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# A Study on Mobility: Pakistani-Origin Muslim Youth in Higher Education

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# A Study on Mobility: Pakistani-Origin Muslim Youth in Higher Education

## **Abstract**

My dissertation is a multi-sited ethnography that investigates the gendered lifeworlds of transnational Pakistani-origin, Muslim college students in New York City and in Lahore, Pakistan. My ethnographic approach follows the multiple and overlapping mobility trajectories of transnational youth as marked by particular, semiotic practices and narratives. During the 16 months of fieldwork, my focal fieldsites—the hallways, dorms, student club-rooms, cafeterias, and libraries at two comparable college campuses—provided the interactional spaces where I could observe students developing their social and cultural selves. In my research, I found that the rural to urban migration pattern and concomitant imaginaries remained significant for both intra- and inter-national movements. My research examined students' narratives about these multiscale mobilities, analyzing emergent and locale-specific discursive and embodied practices in relation to transnational and piety-based markers of belonging. In this, I found that these practices both reified and critiqued traditional and modern notions of patriarchy. My study shows that mobility offers an ideal construct to ethnographically observe Pakistani-origin Muslim youth subject-making and to understand how transnational youth re-fashion their social identities and professional aspirations given contemporary post-9/11 political and social climate.

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A STUDY ON MOBILITY: PAKISTANI-ORIGIN MUSLIM YOUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Mariam Durrani

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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

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A STUDY ON MOBILITY: PAKISTANI-ORIGIN MUSLIM YOUTH IN HIGHER  
EDUCATION

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For Nadine Noor Jabran

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## ABSTRACT

### A STUDY ON MOBILITY: PAKISTANI-ORIGIN MUSLIM YOUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Mariam Durrani

Stanton E.F. Wortham

Asif Agha

My dissertation is a multi-sited ethnography that investigates the gendered lifeworlds of transnational Pakistani-origin, Muslim college students in New York City and in Lahore, Pakistan. My ethnographic approach follows the multiple and overlapping mobility trajectories of transnational youth as marked by particular, semiotic practices and narratives. During the 16 months of fieldwork, my focal fieldsites—the hallways, dorms, student club-rooms, cafeterias, and libraries at two comparable college campuses—provided the interactional spaces where I could observe students developing their social and cultural selves. In my research, I found that the rural to urban migration pattern and concomitant imaginaries remained significant for both intra- and inter-national movements. My research examined students' narratives about these multiscalar mobilities, analyzing emergent and locale-specific discursive and embodied practices in relation to transnational and piety-based markers of belonging. In this, I found that these practices both reified and critiqued traditional and modern notions of patriarchy. My study shows that mobility offers an ideal construct to ethnographically observe Pakistani-origin Muslim youth subject-making and to understand how transnational youth re-fashion their social identities and professional aspirations given contemporary post-9/11 political and social climate.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation is an anthropological study on mobility. By reframing geographic migration, youth aspirations, and higher education opportunities as spaces that facilitate access and greater mobility, differences across youth populations can be reformulated such that something about the nature of migration and subsequent forms of social life may be understood. Understanding difference or variation across human populations has informed and directed many anthropological projects. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars studied cultural and linguistic variation in diverse contexts and in doing so, they attended to continuity or perpetuation of traditional norms within particular places, even as they began to focus more extensively on forms of cultural change.

And yet, social scientists have been critiqued endlessly for constructing unilinear models of cultural change that place tradition and modernity as opposing binaries and creating a teleological progress narrative that moves from ‘tradition’ towards ‘modernity.’ In the last few decades, anthropology turned away from such unilinear models of cultural change that figure a move from ‘traditional’ ways of being to a Western-based modernity. They found this framework insufficient to characterize the multiplicity of lifeworlds they witnessed in the field. In many ethnographies and public conversations, the debate evolved into how contemporary actors negotiate ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity,’ in their everyday practices (Nakassis 2013). These negotiations have been recorded and debated by anthropologists for more than a century. According to Sapir (1931), the effects of (then) globalization and of the far-reaching technologies of communication (railroad, telephone, telegraph, radio, and airplanes) have produced an important result, for example, lessening the “importance of mere geographical contiguity.” He states, “Owing to the technical

nature of these sophisticated communicative devices, parts of the world that are geographically remote may, in terms of behavior, be actually much closer to each other than adjoining regions...The weakening of the geographical factor in social organization must in the long run profoundly modify our attitude toward the meaning of personal relations and of social classes and *even of nationalities*" (Ibid. 108, my emphasis). In our contemporary moment, the expansive reach of today's technological capabilities asks us to reexamine to what extent geography determines social organization and social relations. While it seems Sapir saw the oncoming era of globalization, transnationalism and even evoked a certain post-national ethos, the question is whether the methodological and analytical tools that anthropologists draw from has been sufficient for this ever-changing world in which we live. In an interview regarding his recent ethnography, Jackson (2014) comments that given that group members of the Hebrew Israelites live across five continents, "the traditional model of ethnographic praxis won't quite work." This dissertation pushes this argument by methodologically focusing on the lives and imaginations of Pakistani-origin, Muslim college students in two different countries to study *how* youth understand and enact their aspirations for mobility.

The term 'mobility' refers to the ability to move freely, or the capacity for motion. As an abstract noun, it can be used as a countable, particularized form, as in 'these mobilities,' or an uncountable, general form, as in 'multiple forms of mobility.' In this way, we can consider mobility for anthropological work as it offers a useful construct to understand cross-border (regional and national) movements across scales. Analogous to Rockefeller's discussion of 'flow', 'mobility' connotes a sense of movement, but it differs in that while 'flow' gives an image of "agentless movement with no starting point and not telos" (2011:558), 'mobility' is about the *possibility* of movement. Just as we can have the possibility of mobility, we can have the

possibility of *immobility*. To state it again, it is not whether individuals can or do move but whether they believe they can move. As such, it suggests external (and internal) limitations that may impair mobility. I offer this semantic analysis to posit that mobility provides this study a workable construct by which to explore multiple kinds of border-crossing movement/migratory trajectories.

Specifically, I use this mobility framework to explore the multiple gendered lifeworlds of transnational Pakistani-descent, working class, college students in New York City and in Lahore, Pakistan. In New York City, I followed Pakistani-origin, Muslim students at New York City College, a well-ranked public college located in upper Manhattan. In Lahore, I spent time with migrant students at a private coeducational English medium university, Lahore City University. All of the participants in this study are Pakistani-origin, Muslim college youth who have migrated from rural areas in Pakistan to urban centers within Pakistan and in the US. For some, this may be a singular move, as it was for Zara, from Jhang, a small town in Pakistan's Punjab province, to Lahore, the provincial capital and second largest city in the country. It may be a migration over many years as in the case of Anny, who moved from a village near the China-Pakistan border to Skardu, a larger city in Gilgit, part of Pakistan's northern areas, before moving to Lahore to attend college. For the New York City participants, they may have moved from rural villages with their families or from larger cities to the American metropolis years earlier. The rural to urban migration pattern remained significant for both intra- and inter-national movements. In my research, I encountered how the rural/urban divide is sometimes of greater social value than movement between nations. My research examined students' narratives about these multiscalar movements, analyzing emergent and locale-specific discursive and embodied practices in relation to transnational markers of belonging. Mobility discourses serve as a kind of "virtual space-time



travel” (Lempert & Perrino 2007) that allow students to explore aspirational trajectories beyond the university and demonstrate these moves in the ‘present’ through a cluster of cultural and linguistic practices and discourses.

These kinds of geographic movements, or horizontal mobilities, are accompanied by multiple aspirations and desires for vertical mobility in the form of economic (financial), social (status), and cultural (cosmopolitan)- climbing (Salazar 2010). My theoretical framework draws heavily from Salazar’s work on an anthropology of cultural mobilities, where he argues that “studying the interaction between culturally rooted imaginaries and real physical movements, a relation contoured by global media images as well as personal accounts, helps us understand the multiple meanings behind contemporary migratory phenomena” (Ibid. 53). In this dissertation, a reformulation of migration processes as horizontal forms of mobility enables a ‘leveling’ of the experiences of students’ migration from similar backgrounds in Charsadda, Jhang, or other rural places/imaginaries to cosmopolitan, urban centers as they seek higher education. Similarly, complementary forms of vertical mobility in the acquisition of higher education can be grouped together such that college socialization experiences in New York City and Lahore are seen in parallel.

Given this correlation between international/intra-national migration and aspirations for better educational and economic opportunities, my framework pulls from Salazar’s work that reformulates these two processes as a composite of vertical and horizontal mobilities. From this, I argue that it is possible and analytically useful to focus on the cultural particularities of these composite/multivalent mobilities in specific contexts. As scholars have argued, even if an individual is place-bound, temporarily or not, she/he can imagine themselves in movement,

traveling to other places and times (Salazar 2010; Dick 2010). If migration is as much about imaginaries of mobility as it is about cross-border movements, then it becomes imperative to understand the ways that these multiple mobilities are laminated and make meaning in the lives of Pakistani-origin Muslim youth. Taking up the move by contemporary sociologists to understand mobility (Urry 2000 & 2002) from an ethnographic perspective (Salazar 2010), we can examine what existing cultural models are drawn upon as in-migrant youth imagine their present and future selves simultaneously. In Khagram and Levitt (2007), transnational anthropologists are encouraged to see and study how borders and boundaries emerge. The question, which will be addressed in this dissertation, is: how does one methodologically observe mobility in social life? As is often the case in anthropology, these cultural models/practices/imaginaries are contested and negotiated as youth create a new set of cultural formations that better represent their self-formulations. For Muslim youth, this process has particular political stakes, discussed at length in chapter five. This study argues for a theoretical approach that ethnographically details how mobility, in its multiple forms, can be understood as a contested ideological construct that entails much more than physical movement, and in fact demands that we revisit how we understand notions of modernity with respect to *an anthropology of mobility*.

This approach to movement demands that we revisit how modernity is impacted by or impacts youth mobility trajectories. The 1947 independence of the Pakistani nation-state was a kind of rupture with the colonial legacy, after which the nationalist identity became the lens through which researchers understood the territory and its inhabitants. While people within South Asia have a lengthy history of migration within the subcontinent, studies about Pakistani migration have tended to reify the nation-state, rather than to decenter the construct to see something more within these migration patterns. In earlier conceptions of migration one often finds a “sedentarist

bias” (Malkki 1995); that is, while transnational migration is understood as a process involving international travel, accompanied by access to state bureaucracy procedures, to financial resources, and to structural support in the new location, it is often compared, and often pathologized in relation to, those who have remained stationed in a single geographic place, i.e. provincial region or the nation-state. By situating my research in two distinct yet related locations and moving between these in real-time and virtually, I hope to pre-empt the impulse to reify “Lahore,” “Pakistan,” “America,” or “NYC” as separate *places*. Instead my work attends to how “locality has always been reconstituted by mobility,” and concurs with the understanding that we must not reduce the smaller scales of social life as essentially passive and reactive to large-scale, global flows (Rockefeller, 2011; Tsing, 2005). Furthermore, the ‘mobility’ concept allows us to extend Appadurai’s (1996) theory of rupture within modernity, particularly so that the nation-state is no longer the key arbiter, but one arbiter among a network of others in the formation of social change. My research asks: how can we reconceptualize ‘modernity’ to study mobility and concomitant forms of place-making? How can we deconstruct the binary frames—tied to a nation-state construct such as tradition/modern, past/present, homeland/host country, and other urban/rural social constructs (discussed in this dissertation)—and elucidate the ways that mobility-based social personae emerge?

By situating multiple forms of mobility under one rubric, we can revisit earlier conceptualizations of modernity to understand what is superfluous once we decenter the nation-state. A modern mobility is conceived as movement with origin, direction, and destination, where each point is firmly located within a nation-state. For participants, their migratory trajectories have been a series of starts and stops. While the nation-state project was central to how modern citizenship was understood, this study finds that Pakistani-origin Muslim youth strategize and rearticulate

citizenship (Ong 2005) through their vantage point within the university. This confluence of social and migratory processes leads to a different version of modernity, one that is unstable, unpredictable, and echoes what has been described as “the acceptance of permanent change, disorder, unpredictability, and the permanent re-structuring of accepted realities” (Kesserling & Vogl 2004:4). Drawing on Beck’s (1992) treatise on the emergence of a new (reflexive) modernity that hinged on the condition of generalized uncertainty, we can certainly understand a study of transnational migration that is neither nation-, region-, nor path-dependent. And we can further this thought by linking the emergence (or transformation) of this reflexive modernity to mobility as a social construction, characterizing contemporary modernity discourses as ‘mobile modernities.’ In this dissertation, I develop the concept of a youth-specific version of this mobility as an analytic to conceptualize and ethnographically follow this emergently modern formation and its movements.

As it explores the possibilities of multiple mobilities, this dissertation also problematizes the limitations of mobility in relation to future aspirations to the university, within it, and then beyond. To contextualize these limitations, I refer to the definition of mobility, i.e. “the ability to move, the ease or freedom of movement, and the tendency to change easily or quickly” (Salazar 2010:54). I juxtapose ‘mobility’ to, what Appadurai (2013) calls, *the capacity to aspire*. He explains that aspirations “form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas that derive from larger cultural norms” (Ibid. 187) while the *capacity to aspire* is conceived as a navigational capacity that is “nurtured by the possibility of real-world conjectures and refutations and maps the steps from here to there as oriented by cultural and ethical visions of the future” (Ibid. 189). Of course the capacity to aspire is not evenly distributed and the better off one is, the more fully developed is the capacity to aspire. In later chapters, I discuss migrant students’ desires to get

more ‘exposure’ through travel and educational opportunities elsewhere. These desires are partially facilitated by their student position and the opportunities available at the university. Through these observations, we can see how mobility coupled with the ‘capacity to aspire’ are analytically productive in efforts to understand migration processes as they link to educational and professional aspirations. This move to see the future as constitutive of cultural imaginaries offers a break from previous understandings that ‘culture’ is a concern of some kind of ‘pastness’, habit, custom, heritage, tradition, and that development programs, including education development programs, are about the future with regards to plans, goals, and hopes for youth. Instead, by posing these mutually compatible scholarly endeavors as interrelated, we can argue for anthropologists to reorganize norms for futurity as a necessarily cultural capacity.

In *The Good Life* (2014), Edward Fischer ethnographically follows how ideas of the good life are articulated in relation to markets in Guatemala and Germany. Drawing from this research on aspiration, I want to extend Fischer’s assertion that contrary to the conventional interpretation of the good life as driven by aspirations of vertical mobility, ideas of wellbeing cannot be reduced to considerations of material conditions alone. Instead by framing the youth category as one where individuals seek the capacity to aspire, we find a lens to understand the lifeworlds of Pakistani-origin college youth and analyze the complicated ways that they negotiate, battle, and assert a particularly Muslim youth subjectivity in college. At times, this is in spite of and/or because of efforts by the state and education actors who position this subjectivity in simplistic binaries of good/bad, right/wrong, or some version of us and some version of ‘them’. Unsurprisingly college youth mobilize their ethnic and cultural difference to work this binaric system in their favor, particularly since these differences are appreciated and recognized by state actors (in the form of US Fulbright programs, Pell Grants, etc.) and education structures (private scholarship programs)

as legitimate criteria for aspiration. The Pakistani transnational youth subject is politicized and gendered within both the nation-making discourse and its internal sectarian conflicts and also in the global discourse on eradicating terrorism. Echoing the argument of a transformation to a reflexive, unstable form of modernity, mobility reshapes modern aspirations such that it is not simply about earning more money but rather finding jump-off points, where financial mobility matters, but so do other less predictable motivations. For example, participants expressed their desire to protest gender inequality for female relatives, their interest to travel and gain exposure to the wider world, their passion to return to Pakistan and further its growth or conversely, for NYC participants, to protest anti-Muslim sentiments in the US. In all these ways, notions of the ‘good life’ and related aspirations must be understood through close ethnographic analysis of Pakistani-origin, Muslim youth in terms of the current sociohistorical moment and locale-specific context.

As a project invested in the lives and futures of Muslim youth, this dissertation also considers the identity politics for youth who were in kindergarten when the World Trade Center towers were attacked in 2001. Their experience of the discrimination and xenophobia is markedly different from other ethnographic accounts of Muslim youth who came of age during this pivotal moment. *In other words, they never knew a pre-9/11 world.* For these Muslim youth, what it means to be modern is perhaps of particular social and political significance, and requires that as researchers we consider the kind of migratory narratives that are particular to a Muslim youth subjectivity. Being Muslim and of Pakistani-origin were two aspects, of many others, with which I could understand participants’ mobility trajectories and imaginaries. In the literature on the anthropology of youth, the discussion focuses on how youth, in general, negotiate multiple, and at times contradicting, identities and find themselves choosing between identities dependent on the situation. While this is undoubtedly found across human social life, including this dissertation, I

do not to take the incompatibility or divisions of cultural frameworks as a premise. Rather, each chapter analyzes particular pragmatic acts by participants and their metapragmatic discourse of these acts to see how they align to move towards a theory on emergent Muslim youth formations.

One of the critiques previously leveled at transnational anthropology is that the study of transnationalism has emphasized the activities of a minority population (Portes 2003). While it continues to be the case, that those who travel back and forth between countries of origin and new locales are usually of higher socioeconomic status, it is not the case in this study. Furthermore, by considering how mobility imaginaries shape aspirations and future mobility trajectories, this study is able to seriously consider how working class migrant students imagine future selves, a population typically unconsidered in transnational scholarship. By complicating their motivations as more than class-based, we can see how cultural mobilities are shaped across two diverse educational contexts. In the NYC context, it became increasingly obvious during fieldwork that students would negotiate their religious identities through cultural filters that originated in Pakistan. In other words, these students were raised in conservative religious working class households, where gender norms based around a set of Muslim piety practices, strongly influenced how they presented identity outside the home. These gendered piety practices are mirrored in the lives of the Lahore students with varying degrees of similarity and asymmetry. My analysis is also influenced by the transnational gender analytic (Camp and Thomas 2008) that aims to see the formation of diaspora communities, which reads as mobile communities for this project, as a site of political aspiration and solidarity where mobilities of masculine and feminine subjects are treated as co-constitutive of the emergent youth formation. By including a feminist lens, this project sees class, gender, and religious identity as part of an intersectional rubric of meaning making that emerges at various moments in mobility imaginaries and mobility

trajectories.

### **Statement on Methodology**

This study is based on fourteen months of fieldwork conducted from January 2013 until June 2014. From January 2013 to June 2013, I was living at the Lahore City University campus in Lahore, Pakistan. During the summer of 2013, I moved to New York City and conducted research at New York City College from August 2013 to June 2014. This is also based on preliminary research from a summer 2011 trip to Lahore. My participants consisted of first- and second-year college students who have traveled, either from a less-urban area to Lahore, or from rural areas in Pakistan to New York City, to pursue higher education.

Cities have been idealized as the places in which individuals, in particular youth, imagine a future in which they are more cosmopolitan and mobile (Castells 2009). For my research, I chose two cities that are conceptualized as symbolic of an urban, cosmopolitan way of being at two levels of migratory movement, intra-national and international. The focal participants frequently hierarchized city identities, i.e. Lahori, New Yorker, over other territory-based identities, and looked to other global cities, such as Dubai, Bangkok, or London (Sassen 2009) as their aspirational, post-degree homes. Both Lahore and NYC, despite the tremendous size disparity, hold a similar attraction for the individuals looking for employment opportunities as well as expanding their personal and professional networks. For a student who grew up in rural Pukhtunkhwa on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Lahore and its higher education opportunities represents the allure of a city visible on the world stage, similar to what NYC represents to immigrants from all over the globe. In a sense, the move to such cities is an effort to



become more global and to aspire for greater degrees in the future—a “worlding practice” borrowing from Ong (2011).

In both locales, I observed migrant students during their first few years of college. By following the multiple and overlapping mobility trajectories and imaginaries of transnational Muslim youth, my focal fieldsites—the hallways, dorms, student club-rooms, cafeterias, and libraries—provided the interactional spaces where I observed how students formulated their social and cultural selves. Using semiotic methodologies, I examined Muslim youth online and offline practices that draw on rural/urban/cosmopolitan social types and figures. Notably, I found that these practices both reified and critiqued notions of a diasporic patriarchy even as they link these notions to neoliberal logics, espoused by American-style liberal university programs. These English-medium college environments afforded the opportunity to observe and track student’s metalinguistic and metapragmatic statements regarding their ‘communicative repertoires’ in and out of the classroom (Rymes 2010). With both participant groups, my primary methods of investigation were qualitative, comprised of traditional ethnographic methods (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995; Briggs 1986; Jackson 2010, 2012) and linguistic anthropological methods (Agha 2006; Inoue 2006; Reyes and Wortham 2015) to gather and analyze the requisite data to answer my research questions.

Early during fieldwork and based on my previous experiences at the Lahore fieldsite, I understood how ethno-linguistic identity and one’s city of origin were one set of social markers that determined how a student fit in the campus community. Students from Lahore were marked as “Lahoris” and further identified based on the particular grammar and secondary schools they attended. Oftentimes these students also lived at home, located within Lahore city limits, and thus

they had greater access and knowledge of the city. The students from Karachi, or “Karachites,” mostly lived in the residential hostels. Since Lahore is the provincial and cultural capital of the Punjab province, native Lahoris may be Punjabi-speakers in addition to being Urdu-speakers. In contrast, Karachi is the nation’s largest port city and historically been a highly cosmopolitan city with citizens from all over Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arab states, and eastern Africa. Coming from this diverse cultural and religious milieu, students from Karachi saw their Lahori peers as somewhat less worldly. Within this complex social milieu, study participants, who were neither from Lahore or Karachi, were isolated and even ostracized for their ‘differences.’” These students came from less privileged households and were able to attend the private Lahore City University with the support financial aid packages. The university’s needs-based program recruited these talented candidates from all over Pakistan and sponsored them through a two-year pipeline program to receive full-funding at the undergraduate level. While at LCU, these students were expected to meet high academic standards, i.e. maintaining a certain GPA, while also strategizing their post-graduate lives, which could mean finding a well-paying job, possibly getting married, and/or being able to provide for their families.

Moreover, Lahore was an ideal site to conduct research due to its particular linguistic milieu, burgeoning youth population, and host to many colleges and universities. The city of Lahore, the second largest city in the country, is expected to be ranked 25th in the world as an urban agglomeration (more than 10 million inhabitants) by 2025 (UN 2011). While Pakistan can boast more than sixty recognized language varieties, Lahore, despite its size, has a smaller palette of languages. English, as the country’s official language, and Urdu, as the national language, have constituted Lahore’s language contact zone for the last two centuries. While Punjabi, the provincial language, is still spoken daily within the city, it is taught as an optional subject in

schools. Importantly both Punjabi and Urdu-Hindi (Agha 1994, 1998) are spoken across the border in northern India. Often these languages, in mixed forms, serve as a lingua franca among South Asian college students, complicating simple distinctions regarding region, nation, and language (Ayres 2009; Rahman 1999; Kachru et al. 2008). I observed students' negotiations of their ethno-linguistic diversity in the university context as they became increasingly more mobile, global subjects.

For the New York City portion of my research, I focus on college students who had migrated from Pakistan to the US. The New York City College (NYCC) hosts some of the highest percentage of Asian students from all CUNY undergraduate programs (OIRA 2011). For students living in New York City, where an estimated 25% of the US-Pakistani population reside (Batalova & Ferruccio 2008), the experience of multiple, and at times contradictory, categories of belonging--nation, religion, race, gender--offers an exemplary opportunity to observe transnational youth practices of syncretism and cultural practices. Within this set of fieldsites, I spent much of my time in the Muslim Student Association gender-segregated clubroom and found how central students' religious affiliations were to their public college identities, often expressed through their sartorial presentations and mobility imaginaries.

In my analysis, I observed how gendered mobility imaginaries serve as an organizing principle through which a Muslim youth subjectivity is constructed in both Lahore and New York City. By focusing on youth aspiration-based trajectories, I attend instead to the kind of flexible citizenship that motivates migration to institutions of higher education. In the literature on diaspora, scholars have inadvertently reified binary notions of home/host or displacement/homeland, and such binary frameworks often privilege the movement of male subjects as the primary agents of

transnational subject formation. In response, I focus on how youth personae are inherently gendered and how gender differences selectively differentiate rather distinct types of Muslim communities, both intra- and inter-nationally.

*A Note on Researcher/Teacher Positionality*

In the prologue to *Buddha is Hiding* (2003), Ong begins with a personal story of her journey from Malaysia to New York City to attend college. She remembers a particular moment outside the East Asian Institute at Columbia University, when during a protest, she wondered how Southeast Asians fit into the then-American social imaginary. The fact that this moment occurs on a college campus is not tangential to my study of Pakistani transnationals, who much like Ong herself, find themselves on college campuses and engaged in processes of subject-making while standing on imagined and real borders between Pakistan and America. As a college teacher in both Pakistan and American, I have often found a similar set of reflections between myself and bilingual college students. This intimate knowledge of the college experience from both the faculty and student perspective allowed me to have familiarity with the study's subject matter while still being highly cognizant of all that I did/do not know.

During fieldwork, I was also teaching courses at each college in NYC and in Lahore. My interactions with participants was premised on two professional identities that I assumed: the first that I was an anthropologist conducting research for my dissertation and the second that I was an adjunct faculty member. Of the two, the second identity provided the conduit to meeting students with a 'legitimate' reason to be on their campus. Once they learned I was part of the faculty, I was accorded a different status than if I was 'merely' a researcher. Particularly since my research entailed extensive conversations and 'hangouts' with college students, it seemed that male

students felt more comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with a female who fell within an identifiable set of possible male-female relationships. Furthermore as a mother, and then-spouse, who frequently brought my daughter to campus events, students undoubtedly saw me as trustworthy and ‘safe.’

As a faculty member at LCU, I was able to live in the faculty residential apartments on campus. This positioning facilitated my quick transition to being seen as an insider and being fully immersed in the fieldsite. In the past, I taught courses at the institution from 2006 to 2009 and thus found welcoming environment with the faculty and administration on campus. Being a live-in campus faculty member also meant that my residence was accessible to students, and I frequently had female participants drop in for dinner or a cup of tea. The male students were hesitant to come into my home, particularly since I was living alone with my then-three-year-old daughter. Cultural norms in Pakistan dictate that I was a *non-mahram* (not blood-related kin) female and thus it was generally inappropriate to enter my household without a male present. Having grown up in a Pakistani Muslim household, I was well-versed in this cultural expectation. Similarly, my faculty identity allowed the NYPC students to see me as a ‘legitimate’ female social figure. For example, male students would ask me about the courses I taught in NYC. Some of the students I taught were friends of participants, further making my presence on campus legible. For female NYC students, my status as a part of the university eased my visits to their homes, particularly when it came to introducing myself to their parents. Finally, my own mobility trajectory as a Pakistani-American Muslim female allowed students in both locales to see me as a fellow traveler or sorts. In one moment, this manifested when, Zahid, an LCU student visited my home in Queens, New York City. Or when Sadiq, a NYPC undocumented student, asked me to take presents for his brother, who was living in Lahore and unable to return due to a similar

undocumented (in America) status. In this way, my mobility experiences (geographic, educational, class-based, and generational) provided another vocabulary for our communications.

### **Summary of Chapters**

Following this introduction, chapter two lays the theoretical foundations of the dissertation by exploring mobility as a productive ethnographic space. As a polymorphic conceptualization, mobility asks anthropologists to revitalize our theory-building, especially with regards to primary questions about culture, identity, and migration. While earlier research on mobility positioned the imagination as external to social practice, I reconsider the imagination, including future imaginaries and embodied practices of multivalent mobilities that transcend both physical and sociocultural distances. In the three chapters that follow chapter two, I draw on the frame of ‘ethnographic encounters’ to explore how multivalent youth mobilities can be analytically observed in the ethnographic and push the anthropological imagination on what is constitutive of contemporary Pakistani-origin, Muslim youth formations.

In chapter three, I focus on how mobility is facilitated by and through the structures of the university. I begin with brief descriptions of the physical campus and its relationship to the local urban environment. This is followed by three sections, each which link *mobility* to the university space as a means to understand the particularities of participants’ experience as Pakistani-origin Muslim transnational youth subjects. In section one, I focus on how students inhabit, re-create, and draw boundaries within their particular university spaces; a means by which to understand the university as a space re-created through a process of “transnational place-making”. Section two extends this argument to include the physicalized movements beyond the university that the

university facilitates, even as the state is implicated in the structures of the university and therefore constrain the paths upon which students can be mobile. In this section, I am careful to attend to the ways in which youth cultural forms may actually be reinforcing and reinvigorating historically-situated power formations. In section three, I focus specifically on the vertical and horizontal mobilities that are embedded in the aspirations of students in relation to their life histories, showing where they have come from and how their previous experiences effect what they expect to gain from the university. I use the category of “emerging adulthood” in order to explain how youth metapragmatically formulate their understanding of transnational mobilities (Arnett 2000). In each section, I pay close attention to how mobilities are always gendered, delimiting how male and female youth are differentially situated within university spaces and therefore have different “capacities to aspire” (Appadurai 2013).

Chapter four extends these discussions to place the university and the youth populations that I worked with within a broader set of discourses regarding cosmopolitanism and migrations to the city. These rural-urban trajectories again existed across my participant contexts and reveal another manifestation of the transnational youth formation I am interested in following in this study. In this chapter, I describe moments of encounter for in-migrant college students in Lahore to understand what kinds of differences became salient as they experience contact zones where conflicting metasemiotic frameworks come into contact. By problematizing several stories that depict such encounters with the cosmopolitan urban space in NYC and Lahore, I seek to emphasize the specificities of an emergent transnational youth formation, by describing forms of a Pakistani transmigrant culture and the concomitant forms of digitized and non-digitized subject-making observed on a university campus. Using Agha’s (2011) concept of models of personhood, this section analyzes the characteristics of circulating social types to understand the cultural

models and processes, i.e. mobility types, informing these social personae. In section one, I follow these encounters within the urban university context to understand the unstable boundary-making process of rural/urban social differences. Section two examines some of hybridized linguistic forms that circulate within the Pakistani-origin bilingual population. This is followed by a discussion on sartorialist models/formulations that further build on the distinctions between rural and urban/cosmopolitan social types/personae. The last section focuses on the pragmatic instantiations of these social types through everyday social practices by college students. The vignettes offered in this chapter follow such stories of encounter and show how these diverse student populations within Pakistan interpret these moments, seeking to unpack how mobility offers a framing device to understand negotiations around difference—either its display or concealment.

In chapter five, I consider the notion of mobility-based imaginaries to analyze a local-global mobility framework through a discussion of Muslim youth social personae in precarious times. By revisiting how we understand Muslim youth subjects in the contemporary moment through an analysis of their college practices, we can observe how they use religious diacritics to further their mobility trajectories in multiple ways. For them, it is not always about becoming more mobile as subjects of the modern, liberal state. Mobility itself can have a more expansive analytic reach if we consider how Muslim youth are cognizant of multiple stereotypes and norms and find ways to subvert these notions to become, at times, more successful students or more financially stable, but also to become better practicing Muslims, however that may be defined for them. Through these multiple subversions, we can see how Muslim youth are engaging in extraordinary practices that may not be seen as such by researchers and scholars. These forms of Muslim youth subjectivity may be essential in humanizing their intellectual mobilities that are often disguised within public



discourse as an inaccessible, pre-modern religious sociality. Instead by reformulating the social meaning of how college youth aspire to construct themselves as a globally situated kind of modern Muslim subjects and through the notion of ummah-formation, we can see how Muslim youth subjects do not fit in the liberal subject-making models that circulate in scholarly circles, especially given the precarious nature of social persona.

## Chapter Two: An Anthropology of Mobility

Zara

As we sat in the dining hall of Lahore City University, Zara lazily circled her paper cup of chai with a plastic, white spoon. The other students in the hall were swarming around us, young dark-haired women dressed in colorful, long kurtas, and diaphanous dupattas draped over their hair or around their necks, some wearing bright graphic hijabs, others in short kurtas emblazoned with graphic designs over skinny jeans and blue-tinted sunglasses dangling from their collars. In contrast, the young men's fashion consisted of a variety of t-shirts, jeans, and shorts over flip-flop sandals exhibiting a laid-back, college male persona. A few more were lounging in the dining hall's dark blue chairs in *shalwar kameez*<sup>1</sup>, in neutral colors like white, navy, tan, or black, typically worn by men. In her typical fashion, Zara was wearing loose sweatpants under a large volleyball team t-shirt. She smiled as she told me she would never wear this back home. I asked: How come? As she mulled it over, she told me that people in her village might say:

*Isse kuch zayada wo... yahan ke rang chargayain hain*      [Original quote]<sup>2</sup>  
She's become a bit too... adopted too much of this culture.      [My translation]

To give an example of her multiple worlds colliding, Zara told how she once ran into her high school biology teacher, while the teacher was visiting her Lahore university. As soon as Zara saw her, rather than walk up and greet her, she immediately ran back to her dorm room so that she could change into a less fitted and longer kurta, that adequately covered her skinny jeans and to

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<sup>1</sup> *Shalwar kameez*, one of traditional dresses in Pakistan, consists of loose pants [*shalwar*] and typically loose tunic-like shirts [*kameez*].

<sup>2</sup> In the literal translation of Zara's quote, she uses the metaphor of 'colors' [*rang*] and the taking on of these colors. I have translated the metaphorical notion of '*yahaan ke rang*' or the 'colors of this place' to refer to some version of a culture of this place, i.e. the LCU campus.

grab a *dupatta*<sup>3</sup> before speaking to the teacher. Zara finished the story saying that she did not want her teacher to tell people back in Jhang that she'd become "too 'modern' in Lahore."

.....

*Noreen*

When we met, Noreen was a sophomore majoring in journalism at Manhattan Public College (MPC). She was an active member of her college's Muslim Student Association and consequently she spent much of her non-class time with fellow MSA members in their club room, in the cafeteria, or hanging out at local eateries. These young women chose to wear the hijab and more modest styles of dress, that also are emblematic of Muslim and Muslim-nation cultural identities. Some wrapped their hijab in multiple styles (such as the Dubai style or the Turkish style]<sup>4</sup>, while wearing loose tunics, t-shirts, and dresses with colored tights, jeans, or palazzo pants underneath. For Noreen and her friends, being a practicing Muslim is another space to express her personal fashion. Her Instagram profile provides a highly curated collection of stylized modest dress fashions, henna designs done by herself, images of her with friends, and of her many culinary adventures. Over the three years that we've known each other, Noreen has experimented with the hijab, at times wearing a tight-fitting hijab that stays put or a loose-fitting hijab that may fall off; and at other moments, she wears no hijab. In one of our Facebook chats, she explained her understanding of hijab as comparable to the *dupatta* 'back home,' where home refers to Pakistan:

"Like back home, we wear the *dupatta* on our heads even if we're with women, if there is

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<sup>3</sup> A *dupatta* is a veil-like long cloth that women in Pakistan usually wear with *shalwar kameez*. The cloth can be a sheer chiffon, printed cotton, or a heavier fabric.

<sup>4</sup> While the hijab itself is not an object of study, I must point out the remarkable discourse on hijab styles online. There are numerous tutorials to help women learn multiple styles and often times, styles are recognized by a particular location (such as the Dubai and Turkish style), but also general descriptions of the style (such as turban style, twisty style, etc.). For more, please refer to [www.themuslimgirl.com](http://www.themuslimgirl.com), [www.hijabstyle.com](http://www.hijabstyle.com), et cetera.

an older respectable woman there. It's just a sign of *hayaa*, to respect the other person. So if my hijab falls off, I don't really care lol, I just put it back on. [sic]"

[Facebook Messages; 12.22.2015]

During this online conversation, Noreen critically reflected on her decision to wear hijab, citing her mother's influence, her friends' supportive response to her hijab wearing, and how she sees it as a reminder to be more mindful of her words and actions, but at the end, she explained that the hijab is not the most important thing to her sense of self.

.....

In both ethnographic moments, we can see multiple and simultaneous forms of cultural and religious practices that Muslim college students negotiate as they embark on a journey towards a college degree. For Zara, she performs a college student who does not wear traditional Pakistani attire while at her Lahore campus, but when a non-Lahori acquaintance visits, she changes her clothes to not appear 'too modern.' The tighter wardrobe and lack of veiling are emblematic of a less pious, less authentic Pakistani woman, while the dupatta-clad, loose shirt look is deemed more suitable for Zara, and she strategically mobilizes this knowledge to maintain the latter identity, as she is known by her older acquaintances. Contrastively, Noreen wears the hijab periodically. At times similar to Zara, she acknowledges its social meaning as a sign of respect to elders; other moments, the hijab reminds her of her "personal god consciousness". But for her, the hijab is not central to one's spiritual practice and thus, she is reinterpreting the hijab's significance in her life. The hijab serves multiple meanings depending on the participant framework. Each student draws from a set of cultural and religious practices while simultaneously redefining what these practices mean to her. The veil in its multiple forms (dupatta or hijab) becomes a fluid semiotic diacritic that changes social meaning depending on

the specific participant framework and social expectations in their respective contexts. In this chapter I draw on these vignettes to formulate how we can ‘see’ and study a transnational Pakistani-origin, Muslim youth formation.

What is most important from Noreen and Zara’s stories, is just how connected their discourses are despite physical distance, in how they are both negotiating their fashion-based markers of belonging within a university space that reflects transnational, global, and mobile subjectivities. The signification of the hijab and the dupatta themselves are shaped by the girls’ gendered mobility, and, as such, in order to understand how they lay claim to such social personae, we must first take stock of theories of mobility and migration as they pertain to the experiences of Pakistani-origin youth like Noreen and Zara.

The present chapter is divided into four parts. In part one, I consider how an anthropology of mobility affords a lens into studying migration processes that is not bifurcated by distance differentials. Rather a mobility framework allows us to see lived experiences by following the concurrent trajectories of horizontal and vertical mobility. In part two, I use the concept of mobility to critically examine earlier theories of migration, globalization, and transnationalism to understand what is relevant and useful with regards to this study. I revisit the vignettes of Noreen and Zara and in so doing posit a framework I term the anthropology of multivalent mobilities that sheds particular light on the experiences of Pakistani-origin youth, a group that has been rendered nearly invisible in the broader discourse on South Asia. In part three, I bring gender into the discussion of mobility and argue that women have been largely left out of scholarly discussions on migration, a lacuna my study seeks to fill. What female student should or should not do or the expectations on a male student by his family or university were salient discussion topics by which future aspirations took shape. By emphasizing an approach that focuses on students’ gendered mobilities, we can consider how their mobilities are affected, and sometimes rendered immobile,

due to conflicting metasemiotic frameworks in the form of patriarchal norms, Muslim familial expectations, and academic/professional expectations. In part four, I position my theorization of mobility within the university space to posit that while rural-origin participants seek to engage in a modernizing project by moving to an urban center to acquire a degree, they are embedded in the neoliberal subject-making enterprise of the university. In others words, the university as mediatized space has a large impact on how students construct a mobile subject-making process.

### **Section 1: Unpacking Migration as Mobility**

Both Zara and Noreen are migrant college youth. Upon receiving a scholarship to Lahore City University, Zara, as an intra-national migrant, moved from Jhang, a small town in Punjab to Lahore. Following graduation, she aspires to complete a post-graduate law degree program in England before returning to Pakistan to practice law. While Noreen's family immigrated to the US before her birth, they are constantly traveling and connecting with Pakistani and Indian relatives in North America, Pakistan, and India. At home, she frequently watched Indian and Pakistani TV drama serials with her mother. Although her immediate family is geographically located in New York, their deep social, familial, and cultural connections to Pakistan are evinced through the reference to 'back home' in Noreen's online utterance. Additionally, Noreen uses the first person pronoun 'we' somewhat ambiguously, implicitly including me in the population that knows about the social mores in Pakistan. Both are migrants for whom migration is directly linked to the acquisition of a college education.

Processes of international migration and intra-national migration, as in the case of Noreen and

Zara respectively, are typically seen and studied as two mutually exclusive migration processes, where international migration has received more scholarly attention. While international migration focuses on human movements across nation-state borders, the second form examines movement within nation-state borders. For both types of international and intra-national Muslim migrants in this study, the experience of being mobile has a notably positive valence, differing from involuntary or forced migration trends linked to violence, conflict, and instability in the country of origin. These voluntary *in-migrants* aspire for greater mobility, where mobility is defined as: “(1) the ability to move; (2) the ease or freedom of movement; and (3) the tendency to change easily or quickly” (Salazar 2010:54). Most often, representations of mobility associate geographic or horizontal mobility with vertical ‘climbing’, in the form of economic (financial) mobility, social (status-based) mobility, and cultural (cosmopolitan) mobility (Ibid). In other words, when migrants physically move, it is understood that they are also seeking other forms of mobility to improve their lives. For the participants in this study, their horizontal mobilities were linked to a desire to acquire a college degree, which certainly offers a higher level of social status to the degree-holder and by extension to his/her family. Along these lines, the college environment is still valued and perceived by students and their families as a meritocracy-based institution, where hierarchical classifications based on kin group, religiosity, ethnic background, or *zaat*<sup>5</sup> (or family’s clan) are not central to social organization on campus (see Nakassis 2013). In other words, once in college, a student is perceived as evaluated solely with regards to their merit. In this space, most research participants perceived their college degree as an access point to multiple forms of horizontal and vertical mobility, to be discussed at length in chapter three. Salazar argues that *mobilities* and narratives about mobility, whether crossing internal or external boundaries, are infused with cultural meaning. In the contemporary moment, the global capitalist system demands that all of us increase our cultural mobilities to acquire greater geographic

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<sup>5</sup> For more on *zaat*, see Rytter 2012 and Werbner 1990.

movement and the flexibility to do so (Ibid.).

This dissertation investigates the contemporary simultaneity of mobility aspirations evinced by routes of migration from rural locales to increasingly urban centers that Pakistani transnational youth embark on in search of better education and better possibilities for the future. While earlier projects have focused on Pakistani labor migration (Ahmed 2011; Ballard 2002; Rana 2011) and Pakistani youth in educational spaces (Ghaffar-Kucher 2015; Maira 2009), this project focuses on how Pakistani-origin youth make sense of their migratory selves as they seek educational opportunities that may augment their geographic, social, and economic mobility. While there have been many studies on international and intra-national migration, there has been considerably less attention on studies about international migration for education (Antoun 1994), and even fewer where migration is broadly conceived as inclusive of international and intra-national movements. This dissertation contributes to understanding the process of migration to institutions of higher education, focusing on students typically not included in these educational spaces. In this chapter, I consider migration processes under the rubric of horizontal mobility and situate these horizontal mobilities in relation to vertical mobilities, such that we can understand how education-based cultural practices are positioned on the interstices of multiple forms of mobilities.

While most of my Lahore City University (LCU) research participants received financial aid, the majority of LCU's students came from from middle-class, urban family backgrounds in Lahore, Karachi, or Islamabad. Within this Lahori-Karachi urban-dominant identity structure, students coming from less populated towns in Punjab such as Jhang and Gujranwala, from Mardan and



Charsadda in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, or from small villages in Sindh, initially found themselves isolated and/or disconnected from the more urban, cosmopolitan public sphere on campus. The rural to urban migration pattern remains significant for both intra and international movements. In NYC, Pakistani-origin immigrant students are also differentiated from their non-immigrant counterparts. Their life experiences were not common to their peers and as such, their first year on campus was mostly in conversation with the few other ethnic/minority students on campus. Moreover, the experiential differences between the urban-rural were marked for students. For example, Tooba, a student from a village in rural Sindh, could not leave her family's home without a male escort compared to Lahore where she was often able to travel alone to the local market or with other female friends. Oftentimes these differences were also imagined, such as how Shan, a Hindko-speaking student, felt that his accent sounded more 'backward' compared to accents of other students. These examples of difference—social difference, linguistic differences, gender-based differences—were partially expressive of class differences since many of the immigrant students came from working class backgrounds and could not have afforded the university fees without financial assistance programs.

Similarly, for students attending college in New York City, their family's immigrant experience as racial, cultural, and religious minorities were central to their understanding of present and future, aspirational selves. While their families had migrated 'earlier', they retained deep transnational connections to family in Pakistan, in India, and to relatives who had moved to Canada, the UK, and elsewhere in Europe. These connections manifested in Pakistani and Muslim practices at home which contrasted with the urban college environment they traveled to and from daily. Most of their parents had migrated from rural places and working class backgrounds. In their new locales, they have accomplished geographic mobility and differing

levels of class mobility. The fathers found work as agricultural laborers, as construction workers, or as taxi drivers. Most of the mothers stayed at home, often having four or more children with the youngest still in elementary school while participants were in college. For the NYC youth, rural imaginaries were emplaced in their homes from the very furniture and wall hangings to the gender segregation observed between the male and female members of the family and other conservative customs observed.

As stated earlier, differing scales of horizontal mobility have traditionally been organized as distinct and mutually exclusive, even hierarchically organized and prioritized for study. Migration from Charsadda to Lahore (almost 500 km) is typically not seen as analogous to migration from Charsadda to New York City (almost 11,000 km). In this dissertation, a reformulation of migration processes as horizontal forms of mobility enables a leveling of the experiences of students' migration from similar backgrounds in Charsadda, Jhang, or other rural places/imaginaries to cosmopolitan, urban centers as they seek higher education. Similarly, complementary forms of vertical mobility in the acquisition of higher education can be grouped together such that college socialization experiences in New York City and Lahore are seen in parallel. In his social history of Pakistan, Qadeer sums up a 'Pakistani's ambitions' as a three-pronged goal of educating children to become professionals, having a nice house, and enjoying modern amenities (2006:21). While the statement is rife with assumptions and arguably lacks ethnographic evidence to substantiate it, the narrative of migration as partially driven by the imperative to better one's children's economic, social, educational, and professional futures is a familiar one. For families who may otherwise not have the financial means to ensure such a future, migrant students appeal to the state college aid programs and to private university funding programs to make college possible. At the NYC college this was done through the aid of Pell

grants and other forms of federal and state aid; and at the Lahore university, students applied for need-based scholarships which were mostly privately funded. As they plan and strategize for future mobilities, we must remember that these aspirations of college students, and partly of their families, are not individually based, but formed in and through interactions with family, peers, and media influences. Through the thick unfolding of social lives (Appadurai 2013) and attending to their multivalent mobilities and narratives, we can alter the way that we understand the social object(s) of their transnational youth formation.

Given this correlation between international/intra-national migration with better educational and economic opportunities and the reformulation of the two as a composite of vertical and horizontal mobilities, I argue that it is possible and analytically useful to focus on the cultural particularities of these composite/multivalent mobilities in specific contexts. As scholars have argued, even if an individual is place-bound, temporarily or not, she/he can imagine themselves on migratory trajectories, traveling to other places and times (Salazar 2010; Dick 2010). If migration is as much about imaginaries of mobility as it is about physical movement across borders, then it becomes imperative to understand the ways that these multiple mobilities are laminated and construct meaning in the lives of Pakistani-origin youth. Taking up the move by contemporary sociologists to understand mobility (Urry 2000) from an ethnographic perspective (Salazar 2010), we can examine what existing cultural models are drawn upon as in-migrant youth imagine their present and future selves simultaneously. As is often the case in anthropology, these cultural models/practices/imaginaries are contested and negotiated as youth create a new set of cultural formations that better represent their self-formulations. For Muslim youth, this process has particular political stakes, discussed at length in chapter five. For the remainder of this chapter, I make a case for a theoretical approach that ethnographically details how mobility, in its multiple

forms, can be understood as a contested ideological construct that entails much more than physical movement across borders, and in fact demands that we revisit how we understand notions of modernity with respect to *an anthropology of multivalent mobility*.

## **Section 2: A Critical Look at Migration, Globalization, Transnationalism**

Early migration theories saw physical movement across borders as primarily a path-dependent process and emphasized a linearity between the ‘sending’ society/nation and the ‘receiving’ society/nation (cf. Ahmad 2011). This bi-directional model rests wholly on the nation-state category. Despite the assumption of unilinear processes of migrant acculturation and assimilation, later theories rejected overarching, grand narratives that hinged on territorial categories to explain 20<sup>th</sup> century migratory behaviors and were identified as obsolete for the ‘new’ conditions of globalization (Massey et al. 1998; Arango 2004). Through all this, the theoretical and analytic frameworks that focused on human migration were often separated analytically from studies on social and class mobility, and within both conceptualizations, the nation-state retained its authority. Anthropologists have historically constituted cultures “as essentially immobile or as possessing a mobility that is cyclical and repetitive... Those with culture are expected to have a *regular, delimited occupation of territory*. If they move, they must do cyclically, like transhuman pastoralists or kula-ring sailors” (Tsing 1993, quoted in Salazar 2010: 55, my emphasis). Moving away from this conceptual frame posed a set of theoretical and methodological challenges. How does one reformulate the ethnographic endeavor to understand horizontal mobility beyond territorial limitations and in conversation with multivalent mobilities?

Levitt (2007) critiqued this bias toward ‘methodological nationalism’, where the nation-state or its contemporary borders are taken as given. Along these lines, scholars reconceptualized earlier bounded analytic frameworks such as migration studies, diaspora studies, and globalization (Vertovec 2003; Kearney 1995; Fox 2005; Shukla 2001; Levitt & Jaworsky 2007) with an eye towards transnational studies. Scholars imagined an anthropological project where cultural flows did not fit into the neat binary frameworks of modern-traditional, urban-rural, global-local and critiqued the more problematic foundations of earlier anthropology on globalization<sup>6</sup> (see Appadurai 1996; Gupta & Ferguson 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994). While these theories did much to further scholarly understandings of how global processes unfold, the study of social processes that is premised on bounded or closed societies or social units, whether it be the localities, regions, nation-states, or family units, would come up short to understand the nature of transnational social life and migration (Levitt 2009).

In response to these concerns about methodological nationalism, transnational scholars offered an optic that “begins with a world without borders [and] empirically examines the boundaries and borders that emerge at particular moments” (Khagram & Levitt 2007: 5). The anthropology of the transnational recognized the import of nation-based categories<sup>7</sup> but placed within a larger sociohistorical and economic frame that acknowledges the past as well as contemporary and

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<sup>6</sup> In a sense, these binaries or dichotomous taxonomies are trapped in a relation of antonymy between lexemes, where urban is an antonym of rural, etc. Hence a system of denotational contrasts between lexemes becomes ontologized as a framework of social structure or social reality. In other words, the taxonomic pairs have influenced the ontological premise of how social structures between more populated versus less populated areas are analyzed. In turn, this leads researchers to have to spend a great deal of time disentangling the antonyms to allow space for the invariably observed examples that are much more complex, messy, and diverse types that exist somewhere between urban and rural and those types that do not fall anywhere on the such continua at all.

<sup>7</sup> To note here, these ‘nation-based categories’ can be said to have emerged from metasemiotic frameworks through which the nation-state describes itself by reformulating taxonomies of its census-based citizenship units. In this way, while it is reckless to not acknowledge the ways that national identity effects a subject’s relationship to the state, relying on these categorial identities may overdetermine the analytic possibilities.

future-oriented frameworks. One possible answer to these challenges was to historicize the modern nation-state project within a larger genealogy that recognizes European imperial and colonial projects as well as non-European imperialisms (Said 1978; Stoller et. al. 2007). The dilemma with this approach is that the nation-state and its attendant (multiple) histories often remain a central organizing principle (Sivaramakirshnan and Agarwal 2003). It is in this sense that some scholars propose a “dialectic” relationship between the national and the transnational in order to understand the relational categories which delimit and create possibilities for human migration (Doyle 2009), moving partially away from the national. Through an anthropologically informed study of globalization, scholars deconstructed these understandings of migration and connected them to contemporary modes of capitalist production and markets, making it possible to analyze the increasingly interconnected nature of the globalizing world and its processes (Fabian 1983; Wolf 1982; Trouillet 1991; Tsing 2005).

In a somewhat idealization of the ‘transnational’ perspective, the literature has inadvertently fallen back into some of the same intellectual trappings of ‘globalization scholarship.’ For example, to understand large scale processes of migration, globalization scholars attempted to study macro-migratory processes from a ‘global’ perspective (Castells 1996; Hannerz 1996). The ubiquitous use of ‘flow’ to describe these macro-level, global processes has been critiqued for its construction and perpetuation of the “image of an agentless movement with no starting point and no telos [which] can elide agency, [and] privilege the large scale over the small” (Rockefeller 2011: 558). This critique argues that ‘flow’ as it is characterized actually implies a certain

managerial birds-eye-view of transnational processes and practices<sup>8</sup>. In an early argument against the use of ‘globalization,’ Hannerz asserted that: “The term ‘transnational’ is, in a way, *more humble*, and often a more adequate label for phenomena which can be of quite variable scale and distribution, even when they do share the characteristic of not being contained within a state (1996: 6, my emphasis).” Within the literature on ‘flows’, Rockefeller (2011) notes that innocuous term ‘flow’ frequently reifies the very dualism, of unrestricted flow versus placedness, that it seeks to dismantle, and it appears from Hannerz’s admiration for ‘transnational’ does similar work of concealing more complex and even problematic implications of transnationalism theory. This critique of the managerial approach to globalization has been reframed by Tsing’s (2005) directive to pay attention to discontinuity and “friction” to understand global interconnections. The 2001 Al Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center and the ensuing US leadership’s worldwide re-militarization are framed as a moment when the force of global connections no longer appears so “neat.” (Tsing 2005: 11). Tsing argues that social analysts should turn their attention away from studying newly emergent global circulations as focused on global coherence. Rather her ethnography attends to the catastrophic aftereffects of the timber industry expansion in Indonesian forests and addresses this critique by way of ‘zones of engagement’ that demonstrates the collisions and discordances that accompany globalization’s realities—offering a lens to simultaneously view the processes at the global, the local, and all the layers between<sup>9</sup>. In this study, I hope to extend this exploration of both coherence and friction in an emergent transnational youth formation where college students pull from similar resources for particularized purposes in their local educational and professional contexts.

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<sup>8</sup> The hydraulic-based metaphor of ‘flow’ is useful for managerial-bureaucratic apparatus of the state in its attempt to describe and regulate the tendencies of aggregates of census-based citizenship units, i.e. the ‘waves’ of migration, the ‘influx’ of refugees, ‘pouring’ in our borders, et cetera.

<sup>9</sup> Tsing is trying to move beyond state-origo discourses and corporate-origo discourses by examining the phenomena that emerge through contact between entities regulated by them—Indonesia and the timber industry. These are manifest as ‘residuals’ that do not belong to either framework. She calls this study of contact-produced residuals as a study of ‘friction.’

Clifford elaborates on the challenge of doing anthropological “culture” that is no longer “what it used to be... once the representational challenge is seen to be the portrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, *one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences* as much as on rooted, native ones” (1997: 24, my emphasis). And of course, how do we understand these encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances that are not embedded within a cordoned off geographic location<sup>10</sup>? Perhaps our very methodologies demand a revision of sorts. Jackson offers ‘flat ethnography’ as a method where one can study travel, or mobility, “through the thicket of time and space, about the way that both of those trajectories might be constructively thinned, theorized, concretized, or dislodged in service to questions about how we relate to one another” (2013: 16). As part of the present critique to level the scalar differentials that determine the study of migration processes, I follow Jackson’s proposal and suggest we flatten our view of migration itself such that horizontal mobilities are rendered in relation to vertical mobilities to understand the particularized subjectivities of the participant population, here Pakistani-origin Muslim youth.

In order to further the work and theoretical purchase of transnational studies, I suggest revisiting three central concerns in order disentangle them and retain the utility of the ‘transnational’ as an analytic. First despite the appeal of decentering nation-state frameworks, much of the literature and empirical studies have consisted of a ‘connective circularity between two discrete locations’ (Ahmad 2011: 22). Fetishization of geographic-place and ties to a ‘home’ place undermine the

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<sup>10</sup> To be noted here is that geographic location is not the point. What matters is how the ‘cordoned’ is formulated through metasemiotic discourses that produce denotational unitizations (which many perceive as ‘entities’ in the world).



stated premise of transnational studies. If we truly want to move beyond the nation-state analytic, we must attend to mobility and migration as more than physical and reconceptualize the object of study itself. As it stands, it appears that while scholars have moved away from using ‘flow’ or ‘global’ to describe these movements of people and capital, they have taken up the ‘transnational’ as an adjectival lexeme to describe the movement of objects, places, processes, and people. For participants, their geographic migration to urban locales frequently began years earlier when, for example, while living in rural areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, they applied for a scholarship program to attend university in Lahore, or when their families moved from small towns in rural Punjab to “Little Pakistan” near Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn in the hopes of their children attending a college in America. To situate the transitory nature of physical locations, I could draw on the category ‘transmigrants’ to describe research participants and their migratory journeys who, to an extent, depend on “multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state” (Schiller et al. 1995: 48). And yet, I must agree with Ahmad (2011) that it is not a revolutionary observation, to say that youth can be connected to more than one nation-state. But how do we move beyond the nation-state? What other institutions and cultural models are they connected to? How can we expand on this notion of the ‘transmigrant’ to consider the weight of ‘South Asian’, ‘Muslim’, ‘hijabi,’ and other identity categories? As it is currently defined, the transmigrant category is premised on the construction of the nation-state. In other words, it does not include the multiple linkages youth have to nation-based formations but also to educational institutions, informal cultural formations, regional publics, online communities, and others. In this study, I seek to develop a notion of how college students are formulating a mobility-based Muslim youth subjecthood that extends their reach beyond their homes of origin, where ‘home’

may be a specific village in Sindh, the border region in Afghanistan and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, an imagined “Pakistan”, or a global notion of a youth-based Muslim community, or *ummah*<sup>11</sup>.

The second and consequent critique is that the study of transnationalism has been “grounded on activities of only a minority of the population” (Portes 2003: 876-6). Levitt et al. (2003) augment this critique by contending that not all migrants engage in transnational practices. If the discipline depends on human migratory acts to establish the ‘site’ of study, it naturally follows that only actors currently engaged in the migratory act would be the ‘ideal’ research participants. However, others have argued that studies of the migratory imaginaries held by those who are not in the act (yet) are essential to understanding the study of migration (Dick 2010; Salazar 2010). In other words, transnational anthropology should differentiate the hierarchies and power inequities laminated within these migratory activities and related imaginaries to recognize ways of being transnational that do not hinge on material forms of wealth and privilege. Being transnational cannot be defined except by considering (1) contrasts between metasemiotic frameworks for evaluating persons, (2) the regrouping of ‘person’ diacritics into emergent emblems that are produced at the point of intersection for these metasemiotic frameworks, and (3) the contrastive frameworks that differ at each relocation point of the migratory trajectory. In this study, the participants access the university through external aid mechanisms that may allow them to access a degree of privilege, but the friction that accompanies this access allows us to see how mobility is not an innocuous process. Rather by moving toward a more expansive notion of mobility that also considers other forms of mobility allows scholars to enlarge the foci of study as well as its

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<sup>11</sup> *Ummah* is the Arabic word for “community,” distinguished from the word *Sha’b* for nation with common ancestry or geography. For Muslims, it can be used to refer to a community within a specific mosque, within a geographic area, and a global sense of community amongst Muslims (Grewal 2014).

implications.

Finally, Rockefeller's (2011) critique of 'global flows' as a word suggestive of radical newness and simultaneously innocent clearly can befall the use of 'transnational' as well, especially since it has been lauded for its 'rebellion' against global capital and the nation-state, somehow subverting the hegemony of international and multinational actors (see Ahmed 2011). Lest we forget that the same sociohistorical moment that allows such scholarly approaches to become popular is also when we see "international fiscal, financial, and developmental agencies and organizations [become] increasingly interested in the transformative power of international labor migration in sending societies" (Ibid.18). While a laudatory approach to 'transnationalism' may minimize the role of the nation-state and its infrastructures (by way of legal documentation, border police, etc.) in controlling migration, transnational scholars concede that "state policies still matter" (Levitt et al. 2003:568). It is notable that for Muslim youth in-migrants, the centrality of nation-based migration policing and surveillance was never open to question.<sup>12</sup> Researchers must find a way to neither begin with the nation-state as assumption nor completely dismiss it as a significant site by which to understand what enables or delimits migration. Rather we must mind the ways that infrastructural and structural formations play a role in transnational cultural formations as we ethnographically consider the inter-subjective complexity of contemporary social life (Tsing 2005; Stoller 2015). At the same time, I posit that multivalent mobility is subject to these critiques of transnationalism unless an effort is made to understand the structurally-situated possibilities and constraints that individuals experience.

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<sup>12</sup> See Rana (2011) for extensive discussion on how Pakistani Muslims have encountered the racial exclusionary politics of immigration policy and practice.

*Exploring the Relationship between Mobility and Modernity*

German sociologists Kesserling and Vogl (2004) have described this scholarly dependency on the nation-state as inextricably linked to the concept of the “first” modernity and that the “reference point of theories of (first) modernity is the nation-state institutional and affirmative formation” (Ibid. p. 2). The question that arises, is how we step outside of this notion of (first) modernity to take into account what Gaonkar (1999) describes as ‘alternative modernities’ or Sivaramakrishnan and Agarwal’s (2003) notion of ‘regional modernities’. In order to reflect both the social particularities of twenty-first century globalization and the recognition that different subjective experiences actively reshape the very nature of globalization and its distribution across space and time, one possible solution is a theory on reflexive modernization defined as “a process of unexpected, unseen and unwanted transformations of the general conditions of modern societies” (Kesserling & Vogl 2004: 2). This theory focuses on alternative futures and crucially offers the insight that modernity is a transformative phenomenon that can change from the first to a second (reflexive) modernity, the later seen as an era of instability, insecurity, and uncertainty (Ibid.). Manifestations of this epoch pervade our current social, political, and economic climate—the ever-growing War on Terror and the recent report of US drone attacks in 14 different countries, the inescapable ramifications of climate change on resource allocation and access, the devastating effects of environmental disasters distributed unequally along race and class, and the like. The authors argue that along with the emergence of this second modernity, there are structural changes to mobility (Ibid.). While ‘modern mobility’ is conceptualized by the state, and even social science researchers, as a process with an origin, directional movement, and a destination, it contrasts with a ‘reflexive mobility’ that may be non-directional and where actors are faced with unfortunate delays, breaks, and discontinuities. By understanding how ‘modernity’ in its multiple formulations emerges as one metasemiotic framework through which social

practices are evaluated, we can consider how mobility as laminated construction can allow us to better understand how multivalent mobilities, some of which are seen as ‘modern,’ are emplaced in contemporary socio-historical processes and how actors then imagine, or do not imagine, their own future mobilities.

The influence of a ‘modernizing’ notion on previous studies of migration is evident in a number of ways. For example, we can consider the emphasis on social networks as a methodological approach to studying migration processes. This emphasis on one’s social/kinship network stemmed from the particular kind of migration under study, that of largely working-class subjects from the Global South to Europe and North America. Although this emphasis nullified modernization theory’s assumption that ethnic and tribal affiliations would disappear as laborers migrated to urban centers, it also reified a teleological presupposition of rural-urban migration in which the focus of movement is from the rural to the urban and, by extension when we take multivalency into account, from a ‘less’ modern place to a ‘more’ modern place. In social network studies, it was assumed that the immigrants would join segments of the informal economy in the ethnic enclaves of the receiving country (Castells and Portes 1989; Portes 1994). Scholars emphasized economic rationalizations as the impetus for migration (Sassen 1994; Arango 2004); and it was assumed that returnee migrants would bring greater development and innovation back to the rural (Kearney 1995). Within these theoretical models, the nation-state remained a consistent and stable category to understand internal and external nation-based migration and also presupposed a singular framework of modernity, which is problematic when an analyst sees specific places as less modernized, i.e. less modern and imposes this on their reading of ethnographic data. On the other hand, these ideological views of just what is deemed ‘too modern’ for someone from Jhang versus for someone in Lahore is central to how mobility

imaginaries are constructed and circulated by my participants.

For another example of how a ‘modern’ notion of mobility has influenced migration studies, I turn to the study of diaspora and diasporic cultures. While the diaspora certainly destabilizes nation-centric constructs, in other ways it has the tendency to be interpreted as place-bound. This may have been truer in the past, but with the increasing degree of accessibility to media, particularly digital media, we can no longer consider any individuals, neither those who have never migrated nor those who have migrated years earlier, as bound to a singular place. Scholars have long observed that diasporic communities resist the singularity of place-based locations<sup>13</sup>, and scholarship on South Asian diaspora is marked by its broad geographic reach across countries and continents (Bald 2013; Eisenlohr 2006). Because ‘diaspora’ historically implied a permanent disconnect between the ‘homeland’ and host country, the term ‘diasporic returnee’ is often used to describe migrants who have found their way back, temporarily or permanently, to the homeland (Dattatreyan 2014; Tsuda 2004). Oftentimes this returnee is seen as more cosmopolitan and more ‘modern’ compared to the cousin who never moved. I offer these diaspora descriptions as indexical of how historical and geographic rootedness/placed-ness has impacted the study of diaspora but also to foreground how themes of flight and transcendence, both relevant to the study of South Asian diasporas, are analyzed in recent anthropological studies that explore transnational creations of blackness within African diasporas (Thomas 2011; Yelvington 2001). As Maikki argues: “The metaphorical concept of having roots involves intimate linkages between people and place-linkages that are increasingly recognized in anthropology as areas to be

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<sup>13</sup> Postcolonial theorist Sandhya Shukla (2003) offers Paul Gilroy’s (1991) use of the term the “changing same” to understand the way that South Asian diasporic cultural practices, similar to black culture and blackness, espouse a South Asianness that is at once identifiable but also contextually situated in a specific locale.

denatured and explored afresh” (1995: 52). Similarly, for the South Asian diasporic youth, we must explore their experience of being ‘from’ Pakistan but also moving voluntarily and formulating their own conceptions of community that are both locale-specific but globally inflected.

For this participant population, vertical mobility must be complicated. Rana (2011) explains that a Pakistani worker’s migration abroad may allow for a middle-class ethos when he/she is at ‘home’, but the worker’s status, salary, and position in the global economy indexes a reading of belonging to a temporary working class. Thus “The complex notion of a transnational class depends largely on location, position, and social identity” (Ibid. 14). For migrant college students, I found similar disparities between the home, whether home is the ancestral home/village in Pakistan or one’s parental home, and the college environment. At home, they are perceived as more cosmopolitan, but at the urban campus, they would be seen as somehow deficient in cultural and linguistic competencies. The question then is not so much *who* is cosmopolitan, but *when*, and thus a question of *which* metasemiotic framework is being deployed by the one engaged in *construing* the specific behavior, not necessarily the one engaging in the behavior. Converting such social, linguistic, and cultural capital into economic forms is constitutive of a highly sought after form of vertical mobility, or what Werbner (1999), in the context of Pakistani working-class migration, has called a cosmopolitan attitude. “Such cosmopolitanism implies the possibility of assuming multiple positions in contradictory circumstances, a worldliness that shows how multiple life worlds are imagined and constructed” (Rana 2011:14). In the next two sections, I explore how such seemingly contradictory metasemiotic frameworks collide in students’ lifeworlds and how they navigate such uncertain terrain.

*Methodological Prejudice and Implications for South Asian Studies*

Before turning to part three, I wish to elucidate the effects of the modernity nation-state and the attendant methodological prejudice to the study of social life concerning individuals from the geographic territory known as Pakistan. Since Pakistan is geographically situated lateral to India and Bangladesh on the Indian Subcontinent, it is often referred to as part of South Asia. ‘South Asia’ as a regional concept has been dominated by a hegemonic ‘India’, where ‘South Asia’ and ‘India’ become synonymous (Rana 2011). While “India is celebrated as a vital democracy and growth economy that is a global competitor, Pakistan is thought of as a failed state with nuclear capabilities constantly on the brink of running amok” (Ibid. p. 6). In this conception, India represents Bollywood and technology while Pakistan signifies terror and trouble (Gopinath 2005). In fact, Pakistan has become increasingly read as part of the ‘Middle East’ due to the alignment between it as a Muslim nation and the Muslim-dominant nations to its east. Furthering the destructive effect of this conceptualization of scholarship on Pakistan, Caron and Ahmad (2015) have argued that scholarly knowledge production about South Asia has been focused around an Indian nation-state-insularity that has been detrimental for studies about Pakistan and Afghanistan. Following these critiques, my methodological framework focuses on the social processes and impact of multivalent mobilities in the lives of college in-migrant youth that all find a geographic point of origin in the territory delineated as Pakistan on most world maps<sup>14</sup>. Thus while participants may share many cultural, religious, and linguistic practices, for most of them, what ‘Pakistan’ means remains a contested topic, i.e. how does it connect to India and/or to

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<sup>14</sup> I acknowledge the disputed territory of Jammu/Kashmir poses a challenge to this definition. Although none of my interlocutors were from that territory, the nation-state boundaries of Pakistan and India pose a real and at times problematic challenge to residents of Jammu/Kashmir. The disputed boundary lines have been contested since the postcolonial division of the subcontinent with implications that are still affecting people’s lives to the present date.



Afghanistan, how do non-Urdu speakers fit in, how does gender limit mobility aspirations in a patriarchal cultural context, et cetera. In NYC, this was further confounded for Noreen, whose mother was born in Pakistan and whose father was India-born, and she often had to ‘choose a side’ when discussing her sense of self with other Pakistani youth, later discussed in detail in chapter 5. It was even more so problematic for Sadiq, another NYC participant, who, as an undocumented immigrant, was positioned outside of the American and Pakistan state apparatuses. In Pakistan, students whose family homes were located in Pakistan’s western region were often near the bombings, drone attacks, and extremist violence of the region. These students did not experience a ‘Pakistan’ that is easily located or contained; yet there were similar metasemiotic frameworks they drew from as they envisioned their present and future selves. These questions should not be interpreted to ask what ‘Pakistan’ means to them, but rather inquiries about how they themselves belong to emblematic self-positioning in relation to others, whether this is distant relatives, future life partners, or even public media figures.

In Van Schendel’s (2002) critique of ‘area’ studies, he posits three principal ways of understanding the term: area as a place (for the residents), area as a site of knowledge production (for social scientists), and area as a career machine. For academics, the tensions and frictions of social life for those from ‘Pakistan’ have arguably determined the comparably shorter trajectory of rigorous social analysis and theorization about social phenomena linked to the geographic territory in western South Asia. Of the limited number of ethnographic studies of social life in Pakistan, Marsden’s (2008) work with Chitrali Muslims stands out for its investigation into the transregional forms of mobility that allow us to see identity “imaginings” beyond the national, subnational, or ethnic. He builds on Pelkman’s (2002) call to “move beyond the discussion of whether borders are best defined in terms of fluidity or rigidity and examine how these aspects

are ultimately connected” (2002, cited in Marsden 2006:13), resonating with Jackson’s (2013) call for a flat ethnography. This move to see what kinds of open-ended subject-making emerge from migration, whether it is rural-rural, rural-urban, and transnational movements, is productive considering the multiple scales of real and imagined migratory trajectories with which this dissertation is concerned. Van Schendel (2002) encourages scholars to “jump scale” and to develop new concepts of regional space that reorganizes places and spaces to allow for greater analytic possibilities. Following this proposition, this dissertation, concerned with Pakistani-origin college youth, jumps scale to consider how a view of mobilities can elucidate processes of real and imagined movements and the modernities they evince.

### **Section 3: Framing the Gendered Experiences of Mobile Pakistani-origin Youth**

Studies on migration for Pakistani-origin subjects have focused on primarily male workers from working-class or middle-class backgrounds moving to New York City (Ahmad 2011; Rana 2011; and for migration to Dubai, see Vora 2008). In Pakistan, male workers have been the target population with regards to the creation of transnational labor markets (Rana 2011). While female transnational workers have been a motivating factor for changing domestic economies as well as family systems in India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, Pakistani officials oppose these migration trends by offering counter examples of the abuse of women. This is justified by a need to “protect the honor of Pakistani women” (Ibid. 111). In this sense, labor migration for women in Pakistan is understood as feasible only for middle-class, professional standing women, not for those from working class backgrounds. In this study, the college youth I am concerned with are coming from working class backgrounds and aspiring to join the middle-class. The young women face similar metasemiotic frameworks about female migration that depend on a patriarchal mindset regarding

the protection of Pakistani females.

Due to the limitations of transnational migration for Pakistani females, rarely do studies on Pakistan-origin migration engage with both male and female subjects, particularly for youth populations. In this search for a “more expansive notion of diaspora as a phenomenon that exceeds any causal link to travel, movement, or displacement” (Campt and Thomas 2008:2), we must be careful to not privilege the male subject as the primary agent in diasporic formation. Scholars have yet to fully investigate the ways that gender norms and cultural expectations shape educational and professional aspirations for Muslim female and male social personae. To address these under-explored themes, this analysis focuses on the gendered aspects of Pakistani youth mobilities in university spaces and in online social media spaces, and explores how their future aspirations are always gendered. While earlier globalization and migration scholarship tends to reify binary notions of home/host or displacement/homeland, such binary frameworks have long privileged the migration and experience of male subjects as the primary agents in diasporic formation. However, if attention is paid to how gender constructs the migrant experience for both men and women, it is possible to understand how metasemiotic frameworks of patriarchy and accompanying models of social norms are intimately connected to the gendered nature of transnational migration. In my ethnographic research, I observed that gender was a central organizing principle through which a Pakistan-origin Muslim youth subjecthood is constructed. What the female student should or should not do or the expectations on a male student by his family or university were salient discussion topics by which future aspirations took shape. In both rural and urban contexts, Pakistan has been described as a patriarchal society where “women are treated as chattels, ‘given’ or ‘acquired’ through arranged marriages, to spend their lives in the service of male-dominated social system” (Alvi 1991:125). This rather damning perspective

underlies a social structure that impacts male and female college youth and their aspirations. By emphasizing an approach that focuses on students' mobilities, we can consider how their mobilities are affected, and sometimes rendered immobile, due to conflicting metasemiotic frameworks in the form of patriarchal norms, Muslim familial expectations, and academic/professional expectations.

For the in-migrants I worked with, while they hoped/planned/strategized to acquire an education that would propel their personal and professional aspirations, the question of where one will ultimately live was often left unanswered, uncertain, to be decided at a later date. This question may be answered after completing their education when most of the girls were expected to get married, or perhaps after receiving their first job offer. Horizontal mobility was intimately related to projections of vertical mobility, but always with several contingency plans in place. In other words, it is not a neat unidirectional process, where moving to get an education would correspond to completing the degree program and finding a well-paying job. For example, once Zara completes her law degree, she aspires to apply for a master's program through the Fulbright program or the Commonwealth scholarship program. She plans to focus on tax law but acknowledges that her application may be read more favorably if she focuses on human rights law. Her lateral mobile migratory movements from Jhang to Lahore and a potential move to the US or UK are directly linked to aspirations of vertical mobility. At the same time, she has argued with her mother and uncle to delay her own marriage—a social and familial expectation—in favor of pursuing higher education. For many female Pakistani in-migrants, marriage looms as the main alternative to academic endeavors, as discussed in the introduction. For another participant, Tasneem, her family moved from a village in Punjab to New York City where she has studied speech pathology. She is engaged to her first cousin who lives in the UK and following

her wedding in 2017, to be held in their ancestral village, Tasneem will move in with her future husband and mother-in-law/maternal aunt. Her horizontal mobility is also linked to multiple social mobilities, where becoming a married woman will alter her status in the family as well as her financial status. Tasneem is also majoring in speech pathology, but in one of her last conversations, she expressed a concern of whether her training and internship for speech pathology in American will translate to employment in London. For Zara, Tasneem, and other students, future mobilities remain uncertain, and this uncertainty is culturally organized and with historically-laden narratives about women's role in society.

*Drawing Parallels between Mediatized Pakistani Patriarchal Culture and Participant Narratives*

I observed these narratives about education and gender roles in the visual/filmic artifacts that participants shared with each other on online social networks. For example, one popular social media entertainer, Zaid Ali Tahir, or Zaid Ali T as he is known online, is part of a group of Pakistani-Canadians who create short (2-4 minute) films, and then share their media objects prolifically on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and elsewhere. I came across one such film titled "Failing exams (Brown guys vs. brown girls)". This video begins with the caption: "When a guy fails exams." We then see a young Pakistani man sitting on a dirt pathway in front of green grass, wearing a white t-shirt with small holes and brown stains, a red cloth draped over his shoulder. There are several men's dress shoes to the right of his body with assorted shoe polish containers and brushes. Appearing as a shoeshine boy, he loudly advertises his services in Urdu: "For 5 rupees, get your boots polished. Brother, for 5 rupees, I'll polish your boots. I haven't eaten in two days." Notably he uses a reference to Pakistani currency in the statement. This is followed by another all-black screen and the following words: "When a girl fails exams."

In this clip, Zaid plays the role of a girl, despite his patchy black beard.



Figure 1 Screenshot from Zaid AliT Youtube Video

As a Pakistani girl, he wears a bright, red *dupatta* on his head and a red *kurta*, or loose tunic-style shirt, covered by black and gold embroidery at the neckline. He sits on a black leather couch in front of a beige wall. Someone outside of the frame tosses red flower petals while a wedding song is editing into the film. “*Mubarak ho tumko! Yeh shaadi tumhari...*” [May your wedding be blessed]. Zaid’s facial expression is not fully celebratory in contrast to the song, indexing a tension in the scene. Although the video’s title has ‘Brown’, as a racialized category that subsumes anyone from South Asia, Zaid’s identity as a Pakistani-Canadian is evinced by the Urdu used in the video as well as the reference to Pakistani currency. In such widely-shared online videos, the gendered obligations of Brown, i.e. South Asian-origin, youth who do not perform well on academic exams are parodied as a type of mocking critique. And yet, this parody reflects an understanding of how gendered roles with regards to academic success, or lack thereof, are understood by Pakistani-origin college youth. In another video made by Zaid Ali T, titled “Brown Girl vs. Brown Guys” and viewed over three million times, Zaid and another social media entertainer, Lilly Singh, argue over who has a more difficult time with regards to family

expectations and gendered norms. The narrative flows where Zaid ‘complains’ all the ways that he is unable to decide his own career (he can only be a “doctor, engineer, or lawyer) to which Lilly retorts that her future is about getting married and having babies, even though she has a degree in psychology. The parody continues for four minutes with each trying to ‘one up’ the other about whether brown girls or boys have a more restrictions given by their families. In the comment section, viewers offer thousands of comments in the form of critique and praise to the mediamakers. These comments and the circulation of these videos by study participants collectively formulate a set of gender-based narratives regarding Pakistani-origin youth and their mobility trajectories.

The young women (and men) in this study are aware that while they are studying in colleges, they are also expected to balance their individual mobility trajectories with gendered kin-based social expectations. For example, when Zara is worried about being seen as ‘too’ modern, there is a fear of her becoming too different from the women back in Jhang, that she assuages by changing her clothes into looser fitting, i.e. more modest, and veiled attire. For Noreen, she explains that, contrary to the dominant stereotype of Muslim woman defined by her hijab, she does not privilege her hijab as central to her Muslim identity, but rather draws from multiple imaginaries, including those ‘back home’ and those in her college’s MSA community. And yet, the notion of *hayaa*, or respect, is significant for how she dresses herself. Across multiple participant frameworks in Lahore and New York City, each student is conscious of disciplining her wardrobe such that they fall within the gendered expectations. Their wardrobe is a single marker constitutive of a larger set of expectations that reify and validate a patriarchal set of norms, where young women are expected to get married to a partner chosen by her family, and young men are expected to find gainful employment while still supporting their parents, getting married once

they are able to support a family. For female participants, their mobility trajectories are impacted by expectations to marry; while for male participants, they are expected to become independent earners. This metasemiotic framework is organized around a patriarchal home structure where men have particular roles to earn and financially care for the family while women are expected to produce offspring and care for the home. This metasemiotic framework can be foundational but may provide a foil to the frameworks encountered by mobile subject in the university space. In the following chapters, I explore how students' multivalent mobilities negotiate and adapt differentially across multiple metasemiotic frameworks. For participants, their overlapping subjectivities as first generation college students, as Muslim youth, as gendered youth with Pakistani heritage collectively constitute a Pakistani-origin, Muslim, college youth formation, but one that is not place-based in the traditional sense. Instead as the coeducational, English-medium American-style college campuses provides one site where they navigate self-making projects when confronted with lifestyles and cultural norms that were markedly unfamiliar to their pre-college lives.

#### **Section 4: Social Types as Mobility Models of Personhood**

In the process of exploring these social types observed within and through the university, it is important to acknowledge how institutions of higher education are viewed as a mechanism of change for the individual and society writ large. If particular social types and stereotypes are used to describe individuals within this space, it follows that the space itself may have an influence on how these types becomes tokenized. The university's transformative potential reflects a modernizing discourse where increased academic and professional competencies are linked to better job prospects and a pathway to economic progress for the individual. For participants in



Pakistan, an English-medium college degree ensures that they will learn linguistic and cultural competencies to become more competitive job-seekers. In New York City, a degree signifies potential white-collar jobs for first generation college graduates. In her ethnographic work in urban Lahore, Maqsood (2013) observes the high value on college and university degrees for Pakistanis as they offer an opportunity for middle class and upwardly mobile Pakistanis to respond to popular representations of them as ‘uneducated’ or ‘irrational.’ Participants from rural backgrounds imagine (and hope) that an English-medium college degree will allow them to find more lucrative employment prospects but also to appear more sophisticated. To appear less ‘backwards’, as one participant describes it, is partially the point. For Lahore participants, this can come in the form of better competence in English, taking on urban fashion styles, or expanding one’s friends circle to the opposite sex. In NYC, students would draw on these social types to justify or explain their actions such as wearing *shalwar kameez* to campus, even if they are the only ones on campus wearing it, i.e. “I’m just desi like that.” These circulating social types take on added social meanings based on the urban, educational space. Such an idealized impression of education and its mobility possibilities aligns however incongruently with the education offered at colleges and universities in both American and Pakistani universities, which are driven by neoliberal ideologies to provide professional training to students to become the ideal neoliberal subject, i.e. ‘calculative individuals’ who can succeed in an international job market (Vora 2008:159). And so while rural-origin participants are engaged in a modernizing project by moving to an urban center to acquire a degree, they are simultaneously engaged in the neoliberal subject-making enterprise of the university. There students are prepared for competitive present and future job markets that would allow them to overcome the challenges and obstacles they face as minority Muslim youth from working class backgrounds. These two subject-making projects are mediatized by and within the university for Pakistani-origin college youth.

In the vignette offered at the start of the chapter, the category of “modern”, colloquially pronounced by Urdu-speakers as *mAdurn*, indexes a model of personhood that may be more urban, less religious, and less traditionally ‘Pakistani’ (where traditional is seen as less urban and more conservative Muslim). Students, like Zara and the other research participants, who moved from rural locales to an urban center can feel expectations to perform multiple identities depending on the audience, to become modern in the college environment and less modern in a familial space. As Zara declared, “For different people, you have a different identity. [*Har aik ke liye aapki different identity hothi hai*]” This nuanced understanding of how people enact particular behaviors and diverse social personae based on the situation reflects Agha’s assertion that once a figure of personhood is abstracted from performance, “its existence and characteristics may be debated, discussed, considered, and re-considered” (2011a: 173). The possibilities of becoming/being ‘modern,’ ‘too modern,’ or not modern enough, were common discussion topics among my interlocutors. In this section, I interrogate these social categories to consider how notions of being ‘modern’ overlap with mobility trajectories between rural, urban, and cosmopolitan spaces.

The social categories in question are differentiated along an axis of being/not being *madurn*.

Other renderings of these categories are observed through terms like ‘desi’,<sup>15</sup> ‘paindu’,<sup>16</sup> ‘burger’,

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<sup>15</sup> ‘*Desi*’ is based on the Sanskrit stem word, ‘des’, ‘desh’, or ‘desha’, which refers to ‘country’ broadly speaking, and thus it has become common parlance for speakers of Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati and other languages of South Asia who are genealogically linked to Sanskrit. The (-i) morphological suffix is typically used to describe “person of” blank. Thus ‘des’ with a ‘-i’ can be used as a modifier or a noun. In Pakistan, it can be used to describe the person him/herself as well as an object that can be ‘desi’, like desi food, especially desi ghee, and other artifacts, such as desi clothes and even desi style. In this last set of phrases, the term is phrased with English words and that is representative of its use. Within the English-speaking diaspora, the term is used by South Asians (from Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, or Bangladesh) living

‘bun-kebab,’ ‘brown,’ and others; all of which were used by participants across various settings. “Desi” is used to refer to someone as a ‘person of the country’ where country is loosely South Asia, but can be a reference to rural country. In common parlance, one can refer to food with this term, such as ‘desi ghee’ [butter]. On college campuses, I would hear students in NYC refer to their friend’s outfit as ‘so desi’, i.e. she wore shalwar kameez. Similarly, the term ‘paindu’ is used as an adjective or noun to describe a thing, action, or person as from the *pind*, i.e. village—another way of marking rurality. On the other hand, “burger” could be used to refer to a person who was so removed from all things rural, such as a blogpost about “Karachi burgers” kids at LCU (discussed in chapter four). In its most literal rendering, it referred youth who would rather eat burgers instead of bun-kebabs, choosing the Americanized version of the food type to the Pakistani street food version<sup>17</sup>. In these descriptions, there is a general agreement about a spatially-located identity (the rural versus the urban) and its relationship to class mobility. For example, the burger/bun-kebab distinction rests partially on the fact that burgers, in reference to food, are typically more expensive and eaten in sit-down restaurants, compared to bun-kebabs that are eaten on the go from a roadside stall. These terms are common amongst Pakistani-origin bilingual youth both within and beyond South Asia, and in chapter four, I discuss ethnographic moments when these identity terms were used by participants across the Lahore and NYC

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in the diaspora all over the world (in the US, UK, Australia, South Africa, UAE, etc.). In the Romanized form, the word becomes a marker for a kind of “South-Asian-ness” that can be abstracted and removed from daily social life.

<sup>16</sup> ‘*Paindu*’ is a colloquial Urdu and Punjabi term that references a person or thing from the ‘*pind*’ or village in Punjabi.

<sup>17</sup> As an online Al-Jazeera article (15 Jan 2016) explains about the phenomenon of Pakistan’s ‘burger’ generation, it originated due to a popular eatery in Karachi that was the first of its kind to serve burgers to the Pakistani consumer. The restaurant did not merely bring a new food to Pakistani consumers, but a new kind of fast-food culture. This culture was foreign to many of the early customers had never traveled abroad. Mr. Ashfaq Raza, one of the owners and son of Musa Raza, explains how American fast food consumption included consumption of cultural norms that were ‘seemingly’ foreign to Karachiites. The same college kids felt a new kind of freedom where they could afford the 5 rupee burgers (prices in 1980) and buy a burger for their dates. “Customers began objecting that the teenagers who came to Mr. Burger were behaving in a very ‘Westernised’ [*sic*] way... The kids were sitting too close together, they are holding hands,” Raza recalled. But the restaurateurs encouraged this culture so much so that these Westernized customers were given a name: ‘burgers’.

settings. But most important here is that across these social types, there is a centrality of social class, where for example, a burger as a cosmopolitan type would be assumed to be upper class. In contrast, those types that align with the rural are seen as less economically mobile and ‘located’ in the hinterlands.

This analysis follows Agha’s presupposition that the goal is not to offer an account of what participants are really like, whether they are modern, *madurn*, or not; desi or not; paindu or not. Rather the purpose of raising these figures of personhood is to discuss how they are modeled and maintained by and through “mediatized institutions in contemporary society” (2011a:171). In this study, the university offers a mediatized institution model where these figures of the rural-urban-cosmopolitan axes are evoked, contested, and redefined by youth. Since mediatization links forms of commoditization to forms of communication, the university can be seen as such a site given that students receive an education (communicative practices) by paying tuition fees (commoditization). Additionally, there are other services students partake in, especially scholarship students, where they may not be charged directly, i.e. internet access, library privileges. These “public commodities” appear as if the goods are free but can be paid directly or indirectly, via taxes. College youth also use social media to communicate with college peers—which appears to be free of cost. However, social media is mediatized as a form of “commodities for the producers”, i.e. the Facebook company, where the end-user/student may think of it as ‘free’. In the two videos I analyzed in the previous section, social media becomes an important space for youth to contest and construct gendered and migration-inflected models of personhood, i.e. being ‘brown’, etc. Across these participant frameworks, youth actively negotiate and restructure their multiple subjectivities through fractioned formulations that hinge on the nexus of the rural, the urban, the cosmopolitan.

In Zara's narrative, she linked the semiotic objects of the skinny jeans as part of a 'too modern' ensemble while the *dupatta* and looser, longer shirt signify an appropriate level of modern-ness. In her example, one's outfit offers another mechanism by which to assess one's modernity that is linked to one's mobility. In her research on middle-class Lahori consumer culture, Maqsood (2013) explains that her interlocutors used 'modern' to refer to some kind of 'progress' or 'advancement' and that it generally denoted a positive valuation on such changes over time. In her work, Maqsood draws parallels between her findings on being modern in Lahore and Deeb's (2006) description of modernity among Lebanese Shi'I in Beirut. Being "modern", in Deeb's (2006) estimation, is a comparative valuation that contrasts with some other 'thing/place/act/person' that is not modern, or less modern; and she explains that this comparison indicates two concepts: the idea of progress over time and the value-judgment in being viewed as 'civilized' (ibid. 17). In her ethnography, Deeb examined how Shi'I Muslims consider themselves simultaneously deeply modern, pious, and cosmopolitan and enact these models of personhood through their religious practices. In contrast, this study considers how we may frame the multiple contestations of being 'modern'—too *madurn*, modern, and non-moderns—that play out on college campuses for Pakistani transnational youth through education-based practices. For example, another one of my NYC participants, Maham, claimed that her family was not 'that modern' since they did not allow her to have a boyfriend. Here pre-marital relations with the opposite sex offers an identifiable behavior of a 'modern' model of personhood for Pakistani immigrant families living in America—another mechanism to study multivalent mobilities. Shan, a Hindko-speaking Lahore university student, when reflecting on the transformative process of being a LCU student, remarked that he used to be more 'backward' compared to now. Such comments came up often during conversations where he felt less sophisticated compared to the

majority urban, elite students attending LCU, to be discussed in chapter 4. In Shan's reflection, we see a similarity with the idea of 'modern' as signifying progress over time but his comments also emphasize being modern, or being seen as less backward, as part of some teleological and linear development process with an associated positive value-judgment. In these stories, while the emblems can change, there is a perceivable thing or practice (accent or family expectation) that becomes enregistered, or recognized, as part of a Pakistani-origin youth social persona (cf. Agha 2007).

In later chapters I describe a set of formation-specific repertoires, observed through fashion, language, and social organization. What is key to point out here is that these various utterances by participants are constitutive of the register formation under study, and as such it is historically situated within the American-style university model. The campus becomes a meeting place for students of various rural-based backgrounds to encounter urban, cosmopolitan social types and come to see themselves in contrast to these social types. During fieldwork, it became clear that students in NYC and Lahore were formulating their notions of 'modern' social types based on their experiences as migrants and as minorities at their respective colleges. The students would often explain how their parents hoped that while they sought an education, that they would not forget where they came from or stop practicing their traditions. There was a clear split between parental aspirations for children, where they hoped for economic mobility and even geographic mobility but hoped for a cultural immobility of sorts. For migrant college students, seeking an education on a liberal college campus set the stage for conversations about how to navigate familial expectations while learning in an environment that may not align with their metasemiotic frameworks at home.

## *Conclusion*

As a polymorphic conceptualization, the ways in which mobility asks anthropologists to revitalize our theory-building, especially with regards to primary questions about culture, identity, and migration seems to reproduce the metasemiotic frameworks of ‘nation-state talk’ as folk categories for anthropologists who reproduce them as beliefs about the way ‘reality’ works, while struggling against these same categories, without realizing the state-origo characteristics that overdetermine the ‘talk’ and attendant scholarship. While earlier research on mobility positioned the imagination as external to social practice, I reconsider the imagination, including imagining of the future, as embodied practices of multivalent mobilities that transcend both physical and sociocultural distances. As we move and transcend physical and social distances, we draw on earlier, historically laden imaginaries of our Self and the Other, and of modernity, as well as encounter new imaginaries. An ethnography of encounters, of “engagements across difference”, can elucidate the “interactive and unequal dynamics of power that shape culture making across relationships of difference” (Faier & Rofel 2013: 364). In the following chapters, I draw on a frame of the ‘encounter’ to explore how these multivalent mobilities can be analytically observed in the ethnographic and push the anthropological imagination on what is constitutive of contemporary Muslim youth formations.

### Chapter Three: Migrant Youth Encounters in the University

#### *Arriving at Lahore City University*

Blanketed under a layer of flourishing ivy, the private college's main building's maroon-red brick façade emanates an air of privilege and noteworthiness and can be seen from beyond the black iron gates from where students, faculty, and visitors must enter or exit the Lahore City University [LCU] campus. The red brickwork exterior evokes the architectural aesthetic of the Lahore Fort, or *Shahi Qila*, the historic Mughal citadel in Lahore's old city, the colonial-era government buildings lining the tree-lined Mall Road that runs through the city, and many local red-brick homes and buildings. In a city known for frequent load-shedding,<sup>18</sup> the campus is designed to never completely lose electricity due to its highly advanced water and electrical system with its



*Figure 2 LCU Campus Image taken by Participant*

own generator—an astounding marker of its privilege and resources. Several participants in Lahore had a penchant for photography and frequently used the campus as a canvas for their visual projects, demonstrated by these images of

the campus. Given this sophisticated façade and affluent culture, it is rather ironic that just a few feet outside the gates one encounters a foul-smelling water canal, caused by pollutants from a nearby manufacturing company. This close proximity to environmental pollution echoes the camouflaged systems of social and class inequalities found on campus—where groundskeepers, facilities management, cleaning staff, and cafeteria personnel rarely fraternize with administration, faculty, or students.

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<sup>18</sup> Some days the electricity can be shut off for 10-15 hours.



The university buildings and finely manicured campus are located at the end of the city.

Difficult to get to unless you live in the nearby residential area, home to Lahore’s elite

residences. In fact, the campus address has the phrase “Opposite Sector ‘U’”, oddly positioning

the campus as beyond the housing area but not

fixed place designation of its own—rather opposite to the ‘U’ housing area. The university is described by its admirers as the “Harvard University of Pakistan” (NY Times, 2009). This recognition and valuation for the high-quality of its faculty (most PhD holders from the US, UK, etc.) and English-medium liberal arts education is also critiqued for lack of accessibility to the general public. In a personal conversation with my friend and LCU alumni, she described it as a refuge from the rest of Pakistan. For many of its students and even faculty, the gated university campus becomes a bubble that is separate from the inequalities that lie just beyond the gates.



Figure 3 Street-level view of NYPC

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### *Arriving at NY Public College*

Located in the middle of a bustling metropolitan, the NY Public College (NYPC) is a set of towering edifices connected by skywalks. Inside the gray concrete exterior, students maneuver through a highly urban campus that has a direct, internal escalator leading students from the public subway system directly to the classrooms. The building has group areas for students to linger in before and after classes—a set of color chairs and tables near the library, couches lining each floor next to the classrooms and moving escalators, or anywhere along the windows of the

skywalks as they watch pedestrians and cars whiz beneath them. The buildings are in the midst of some of the most expensive real estate in the city and a few blocks from one of the most popular and well-known public parks in the world. While NYPC college campus was certainly more urban than the LCU residential campus, its proximity to the city meant that students were also cognizant of the stark income disparity between the upper east side campus environment and the nearly two hour commutes they traveled from homes on Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Queens to the Manhattan's east side.

NY Public College, "An Urban Leader in Affordable Higher Education," has been recognized by national ranking organizations as one of the top five best value colleges in the country and President Obama has described it as "one of the best colleges in the country." As one of the more selective public college programs in the city, the NYPC website boasts of its alumni in positions of authority and prestige across New York City. Additionally, it values its diverse student population where more than 50% of its student body is made up of ethnic minority groups.



This chapter focuses on how mobility is facilitated by and through the structures of the university. I began with brief descriptions of the physical campus and its relationship to the local urban environment. While the NYPC is encircled within a metropolis and LCU's comparatively sprawling campus is distanced from the more populated sections of Lahore, both colleges pride themselves for providing a prestigious higher education in an urban metropolis. Within Pakistan and reflecting trends in South Asia more generally, there has been a concerted effort to attract

more foreign direct investments and transnational corporations to Pakistan. In recent history, public and private actors invested heavily in ‘world-class’ higher education institutions, such as LCU, to provide an education that is on par with one that students typically have to go abroad for. Students who attend Pakistan’s elite universities are poised to find an employment future as cosmopolitan, neoliberal subjects with opportunities to travel and work internationally (Lukose 2009; Vora 2008). Similarly, attending one of the best US public colleges allows in-migrant students to aspire for social and economic (vertical) mobility through the future promise of gainful employment, indexing an accompanying financial mobility.

This chapter is divided into three sections, and each section links *mobility* to the university space as a means to understand the particularities of participants’ experience as Pakistani-origin Muslim transnational youth subjects. In section one, I focus on how students inhabit, re-create, and draw boundaries within their particular university spaces; a means by which to understand the university as a space re-created through a process of “transnational place-making”. Section two extends this argument to include the physicalized movements beyond the university that the university facilitates, even as the state is implicated in the structures of the university and therefore constrain the paths upon which students can be mobile. In this section, I am careful to attend to the ways in which youth cultural forms may actually be reinforcing and reinvigorating historically-situated power formations. In section three, I focus specifically on the vertical and horizontal mobilities that are embedded in the aspirations of students in relation to their life histories, showing how where they have come from and how their previous experiences effect what they expect to gain from the university. I use the category of “emerging adulthood” in order to explain how youth metapragmatically formulate their understanding of transnational mobilities. In each, I pay close attention to how mobilities are always gendered, de-limiting how

male and female youth are differentially situated within university spaces and therefore have different “capacities to aspire” (Appadurai 2013).

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### **Section 1: Muslim transnational Place-making on the College Campus**

Globalization and transnational flows have been understood through theoretical frameworks that attempt to break the narrow boundedness of traditional social categories. And yet notions such as ‘hybridity’ are susceptible to same dilemmas of confined categories since the ‘mixing’ that is being indexed is somehow pulling from two separate categories. As Nakassis (2013) lays out, the debate between homogenization versus heterogenization to explain cultural globalization has resolved that globalization neither homogenizes nor heterogenizes. Rather individuals, particularly youth, negotiate ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ and “the sociality which takes place in youth peer groups problematizes the very notion of sameness and difference” on which cultural globalization discourses depend (Ibid. 246). In this study, college youth reorganizes spaces within the American-style English medium university and offer a rubric of global Muslim youth practices that retain and enforce sex-segregation, i.e. forms of veiling/purdah, between male and female students on otherwise co-educational campuses. Along these lines, the next few vignettes explore a notion of a Muslim global youth community-building, that is based on and pulls from a concept of a Muslim community, or *ummah*, but arguably, their understanding and making of an *ummah* is more expansive and less predictable in the university setting than other such community-building efforts. The term *ummah* denotes ‘community’ amongst Muslims (Grewal 2013) and it can refer to a community within a specific mosque, within a geographic area, and a global sense of community among Muslims depending on the degree of deictic selectivity of the denotational schema of the utterance used to refer. The ideological value of a worldwide Muslim

community and the participant's aspiration to create such community standards at their college campus offers an analytic principle to understand their spatial organization practices. Due to the widespread distribution of Muslim youth around the world, and even within this ethnography, it is difficult to see this emergent formation as anything but dispersed and yet there is always an indexing of 'a' Muslim community (at least one) that runs through. This is the reason why the stories told in this chapter are never located in one place, but rather appear to move between locations simply because they are represented through variable deictic anchoring to locate and attend to how linguistic anchoring produces varied social relations with actual or imagined 'others' in the here-and-now of social interaction.

One potential framework to situate these practices that 'move' across locales is found in Marilyn Strathern's comparative work on Melanesians and English peoples. In *Partial Connections*, she argues that in the "English view, persons acquire identity from the places they are at... Places stay, persons move... Classes are fixed, individuals mobile... Moving between locations thus seem like an act of disorientation... the result is felt to be fragmented persons and cultures" (Ibid. 1991: 117). In contrast, Strathern finds that Melanesians 'make the places travel' (Ibid.). Werbner (1999) draws on Strathern's observations in her discussion of transnational routes of the Pakistani diaspora from South Asia through and between the Middle East and Europe, arguing that Pakistanis also make the place travel. Werbner (1999) describes a scene of a Pakistani women wearing a *shalwar kamiz* and walking along a street in an English city. To a British bystander, it may seem that she is flaunting her ethnic identity, and Werbner asserts that the British gaze would view this dress as 'deliberately aggressive'. Instead she argues that such outfits are 'gifts' and the significance of aesthetic home environments arranged according to commercial imports from 'back home' are "one important way of *making places travel*, of making contiguity out of

distant locations” (Ibid. 25, my emphasis). In my subsequent analysis of place-making by Muslim youth on college campuses, I am drawing from this approach to consider how one can make ‘place’ travel in not just discrete physical artifacts, but also spatial organization practices.

With regards to my previous critiques on migration/transnationalism, the methodological bias towards place<sup>19</sup> as rooted may delimit the analytical possibilities of how ‘places’ travel to the university. To reconceptualize from where ‘places’ can travel, I rely on the concept of *multifocality*. Multifocality offers a frame to consider how a transmigrant culture, based in multiple nations and in postcolonies with active migrant and diasporic communities abroad, can arise, exist, and be negotiated within a number of central, yet physically non-connected, places, i.e. multiple foci, that are both within and beyond each nation-state (Morris 2012). Through an emphasis on the partiality of place-making, I argue that the pockets of civil society activity I analyze here, particularly the civil sectors of higher educational spaces, are themselves multifocal pockets of socialization (based on gender, race, class, and generation) and that these multifocal pockets, mediatized education spaces, shape the process of place-making for Muslim youth formations. If we follow Bachelard’s (1994 [1958]) proposition that an experienced house is not an inert box, rather “[i]nhabited space transcends geometrical space,” we can witness how the university, when experienced by in-migrant youth, undergoes a process of being reformulated through the spatiality of students’ activities. The following analysis focuses on how students encounter and inhabit the fieldsites of this ethnography—the informal spaces of the hallways, dorms/hostels, student clubrooms, cafeterias, local eateries, and libraries within the participants’ colleges. As human relationships over distant geographic locations became more visible over the

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<sup>19</sup> In his research on the western Apaches in Arizona, Basso found that earlier historians, such as Spicer, had failed to recognize the Apache historical traditions when recited before. They expected a chronological flow rather than a narrative organized around place (Basso 1996).

20<sup>th</sup> century due to exchanges of capital, labor, and information and due to the resulting coming-into-contiguity of metasemiotic frameworks known to people who have these relationships, it becomes even more necessary to imagine separate spaces/sites as part of a larger Place, or transnational sphere, whose outline is made clear upon closer ethnographic study. And yet such conceptualizations clearly draw on the a priori locations rooted in geographic places, i.e. Werbner's notion of how 'places travel,' which is arguably problematic both as metaphor and as ethnographic theory<sup>20</sup>. In the following vignettes, I examine how young college Muslims' practices have altered the way these spaces are organized and experienced through a process of ummah-making, as one characteristic of a Pakistan-origin, Muslim youth formation.

*Vignette 1: Gendered Space in an NYPC Extracurricular Club*

In my original research plan, I had thought I would conduct fieldwork with students in the student club called, the South Asian Cultural Club (SACC). At NYPC, each club, of a certain size, applies for a clubroom space on campus. When I visited during preliminary fieldwork, I had the impression that the club was a pluralistic space where students of different South Asian origins worked together to build solidarity and community based on a common regional heritage. The SACC clubroom had three large flags displayed prominently on their walls: a Bangladeshi flag, a Pakistani flag, and an Indian flag. Also, the president of the Pakistan Club portion of SACC was a Sikh Indian-American girl whose family's ancestral village was in modern-day Pakistan's territory. It appeared that 'Pakistan' itself was being redefined by club members—a seemingly ideal site for ethnographic inquiry on the migration experience for South-Asian American college

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<sup>20</sup> Although Werbner's notion of 'places that travel' is appealing in that it gives a language to how mobility can be understood, it is premised on the notion of a rootedness regarding 'place' that then 'travels.' Metaphorically it inadvertently reifies the notion of placed-ness that this study seeks to decenter.

students.

As is the case with ethnographic research, I found a different story when I arrived for fieldwork. Rather than providing a space for all South-Asian origin students, I found that most of the Pakistani-origin students felt disconnected from the SACC club's programming since it was focused more on Indian-centric cultural traditions. As part of this India-centrism, SACC's events were often around Hindi Bollywood music, dancing, and intermingling of male and female club members. A major event for SACC was their fall fashion show event where each member would wear their most fabulous South-Asian attire—saris, sherwanis, kurtas, lehngas—and strut their stuff down a red 'carpet' to Bollywood music. This was followed by dance performances and then an open dance floor with the hired deejay for the night. For most of my NYC participants, such cultural practices and non-segregated events were not what they had grown up with, what their families would approve of, and, therefore, what they were comfortable with given their familial constraints and socialization. Tasneem, a NYC college junior, once attended a SACC Diwali party, but once the pictures were shared on social media, she was reprimanded by her family, and specifically by her fiancée. Following this conflict, she resolved to never attend another party event. As she said, it was not worth the trouble. Instead they opted to become members of the Muslim Student Association, or MSA. The MSA had taken the college-provided clubroom and constructed a dividing wall between the male club area and the female club area. On Facebook, the MSA had one open group page and two closed group pages: one group page was for anyone interested in the MSA's activities, another group page exclusively for the MSA brothers, or male members, and a third group exclusively for the MSA sisters, or female members. In this way, each of these Facebook group pages offered a way for students to participate in community but was constructed with a sex-segregated social structure in mind, a



digital divide of sorts but marked differently from the well-known definition<sup>21</sup>.

Within the anthropology of Muslim societies and South Asian culture, such practices of sex-segregation, or sex- and gender-based notions of propriety and piety in public spaces, here educational spaces, have been connected to the historic notion of *purdah* or veiling in South Asian Muslim homes, schools, and public spaces, discussed at length in chapter five. At many mosques, Islamic community centers, and Islamic schools in the US and across public spaces in Pakistan, one will still find men and women, even boys and girls, separated according to sex. Within the MSA clubroom in NYC, the students were spatially separated according to sex as was their social media “places”. During club meetings, the MSA would reserve a classroom on campus, which were not designed to be segregated—just 30 or so desks distributed in an empty room. But once MSA students arrived, they would separate the desks in a male student side and a female student side, creating sex segregation that was in line with their clubroom practices. When I visited my female students at their family homes, I would spend time with them in their personal bedrooms, away from the men in the house who would be in the main living spaces--TV rooms, dining areas, et cetera. In Lahore, I was able to visit the female students in their hostels but was unable to visit the male students since the hostels enforced strict sex-segregation. Both universities espouse liberal, progressive values but the spatial organization of the educational spaces either by students themselves, as in NYC, or by the university, as in Lahore, were organized around sex-segregation. In NYC, this was marked even more so when they invited Islamic scholars to speak at the college for MSA club events. To enter the auditorium, the male MSA members entered at the main entrance. For female MSA members, there were taped signs

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<sup>21</sup> The digital divide is understood as the gulf between those who have access to the internet and computers, and those who do not.

asking them to enter from the auditorium's upper level entrance by taking the stairs to the next floor level. Through these strategies, students enforced a practice of veiling and separation within the college space.

*Vignette 2: PDA Stuff at LCU*

To further explore how a focus on mobility across towns and cities can further anthropological insights, we return to the ethnographic moments when migrant students are forced to reckon with cultural contrasts between their homes and very different university contexts. First to understand the cultural specificities of city-origin, ethno-linguistic heritage, and its effect on student cultural groupings, we can consider how gender socialization in different cities culminated in the sex-segregated social groups during the participants' freshman year. Many of the Karachi-origin students attended co-educational secondary schools while students from Lahore and other cities in the Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa attended either all-boys or all-girls schools throughout their primary and secondary schooling. Zahid and other male students in Lahore often discussed the experience of being an ethnic minority student in the urban co-educational college environment. For the female transmigrant students in Lahore, it seemed that a male-dominant campus was a foregone conclusion. Such gender socialization differences appeared especially prominent during the first year of college when students would align themselves with students of their own sex and city origin. In the first few weeks of fieldwork, I met several participants attending the university on full scholarships.

Zulfiqar, Shahid, and Haroon arrived in my small, windowless office (previously a storage closet) and sat opposite my desk in three wooden chairs. During this initial conversation, I learned that

all three boys had grown up in Sargodha, a small city about 170 kilometers northwest of Lahore. They explained how they had a network of fellow students from Sargodha that had supported their transition to the university. Zulfiqar attended the army school while Haroon and Shahid attended a branch of Punjab Group of Colleges, a private college consortium in Pakistan. In these less urban settings, the boys explained that while female students had been present in classes, there was little interaction between boys and girls during class time and certainly not outside of class time. They arrived at the university without having much interaction with female students and certainly unfamiliar with heterosexual non-platonic relationships which may explain why Shahid and Zulfiqar both remarked on seeing male-female couples giving public displays of affection on campus as ‘shocking.’

*Interview with Shahid [March 3, 2013]*

- 1 S: Last week I went for my jumma prayer. And then I saw, in front of the masjid, a boy and a  
2 girl doing something. So that was quite shocking.  
3 M: What were they doing?  
4 S: I can't really tell.  
5 M: (giggling)  
6 S: (giggling)  
7 M: Were they like? (giggle) Were they like touching?  
8 S: You know.  
9 M: Were they just talking?  
10 S: No, no. If it was all about talking, then why would I be shocked?  
11 M: So like inappropriate for campus.  
12 S: Yeah. Inappropriate, like PDA stuff.  
13 M: Ok, ok.  
14 S: PDA stuff.

Shahid's giggling and vague comments in line 8 and 12 demonstrate how he avoided the topic while still trying to make sure I understood what kind of inappropriate touching he encountered. Zulfiqar shared a similar story about one of his first few weeks on campus and encountering a boy-girl couple sitting on a bench on the backside of the campus canteen area. While he walked by them, he saw they were taking a selfie of themselves kissing. Before arriving at college, his family and friends had been concerned that he would fall under questionable moral influences

including intermingling with the opposite sex. There was no mention of being careful about intermingling with the same sex. Both boys felt these behaviors were problematic and in the case of Shahid, he resisted using more specific language to describe the touching he saw. We never got to the bottom of what exactly they were doing because Shahid was visibly and linguistically uncomfortable explaining the degree of physical impropriety he encountered. His avoidance strategies allowed a knowing of what happened without an interrogation of what kind of PDA stuff actually occurred, a kind of concealment strategy.

For participants in both urban locales, Muslim and Pakistani-cultural practices of sex-segregation and veiling remain deeply embedded in how they organized spaces in their home and college spaces. Sometimes these spatial organizations were based on college guidelines, as in the case of Lahore college hostels, but they could also be based on students' own choices. In Alvi's (2013) discussion on veiling practices in Pakistan's Punjab "Concealment and Revealment: The Muslim Veil in Context," she argues several key discussion points to contextualize Muslim veiling practices, i.e. purdah, sex-segregations, etc. First she argues against the veil/veiling being understood as apart from the particular practice under study; in other words, she insists on seeing veiling as a social practice that must be understood in the context of its occurrence. If events of any cultural form can be discursive to form a set of some kind (Silverstein 2005), I argue that veiling practices on college campuses form an interdiscursive type that can elucidate how veiling has been reformulated for contemporary transnational college youth. Alvi also argues that to understand veiling as primarily a dress code forecloses its location in nonsartorial contexts. She argues that the concept of concealment can demonstrate how the meaning of honor and shame<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> In Abu-Lughod (1986) study, she finds that the veil as a dress code is embedded with ideas of "sexual shame" and concerns Bedouin women in relation to hierarchically superior men.

links to veiling in both sartorial and nonsartorial contexts. Later in this dissertation I discuss sartorial forms of veiling. In this section, I wish to draw attention to the practices of veiling in nonsartorial contexts to unpack how these cultural forms have traveled and are reformulated within the college context, quite a distance from Abu-Lughod's (1986) study of Bedouins and even Alvi's ethnography of Punjabi village life.

Alvi also points that these practices are not limited to female concerns, and throughout my fieldwork, I found that male students would also practice various forms of *purdah* or separation from 'PDA stuff,' from their female peers, or even from me. When male participants would drop by my apartment at LCU, they would stand in the doorway and wait to see if there was another adult in the apartment. For example, if the nanny was home, they may come inside to the sitting room area, but more often than not, they felt uncomfortable coming inside a single woman's apartment. By creating a type that is not specific to sex nor sartorial choices, we can follow how the value of concealment forms a meaning that is "neither isolable to one context nor a privilege of a particular time or place but finds new expressions" across contexts (Alvi 2013: 190). In this sense, for college students, nonsartorial practices of concealment allow them to bring their practices from parental homes and homes of origin into the college context, particularly with regards to extracurricular activities.

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## **Section 2: Tracking Vertical and Horizontal Mobility Trajectories in/through the University**

In their discussion on the transnational lives of students, Suarez-Orozco, et. al. (2011) explain that the very mobility of transnational youth challenges many assumptions of state-based systems of education where emphasis is placed on acculturation, monolingualism, and single-nation citizenship. In her research on the gendered lives of college students in Kerala, India, Lukose (2007) suggests that studies about the lives of transnational students can elucidate how categories of nation, citizen, and immigrant are organized, particularly with respect to their educational lives. In her work on cultural citizenship, Ong (2005) traces how such traditional notions of single-nation citizenship, associated with entitlements depending on membership to a nation-state, are now reorganized due to the ever-shifting landscape of global markets, technologies, and migration. In this new world, rights and protections long associated with the nation-state are disarticulated and rearticulated through elements such as global market interests and transnational development agencies catering to mobile elites and marginalized populations. Within this framework, Muslim-identifying participants of Pakistani-origin, we can adopt Ong's notion of cultural citizenship as "a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (1996:738), where the process of self-making and being-made in the college context can be followed through narratives about transnational students' educational mobilities.

For NYPC students, most students were eligible and received Federal Pell Grants and state aid to low income college students. While this process offers some financial aid, NYC participants would also work as part-time employees across a variety of jobs, including in restaurants, community centers or local mosques, or family businesses. For Sadiq and other undocumented youth in NYC, these state aid programs are unavailable but the new work permit policy offer some financial mobility. For LCU students, the scholarship program offers one avenue to access private institution-based financial resources. For those who go on to apply for Fulbright exchange programs and graduate scholarships and Commonwealth scholarships, development programs from the US and UK defense departments offer another set of resources. These kinds of public and private financial resources for education were available for low-income students in both Lahore and NYC. From these, we see a kind of vertical mobility that is accessible through particular citizenship entitlements. To further understand this mobility, I turn to Ong's rubric for two globalized milieus where one consists of zones of hypergrowth where "citizenship norms and neoliberal values place a premium on self-enterprising actors, regardless of citizenship status," and zones of political exclusion. For this study's participants, they are actively seeking grants, scholarships, and jobs to afford a college education while simultaneously positioned within displaced, undocumented, and often surveilled populations. From another mobility point of view, participants might begin in zones of exclusion and through strategic means, found through the university apparatus, aspire to enter zones of hypergrowth. "Rights and entitlements once associated with citizens are becoming dispersed among populations who can include non-citizens. Furthermore, the difference between having and not having citizenship is becoming blurred as the territorialization of entitlements is increasingly made in spaces beyond the state" (Ong 2005: 24). In this way, Ong's theoretical reconfiguration of citizenship allows us to revisit the mobilities and multiple forms of citizenship available to Pakistani-origin college youth. Students in Lahore may otherwise be considered non-citizens of the US state and certainly are positioned on the

peripheries of the Pakistani state, while those in NYC who are seen as potential targets for counter-terrorism programs and policies. For these youth, graduated forms of sovereignty are facilitated in part by the sociopolitical resources found through experiences at the college campus space. This emergent form of precarious citizenship position Muslim youth in the interstices of multiple states, institutions, and communities, where their mobility is a constant push and pull as they mobilize sociopolitical, linguistic, cultural, and educational resources and knowledges. While they may aspire to find stable jobs after college, this perception should not place them as simply interested in becoming more ‘modern’ liberal subjects. They are also entrenched in number of political and gendered subjectivities, i.e. practices of concealment and patriarchal expectations from the family, as they strive for greater mobility<sup>23</sup>. While the most common form of mobility is horizontal/physical movements across geographic space, horizontal mobility intersects and is overlaid by aspirations for multivalent vertical mobility, as demonstrated in the stories that follow. Through the narratives of educational journeys for four students, Hira and Zahid in Lahore, and Sadiq and Zainab in New York City, I excavate the motivations, aspirations, and conditions that facilitate and/or delimit mobility as they are mediated by students’ access to and engagements in the university space.

*Vignette 1: Hira*

For scholarship recipients, reaching the LCU campus was a feat of academic success and personal determination, particularly for students coming from rural and distant communities. Hira had grown up in a village near the Siachen border that she describes as about twice the size of the LCU 100-

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<sup>23</sup> While my intention is to offer a view of Muslim college youth practices with regards to veiling and patriarchal cultural frameworks, I also identify when these practices may seem to limit social practice and mobility. Simultaneously students do construct their own practices that create alternative avenues of mobility through these very same practices.



acre campus. Following a massive earthquake in 2005 that killed more than 85,000 people in the region, her family relocated to the more populated city of Skardu where she was able to attend better schools than the village schools. In this more urban school, Hira learned about LCU's scholarship program and the possibilities of studying engineering in Lahore. Her maternal uncle, who had once lived in Lahore, encouraged her to apply for the first part of LCU scholarship program process. LCU's scholarship program application requires a two-year commitment and the first part consists of an exam taken during the first year of 'Intermediate' studies, equivalent to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in the US. Those students who pass are then invited to an all-expense paid, two-week summer coaching session at the LCU campus. Since Skardu is located more than 950 kilometers to north of Lahore and at the base of the Karakoram National Park (the greatest concentration of high mountains on Earth), traveling between Skardu and Lahore is a trek to say the least. Additionally, Hira's family would not allow her to travel alone so her maternal grandfather escorted her to Lahore for the summer session. They took a flight from Skardu to Rawalpindi and then took a five-hour bus ride from Rawalpindi to Lahore. Two weeks later, her brother escorted her back. That fall, Hira took the university's version of the SAT exam in Peshawar, finally Hira learned that she was accepted to LCU on a full scholarship to study engineering. For Hira, the move from her village to Skardu and eventually to Lahore was a lengthy process that demanded immense resources and commitment for her and her family. Her two older brothers have also studied engineering from other colleges in Pakistan, but Hira has moved further away from the original village than anyone else. While we can see these extensive horizontal/geographic mobility movements, these are coupled with vertical mobility in the form of accessing better educational opportunities at each step, several admissions testing to advance beyond, and the financial assistance from LCU.

*Vignette 2: Sadiq*

NYPC students' families had migrated to America a few years before they started college, but while they may be temporarily place-bound, their imaginations are in constant motion, traveling to distant places and times (cf. Salazar 2010). In Sadiq's case, when he was three-years-old, he traveled with his mother and older brother using false passports to join Sadiq's father, then living and working as a taxi driver in New York City. Although he had no memories of living in the village his family came from, Sadiq was raised by his Punjabi-only speaking mother and he was taught not to share his undocumented status in school or with friends. As he neared the end of his senior year, Sadiq knew that his family would not be able to support his college education and that he was also not eligible for federal aid. He started working as a waiter at a Pakistani restaurant in Manhattan that catered to a working class, largely male clientele. In this capacity, the owner took advantage of his citizenship status and paid far below the minimum wage. As an undocumented youth, Sadiq is positioned beyond US federal and state resources given to many of his peers. In 2012, Sadiq was able to acquire a work permit with the assistance of President Obama's policy, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which offered a right to work permit and deferment from deportation. As he began to save money for college, Sadiq chose to study engineering at NYPC. As he explains it:

“It's very easy, especially if you have a degree in engineering. Firms will hire you. I have a lot of friends who have engineering degrees. Even after they got their associates, firms have hired them.”

February 14, 2014

These future employment imaginaries are common amongst most college youth, where studying the 'right' subject might ensure a post-baccalaureate job. While Sadiq has been living in NYC since before he can remember, his horizontal and vertical mobility remains in a precarious

position due to a lack of legal status documentation and the implications of this. As he continues working toward an engineering degree, Sadiq hopes to find a position that will allow him to acquire future financial, legal, and geographic mobility.

*Vignette 3, Part 1: Zahid in Lahore*

I first met Zahid through Ali. Ali had become my unofficial participant-recruiter, especially within the Pashto-speaking male student community. When Zahid, Ali, and other Pashto-speaking youth would meet me for chai after their classes, we often discussed the isolating experience of being an ethnic minority student in the urban Pakistani college environment. In our one-on-one conversations, Zahid and I explored these experiences and the aspirations that led him from his family home in FATA, or Federally Administered Tribal Areas in western Pakistan, to Mardan and finally to Lahore. Historically, FATA residents have moved freely between Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly since they often shared ethnolinguistic identity and histories. Since 2001, this area has become a major battleground for the Pakistan-US coalition war against the Taliban and related terrorist organizations in the area. Zahid's family had personally experienced some of the conflict's effects and the loss of their family property. Although the family had moved to Peshawar in 2001, they were still able to visit. The visits stopped once the Taliban demanded use of the property to house their operations. Subsequently the Pakistani military attacked this now 'enemy' house, which is blanketed by bullets and gunfire. Due to these instabilities, his family no longer visits FATA and is permanently located at their joint family home in Mardan where 60 members of his direct and extended family live together. When I expressed astonishment at this number, Zahid laughed and said "*Pura campus hai humara ghar* [Our home is like a whole campus]." Zahid's segmented journey to Mardan was mostly influenced by regional

instability/extremism and the Pakistani-US coalition's military operations, and this also affected his academic progress. Once in Mardan, he was an average student and after high school, he attended a local engineering college before seeking admission to LCU. Once he learned about the scholarship program in Lahore, he applied in the hopes to study economics and political science, neither particularly in line with his family's wishes. Fortunately for Zahid's own aspirations, he was accepted, and when he moved to Lahore, he became the first in his family to move outside of Pukhtunkhwa for his education. His father, an Islamic studies scholar, feared that Zahid would no longer pray once he moved away. Zahid sheepishly once told me that he was always missing at least two of the day's five prayers. And Zahid like many other college students enjoyed the lack of structure, markedly different from his home environment and even his previous engineering college experience. At LCU, he had an active social life, played soccer on campus, and spent much of his time sitting on the benches facing the campus food hall, smoking cigarettes and doing 'poondi', which is the Punjabi slang term for checking out or watching girls. In this way, Zahid's mobility to Lahore positioned him from a strictly gender-segregated upbringing into a coeducational college campus and a member of an urban Pakistani male youth subculture.

*Vignette 3 Part 2: Zahid in New York City*

After I moved to New York for my second phase of fieldwork, I stayed in touch with many of my participants through Facebook. Through fieldwork in social media, I learned that many of my focal participants had applied for a Fulbright sponsored undergraduate semester exchange program. The description of the US Department of Defense program highlights that it is a 'national' program and highly encourage women, students with disabilities and those from FATA, Gilgit, Pukhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Northern Sindh, Southern Punjab. Echoing this interest

in better representation, the college website describes its needs-based scholarship program, which allowed many of my students to attend the college, as an initiative to create a truly national university. Here ‘national’ is an inclusivity-based invitation to ethnic minorities in international educational programming, which is notable in the way ethnic minorities are differentially situated within the opportunity structures of LCU’s own scholarship program, discussed earlier. Four of my focal students and eight others from the larger student group in Lahore were given fellowships to come to the US as exchange students, including Shaan, Zahid, and Yusuf.

During a short visit to Lahore in 2014, I met some of my participants before they took the Daewoo bus to Islamabad to interview with counselors at the US Embassy, they told me how they try to look as Other, or what Shan called ‘backward’ as possible since it seemed to help their chances of getting the scholarship. Shan and Zahid said that they emphasized their Pashto identity since the program counselors were looking for ethnic minority students. Furthermore, their migration from rural areas in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa to Lahore were indicative of their self-enterprising nature and interest in exploring new opportunities. By mobilizing ethnic difference within Pakistan, they are recognized by the university and by state actors as valuable, worthy of aspiration.

And at the same time, the exchange students from Lahore desired the ability to travel abroad, to be geographically mobile. And the benefit of a 6-month student visa to the US with a full tuition waiver, travel costs, and free accommodations, and an additional monthly stipend facilitated levels of horizontal and vertical mobility they would not have had access to otherwise. They were also very excited to step onto an American liberal arts college campus. Once in the US, Zahid,

Shan and others strategically dealt with their stipend monies. Rather than spend it on eating or shopping, they saved this money to travel during spring break and on holidays, increasing their mobility. Zahid was placed at a small liberal arts college in western Pennsylvania and traveled through NYC on his way to Niagara Falls and Boston. He let me know when he was passing through and we would try to meet somewhere in the city but often to no avail. He was just so busy hanging out and the thought of his 30-year-old researcher friend crashing the party was not too exciting—neither for him nor me. But one day he needed a place to crash and asked if it would be alright to spend the night at my place. As I contemplated the propriety of the situation, I realized that he must really be in a jam to ask and invited him over.

When we met in Lahore, I was married with a three-year-old daughter. Nadine and I lived on campus and most of my participants would often see us together. But what many of them didn't know is that I was recently separated. When Zahid came to my one bedroom Queens apartment, it became quickly obvious that I was no longer married. He asked when I had gotten divorced and I explained that it had been an ongoing process. My marital status became a starting point for a general conversation about marriage and how he hoped to marry an educated girl someday. But he was conflicted about this since most of his family expected him to marry one of his female cousins, as the tradition in the family is. And he went on to explain that marrying cousins was not the issue. For him, he felt that since his female cousins did not have an education, they may not be adequately suited for marriage. His 15-year-old sister was engaged to their 25-year-old cousin and Zahid was tormented by her reality compared to his life. Having attending a coeducational college in Lahore and now living in American college dormitories with both men and women, Zahid no longer felt the same visceral uncomfortability he had when he first arrived at the Lahore college campus. Now the cultural and familial norms seemed unfair and had problematic

implications for his own life and his sisters' lives. Zahid felt that his sister seemed depressed and said sighing, "If it were me, I'd be depressed too."

In Zahid's story, one can sense how disparity between his mobility as a Pakistani male and his sister's lack of mobility bothered him. The family's moralist vision of the future for their male and female children seems to contrast with Zahid's vision, now markedly different. But contrary to an interpretation that may lead us to believe that education made it possible for Zahid to see these gender inequities, he explained that that he had always felt this was unfair, and in the past, when he expressed disagreement with elders regarding marital decisions for the younger girls, they did not take him seriously. "An unserious person does not have credibility," Zahid clarified. He believed that his education and his semester in America would increase perceptions of his seriousness and subsequently his credibility as a man in the family. In order to bring about change, Zahid hoped to use his position as a mobile transnational subject made possible by his experiences and the opportunity structures offered to him due to his gender, his schools' resources, international development projects, etc. Now the very same arguments that he made in the past would have more credibility since the elders might believe him to be a more credible speaker. For Zahid, his mobility trajectory may not only change his own life but may also help counter the gender inequities faced by his female siblings.

#### *Vignette 4: Zainab*

Zainab's father had immigrated to the US through Mexico and, like Sadiq's father, had worked several years as a laborer. He married Zainab's mother, a close relation, and they continued to live apart for several years while she stayed in his ancestral village with his family. Once she

moved to NYC with Zainab in tow, they settled in a house deep in Queens. When it came time for Zainab to go to college, she applied to both NYPC and Stonybrook University, located further inland on Long Island. Zainab wanted to go to Stonybrook's campus, but this would require her to possibly move out of her parental home to the campus. Her father was extremely displeased by this plan and made it perfectly clear that that if she decided on Stonybrook, she would no longer be welcome at his house. He disapproved of daughter living away from the watchful gaze of the parents, a sentiment echoed across other NYPC female students. Within the patriarchal nature of the Pakistani family structure, girls were expected to live at home until they get married. Her father disapproved of moving to an American college campus, particularly since the dormitories are not strictly segregated and male students can visit female students' dorm rooms. Moreover, she was sure that he was uncomfortable with her being exposed to non-Muslim activities, often typical on college campuses, such as drinking alcohol or going to co-ed parties. While it was permissible for Zainab to get an education, it was not permissible for her to move out. Zainab told me she was quite upset about his reaction, but realized that it would cause conflict at home if she pursued this decision. For Zainab's father, his mandate could be seen as partially motivated by fear of how this may affect Zainab's future, specifically the marriage prospects for her and her two younger sisters. Although Zainab's mother was willing to consider this possibility, her father was adamant that she should not. Other students experienced similar challenges when they tried to leave the NYC area for college and all of the NYC students decided to ultimately live at home and commute, for similar reasons. Zainab's mobility as a transnational youth seems to also limit the educational possibilities her family is willing to support.

In these four stories, we can see the complexity of Pakistani-origin, Muslim youth mobilities. Hira and Zahid are both from areas on the margins of the Pakistani state, where their families



have migrated to more populated areas so that the children can access better education. Sadiq's and Zainab's families migrated to the US during a moment of more inclusive immigration policies, but without proper state documentation, Sadiq continues to live on the peripheries of the American state. In their desire to acquire education and enhance their mobility trajectories, each student is also deeply enmeshed in political and gendered subjectivities. For example, Hira, a member of the Shia sect of Islam, understands the precarious position that she, and her family, are in given the increased sectarian and extremist violent attacks targeting Shia Muslims in contemporary Pakistan. At LCU, this manifests in her efforts to not be public or outspoken about her Shia identity. Moreover as a native Balti language speaker, Hira discussed how she felt that her accent and style of dress was seen as culturally and linguistically different, leading her to feel disconnected from her peers, especially during the first two years at college. For Zahid, his Pashto accent and mannerisms position him as culturally outside of the college population. In a later chapter, I discuss Zahid's experience of ethnic intolerance on campus. For these students at LCU, they encountered the campus as outsiders who had to traverse both horizontal mobilities to get there but then also had to navigate the college's social terrain. As an undocumented student in NYC, Sadiq faced a different set of challenges with regards to accessing mobility through the college degree but facing a form of immobility due to his lack of citizenship papers.



### **Section 3: Reformulating Mobility to Examine Youth Formations in Higher Education**

A reformulation of mobility, as multivalent and layered, facilitates a study of an emergent model of Muslim college youth formation. The mobility aspirations emplaced within and facilitated

through higher education elevate the stakes and possibilities for intellectual inquiry and its political significance. Anthropologist Noel Salazar identifies an ‘anthropology of cultural mobilities’ where mobility is understood to be a multivalent category infused with cultural meaning and implications. These cultural meaning/‘facts’ are observable through the metacultural discourses that accompany mobility moves and mobility imaginaries. Mobility imaginaries are defined as “socially shared schemas of cultural interpretation about migratory movements that mediate reality and help form identifications of Self and Other” (Salazar 2010:56). The migration discourses and narratives discussed in the previous section offer a kind of “virtual space-time travel” (Lempert & Perrino 2007) that allows students to narrate aspirational trajectories to the university and beyond. I demonstrate how these journeys are presented through an assemblage of youth syncretic speech practices and embodiment. For most students, the college years are a series of transformative moments, where we think deeply about what we hope to do after graduation, what communities we wish to join, leave, or just continue being a part of, and what kind of world we want to inhabit—all indexical of ever increasing mobility imaginaries.

In the cultural logics of migration, imaginaries play a dominant role in the conceptualization of the ‘green pastures’ on the other side as well as the, often mythologized, memory of origination points (Salazar 2010). According to this theoretical approach, migration is as much about the imaginaries as it is about physical movements. One can say that youth is a particularly definitive moment in our lives where we idealize the possibilities of adulthood. Education offers the space of potentialities where one can imagine futures, that are perhaps different from our pasts. Every college student arrives relatively anonymously onto a campus, opposed to grade school where everyone knows you from an early age; and the campus provides a space for “the creation of and experimentation with, new identities” (Nakassis 2013:8). Furthering the argument for college as a

formational moment for future subjectivities, Mendoza-Denton and Boum (2015) argue for anthropologists to expand the category of youth to consider, what Arnett (2000) describes as, *emerging adulthood*. As Arnett explains that ‘emerging adulthood’ is a time “when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course” (Ibid. 35). This framing of life’s possibilities is by definition central to how college students are positioned—as between an adolescent phase and full adulthood with the responsibilities of a full-time job and marriage—and for the students in this dissertation, the stakes are high.

As this dissertation follows a group of transnational Pakistani college students during this phase of their lives, I am sensitive to how the particularities of many conceptions of a US-based youth identity category might be unsuitable for the purposes of this study. To be sure, Arnett acknowledges that ‘emerging adulthood’ as a generational category is culturally constructed. He explains that in Western industrialized countries the period between 18-25 years of age are marked by a series of demographic transitions. Within these countries, people in their thirties believe that they have reached adulthood while the majority of those between 18 and 25 years of age are still in the process of obtaining education for a future career. The latter are oftentimes unmarried, childless, and still living at home. While Arnett’s framework was developed in the context of a Western industrialized country, ‘emerging’ adulthood allows us to see how transnational Pakistani youth may espouse some of these characteristics while also being developing particular subjectivities that reflect their positioning by state actors as questionable, suspicious, and needing surveillance. This paradoxical position is perhaps why during

conversations with NYPC students they often commented that it is highly likely that they are being surveilled by the NYPD.

For example, during a dinner at Hala's house, Noreen, Hala, and Maria detailed how there was a student on their Muslim Student Association Facebook page who they suspected was a NYPD informant, because he voiced sympathetic sentiments for ISIS and it was common knowledge that one should not do that publicly. They argued that if he was getting away with it, he must be baiting other students as an informant. Whether or not the student was an informant, this hyper awareness about such surveilling practices as part of a counter-terrorism measure indexes their atypical college youth experience as Muslim youth at a time of heightened fears and paranoia, which I discuss at length in chapter five. With regards to emerging adulthood, while these students are somewhat similar to peers as they navigate the college years, they remain cognizant of how the current war rhetoric and 'Muslim extremist' narratives are present in their college lifeworlds. For these students, geographic location is transitory and not the point. In these vignettes I explore how youth formulate and narrate transnational mobilities through the university and its resources available to them.

*Vignette 1: Transnational Educational Mobilities within and beyond Pakistan*

For students at LCU, the university's association with an American/British model of a college education was well established. Many of the faculty were educated abroad and the liberal arts curriculum espoused a distinctly American character<sup>24</sup>. Additionally, the facilities management team had established several plaques and signage on campus recognizing visits and donations from foreign dignitaries, including former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. Students were aware

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<sup>24</sup> Many of the LCU faculty, including myself, have receiving graduate degrees in the United States, England, Germany, or Australia. In non-LCU academic gatherings in Lahore, acquaintances would comment that LCU does not hire unless one has a non-Pakistani graduate degree.

that if one were to do well at LCU, it was possible to access resources for further educational mobilities beyond Pakistan. For example, Zara aspires to move to the UK or the US to pursue a master's law program. Many LCU students, including four research participants, applied yearly for a Fulbright-sponsored student exchange program. For example, they traveled from their Lahore college campus to liberal arts college campuses in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Alabama, further building bridges between US colleges and LCU. For these students, a mobility-driven sensibility continues to reverberate in their minds as they imagine aspirational lives beyond the university that would allow for geographic and social mobility. This close link between LCU's campus culture and curricular model and US institutions is particularly evident in the following transcript.

The following excerpt is from a conversation I had with Hira about LCU's reliance on foreign-educated faculty and how this was a unique advantage for her and other Pakistani students. There is a general stereotype that LCU is like a being in a 'bubble', particularly since its culture is strikingly different from other higher education institutions in Pakistan. To this Hira responded, that LCU is indeed part of Pakistan and she explains it by highlighting the Pakistani faculty, who may go abroad for their doctorate, but then come back. On the right is the original transcript, mostly in Urdu, and the left is my translation of the Urdu transcript. The underlined words were the English words she used in her otherwise Urdu-based comments. Additionally, I have highlighted the use of positional deictics in this piece with italics. For example for '*yahaan*', 'here' is italicized and indexes Pakistan, '*waapis*' references 'coming back,' while '*baahir*', which means 'outside', is used to talk about a generic Western country (could be US or UK) where faculty get their doctorates.

<p>1 <b>H:</b> Yes, [LCU] is part of Pakistan.</p> <p>2 Because look at the <u>instructors</u> <i>here</i>.</p> <p>3 All of them are Pakistani.</p> <p>4 I mean, these people have gone <i>out-of-</i> 5 <i>Pakistan</i> to study <u>but</u> they came <i>back</i>.</p> <p>6 So I mean, it's a good thing they came 7 <i>back</i>.</p> <p>8 <i>Here</i> to teach Pakistani <u>students</u>, meaning 9 to help Pakistani <u>students</u> get ahead.</p> <p>11 <b>M:</b> But if you get an opportunity to go 12 <i>outside-of-Pakistan</i>...</p> <p>13 <b>H:</b> When I <i>go</i>, then I will come <i>back</i> to 14 Pakistan Inshallah.</p> <p>15 Because I think of going <i>outside</i> for this 16 reason</p> <p>17 because if you go <i>outside</i> then you get 18 <b>exposure</b>,</p> <p>19 you get more <u>chances</u>, to make continued 20 <b>progress</b>.</p> <p>21 So for this reason, I wish to go</p> <p>22 So that, in this way, you will get more 23 <b>improvement</b> in yourself.</p> <p>24 And studies are better <i>outside</i>, they are 25 good <i>here</i> as well.</p> <p>26 If I go <i>outside</i> so I will get more <b>changes</b> 27 in me.</p> <p>28 When I get lots of <b>exposure</b>, then I, it will 29 be <b>better</b> for me.</p> <p>30 So this is also a reason.</p> <p>31 And also, <u>travel</u> is an activity I enjoy</p> <p>32 That I go <i>here and there</i>, see [new things]</p>	<p><b>H:</b> <i>HaaN yeh Pakistan ka hisa hai.</i></p> <p><i>KyuN ke yahaaN ke <u>instructors</u> dekhaiN,</i> <i>har koi sab Pakistani hai.</i></p> <p><i>Matlab woh logh baahir jaa ke parh ke</i> <i>aaye, <u>but</u> waapis aaye wo.</i> <i>Tho matlab, achi baat hai ke woh waapis</i> <i>aaye.</i></p> <p><i>YahaaN, Pakistani <u>students</u> ko parhane,</i> <i>yani Pakistani <u>students</u> ko aagay</i> <i>pohanch-aane ke liye.</i></p> <p><b>M:</b> <i>Laikin aap ko agar mokaa mile tho</i> <i>baahir jaane ka...</i></p> <p><b>H:</b> <i>Jab meiN jaoon gii tho meiN waapis</i> <i>aoon gii Pakistan, inshallah.</i></p> <p><i>kyuN ke meiN baahir jaane ka isliye soch</i> <i>rahi huN</i></p> <p><i>kyuN ke jab aap ko baahir jaake <u>exposure</u></i> <i>mil tha hai,</i> <i>aap ke zayada <u>chances</u> ho thay haiN ke aap,</i> <i>uh, mazeed taraqqi karne ke,</i></p> <p><i>tho isliye meiN jaana cha rahi huN</i></p> <p><i>thaake mein, uh, isthara <u>improvement</u></i> <i>zayaada hoyegi aap ke undhar.</i></p> <p><i>aur parhai bhii baahir zayaada achi ho gi,</i> <i>yahaan bhi achi hai,</i></p> <p><i>baahir jaoN gii tho meri undahr aur</i> <i>zayaada <u>changes</u> ayeN gii,</i></p> <p><i>meiN, mazeed jab <u>exposure</u> mile ga, tho</i> <i>meiN, mere liye zayaada achi ho ga,</i></p> <p><i>tho iss wajah bhi hai</i> <i>aur vaise mujhe <u>travel</u> ka bhi bahuth shauq</i> <i>hai ke meiN jaoon, idhar udhar. dekhooN.</i></p>
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As Hira describes it, leaving Pakistan allows one to make ‘progress’ (line 20), to get ‘exposure’ (line 28) that it is ‘better’ (line 29) for the individual (here Hira herself), to have ‘more chances’ (line 19), to get more ‘changes’ (line 26), to ‘improve’ oneself (line 23). Throughout this transcript, Hira links her aspirations to *taraqqi*, or ‘progress’ (line 20) early to make the argument for why transnational mobility to seek education and professional possibilities is a positive value, i.e. ‘*achi baat*’ or ‘good thing’ (line 6). Maqsood also found a similar positive valence ascribed to *taraqqi*, literally meaning ‘progress’ or ‘advancement’. This rhetorical pivot favoring progress revolves around an axis of ‘modernization’ and the language of development. In order to not to conflate modernism with modernity, I turn to Murphy’s (2000) argument that the language of development and modernism tends to carry a “concept of time lived forward in moral as well as strictly chronological terms” which is informed by a “global discourse based ultimately on popular notions of social evolution, according to which the developed countries of the industrialized West represent cultural and economic advancement, relative to the backward societies of the developing world” (Murphy 2000: 207). Modernity and progress are demonstrated partially through the acquisition of an English-medium college education and for those who receive this education in an English-speaking country become the ones who have progressed the most. The moral valuation given to this education is then linked to the transnational features at LCU, particularly its faculty. For Hira, the education LCU faculty acquires from the outside, ‘*baahir*’, is now accessible at the Lahore campus and thus allows her to partake in similar forms of mobility.

For Hira and others, the LCU faculty’s mobility and exposure to education beyond Pakistan becomes particularly advantageous when students hope to apply for US and UK graduate school admissions and scholarships. Along with the access to faculty and advisory resources at LCU that can expedite her application, Zara is also considering whether to major in tax law or human rights

law. Given the dominant, and accurate, narrative of human rights violations in Pakistan against Shia Muslims, Ahmadi-sect Muslims, Hindu and routinized and acceptable violence against women, she realizes the application of a Pakistani women interested in working in human rights law might find an interested audience more easily than one who wishes to study tax law. For students, their current locations are understood as a somewhat temporary situation where progress means mobility partially facilitated by further educational possibilities. In this narrative, Arnett's concept of emerging adulthood holds partially true with regards to the demographic transitions that will invariably follow many of these young adults, like Hira and Zara, into their post-baccalaureate lives.

*Vignette 2: Perceptions of (Im)Mobility Observed in LCU's Scholarship Program*

The scholarship program at LCU offers an attractive aid package for low-income students, designed to “provide the talented yet financially challenged youth of Pakistan a chance to study at [LCU] on full financial aid” (Online Website). It covers the yearly tuition, hostel fees, and provides an additional stipend for food and other expenses. In bold font, the front page of the university home page asks: “Need Financial Support to Reach Your Dreams?” In their effort to increase class and ethnic diversity, the need-based scholarship program was institutionalized to extend “the benefits of world-class education to talented students all over Pakistan and thereby become a truly national university [sic]” (Online Program Literature 2012). Between 2006 and 2014, they accepted a total of 405 scholarship students, of which 346 were male and 59 were female. The boys would quickly form groups of, for example, all the Pashto-speaking scholarship students, over 46 students over nine years compared to only three Pashto-speaking female students in the same time. The limited number of female students meant that for girls, compared to the boys, it was harder to find fellow scholarship students with whom to build community.



While this program's financial resources greatly facilitate students' geographic mobility, once on campus the students find themselves ostracized and labeled for their cultural/ethnic/linguistic differences

In conversations with female scholarship students, they explained that they preferred not to sharing their scholarship status. During my fieldwork period, I taught an anthropology and education course at LCU, for which I hired a senior LCU anthropology student as my teaching assistant. Rabia, from Sindh, sat diligently throughout the course and listened intently when I mentioned my ongoing dissertation research. After the course ended, we went for lunch, my way of thanking her for the semester. Over a plate of chicken tikkas and naans, Rabia told me that she was also a scholarship student. I stared at her with incredulity, particularly since she knew that I had been exclusively focusing on this population for my research. Rabia reflexively acknowledged that she has always hidden this fact about her school identity. At some point, it had been so long since she had shared this fact that she just decided to not discuss it ever.

This fear of being known as somehow financially wanting was echoed by other students who would conceal their scholarship status. One strategy was to deflect the status itself. For example, Zara told me that she is not like the other scholarship students. She explained that her family went through a difficult phase financially after her father passed away. It was a temporary situation that would soon be resolved. Another student, Yusuf, from Charsadda in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, shared a similar story of his father's passing as the main reason why he became eligible for the program. For students, there was a social taboo, a feeling of 'embarrassment', about sharing their financial aid status on campus. This was despite the prestige and academic success required to

obtain the scholarship award, as well as their stellar performance on the two-year admissions process tests and interviews. Rather than pride themselves on their academic achievement, they partially concealed the story of the process of arriving at LCU.

This concealment strategy is observable in my conversations with Shan, a scholarship student at LCU. During an interview with the Hindko-speaking freshman student, we began to discuss how the scholarship office would frequently instruct scholarship students to not share their financial status. The university's representatives seem to acknowledge that admitting one's financial status may be interpreted as a deficiency and would be derided in the otherwise more privileged (read: elite) student body. Since I wondered how the students felt about it, I asked Shan about this. He quickly told me that he agrees with this policy. As he put it, Shan prefers not to tell other students because he fears that once they know this detail, they will see him differently. He used the metaphor of his leather brown two-strap sandals. He said that many male hostel residents would roll out of bed typically 15 minutes before class, showing up in plastic home slippers, Bata or Servis (local wallet-friendly retail store) sandals, a wrinkled t-shirt over a pair of jeans, and tousled hair. In some ways having taught at universities across the US and Pakistan, being informally dressed for class is a typical look for many college students. But Shan explained that if he told others that he was a scholarship student, the same slippers and unwashed hair would take on additional meaning of, as he said, a '*bechara*-type' or someone to be pitied. Instead he said it made more sense not to talk about it, as the university advised him. At the same time, the students did not mind being seen for their geographic mobility. For example, while having a Pathan ethnic identity was source of pride, an identity that marked students as coming from a particular region in Pakistan, the same cannot be said about their financial mobility aspirations. Shan told me,

similar to Rabia, he plans to tell everyone that he was a scholarship recipient after graduation. For now, he felt that he had not accomplished enough to be public about his financial status.

To better understand how the administration perceive scholarship students, I scheduled time with the Dean of Students, Mr. Ahmad Sami. Previously employed by one of Pakistan's largest multinational agricultural companies, Mr. Sami joined the University's academic affairs office after more than fifteen years in the private sector. The administration's decision to hire someone who had no professional experience in any educational institution speaks to both the composition of the board, made up of primarily businessmen, and the prevailing corporatization culture in contemporary higher education worldwide. During my meetings with Mr. Sami (which I was not allowed to record but could take notes during), we were frequently interrupted by students and other university staff asking for meetings or other issues. Mr. Sami usually took the constant barrage of requests in good humor, aware that the job entailed constant communication with students, even though his tone with them was often curt. During one such meeting, I was interviewing him about the scholarship students and how their experiences differed from the non-scholarship students. Mr. Sami was not at all subtle in his reading of them in his anecdotal example. He told me about a student from 'up north', or from the northern areas. This young man seemed to have fallen in love with a fellow female student, but she did not reciprocate his feelings. As Mr. Sami told it, this student could not handle this and he disappeared from campus. Later he was found "in shambles" at Data Durbar, a centuries-old Sufi shrine located in Lahore's old Walled City. In my fieldnotes, I underlined "in shambles" several times. Mr. Sami emphasized his opinion that the scholarship students did not come prepared for the co-educational culture at LCU.

The university provides financial aid to these students, but there was a lack of follow-up with students in the way of academic or social resources to help students adjust better to the new cultural context and academic expectations. This is a particularly difficult task for students coming from schools where they have not received quality secondary education, and certainly not prepared for the American-style English-medium liberal arts model at LCU. For example, during their freshman year, all students are required to take an introduction to writing course. Having taught several sections of this course from 2006 to 2009, I had an intimate knowledge of how students from non-elite backgrounds face real challenges to this course requirement. For example, many of them had never written an argumentative research essay in English<sup>25</sup>. But more than that, they felt that they were less academically prepared than their more elite peers. This ‘immobility’ imaginary is further heightened based on the administration’s deficiency view of scholarship students. The orientation towards these students was that of assimilation and acculturation, and if that did not work out and it affected their academic or personal lives too deeply, then LCU was not the place for him/her. Of the eight focal students I followed over the last three years, Osman, a soft-spoken student from Sargodha, did not make it past freshman year. Initially he found the academic expectations too challenging and he failed out of the scholarship program by year two. For such students, their hopes to aspire for professional and social mobility are dashed when they are unable to adapt to the culture and academic expectations at LCU.<sup>26</sup> The moralist tone by Mr.

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<sup>25</sup> In Pakistan’s secondary education system, students typically pass to the next grade by taking final examinations. These examinations are typically multiple choice and short answer questions. For many students entering LCU, they find themselves ill-equipped for research essay assignments, such as a 10-15 page research papers. LCU runs an Academic Writing Lab to offer extra tutoring support to students. However, students must seek these out on their own and as is often the case with college students, they are sometimes slow to make use of these resources in time.

<sup>26</sup> Arguably, if LCU is inviting students from low-income, under privileged backgrounds to attend the university, it seems there is not enough effort to support equity-based programs to ensure scholarship students adjust more smoothly to the academic and social expectations at the elite university.

Sami and other administrative officials signifies the belief that these students, who are not able to succeed, did not deserve to be there—that there is a process of ‘natural selection’ that divides between those who should be at LCU and those who should not. In these moments, rather than acknowledging the mobility trajectories of in-migrant students, youth and administrative officials construct a narrative of immobility with moralist and deterministic underpinnings.

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### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have attempted to situate Pakistani-origin Muslim youth subjectivities within the university space, to reveal the specific negotiations that arise as they seek varied educational opportunities. In the first section, “Muslim transnational place-making on the college campus”, I focused on how students encounter and inhabit the fieldsites of this ethnography—the informal spaces of the hallways, dorms/hostels, student club-rooms, cafeterias, local eateries, and libraries within the participants’ colleges. What I showed in this section was how Muslim students constructed university spaces that fit their identities within a broader and on-going discourse on how to be appropriately part of the *ummah*, a discussion that affected boys and girls in my study differently. My participants’ regional, gendered, and religious identities shaped how they constructed their club space, digital personae, with whom they interacted with, and what they felt was appropriate relations with the opposite sex on campus. The stark divisions between Muslim and non-Muslim students, as demonstrated in the decisions to join the MSA and not the SACC, and the separation of male and female students in the MSA itself were two ways of “seeing” how gendered place-making occurs on university campuses, place-making practices

which were not so different than the negotiations of PDA and cross-gender interactions on LCU's campus. In the second section, "Tracking vertical and horizontal mobility trajectories in/through the university", I use Ong's theoretical frameworks to reveal how participants might begin in zones of exclusion but through strategies deployed based on their position in the university, aspire to enter zones of hypergrowth. I show how my participants' mobility imaginaries, both vertical and horizontal, are constrained and made possible by their positioning as Muslims within the discourse on the War on Terror in both Pakistan and in the United States. Students in my study were given scholarship opportunities like those promoted by Fulbright-Hays because they were marked as rural, less modern, and perhaps more prone to radicalization if not provided these exposures to other ways of life, which were, in these examples almost exclusively American ways of life. Finally, in section three, reformulating mobility to examine youth formations in higher education, I argue that youth is a moment in our lives where we idealize the possibilities of adulthood, and in which education offers the space of potentialities where one can imagine futures, that are perhaps different from our pasts. However, rather than relying on a de-contextualized model of emergent adulthood, I argue that Muslim students have a very specific form that emerging adulthood can take. I specifically use the example of the NOP program to show how students from different regions of Pakistan must make their identities visible or hidden as they attempt to find means of financial mobility through the university. These negotiations are reflected in their metapragmatic framing of sartorial practices, a crinkled shirt having a very different valence depending on if one came from Pakistan's rural peripheries or one of the its cities, Karachi or Lahore in particular.

In the next chapter, I extend these discussions to place the university and the youth populations that I worked with within a broader set of discourses regarding cosmopolitanism and migrations

to the city. These rural-urban trajectories again existed across my participant contexts and reveal another manifestation of the transnational youth formation I am interested in following in this study.

## Chapter Four: Encounters in Cosmopolitan Urban Centers

### Introduction

During the first few weeks at the Lahore college campus, the scholarship students, those moving from rural areas to the posh, manicured college campus in Lahore, experienced numerous moments of cultural shock. Similarly, the journey from more conservative and Muslim-practicing home environments to NYPC's Manhattan college campus can be similar jump in culture shock, particularly as students 'carry' with them mobility imaginaries from beyond the place-bound context. To ethnographically frame these moments of cultural encounter, I refer to Pratt's concept of "contact zones" to demarcate "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (1992:4). Contact zones are conceptualized to understand unequal relations of power between populations. For the students in Lahore, their geographical locations of origin are positioned on the peripheries of the Pakistani state, often from areas that have experienced the weight of the war against terrorism or from rural villages that do not benefit from the state's urban development programs and policies. For students in NYC, their immigrant status and Pakistani cultural heritage contrasted the American public city college they attended. Moreover, as students on financial aid, their material conditions poise them as less economically privileged than their upper middle class peers. The socioeconomic status also determines their schooling background, their family histories, and several other indices that may heighten a sense of asymmetrical relations. By considering an ethnography of encounters, here encounters with a cosmopolitan, urban set of imaginaries, we can extend our understanding of how unequal power dynamics interactively shape culture-making across sites of difference (Faier and Rofel 2014).



As I argue in chapter two, given the tendency in migration scholarship to concentrate on international migratory movements, this methodological bias obfuscates how we can reposition mobility as an analytic that sees international and state-internal human movements simultaneously to see something more inclusive about the experience of in-migrants. In this chapter, I focus on how migrants encounter a cosmopolitan urban center and the social interactions that transpire in these encounters. As education-driven in-migrants, Pakistani-origin college students differ from other migration studies, particularly those focus on solely labor migration or involuntary migration. These college students voluntarily leave their homes and communities to obtain a college education with the hope that this education will allow them to improve their future lives. This echoes Park and Lo's (2012) work with South Korean college students and how globalized models of education and social advancement are foundational to transnational movements as more and more students move for educational and social achievement to new locations to find the best opportunities.

In this chapter, I describe moments of encounter for in-migrant college students in Lahore to understand what kinds of difference became salient as they experience these contact zones. By problematizing several stories that depict such encounters with the cosmopolitan urban space in NYC and Lahore, I seek to emphasize the specificities of an emergent transnational youth formation, by describing forms of a Pakistani transmigrant culture and the concomitant forms of digitized and non-digitized subject-making observed on a university campus. Using Agha's (2011) concept of models of personhood, this section analyzes the characteristics of circulating social types to understand the cultural models and processes, i.e. mobility types, informing these

social personae. In section one, I follow these encounters within the urban university context to understand the unstable boundary-making process of the rural/urban social differences. Section two examines some of hybridized linguistic forms that circulate within the Pakistani-origin bilingual population. This is followed by a discussion on sartorialist models that further build on the distinctions between rural and urban/cosmopolitan social types. The last section focuses on the pragmatic instantiations of these social types through everyday social practices by college students. The vignettes offered in this chapter follow such stories of encounter and how these diverse student populations within Pakistan interpret these moments, seeking to unpack how mobility offers a framing device to understand negotiations around difference—displays or concealments of difference.

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### **Section 1: Encounters of Rural Mobility Imaginaries in the Urban University**

In this section, I offer three vignettes from LCU that follow rural-origin youth encountering narratives of rural mobility imaginaries in the urban university context. These rural mobility imaginaries are seen as undesirable or not ‘cool’ by the more urban, cosmopolitan student populations. In one narrative that follows, a student recalls a moment when an urban student expresses disgust at his presence at LCU. In another, one student explains that as the scholarship program has expanded, the prestige of being an LCU student has decreased. In these moments of encounter, the ethnic, rural-origin student is painted as an outside whose presence is not welcome nor desirable. In a recent study of British Pakistani migrant stereotypes, Charsley and Bolognani (2016) explain that while moral evaluation is a common feature of boundary-making events, the affective nature of the evaluation also reflects the fragility of the boundary being drawn. The uneasiness of these boundaries, where the cosmopolitan student may be a second generation

urban migrant, demonstrates the instability of the distinction between the rural and the urban, particularly for Pakistani students.

*Vignette 1: Ethnic Imaginaries at LCU*

In conversations with participants, Shan and Zahid, both scholarship recipients, and Ali, a non-scholarship Pashto student, we often talked about the cultural challenges that Pashto-speaking migrant students experienced. In contrast to Shan and Yusuf's lack of travel before LCU, Ali had participated in a high school student exchange program and having lived for a few months in Missouri with a 'white' American family. Based on the shared experience of having lived in the US, we often talked about what it is like to be a Pakistani in America and the ways that cultural exchanges (encounters) can be both beneficial and troubling. During one of these conversations about encounters, Ali told me about his friend Zahid who experienced a particularly troubling episode during his first few weeks on campus. After several text messages, Zahid came to meet me in my office. The department gave offices to all current faculty and since I was teaching a course on anthropology and education for the social sciences department, I had my own office. The facilities management had organized it like a typical faculty office with a large desk in the middle, but I had rearranged the space so there was a small sitting area where students would feel comfortable to talk to me. This was especially important for male students since I could not enter their living spaces as a female due to the strict rules of sex-segregation on campus. Additionally, they were less likely than the female students to visit my apartment. This space became a confessional where research participants would feel more comfortable to come and share stories.

Zahid and Ali both came a few minutes late to the office. Zahid was in a dark brown shalwar kameez, and Ali in a cream colored shalwar kameez, both modeling patchy beards. It was a Friday, or *jumma*, and they had just come from the weekly prayer gathering at the campus mosque which was followed by lunch with friends. As we began to talk, the topic of being a Pathan on campus came up. For some time, we talked generally about being Pathan on a campus that was mostly not Pathan. Since Khyber Pukhtunkhwa is the province where most members of the Pathan ethnolinguistic community are historically based. Many of the Pashto-speaking students attending university in Lahore were from this area and, as I discussed previously, often spoke in Pashto to each other on campus. Pashto and Punjabi could often be heard around campus, in addition to English and Urdu. Other languages, such as Siraiki, Sindhi, were not as commonly heard on campus, partly due to the fewer number of their speakers on campus. Zahid and Ali were both Pashto speakers and proud of it. In the following quote, Ali's English was peppered with American English, while discussing why Punjabi-, Siraiki-, or Sindhi-speakers do not seem to use these languages on campus.

And I don't know why they do not speak their own languages when they are around each other, because we, when we meet, *we totally like*, we won't speak Pashto. No, no, we won't speak Urdu or any other languages except Pashto. Soo, I don't know.

[April 14, 2013]

He made the importance of speaking Pashto with other Pashto LCU speakers clear, particularly within the community. In contrast, Zahid spoke both Urdu and English but with a much thicker Pashto accent. For example, Pashto speakers will often substitute the a voiceless alveolar fricative ⟨s⟩ for a voiceless alveo-palatal fricative ⟨sh⟩, as in the word 'salwar' for 'shalwar'. Such accent variations, his sartorial choices, and clique formations immediately place students like Zahid as socially and culturally different from his non-Pashto-speaking peers. I also observed that his

English was a more formal British-style English register compared to Ali's learned Americanisms.

Compared to the Pashto-speaking students who had attended mostly all-boy schools and cadet academies, the "Karachi kids" at LCU were far more comfortable in its co-educational context. Many of these students were emblematically seen displaying a more Western-influenced social persona due to their sartorial choices (more jeans, shorts, and brand name clothing), English accents, accompanied by wealthier/cosmopolitan backgrounds, analyzed later in this chapter. As a few LCU Karachi-origin students explained it: "Lahore is like a village," while Karachi represented Pakistan's most bustling metropolitan. If the Karachi kids consider the urban landscape of Lahore a village, then in-migrant students from peripheral areas are even more 'rural' comparative to the 'Lahori' social persona. I will discuss these social personae later in this chapter, but for now, I want to be clear that there was a noticeable cultural distance between Karachi-origin student and other student groups, but particularly so for Pashto-speaking social groups. This social backdrop provides context to a story Zahid narrated about an encounter during one of his first weeks at LCU. He was walking near the campus eatery, or *khokha*, area and passed a group of two male and three female students, who he believed were from Karachi. When asked how he knew, he referenced their clothes, that the boys wore shorts and the girls did not all wear dupattas. From this group, one of the male students sharply asked Zahid: "*Tum Pathan ho?* [Are you Pathan?]" Zahid said he responded, surprised: "*Haan. Tho?* [Yeah. So?]" The male student responded, "I don't like Pathans" in English. The incident did not proceed further since Zahid says he brushed them off and walked away.

While I was not present to witness this account, Zahid's storytelling and later frustration at this kind of ethnic harassment illustrated the complexity of encountering differences on campus. Zahid was puzzled as to why they felt comfortable mocking his ethnic identity, even though they knew nothing about him. The university campus serves as a site for such encounters where students from more urban (often privileged) backgrounds encountered students from more rural areas and of less privileged homes. In stories of such encounters, the 'us' and 'them', the lack of unequivocal distinction and clarity between rural and urban identities may help explain the affect-laden nature of such representations (Bolognani and Charlsey 2016). The university campus is a "meeting place" in Massey's (1994) sense of the term, rather than just a site for academic instruction, where students from diverse social, religious, and economic backgrounds interacted. In contrast to schooling environment, the college learning environment does not make space to help students adjust to the new socialities of the college campuses. Zahid's experience of ethnic-based harassment offers an example of the more problematic encounters that can occur. The ethno-linguistic category of 'Pathan' carries an additional set of identity categories, such as less urban and more tribally-based. While these students are physically mobile and have moved to Lahore, the stereotypic social personae of the Pathan versus the Karachiite continue to inhibit interpersonal mobility and exchanges. The more valuable or privileged social persona of Karachi-origin students might raise class-based anxieties for the Pashto speaking youth.

This sentiment of this class-based ideological divide between Punjabi and Pathan populations was echoed in Maqsood's fieldwork (2016) in urban Lahore. While she was conducting fieldwork on middle-class Lahori consumption practices, she also began working on a research initiative about the life histories of tribal Pathans, those who had been displaced from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas by U.S. drone attacks and Pakistan military operations. In a conversation with one

Punjabi informant in Lahore, when Maqsood said that she was focusing on Pathans in her research, he pointedly asked: “I thought you were interested in middle-class people like us. Why are you researching them? Some of them might have money but their *lifestyle* is not middle-class, like ours.” In Maqsood’s fieldwork account, the speaker uses the deictic term, ‘them’ as a contrast to ‘our’ middle-class lifestyle, positioning Pathans on a lower economic stratum to the middle-class urbanite. In the article, she explains that while traditionally scholars have employed an ethnic lens to understand such moments of hostility, such as what Zahid experienced, her research suggests that a focus on mobility—both the ability of Pashto-speaking migrants to physically move but also their aspiration to change their economic and social mobilities—shifts our attention “to the forms of discrimination that are inherent in sensibilities and modes of thinking that stem from ideologies of modernization and development” (Maqsood 2016). According to this, while the ethnic category is explicitly referenced in Zahid’s encounter with the students, what may be rooted in the hostility is the impact that Pakistan-internal migration is having on a changing urban population that is observed in the changing student body. As Skeggs explains, “To feel disgust is to be fully physically conscious of being within the realm of uneasy categories... in disgust people are just too close for comfort. Expressions of disgust enable one to repel because they rely on public acknowledgement, it provides collective reassurance that we are not alone in our judgement of the disgusting object, generating consensus and authorization for [our own] standards, maintaining the symbolic order (2005: 970). This discomfort/disgust with increasingly more Pashto-speaking students is reflected in how the instances of intolerant remarks, both explicit and implicit, and even fear of these remarks, as experienced by Pakistani-origin Muslim youth at NYPC, discussed in chapter five. The fear of class mobility, or aspirations for mobility, are laminated onto ethnic differences. Here we can see some aspects of the multivalent nature of mobility. For example, while geographic mobility leading to more encounters in the urban space, in-migrants encounter mobility imaginaries that emplace them as less privileged, less refined, less

education, and less noteworthy even in the case of Maqsood's (2013) research. In turn, in-migrant youth may internalize these stereotypic social personae in their reflections on themselves, discussed in the next section.

*Vignette 2: A Series of Dismissive Encounters*

During a short research trip to Lahore in 2014, I met Shan and his best friend Taimur for a coffee at one of the cafes on the Lahore City College campus. The café was very loud and Shan suggested that we walk out of the area and sit on some couches in the building's lobby. We began an intense conversation about the university and how it has changed, particularly due to the influx of scholarship students like Shan. Taimur, from Islamabad and one of Shan's best friends, explained that as recently as three years ago, LCU did not reflect our Pakistani society because it was an "elite institution with a particular mindset." However, with the introduction of the scholarship program, individuals like Shan who Taimur describes as coming from "the backward areas," have changed the university's culture.

1        Let me clarify, by saying that people like him [Shan], means that, people who have different  
2        set of opinions, who have been into mosques, who have been interacted with, who have interacted  
3        with the mullas of the **local areas**, people like that. Yusuf, all these people. They have different  
4        mindset as compared to us or as compared to elite people. umm. Which LCU used to have  
5        before so after the introduction of [the scholarship program], so after the introduction of [said  
6        program], LCU has become somewhat a neutral place, because here **people like me** get interacted,  
7        used to get interaction with Shan and **Shan actually gets exposure of what other beliefs are**.  
8        And that's what is making LCU a different place. And now I think that it is actually reflecting the  
9        society.

[April 14, 2013, my emphasis]

Taimur's meta-pragmatic explanation about "people like him", where 'him' references Shan and people who are seen as rural and non-elite, demonstrates how LCU offers a meeting place for



those with ‘different’ opinions and beliefs to have ‘exposure’ of unfamiliar beliefs and norms. Further he aligns these ‘different’ opinions with mosques and interaction with religious individuals in the ‘local’ areas. This encounter between Shan and those who interact with their local mullas, or religious leaders, and the LCU crowd is quite literally making the university a “different place” (line 8), which he says is “actually reflecting” Pakistani society. This example shows the ambiguous distinction between students like Shan and Taimur, who have taken different journeys to the same university and remain cognizant of the mobility differentials while simultaneously acknowledging that ‘actual’ Pakistani society is much more heterogeneous, especially given LCU’s reputation for being an elite institution. Taimur’s comments point to the rural mobility imaginary of Pashto-speaking students. Students like Shan are perceived by non-scholarship, non-Pashto-speakers as likely more sympathetic to “mullas of the local areas” (line 3) and this coupling of rurality with a more religious sentiment is especially problematic. Taimur’s comments align rurality and religiosity as constitutive of a “different” mindset compared to the elite population at LCU. The rural-ethnic minority-non-elite students are linked to a kind of ‘less privileged’ social type, compared to the majority urbanized-elite students, and this linking is reinforced by persistent alignments across interdiscursive chain segments such as this excerpt. In the next vignette and set of transcripts, we see how these role alignments appear in an exchange with an ‘elite’ LCU student.

### *Vignette 3: Schooling, Class Anxieties, and Mobility*

During the hour or so that Taimur, Shan, and I sat chatting, Amir that I had met through familial connections in Lahore, was walking through the lobby area. When he saw me, Amir approached for a moment to say hello. Originally from Karachi, Amir had a complicated family history, of

which the other students were not aware. While he grew in a relatively upper middle-class household, Amir's father worked at a local bank while his mother was college-educated, stay-at-home mother of three. When his father passed away, his mother became a full-time teacher at a local private school. For many students' families, when a father passes away, it can have a sudden effect on the family's financial standing and stability. For Amir, his family's previously middle-class background and mother's educational background allowed them to recover a degree of stability that is rather difficult for single mother households in Pakistan. After several years at a Catholic school, Amir switched to Karachi Grammar School (KGS), an English-medium private high school in the city known for being a school for the city's elite due to its high school fees, academics, and resources. In this way, while Amir had grown up in a urban, middle-class family setting, his family had been able to maintain their class status after his father's passing due to their social network and his mother's educational background. Despite my knowledge of these facts and personal conversations that Amir and I had about coming from a matriarchal home, Shan and Taimur only saw his urbane, cosmopolitan identity which, as this vignette shows, they pointed out through observable semiotic markers like his comportment, speech, and general appearance. As Amir asked me what my plans were for the rest of the day, unbeknownst to me, Shan and Taimur watched him carefully. In the middle of the conversation, Taimur looks at Amir and asks pointedly in Urdu: "Where are you from? KGS? [*Aap kahaan se haiN?*]" Amir responds with an honorific 'yes': "*Jee.*" Taimur turned to me: "See, ma'am. This is the first time I'm asking him. I didn't even know." It seemed that he wanted to give material evidence, from the field so to speak, for his argument about the difference between elite LCU students like Amir and scholarship students like Shan.

The mention of the school identity “KGS” is noteworthy in that it has become emblematic of an elite, privileged life with which Shan clearly does not align. As the conversation carried on, Shan clarified: “He [Amir] has this attitude. He's from KGS.” As a contrast to this elite social personae, Shan offered: “I have spent 2 years in LCU, but I can't speak a word of English. No offense to me again, but I can't even speak English.” This seemingly contradictory statement, put forth in competent English, points to an anxiety or inadequacy that Shan feels that he is not speaking ‘English’. ‘English’ does not refer to the morpho-syntactic grammatical system used to formulate the clause “I can’t even speak English,” rather it refers to the same ‘attitude’ that is tied to one’s schooling experience. In Pakistan’s urban spaces, and especially at LCU, I observed that one’s grade school experience is a significant marker of social status and belonging. As a visiting researcher who had lived in Pakistan for some years prior to my fieldwork stay, I would frequently socialize with friends in Lahore and Karachi; and during the course of a typical introductory exchange, the usual pleasantries would be exchanged. *Hi. Hello. What’s your name? Mariam. Yours? Faisal. You’re X’s researcher friend, right? Yep. What school did you go to?* Oftentimes, I would pause in this moment since the person had clearly thought I had grown up in Pakistan. This school question was a way of situating a person’s social status through once question. In Lahore, certain schools Lahore Grammar School (LGS, an all-girls private school), Aitchison College (an all-boys private school), St. Mary’s Convent School, Lahore American School, and other private schools meant you must come from an upper-middle class family background. In Karachi, it was Karachi Grammar School, St. Michael’s Convent, Karachi American School, etc. When Taimur and Shan point to Amir’s connection to KGS, for them it tells them all they need to know about him. His actual family background or story becomes practically irrelevant once KGS has been evoked as his school identity.

Amir sat down with us in the lobby and the students continued to debate the politics of being an LCU student from a non-elite background. In the following except, Shan continues his feeling of dissociation from LCU that he is not giving an accurate representation of LCU, compared to Amir. Below in the left column is the transcript in English, while the right column is Shan’s mixed English-Urdu speech. In the left, the underlined text was originally in English.

10	S: <u>Let's say, if I'm going outside, outside of like LCU.</u>	S: Let's say, if I'm going outside, outside of like LCU
11	Someone meets me.	<i>Koi mujhe miltha hai.</i>
12	He says, <u>Oh you're from LCU?</u> Ok.	<i>Ketha, Oh you're from LCU? Ok.</i>
13	So what <u>image</u> of LCU am I <u>representing</u> ?	<i>Tho mein LCU ki kya image represent kar raha-hoon?</i>
14	<u>See! I mean</u> if you went back 10, 5 years ago.	See! I mean, agar, <i>aaj se das, aaj se paanch...</i>
15	Before <u>he had this attitude</u>	<i>Pehle mein, he had this attitude,</i>
16	One could see from afar that	<i>Woh dur se pehchana jatha.</i>
17	<u>Look he's an LCU student, from his dressing,</u>	Look he's an LCU student, from his
....		dressing,...

I interjected here, feeling slightly uncomfortable with this line of self-deprecation, “I don’t think so. I think everyone pretty much looks the same.” Shan went on:

18	S: No, <u>that's [your] personal opinion.</u>	S: <i>Nahin</i> , that's [your] personal opinion.
19	<u>No, no, not everyone is the same. There are 507</u>	No, no, not everyone is the same. There are 507
20	<u>NOP scholars here, right?</u>	NOP scholars here, right?
21	<u>I mean, out of bachelors, How many</u>	I mean, out of bachelors, bachelors <i>kitne</i>
22	<u>bachelors? 3000?</u>	<i>hain? 3000?</i>
23	<u>More than like fifteen to 20%</u>	More than like fifteen to 20%
24	Those who are <u>like from backward areas, right?</u>	<i>woh hain jo</i> are like from backward areas, right?

25	<u>They're actually from backward areas. See?</u>	They're actually from backward areas. See?
26	<b>M:</b> But why do you? Where do you get this impression from?	<b>M:</b> But why do you? Where do you get this impression from?
27	<b>S:</b> <u>No. This is not impression.</u>	<b>S:</b> No. This is not impression.

In these excerpts, Shan compares himself with a student from 5 to 10 years ago, from a moment before the scholarship students become more than 15% of the university student population. He imagines that person could ‘represent’ (line 13) the university in a different way, indexing that person’s ‘attitude’ (line 15) and ‘dressing’ (line 17), indexing sartorial choices as key to understanding identity which is discussed later in this chapter. He then references the scholarship students and marks them as from “backward areas” (line 25) This association with someone from a backward, i.e. rural area, even if that is a town in another part of the country and not exactly ‘rural’, was echoed in Taimur’s comments about “local areas.” The term ‘local’ becomes linked to rurality and a lack of modernity. As Murphy found in his study of Lahore, the “rhetoric of ‘advanced’ versus ‘backward’ modes of life” are very much observed among LCU youth, where ‘developed’ societies of the metropolis are placed in contradistinction to the ‘backwards’ societies in developing areas, i.e. rural areas (2000: 207). That these binary models find salience on college campuses where in-migrant students encounter the cosmopolitan urban context speaks to the need to see migratory patterns beyond the international/intra-national distinction, and see how the rural-urban divide gets relocated and recontextualized for multiple mobility imaginaries.

In the earlier vignette of Zahid’s story, I described the association of Zahid and other Pathan students are seen as coming from a non-urban locale and as having grown up in a ‘backward’ or less developed/less urban area, also found in the conversation with Shan, Taimur, and Amir. Male

students who are ethnically Pathan often avoid the Lahore or Karachi-origin students and to organize themselves into separate social group, especially in the first two years of college before they become more familiar with their classmates through clubs and other extra-curricular activities. According to a university statistic, 9% of the scholarship students (or 68 students) are from Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK), while around 70% of the students are from rural areas in Punjab. For many of these scholarship students, being a university student in Lahore is a marked contrast to their lives in KPK before college, and it differs drastically from the experience of their non-scholarship students coming from the one of three major cities: Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad. The encounters between the urban-origin student body with the more rural-origin students can result in a subtle tension seen through uncomfortable conversations and internalized self-perceptions as some how inferior or less valuable. At the same time, other students respond to this tension differently; for example, some of the female students would downplay their scholarship status and/or rural backgrounds, distancing or even disavowing this 'identity'. The ambiguous responses around types of differences are indicative of the instability of the divisions themselves, especially for constantly mobile bodies.

In conversations, students contested and negotiated the parameters of these differences and constantly reformulated them during their college years. They also discussed how LCU itself is changing based on the growing scholarship program, as Taimur explained "making LCU a different place" (line 8). While Shan was in the US as an exchange student, we would catch up via Skype on how the exchange experience was going. During one such conversation, he told me that he believes that LCU was becoming more like an NGO, or non-profit organization, compared to a reputable university. When I asked what did he mean, he said that as a LCU student, he is invested in the LCU 'brand'. LCU graduates have a reputation for finding lucrative employment

and he argued that if this association gets displaced because people have a different ‘accent, dress, and thinking’ from the urban-‘non-ethnic’-elite student social persona, that will be disadvantageous for all graduates. He emphasized that the students from KGS, LGS, Aitchison are what people think of when they hear about LCU, not about students like himself.<sup>27</sup>

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## **Section 2: Hybrid Linguistic Performative Economies**

In de Fina and Perrino (2013), they critique studies of speech communities that are viewed as relatively homogenous and bound to specific locations. In response, they argue that, “although in the past, dislocations often implied drastic separations from places and cultures of origin, nowadays the diffusion of new globalizing media has resulted in the ability of displaced populations to keep in touch with their home countries and with other, far away interlocutors, and in the possibility for those who are not physically displaced, to constitute and take part in virtual transnational communities ‘with no sense of place’” (Ibid. 510). This notion was echoed by Sapir (1931) who argues that the far-reaching techniques of communication as lessened the “importance of mere geographical contiguity.” Following this argument, this section examines some of the ways that transnational youth population take part in a kind of transnational speech that lack a sense of bounded location in the conventional understanding of speech community. And yet there is some facet of community that exists by focusing on some linguistic consistencies for Urdu-Hindi transnational speakers, including college students.

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<sup>27</sup> Although beyond the scope of the present study, the question of how higher education institutions become ‘neoliberal brand’ formation, as outlined by Nakassis in a collection of essays on Brand Neoliberalism in *Cultural Anthropology*, but in this study, the non-elite students feel counterfeit to their institutional brand.

During fieldwork both online and offline, I observed the ways that Urdu was being reformulated for needs by transnational in-migrant college students in both NYC and Lahore. In Nakassis' (2011) research with Tamil-speaking college students, he analyzes their hybrid performative economies of mixed English and Tamil linguistic practices as part of a larger desire for 'style,' while the 'disfluencies and hybridizations of English with Tamil keep its excesses in check.'" Similarly, to speak only in one or the other grammatical system, here Urdu or English, would index a lack of global sociality and urban competence for bilingual Pakistani-origin. Instead, I observed how college youth incorporated linguistic-hybrid performative economies as part of their participation in the youth formation under study. Mobility imaginaries become present in the linguistic mixing practices occurring in higher educational spaces, online, and beyond. In other words, the moment of encounter with the cosmopolitan and concomitant anxieties could be observed in in the very grammatical constructions they spoke.

Originally I was attuned to this style of speaking from teaching experiences during my pre-fieldwork experience at the Lahore university. In the introductory academic writing classes that I then taught, I had many students who were less confident in their verbal English skills. Since the course's objective was to evaluate written English skills, I was more lenient than most about their use of Urdu during course discussions. As I listened to their mixed use of English and Urdu, it became apparent that the mixing taking place was more substantive than lexemic borrowings from English to Urdu. I observed nearly all students and most faculty engage their bilingual, if not multilingual, communicative repertoires. That is, they use English, Urdu, Punjabi, switch between or mix the language varieties, and in some speech events, they may mix language



varieties so frequently that the utterance cannot be explicitly referred to as English or Urdu, but rather some kind of language mixing (cf. Auer 1999; Woolard 1999). Due to the historic and sustained contact between English, Urdu, and regional languages, scholars have studied and written about the different varieties of English spoken and written in Pakistan, i.e. Pakistani English (Rahman 1996; Baumgardner 1993; Mansoor 1993, 2005; Kachru, Kachru & Sridhar 2008; Ayres 2009). While Baumgardner and Rahman have observed how lexical items from English have become indigenized by Urdu speakers, there have been no studies on the effects that sustained contact with English has had on Urdu language practices and other regional language varieties in Pakistan and certainly not on the presence of these mixed varieties in English-medium universities.

*Case 1: English-Urdu Hybridized Predicates*

Earlier in this chapter (vignette two, line 4), Shan uses a syncretic noun-verb construction to say the following:

<i>Tho mein</i>	LCU	<i>ki kya</i>	image	represent		<i>kar raha-hoon?</i>
So	I	LCU	of what	image	represent	do-stay.perf.CR aux
<b>So what image of LCU am I representing?</b>						

In this line, he rhetorically questions whether he is representational of the university since he describes scholarship students, like himself, as migrants from a ‘backwards’ area (line 24). The very structural nature of this mixing is pulling from both English and Urdu grammatical systems, which I explain briefly. The fact that such a verb construction was used at the English-medium university was not at all unusual. In fact, this construction is ever-present in urban Pakistani contexts as well as across the diaspora among Urdu- and Hindi-speaking bilinguals. Next I focus more on the *karna* [‘kar-’] construction to explain its English-Urdu grammatical formulation that

follows the certain rules of Urdu-Hindi predicate construction and simultaneously incorporating English-based predicate grammar.

*A Brief Overview of the Urdu-Hindi Predicate*

Agha (1998) explains the structure of the Urdu-Hindi predicate, as consisting of a main verb (MV), with complement verb (COMP) or dependent verb, and an auxiliary (AUX) verb. He goes on to describe two constructions of the predicate: (1) a simple verb construction and (2) a compound verb construction. In the simple verb construction, the main verb consists of just one verb [V<sub>1</sub>] and for the compound verb construction, the main verb clause (MV) consists of two distinct verb stems [V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub>]. In Urdu, the main verb can be followed by the complementary verb (COMP) and an auxiliary verb (AUX).

1.        { [ MV ( COMP) ]<sub>v</sub> [AUX]<sub>v</sub> }  
              where MV = [V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub>]

There are two other kinds of constructions of the Urdu-Hindi predicate that follow the same constituent structure but with an incorporated lexical noun-form (N<sub>i</sub>) found in the main verb constituent, as seen below.

2.        { [ MV ( COMP) ]<sub>v</sub> [AUX]<sub>v</sub> }  
              where MV = [N<sub>i</sub> V<sub>1</sub>]
3.        { [ MV ( COMP) ]<sub>v</sub> [AUX]<sub>v</sub> }  
              where MV = [N<sub>i</sub> V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub>]

For Urdu-Hindi speakers, these predicate's morphological constructions (2 and 3) give speakers the possibility to incorporate traditionally noun-forms from Arabic or Farsi, and structurally incorporate these noun-forms into otherwise Urdu-Hindi predicates. For example, the Arabic noun for murder, *qatal*, is incorporated with the Urdu verb, *karna*, which means 'to do', to become *qatal karna*. From this, it seems logical that if speakers with a degree of communicative

competence in both English and Urdu-Hindi are speaking to other speakers with the same shared communicative repertoires, then we may see the emergence of English noun and verb incorporations in Urdu-Hindi predicates. While the morphosyntactic segmentation between predicates without an incorporated noun and with an incorporated noun is identical, my data included cases of a grammatical innovation where the noun incorporation is of *English lexemes*, not Urdu lexemes, into the otherwise Urdu-Hindi word order of Subject-Object-Verb. Linguists characterize this phenomenon as noun incorporation and verb incorporation.

Shan's incorporation of the English lexeme 'represent' into the mixed Urdu-English predicate 'represent karna' is representative of the kind of noun and verb incorporation I found used by other students in both LCU and NYPCC, where English forms are incorporated into *karna* verb constructions. Many times the English lexemes that fit the construction were *ambient forms* (Whorf 1956), or forms that they could be used in both stative and verb constructions. In other words, these are lexemes that could be used as either a verb or a noun depending on the usage. Examples of such ambient forms are 'call', 'offer', 'drop', 'complete', et cetera. There were also instances of just English verb-forms like 'represent', 'attend', 'consider', 'avail', and 'investigate' that were incorporated with *karna*. This kind of verb construction is common where bilingual youth will rely on the *karna* construction to use English predicates, thereby demonstrating competence in both grammatical systems and in fact, merging the two.

#### *Case 2: Puff MaArna in Lahore*

Additionally in Lahore, students would also begin to use other Punjabi-based verb constructions that grammatically mirror Urdu. For example, the verb *maarna* in both Punjabi and Urdu means

‘to physically hit something.’ During a smoke break with Zulfiqar, a student walked up to him as he was smoking a cigarette and asked, “*Aik puff maarnaa hai?*” which translates to "Do you want a puff? (of the cigarette).” The original meaning of *maarnaa* has shifted almost entirely in this slang form, where it is not about hitting anything, rather taking a drag from a fellow student’s cigarette. In another example, students would frequently use is ‘chill *maarnaa*’, which denotes to ‘engage in chilling’ or to ‘chill out.’ It becomes more about ‘engaging’ in whatever interactional/speech act is occurring or about to occur. At LCU, I also heard other colorful usages of ‘*maarna*’ such as ‘date *maarnaa*’ (to go on a date), ‘CP *maarnaa*’ (to speak up in class, i.e. class participation point or ‘CP’), and ‘point *maarnaa*’ (to make a point in an argument). In this way, bilingual Pakistani-origin youth speech often finds ways of innovate and draw from English, Urdu, and Punjabi grammar and merge them in speech utterances.

*Case 3: Online Linguistic Innovations in Romanized Urdu*



*Figure 4 Screenshot from Pakistani Memes Facebook Page*

A brief analysis of online language use by bilingual Pakistani-origin youth further demonstrates the mixing of English-Urdu communicative practices. In the screenshot, a popular Pakistani Facebook profile “Pakistani memes” share a tweet from Zaid Ali, the Pakistani-Canadian social media entertainer discussed in chapter two. He sets up several translations of ‘*ac^ha*’, a shifter term (Jakobson) in which the denotational content shifts depending on the context of usage. For example, as a response to a yes/no question, ‘*ac^ha*’ can mean ‘yes’. If someone informs you that that will be returning in an hour, you can respond with ‘*ac^ha*’ to mean ‘got it’ or ‘alright.’ It can also be used if one asks: “How is the pizza?”; one can respond with ‘*Ac^ha hai*’ or “It is good.” In this meme, online grammatical punctuation becomes a way to index differentiated social meanings to ‘*ac^ha*’ that go far beyond the denotational meanings previously discussed. Additionally, the ‘meanings’ on the right side are written in an informal, youth register of online Romanized Urdu. If one attaches no punctuation, it means “everything’s cool.” Adding a question

mark, exclamation mark, points of ellipsis (...), or a period can completely shift the meaning-making of the online utterance and the subsequent conversation. Online and offline hybridized linguistic practices of Pakistani-origin youth involve many such innovations of language that are not linked through geographic contiguity. In this dissertation, I have briefly discussed particular instantiations of these innovative constructions and the networks of addressivity that are constructed across online and offline spheres of communication. While these examples point to a rich space for further inquiry and analysis, these hybridized linguistic performative economies enplace youth coming from non-English speaking backgrounds to become fluent in an urban/cosmopolitan youth register, and those who do not/cannot perform this speech are further distanced from youth social collectives.

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### **Section 3: Urban-Rural Sartorial Inflections Observed on Campus**

Tracking linguistic or sartorial social innovations across mediated moments displays that, while there are certainly contextual variations in particular locales, there may also be something of the ‘changing same.’ Postcolonial theorist Sandhya Shukla (2003) used Gilroy’s (1991) use of the same term, the “changing same,” to understand the way that South Asian diasporic cultural practices, similar to discourses on black culture and blackness, espouse a South Asianness that is at once identifiable but also contextually situated in a specific locale. This section focuses on sartorial choices that are constitutive of a metasemiotic system of social meanings that are accessible and knowable for South Asian college youth across contexts. In *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith*, Tarlo (2010) cuts through the dominant media stereotypes regarding Muslim women’s appearance. Her approach to understand the way that politics, modesty, and religion impact young British women’s sartorial choices provides a jumping off point to

understand Pakistani-inflected, Muslim youth attire. In the following section, I offer cases where rural-urban mobility imaginaries and discourse on how to appear ‘modern’ or not offers a lens to further understand mobility formulations and process across LCU and NYPC. The first three vignettes follow particular choices and perceptions of individual female students at LCU and NYPC, followed by an analysis of these three. Vignettes four and five focus on a particular LCU-specific college costumed practice, Color Week, and the social type discourses that these Color Week costumes confirm.

*Vignette 1: Zara and the dupatta*

In the ethnographic case described in chapter two, Zara, a student in Lahore, deployed more conservative clothing, demonstrated through a longer and looser kurta and a dupatta, when she realized she would meet her visiting high school biology teacher. Zara’s chance encounter with her teacher was an opportunity for her to demonstrate that she was still the same girl who grew up in Jhang even though was now attending an urban, elite college. As Zara explained it, she did not want the woman to think she had become ‘too modern.’ Zara explained that when she was accepted to LCU, one of her good friends also got accepted. In contrast to her, her friend’s family, also from Jhang, decided not to let her attend university and instead her marriage was arranged. This story became a cautionary tale for Zara of what an alternative option to the university was, even though she was not engaged to be married. Further adding to the cultural distance between going to university in Lahore as opposed to staying in Jhang, Zara’s high school friends told her that once she goes to college, she may “become different.” These friends and the larger Jhang community seemed to be more expectant of Zara to follow certain social norms, even more so than expectations from her direct relatives. “You have to do it because of people.

*(LogooN ki waja se karna hotha hai),*” Zara says. So while her mother, sister, and brothers know that she does not cover her head while in Lahore, her former classmates, teachers, and extended family do not. And Zara does not try to challenge these expectations. Instead she has found ways to adapt depending on where she is at the moment. Zara chooses different fashion choices to cover herself or not—whether it is no head covering while she is serving a volleyball during an inter-collegiate game, a loose dupatta hanging off her shoulder while she is eating at a local restaurant near campus, a diaphanous dupatta hanging partly off her head while she is riding the bus to Jhang, or a full chador when she is walking around her neighborhood in Jhang. As Zara explains it, “*Jhang meiN ishee thar^a se hai.* [That’s just how it is in Jhang.]”

*Vignette 2: Noreen and the Shalwar kameez*

In the previous chapter, I highlight Werbner’s (1999) discussion of observing how ‘places travel’ particularly through shalwar kameez, and other material artifacts, worn by Pakistani in-migrants in new locales. In the final example, I pull from a Snapchat video that Noreen posted discussed how she feels about wearing shalwar kameez in New York City. Snapchat is video messaging cell phone software application where individual users record and share short videos as ‘My Story.’ Other Snapchat-using friends can view these short video segments on their phone. The messaging function is designed to be ‘conversational’ so video that a user can easily film on their phone and immediately send to their friends. Noreen uploaded a rather interesting video where she shot herself using the phone’s front-facing camera. She spoke directly into the camera, ‘speaking’ to her friends. The following is a transcript of the relevant Snapchat:

- 1 We’re going to talk about wearing shalwar kameez in public, and why people are so embarrassed
- 2 to do it. I mean, Brown people, Arab people, or whatever culture you belong to, you have cultural
- 3 clothing that feel like ‘weird’ going outside wearing it. Like people are gonna look at me.



4 For so long, brown people have been so conscious of looking Fobby.  
5 You know, like if I wear shalwar kameez to school, people would be like,  
6 “Oh you look like such a FOB.” I was like yeah “ha ha, yeah, I’m such a FOB ha ha.”  
7 But really why the eff does it matter? And then interestingly enough,  
8 you go to H&M, you go Forever 21, and you look at their front display window,  
9 and they are wearing shalwar kameez,  
10 And now the same people that were calling me a FOB are wearing long shirts on jeans,  
11 and you’re like [makes a sarcastic sound]  
12 It’s ridiculous how conscious we get to be ourselves.  
13 It’s like you know that’ll be fashion in like a year so just relax.  
14 We’re literally in a society where wearing ripped jeans and Uggs is acceptable!  
15 So just go wear whatever wha.. uh! Uggs!  
16 You know I don’t understand the logic of being embarrassed of wearing shalwar kameez,  
17 like you’re not white. You’re not American. They’re never going to accept you!  
18 This is just remnants of colonialism in our minds, in our minds!  
19 We were born here, but we’re still ashamed to wear shalwar kameez. Like what is wrong with  
20 YOU! I just can’t deal.

[January 20, 2015/ Social Media]

Noreen’s monologue, or ‘rant’ as she called it during our later messages, focused on how she feels that people with ‘culture’ should not be worried about looking FOBby. FOBby is a reference to the acronym, “Fresh off the Boat” which Shankar (2007) observed in her work with South Asian (mostly Indian)-American youth in Silicon Valley. “FOBby” provided a lens to understand how class-coded values operated in a diasporic context, and it indexed unhip, unattractive, and generally undesirable. At NYPC, this word circulated in a similar way, where it referred to a recent immigrant who may still wear the shalwar kameez, similar to how Werbner’s description. For Noreen, it took on another layer of social meaning, since she argues that dressing Fobby is not a big deal. She defends this position by point to the mainstream young women’s retail stores, like Forever 21 or H&M, that she argues are drawing from South Asian culture for what’s in and fashionable. Given this, she implies that if it is good enough to be at these stores, it should be

acceptable more broadly. Of course at H&M, the clothing items are designed for American consumers compared to the shalwar kameez she buys on family trips to Pakistan. Her final layer of critique points out that due to the ‘remnants of colonialism in our minds,’ people seem to feel shame about wearing the shalwar kameez in public.

*Vignette 3: Noreen as the “Mod” Girl*



*Figure 5 Facebook Screenshot from Noreen's "Wall"*

In this Facebook post posted on Noreen’s profile by a friend of hers, it states:

“I wanted to tell you but couldn’t. So today you looked like the ‘modern girls’ from old black and white movies. You know the kind who are basically as normal as the others but because they don’t wear a saree or shalwar kameez they’re automatically mod. So yeah. That.”

Noreen’s friend was commenting on Noreen’s not wearing a sari or shalwar kameez, but still being dressed ‘normal’ and yet being seen as ‘modern’ or ‘mod’, the shortened colloquial form of ‘modern’. In this short online utterance, we see a reference ‘modern girl’ from old Bollywood movies, where being ‘modern’ or ‘mod’ was ascribed to non-sari/non-shalwar kameez attire. In the Snapchat ‘rant’ by Noreen, she argues for why ‘brown’ (line 4) people should not be embarrassed to wear their ‘cultural clothing’ (line 2). In the first vignette, Zara explains that she adapts her veiling based on the context. For each student in NYPC and LCU, perceptions of being

‘modern’ or not are connotative of their sartorial choices. The valuation for a kind of South Asian/Muslim modesty, where modesty can be seen as a measurement of how ‘modern’ or not, i.e. how far in line with a set of traditional norms a female is. This is read sometimes by her wearing a dupatta and/or other forms of traditional dress, and policed by the undesirable label of ‘modern’, that indexes some kind of impropriety and/or disrepute to the wearer. For the NYPC students, this was framed as a political performance, and Noreen critiques those who do not wear cultural clothing as part of a desire to be accepted by ‘white’ Americans. For the LCU students being labeled modern may have much more significant social consequences back in the rural ‘home’.

*Vignette 4: Color Week at LCU*

Every spring, LCU’s senior student body organizes a ‘Color Week’, much like the spirit week ritual I have seen at universities and schools across the US. Each day is designated with a title and theme, and students dress to the theme. The week typically starts off with ‘Daku Day,’ or ‘Gangster Day’ where students wear all-black ensembles, usually black shalwar kameez and wear dark eye make-up to give the appearance of a stereotypical gangster persona, made popular in Bollywood and Lollywood<sup>28</sup> movies. The movie persona was typically dressed in black with a long tilak on their foreheads and turbans, see image below. The students mimic this dress and bring water guns to ‘hold up’ fellow students and faculty to demand for money. These monies are collected and then the entire senior class goes for a ‘treat’ or meal with these monies.

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<sup>28</sup> Lollywood is the common term used to refer to the film industry in Pakistan, traditionally based out of Lahore-hence ‘L’ollywood.



*Figure 6 Daku Image from Bollywood Movie*



*Figure 7 LCU female students dressed as Dakus*

The next few days mirror the excitement and fun, and throughout my time at LCU, there have always been two other days in spirit week: *Paindu* [Villager] *Day* and *Yo Day* [‘Yo’ is a reference to Americanisms, and mimicking an American, often hip-hop inflected, cultural stereotypes.] These institutionalism practices where students ‘perform’ and embody stereotypic social personae along the rural-urban-cosmopolitan imaginaries often border on offensive, particularly for students from more rural cultural backgrounds. For example, although Daku Day is supposed to be in good fun, there have been many instances where senior students harass and haze the freshmen students to get their money.



*Figure 8 Paindu Day at LCU*



*Figure 9 Finding One's "inner" Paindu*



*Figure 10 Paindu Day at LCU*

Similarly, Paindu Day caricaturizes the *paindu*/villager social type and students find multiple ways to dress this social type. In figure 5, the male students wear *dhotis*, typically worn by rural laborers, and carrying the sugar cane stick, couple with bright kurtas and turbans. They may draw a large black mole on their faces. In figure 7, we can see the male student wearing a *dhoti*, carrying a sugar cane stick, holding a rooster, and wearing a traditionally ethnic-Sindhi *topi* (cap). On that day, he was seen talking to his rooster and playing a character of a rural '*paindu*' villager. Other male students would wear bright colored shalwar kameezs in yellow or orange, which contrasted the colors worn on other days. Male student performances were often a bit exaggerated or simply absurd such as carrying and talking to a rooster around campus.

Female students will pull out their most 'traditionally rural' outfit, brightly colored shalwar kameez with colorful make-up and traditional jewelry, perhaps a red flower in their hair. In figure 5, the girl in all-black on the left is also carrying a hand-held fan, to further index a rural social type, where hand-held fans are necessary as electricity may not be as common or consistent. It is

not so much that these clothes are costumes. Some of the senior girls I spoke to on the 2013 Paindu Day explained the day. They said that when they arrive at LCU as freshmen, everyone dresses up according to how they grew up, where they grew up, their family's influence, et cetera. But over time, their preferences seem to change until they all start to dress similarly. But, they said, on Paindu Day, they can bring out their 'inner paindu'. According to them, there are multiple kinds of paindus: the *shehri paindu* [paindu from city], *gaon ki paindu* [village paindu], and then you have the absurd paindu.

In fact, the girls I talked to said they borrowed some of their outfits from their mothers or these were outfits they wore a few years ago to a wedding, but what makes it caricatured is the particular curated ensemble with the make-up, jewelry, and even the accents they perform on this day that make it truly 'paindu.' Some girls wore sunglasses with the price tag still on. The sunglasses with price-tag diacritic marks a level of sophistication, where the joke is that a paindu person wants everyone to know that they *just* bought the eyewear, emphatically pointing out that their purchasing power. In this way, the rural is imagined by someone who lacks in competence of how to be sophisticated and modern. The multivalent nature of vertical mobility imaginaries is complicated by these notions of someone who may not live in the rural place anymore, but still acts, dresses, talks like someone in 'there.' On most Paindu days, LCU students will perform a 'wedding' in the late afternoon, where students play *dhol*s, large drums, and act as if one of their own is getting married in the field behind the sports center. The day-long production is demonstrative of the circulating stereotypes of an imagined rural-Pakistani 'paindu' person.

This further contextualizes the ambiguity of the caricature, where these categories must be mocked to distance themselves from these stereotypes.



*Figure 11 Yo Day with LCU girls*



*Figure 12 Yo Day with LCU Boys*

Another day during Color Week is ‘Yo Day.’ On ‘Yo’ Day, male students dress and mock or caricaturize some notion of an American youth. Sometimes this can draw from a hip hop set of fashion markers, basketball jerseys or t-shirts with Pan-African colors, and for girls, this means more ‘Western’ clothes, i.e. no shalwar kameez, but slightly ‘off’ in terms of trying too hard to look ‘cool’. Here the joke is slightly different from the caricature of the rural social type. To dress ‘Yo’ means you are trying too hard to be someone that is not really Pakistani but dressed in all Western/American clothes and accessories. It can appear like a cartoonized version of the uber-cosmopolitan, urban social type that has lost touch with the local context.



In these costumes, students create an array of social characters from the daku, to the variations of paindu, to the yo type. The social character constructions riff on sartorial boundary-making performances, interpreting the ‘absurdity’ of the social types. The mobility imaginaries displayed in these caricatures are demonstrative of the class anxieties that link rural to urban migratory patterns. The clothes that students wear on the Color Week Days are often their own clothes, sometimes from years ago, i.e. these are not specially rented costume attire. What makes them costumes is the particular sartorial ensembles and mannerisms (talking to the rooster or making specific poses) to mock the social types is what makes it decidedly ‘uncool’ or funny. These stereotyped personae are not exclusive to LCU’s campus, but rather they circulate as part of a larger set of discursive formulations around migration within and beyond Pakistan. Later in this chapter, I analyze the ‘burger’, ‘desi’, ‘paindu’, and other social types, often ridiculed and/or mocked through online and offline conversations by both LCU and NYPC students. Linking these college mocking practices to the circulating social types is central to understanding the larger Pakistani-origin youth social formation and its encounters with urbanity and cosmopolitan sociality. While LCU provides one site to observe how the urban-rural social types are laminated by multivalent mobility imaginaries, the students are drawing from the media, from Bollywood and Lollywood (the Indian and Pakistani movie industries), from online media discourses, and from their own social media networks.

*Vignette 5: Female Scholarship Students’ Sartorial Choices*

On Paindu Day, students dress as their most ‘paindu’ self and for that one day, it is acceptable. But other days, it is important to try to be a regular college student. While the social taboo for

being ethnically or economically different was one challenge, to be physically identifiable for one's cultural difference posed another level of anxiety for students. And for female scholarship students, of which there were far fewer than male scholarship students, it was common to take extra measures to make markers or signs of their cultural difference less visible. I discussed some of the rhetorical strategies, students used in chapter three's discussion of dismissive mobilities. A strategy to conceal one's financial status was to alter one's fashion and appearance. For example, Zara explained that when she moved to Lahore, she found a tailor very quickly to get her clothes made according to the Lahore fashion. When I first met her, she wore a long dark blue *kurta* with white embroidery around the collar and cuffs with a pair of dark skinny jeans and silver-sequined *khussas* (handmade leather sandals). We had met each other through the university's scholarship office, but Zara made sure to tell me that she is "not really" like the other students. When pressed for why this is the case, she explained that she, unlike others, is involved in campus extra-curriculars and makes friends with everybody.

Zara had moved from a smaller town in Punjab to its capital Lahore, while other scholarship students, like Anny and Tooba, had migrated from further distances, Baltistan and rural Sindh respectively. For these students, adapting to look and sound like the other students was more difficult, Navigating Lahore's fashion sense was very different compared to their previous experiences. Unlike Zara, Anny, who grew up in a village in Baltistan before moving to Skardu, continued to wear clothes that her family would have stitched for her. Moreover for Anny, the university campus was particularly isolating in that no one spoke her home language, Balti, and so her first year was isolating in that way. Tooba, a scholarship student from a village in the province Sindh, used to wear the full burqa, also called the shuttlecock burqa, whenever she left her home. In Lahore, she wore a diaphanous dupatta over her head, if not a full cotton chador.

These head coverings were part of their daily attire at varying levels of thickness, whether on campus or back in the village. Zara would often use Tooba as a counterpoint to herself, where Tooba was the in-migrant who did not adjust to LCU. According to Zara, she was not open to making friends with people that were different from her. In this way, rural mobility imaginaries continued to have social salience for youth as they created or disconnected from the social circles on campus.

In order to get a better understanding of the villages that participants were from, I gave participants handheld video-cameras to record some rural scenes<sup>29</sup>. The female participants were not able to record the footage themselves since it was seen as unsafe or not possible to walk around their villages, much less with a camera. Instead Zara's brothers and Tooba's father generously offered to take footage for me. In these video shorts, there are few women in the frames and when seen, they are either in heavy dark chadors or full burqas. Most of the village's public areas was still highly segregated and village women spent most of their time at home or working on their farms. The village's public square, the markets, local mosque, bus stations, were filled with mostly men. While it was expected that they wore full chador or burqa in the rural settings, the young women participants did not wear such piety-based fashions at the university, but apparently with the approval of their families. For example, before college, Zara and Tooba had both asked their mothers if it was alright for them not to observe these traditions at the university and were given approval. In this way, even after moving to Lahore, familial expectations and norms would continue to influence female students' self-presentation styles.

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<sup>29</sup> This was particularly so because as a single mother with a small child, it was not feasible for me to travel the two day journeys to their villages.

These fashion choices had social implications and affected how others saw these young women on campus. In conversations with non-scholarship students, they pointed out that they could not tell that Zara or Fareena, another student on financial aid, were even scholarship students. They claimed that Zara and Fareena blended in so well due to their apparel choices and social life on campus. On the other hand, Anny and Tooba, due to their clothing, were seen as ‘weird’ by other students, including Zara. When I pressed her for why she thought so, she said Tooba and Anny did not seem to want to socialize with anyone, that they preferred staying to themselves. This was not really the case, of course. Anny often expressed sadness for not having more friends at LCU. Tooba’s explanation for her lack of sociality was due to the extensive academic workload. Whatever their reasons were, it was certainly difficult for them to feel socially and culturally isolated from their peer group. In chapter three, I discussed how the male research participants made similar moves to hide their scholarship status but in gender-different ways. Shan’s story about not being seen as a ‘bechara’ or as pity-able is another example of how students understand that showing their social and economic differences is not advantageous to social mobility.



*Figure 13 Screenshot of Zara and Fareena mocking 'Paindus'*

In figure 10, we see Zara and Fareena in a retail store, trying on sunglasses with visible price tags, mimicking the paindu stereotype. Their participation in the circulating discourse about the paindu social type was evident in this picture that Zara shared online through her Facebook page and tagged Fareena in it.

<i>Speaker/Writer</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Translation</i>
1 Zara's caption:	"We be typical paindoos!!!" [sic]	
2 Fareena commented:	"hahahaha!!! i love this picture! its so colorful..and come on, <b>we're so cool!!!</b> [sic]"	
3 Zara responded:	"Ahahaha!! cool <i>tou khair kahin say nahi lag rahay...chicorian lag rahi</i> <smiling face with tongue>"	"We don't look cool at all. We look like cheap."

The caption and corresponding comment from Fareena suggested that she appreciated the picture and was accompanied by a slightly sarcastic tone on how 'cool' they look (line 2). Fareena's response (line 2) acknowledges that they certainly do not look 'cool' they look, but rather 'cheap.' In this short example, Zara and Fareena metapragmatically engage with the paindu social type by mocking the type in the image. A paindu look is actually cheap and not cool, yet the satirization of this rural-based social persona identifies it as one who aspires for affluent lifestyle with the material object of 'sunglasses', but in not quite the right way. It is desirable to distance themselves from this persona.

In these short vignettes, fashion and apparel choices become a site to negotiate encounters with the cosmopolitan, urban sensibilities that are found or anticipated in the university space. Zara negotiated this by adapting to the style choices that are more common amongst urban college women. Shan did the same by simply not making his financial aid status explicit, letting others to interpret his slippers and disheveled look as just another college student. The women would often

shed the piety-based head covering styles that were required in their rural home spaces and adapt these styles for the university. But as it has been discussed, adapting or accommodating to the accepted style norms of the urban space is usually not sufficient for smooth transitions. Not finding a fellow Balti speaker, as in Anny’s case, or feeling isolated from extra-curricular societies, as in Tooba’s story, makes it extra difficult for those from a non-urban space to navigate the college context.

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#### **Section 4: Typologies and Discourse about the Urban-Rural Social Types**

Color week was one opportunity for students to engage with the social types that represent the class anxieties between the rural and the urban for Pakistani-origin students. In this section, I analyze how the discourse on these social types circulates as a commentary on class-coded, urban-rural differences amongst Pakistani-origin students.

One such type is the ‘burger’ social type which has an older history in urban Pakistan. In the late 80s, the famous Pakistani comedian, Umar Shareef, coined this phrase to describe the social class who found it more enjoyable to eat burgers. This burger-eating class was mocked for using a tissue paper to eat *roti*, a common flatbread served across the Indian subcontinent. These ‘burger kids’ have long been the butt of jokes in Pakistan, seen as becoming so modernized and influenced by Western cultural practices that they are out of touch with the experience of everyday Pakistanis. Monis Rahman, founder of Rozee.pk, Pakistan’s biggest online jobs portal describes burgers as those who are spoiled and detached from the country—someone who is

enamored by things from outside of Pakistan<sup>30</sup>. And yet, being a burger has value and becoming like a burger has an aspirational cachet. Burgers are also thought to have fluent English-speaking skills, and as Rahman explains that their international exposure make them more competitive on today's job market.

### *Vignette 1: Burgers at LCU*

On a now defunct student blog called “The fortnight,” an LCU student-writer listed 15 items that answered the prompt ‘You know you’re a LCU ‘Khi’ Burger when...’ While these are written from a single writer’s perspective, this post was shared on Facebook by many LCU students when it was published back in 2013. Here, I analyze the bulk of them to see what kinds of social practices are associated with the burger social type. I have re-organized the fifteen original statements into three broad categories associated with burger kids that relate to some of the previously discussed beliefs held by the student-participants. I divided the list into three main categories: consumption, language use, and campus social networks.

### **You Know You’re a LCU Khi Burger when...**

#### **Consumption practices (often linked to Higher Financial Status)**

*College life is different from home*

1. You wonder if you can somehow get an AC in your room because you find Lahore too hot for life
2. You switch your phones to a better one because you think Lahore is safer and you won't get mugged here

*Travel*

3. You've never sat in a rickshaw before and you ask your “daddy” to buy you a car because rickshaws are too tacky, loud and time consuming
4. Your parents book your flight back home even if they hear you sneezing over the phone

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<sup>30</sup> Al-Jazeera Article. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/ajeats/2016/01/rise-pakistan-burger-generation-160111120304597.html>

*Food*

5. You say you're not burger but you are because you drink only Nestle water and you think if you drink water from the filter you'll catch some disease
6. Your minimum budget per day is Rs 500 and you always end up asking your parents to send you more money because it wasn't enough
7. The only time you eat at PDC is when you're on a budget and that too because you don't want to tell your parents that you spent that money on hosting a party.

*Clothing*

8. You wear shalwar kameez only on Fridays and dodge wearing them throughout the week because you only have limited shalwar kameez and you want to save it.
9. You buy clothes only from stores that you know are reliable i.e. MANGO, Splash, Levis, etc
10. You take out your sweaters and hoodies in early October and have all the Lahoris look at you and snigger "Karachiites"
11. You wear shorts with a hoodie and flip flops during winters because you want the best of both worlds

**Language Use**

12. You don't get Punjabi language and humor: when you haven't heard the word "poondi" before and you find the "poondi bench" very fascinating and intriguing. There are times when someone cracks a joke in class in Punjabi and you're just like, "errm was that supposed to be funny?" "And you end up asking someone to explain to you what it really meant.

**Campus Social Networks**

13. You're not interested in the student council and are only doing it because you think it is a popularity contest
14. You're too cool to mingle with Lahoris and ditch your O-week group on the first day only because you know you don't need this and you have way too many Karachi friends
15. The only 2 societies that you want to join are SLCU and Dramaline. Freshman year everyone just wants to be a part of the most popular societies and these two are the ones. Both societies already monopolized by Karachiites and more Karachi kids are eager to keep this legacy going.

In the first/consumption practices category, I further divided the statements into four categories:

1. College life is different from home; 2. Travel; 3. Food; 4. Clothing. In the first category, many of the signifiers of 'burger status are linked to the ability for these students can simple call their parents to get more money, whether the money is to buy an AC in your hostel room, a back-up cellphone because your regular phone is too expensive, or you only buy from 'reliable' stores which happened to be all non-Pakistani brand name clothing stores. Finally, there is also some



kind of non-Punjabi, non-Lahori calling out of these students. They do not wear *shalwar kameez* often; they don't get Punjab language use or humor; and they prefer not to socialize with non-Karachiite students. Of course these are perceptions and during my time at LCU, I knew many students who made friends across multiple kinds of differences, but these differences are present, observed, and circulated as part of a metadiscursive formation where rural, less cosmopolitan, and less privileged social types are positioned in contrast to more urban, affluent, cosmopolitan social types.

And of these types, one's gendered experiences can mobilize or limit where one is placed along the spectrum. For example, when explaining how Karachi boys can also be 'mummy-daddy', 'girly-boy' types, Zulfiqar, a scholarship student from Lahore, also explained that Karachi girls were not very girl-like. He felt that their use of expletives in casual conversation, non-traditional clothes (i.e. *shalwar kameez*), outspoken-ness made them seem more masculine. Jokingly he said that you cannot tell who the girls are and who the boys are in that crowd. Shan would also agree with such sentiments and say language use among LCU girls was not appropriate. At LCU, burger is overlaid with social meaning about class, gender, urbanity/rurality in Lahore. Burger is similar to Reyes' (2012) recent work on the conyo social type in the Philippines. She explains that like Agha, discussions of conyo are not so much about 'real people' as 'figures of personhood' that become objects for metapragmatic commentary. Iconizations of conyo are "motivated by a range of listener anxieties about nation, modernity, class, and race" (Reyes 2012: 4). For Pakistani-origin youth, the same can be said for social types such as 'paindu', 'yo', 'burger'. Within the demanding identity work required due to the complex situation of cultural change, ongoing migration, varying levels of transnationalism, and youth aspirational mobilities, these social figures offer a point of clarity, for how boundary-making between an 'urban' us/them

and a 'rural' us/them. While these boundaries remain inherently unstable, they are further complicated by gender-inflected stereotypes and class anxieties/aspirations.

*Vignette 2: Gender Bending and the Girly-Boy Social Type*

If the scholarship students were perceived as less financially privileged and less cosmopolitan, there was a responding negative stereotyping of the non-scholarship students. Zulfiqar, Shahid, and Haroon—three students from a rural Punjabi town—laughingly once told me a story about how they were lounging in their hostel room when they heard a shriek. Everyone in the hall rushed out to see a fellow student screaming because he saw a cockroach. For them, it was hilarious that he was scared of an insect. They guffawed as they said he must be a 'mummy-daddy-type' and a 'girly-boy.' In Lahore, the 'mummy-daddy' social type is commonly identified as one who is less independent and not street smart, i.e. someone who would freak out because of a cockroach. For Zulfiqar and his friends, this minor example demonstrated how such students needed their parents to protect them and could not take care of themselves.

They also used another social type to ridicule this incident, 'girly boy', indexing a negative gendered association for male students who are perceived as dependent. For these three young men from Gujranwala, a small town in Punjab, the 'girly-boy' is less masculine and more like a stereotypical female who would be frightened by a cockroach. During the conversation, I probed them more about what exactly a 'girly boy' is. Zulfiqar suggested that they may wear more feminine colors or shorts more often. While it is certainly not acceptable for women anywhere in Pakistan to wear shorts publicly, this connection to a feminine style is exclusive to men perceived

as feminine. Simply the visibility of male student calves is interpreted by Zulfiqar and his friends as less than masculine. The indexing of a feminine man cannot be disconnected from the dependency trope of the ‘mummy-daddy’ type. Zulfiqar elaborated that a male student who is scared of cockroaches, wears pink, and asks his parents for money, signifies a social type who is not independent and contrasts the students from rural areas who do not do such things. For these students who had to seek financial resources beyond the family to get an education, they feel more accomplished, more adult, more independent compared to these supposedly ‘mummy-daddy’, ‘girly-boy’ types. The dependency notion, that kids coming from more affluent backgrounds would be more dependent on their parents links the mummy-daddy type to the ‘burger’ social type. Both were the subjects of ridicule among students who did not have the more affluent and privileged family backgrounds.

*Vignette 3: Observing Burgers in NYC*

The New York City student-participants had close connections to some of same rural towns and villages where the Lahore student-participants grew up. One such student that I met was sm. When we met she was a sophomore studying physical therapy. Aqsa lived with her two brothers, father, and stepmother in a subsidized housing area in Brooklyn. Her family was originally from Gujranwala, like Zulfiqar and his friends, but her father immigrated to the US before she was born and worked as a cab driver. She was born in Pakistan, as were her brothers, and they lived there until her mother passed away when she was 7 years old. For several years, Aqsa lived with her aunt’s family until her father remarried and moved his kids and new wife to Brooklyn. This was during Aqsa’s early high school years and while the transition must have been challenging, I was struck by her hardiness and determination. During our first conversation, she told me with

frustration, “*Mujhe laktha hai ke meiN sara New York khud chala rahi hoon* [I feel like I am running all of New York myself].” And truly as the only daughter in the family, she was in charge of running the errands, buying the groceries, making fresh Pakistani dishes with chapatis for dinner, etc. Her stepmother did not speak English and could not help out much beyond the home. Aqsa had very clear intentions for how she hoped to use her degree.

A month after we met, I visited Aqsa’s home for lunch. As was often the case, when I visited my female student-participants, the elders of the home thought I was a friend of hers, rather than a researcher. When I entered the home, her father and brother were sitting in the living room. Aqsa escorted my daughter and me to her bedroom. It was assumed that I would not be sitting with her male relations and since her stepmother was visiting Pakistan at the time, I only interacted with Aqsa during lunch. I was also struck by the furniture, bed sheets, and lighting fixture. It seemed that the items closely resembled the furniture I had grown up seeing at my relatives’ homes in Pakistan. For example, there was a tube light on the wall above the bed, a tube light with a switch attached to it that plugged into an electrical outlet. When I asked her where did they get the tube light from, she told me that her father brought it from Pakistan. My daughter and I sat in the room as Aqsa brought lunch and drinks out to me. We drank mango juice and ate a chicken curry served with rice and yogurt. After lunch, her father and her brother drove my daughter and me to the closest subway station. On the drive, they did not speak to me at all, but they did speak to each other in Punjabi as I sat in the backseat of the taxicab. When we stopped at the stoplight near Prospect Park, an overweight white American woman walked across the zebra crossing. Her brother looked at her dad and scoffed: “*Woh burger dekho* [Look at that burger].” In this moment, I was struck that he used the term ‘burger’ to refer to a large white-American woman. Most of the references of ‘burger’ in Pakistan had been of someone from an affluent, urban background—the

kind of person in Pakistan who would eat burgers more than rotis. In Brooklyn, Aqsa's brother used 'burger' to speak of a non-Pakistani woman. The shifting characteristic of this term to index both class and nation-based anxieties of Pakistani-origin individuals in NYC, where it seemed her brother thought of the term as socially meaningful term to index excess and overconsumption.

### *Conclusion*

In Reyes' analysis of the *conyo* figure in the Philippines, she finds that the social persona is understood as participating "too enthusiastically in imperial/colonial models of behavior that are seen as overly modern and a national betrayal" (2012:5). Along similar lines, Besnier's (2011) work focuses on the *fie Palangi* figure in Tongo, a figure seen as pretending or wanting to be like a Westerner. This chapter explores the figures of burger, paindu, yo, fobby, desi, mummy-daddy as analogous moments moments of postcolonial anxiety where youth who seek to become more urbanized, English-speaking cosmopolitans. These figures provide a vantage point to understand how mobility imaginaries within and beyond Pakistan are positioned to contest what is appropriately modern, too modern, or not modern enough. In some instances, students will mock the figures through their apparel and self-presentation, simultaneously dissociating themselves from these figures. As imagined figures that are negotiated, ridiculed, and defined within the college context, we see how youth are grappling with their own mobility trajectories that take them physically and ideologically between rural and urban imaginaries. In the next chapter, I extend the notion of mobility-based imaginaries to analyze a local-global mobility framework through a discussion of Muslim youth subject-formation during precarious times.

## **Chapter Five: Encounters with and Reformulations of the Muslim Youth Subject**

### **Introduction**

Given the recent political and economic insecurities facing many Muslim-majority areas around the world, Muslim youth are eager to avail educational opportunities that offer more stability and financial mobility. As they seek such opportunities and venture away from more ‘familiar’ environments, they often confront xenophobic and racist narratives that emplace them in vulnerable positions as minorities/in-migrants across physical, imaginary, and online contexts. Public media discourse in the US and Europe continue to represent Muslim identity categories as fixed/stable forms and increasingly as threatening or dangerous. The recent US presidential campaign has only heightened these fears by evoking civilizational faultlines between Muslims and everyone else, raising fears within broader Muslim communities around the world including Pakistani Muslims and Muslim Pakistani-Americans.

As a response to this simplistic (and offensive) discourse, scholars of the anthropology of Islam have made a concerted effort to study the ambiguities and contradictions that inform the everyday lives of ordinary Muslims—an “everyday Islam” that demonstrates the complexity and (assumed) ‘ordinariness’ of Muslim lives. For some, this framing of the ‘ordinary Muslim’ seems to beg the question of how does one define an ‘ordinary’ or ‘everyday’ Muslim. What, if anything, differentiates an ‘everyday’ Muslim from, perhaps, an ‘exceptional’ Muslim? While the anthropological project is driven to understand variation across human social life, some scholars claim that the framework of the ‘everyday’ can be problematic. The dilemma of the ‘everyday’ is its characteristic as a highly non-selective deictic, i.e. everyday as in 24 hours/day; 7 days/week;

365 days/year kind-of everyday. This can inadvertently become an essentializing term that effectively ‘others’. Everyday’ can also be used to refer to the ‘ordinary’, but this is either a normative ordinariness or an unexamined assumption about ‘types’ of Muslims. In “Rediscovering the ‘everyday’ Muslim,” Fadil and Fernando argue that “a reinvestment in the ‘everyday’ or ‘actual’ lives of Muslims explicitly or implicitly mark revivalist or pious Muslims as exceptional and, more insidiously, not ‘real’” (2015:61). Through a critical reexamination of Mahmood’s *The Politics of Piety* (2005) and Hirshkind’s *The Ethical Soundscape* (2006), they suggest that such ethnographic projects about the everyday ‘Islam’ that “attempt to emphasize (most) Muslims’ sameness in order to undermine a clash of civilizations framework can end up producing certain Muslims as aberrational, unnatural, and even inhuman” (Fadil and Fernando 2015:82). While most anthropologists of ‘everyday’ Islam see their work as countering the dehumanization of Muslims in the public sphere, this critique of a normalizing frame demands a closer examination of how an anthropology of Islam frames the ‘everyday’ in current and future research concerning Muslim populations.

This dissertation is concerned with the multivalent mobile lifeworlds, or the everyday social lives, of Pakistani-origin Muslim youth in NYC and Lahore. During the course of my research, it became more and more ethnographically apparent that the precarious nature of what it meant to be a Muslim youth subject considered heavily in how youth organized their online and offline lives. In this chapter, I draw on the framework of multivalent mobility and mobility imaginaries (chapter 2) to analyze South Asian Muslim-inflected cultural practices and discourses observed in their time at college. By considering mobility imaginaries of Muslim transnational youth, emphasis can be given to how Muslim youth subject-making practices offer a site to observe an emergent transnational formation in the digital moment. In this chapter, I attempt to move beyond

some of scholarly dilemmas posed within the anthropology of Islam to ‘write’ about Muslim youth subject-making processes as an emergently mobile, transnational formation.

To further the theoretical reach of mobility imaginaries in the study of transnational formations, it is possible that an emphasis on ‘fluidity’ can easily go the way of other theories of globalization that inadvertently dislocate aspirations from the vagaries of structural and material conditions that shape how and what can be imagined. Abu El-Haj and Bonet (2002) argued that rather than focusing exclusively on how youth from Muslim transnational communities negotiate religious and ethnic identities, scholars should also examine how their social identities explicate notions of citizenship, in particular attending to how schools shape “parameters of social membership and political participation for these youth” (2002: 32). In this section I attend to some of these structural realities, and their configurations of power, that can both constrain and augments the students’ mobility. I begin by interrogating ‘emerging adulthood’ by theorizing the ‘everyday’ Muslim, a social persona of the *[Muslim] subject* of the liberal state, who is tolerant, holds democratic values, and favors diversity. The contrast to this ‘everyday’ Muslim is what has been framed within the public sphere as antithetical to the ‘everyday’ Muslim, i.e. seemingly less tolerant, less open. Oftentimes this Muslim social persona is recognized by semiotic markers of Muslim piety, i.e. the hijab or beard, more modest clothing. This more ‘pious’ Muslim subject is also considered by non-Muslims to be more politically visible around concerns of the Muslim global community, i.e. the Syrian refugee crisis, the Palestinian struggle for independence, et cetera. Oftentimes these political stances are taken through online social media activities by Muslim youth in their Facebook groups, Instagram pages, or Snapchat stories. In this chapter, I argue that Muslim college youth find themselves drawing on both these social personae depending the context, perhaps mobilizing the liberal Muslim subject when it is advantageous to acquiring greater mobility while all the while remaining cognizant of a ‘pious’ *Muslim subject*



may be seen as exceptional to this liberal Muslim subject, who is more acceptable to non-Muslims. In part one, I will discuss the various vectors of the global Muslim community, or *ummah*, that I observed during online and offline conversations with students. Through the transnational ethnographic project, one can witness the multifocality of the imagined, global *ummah*-formation. In part two, I re-theorize the concept of emerging adulthood to understand participants' negotiations of the multiple structural and discursive renderings given the 'War on Terror', the aforementioned *ummah*-formation, and 'liberal' and 'pious' Muslim subjects. Lastly in part three, I hope to attend to some of the semiotic markers that blur the lines between these social personae and reveal how Muslim youth subject choose to 'pass' or not as it were.

### **Section 1: A Muslim-Nation'/Ummah or World-making Mobility Imaginary**

The majority of the MSA club members were from immigrant, working class families who had moved from a predominantly Muslim country to NYC. They had grown up immersed in the imaginary of these Muslim-dominant countries, while living physically in the United States. For many of them, their weekend activities centered within their respective immigrant communities; friends of their parents who had also migrated had become part of an extended immigrant familial community. Whenever I tried to set up weekend plans with the girls, it was complicated because they often had prior commitments to accompany parents to a family friend's wedding or a dinner party, a fundraiser for the local mosque or other mosque event. For these temporarily place-bound in-migrants, they had created a sense of an exclusively Muslim-centric community from which college youth could imagine what a Muslim 'homeland' would have been like. In Sarroub's (2005) ethnography about Yemeni-American girls, she describes the Yemeni community lived by an emphasis on ritual and religious practice, the prominence of family, the focal role of a

Yemeni-based ethnic identity. In studies on Muslim-American youth, scholars have often framed the experience of living and commuting between two separate and parallel worlds, i.e. the ‘school’ world and the ‘home’ world. Sirin and Fine (2008) describe these parallel lives as taxing where students selectively enact different aspects of their identity depending on the context. In this study, while acknowledging the negotiations that youth often make as they balance multiple cultural selves, I wish to move away from the ‘between and betwixt’ model of understanding the immigrant experience. In Salazar’s discussion on cultural mobilities (2010, 2011), he draws attention to how historically laden imaginaries are central to voluntary movements. Along these lines, my research asks how do Pakistani-origin college youth reformulate these notions of locality and then mobilize them for their personal and academic aspirations.

Regarding the challenge to reformulate anthropology for the global age, Appadurai (1996) asks: “what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world?” When one’s weekend routines revolve around a set of social interactions where fellow immigrants reconstruct a cultural environment, youth begin to draw up on this environment as a part of their mobility imaginaries of ‘Pakistan.’ At times, this can go the way of dislocated an imaginary of the place, here Pakistan, from the place itself. For the NYPC students who currently reside on Staten Island or Brooklyn, their sense of locality extends through the circulation of mobility imaginaries about Pakistan. Pakistan and its violent partition from India based on the notion of a ‘homeland for Indian Muslims’ becomes a powerful instantiation of what it must be like to be within a Muslim community, to be part of a Muslim majority is a taken-for-granted category—where one does not feel like their difference constantly or feel the need to commute between two parallel worlds. I posit that the notion of an ummah, an all-Muslim community,

becomes an aspirational doxa in the Bourdieun sense, where a Muslim social world seems both self-evident and highly sought after.

*Vignette 1: "I just associate myself more with Pakistan"*

At NYPC, Noreen was an active member of the college's Muslim Student Association. When we met, she was a sophomore and hoped to become a more active member of the group later on. Noreen used to often hang out in the MSA clubroom, on the sister's side of course. During a hang-out in the MSA room in the spring of 2014, I listened to Noreen and her friends discuss how they reacted when they learned that Noreen was not only of Pakistani-origin but in fact, while her mother had grown up in Karachi in Pakistan and her father was born and raised in India. Noreen said that when everyone found out her father was from India, they called her '*naqli Pakistani*,' or fake Pakistani. While her friends teased and provoked Noreen, she went on to describe the reason why she felt a stronger affinity for Pakistan than for India.

"They tortured me. They like you watch, like you don't watch Pakistani dramas. Cause you're half Indian. It's not like I'm not hating on my half Indian side. It's just, I just associate myself more with Pakistan. 'Cause I like the idea of Pakistan... The reason why I support Pakistan, the reason why I ever bash India is 'cause I believe, I support the idea of Pakistan, the Partition, everything. Like I support why they separated."

[MSA clubroom, Jan 31, 2014]

In Noreen's support for the "idea of Pakistan" and for Partition, she is echoing a Muslim nationalist sentiment that has been central to the conception and development of the Pakistani nation-state. As Salazar (2011) has stated, imaginaries of fixity, or lack thereof, can influence our experiences of mobility. For Noreen, despite her physical dislocation from Pakistan, her bi-

national parental lineage, and her historical placement in 2014, and not 1947, she evokes the dominance of an imaginary of fixity with ‘Pakistan’, i.e. a nation for Muslims.

Noreen’s citational reference to Partition is worth a deeper look. In the colonial era preceding 1947 in the Indian subcontinent, the Muslim League, a political party that advocated for a separate Muslim-majority nation-state, worked with the Indian National Congress to establish an independent Indian subcontinent. Mohammed Iqbal, considered the spiritual father of the Pakistan (Esposito 1983), believed that for Muslims, all political action is an expression of Islam’s spirituality. In this way, Pakistan was driven by an imperative to create a homeland for “Indian Muslims”, i.e. the modernity of this nation-state hinges on a spiritual connection to the ummah. Islamic scholars have framed the notion of ummah as a spiritual principle before it is an organizing principle for society, economy, and polity (Akram 2007). For Pakistani-origin immigrants in NYC, this concept retains significance several thousand miles away from the territory and several decades after the fact. When asked to choose her ‘Indian side’ or ‘Pakistani side’, Noreen argues that she chooses Pakistan because of the ‘idea’ of it, i.e. the ideal that Pakistan would be a homeland for Muslim. Across multiple ethnographic moments, Noreen would echo the same sentiment, her alignment with ‘Pakistan’, her favor towards her ‘Pakistani’ side.

*Vignette 2: “any Muslim country would be much better...”*

Noreen’s support for some notion of Muslim-based nationalism was echoed in another student’s expressing the desire to move to Pakistan, despite having moved to the US when he was only three and never visited since. While Sadiq’s father, a taxi driver has attained legal status, his wife and two sons have not. As a 20-year-old public college student in New York City, Sadiq

maneuvers through his degree program and employment options with undocumented status, making the life of a Muslim in-migrant youth exponentially more difficult. The following is an excerpt from a conversation we had near the student social spaces near the library during fall 2013:

1 S: If I'm going to do engineering, um.. It's very easy, especially if you have a degree in  
2 engineering, firms will hire you. I have a lot of friends who have engineering degrees.  
3 even after they got their associates, firms have hired them, then I'll be able to move  
4 around wherever I want, like go back to Pakistan and establish a household over there  
5 M: You want to establish a house in Pakistan?  
6 S: Yeah I do.  
7 M: What? You would live there?  
8 S: Yeah.  
9 M: You don't want to live here?  
10 S: No.  
11 M: Wait, what? I didn't see that coming at all.  
12 S: I dont know it's like, **Islam wasn't a big part of my life** until I guess, you can say, the  
13 past three years, since I started college. And uh, ever since it became a bigger part of my  
14 life. It's just like, I just want to live my life, according to the standards of Islam. And it's  
15 much harder to do it over here. And like me growing up and knowing what I had to face,  
16 like how I was perceived and how I perceived the world, like I wouldn't want my  
17 offspring to like to go thorough the same things that I did. And I feel like being raised in  
18 Pakistan; and not even Pakistan, **any Muslim country would be much better for them**  
19 **than it was, for example, for me.** For example, my older brother like, only until he  
20 moved to Pakistan did he start considering himself Muslim. Like most of the Muslim  
21 generation, Pakistani Muslims generation don't really, like; they are Muslim by name.  
22 They don't really pray. They don't know much about their religion, anything. But my  
23 mother did a good job. She not only send me to a predominantly Pakistani masjid, she  
24 sent me to like Yemeni mosques, and like Turkish mosques so I can see differences of  
25 opinions, what not. So ever since it became a bigger part of my life, I've wanted to move  
26 out of the US, and also because I've been in New York City for 20 years and have not  
27 left, I just want to like get out.

[March 12, 2014, emphasis added]

Sadiq's comments to move back to Pakistan caught me off-guard. I did not expect that moving back to Pakistan would be part of his mobility imaginary of his future. Previously he had expressed some tension in being a Muslim and the fear he has about his future children feeling this way. He begins by identifying Pakistan as a possible future home, but then shifts to the slot of any 'Muslim country' as better than how it was for him. This echoes Noreen's admiration for

the idea of Pakistan. For these Pakistani-origin students in NYC, they imagine and perhaps idealize a community where Muslims are not seen as Other, threatening, or dangerous but rather find solidarity, where being a Muslim is celebrated, shared, and appreciated amongst peers.

In his comment, Sadiq describes desire to be in a Muslim nation was concurrent to his awareness of religion concurrent to the start of his college experience. If during high school Muslim youth find themselves unable to form a Muslim community in the school environment, the college MSA space makes it possible to organize themselves around a Muslim-centric social community. The notion of emerging adulthood allows us to see this formational moment when being a Muslim is not external to the educational environment, part of the doxa. For Sadiq, becoming involved with the MSA has allowed him to learn more about his faith but importantly to be around Muslim youth peers. He also recalls the difficulties in perception by others as he was growing up. In order to reconcile these feelings of difference for future generations, he considers the possibility of moving to Pakistan or another Muslim country. Students would often discuss the possibility of leaving America, without ever having really lived outside the US. As an undocumented student, Sadiq's yearning to leave the US is even more heightened, and Pakistan is symbolically a place where he may ostensibly not face the same challenges to be a practicing Muslim, that he has faced in America. Students see future migrations to Muslim nations as a mobility imaginary that will not inhibit their religious practices as well as wider societal acceptability of Muslim-inflected lifestyles.

*Vignette 3: Creating a Sense of Ummah on Campus and Online*

For the Pakistani-origin MSA students at NYPC, building a sense of community as MSA members was an important site for how their piety practices could become more present during their time on campus. The MSA club room provided a space to pray, but with that, it also was a meeting place for NYPC Muslim students to gather, to talk, and to have their own ‘ummah’ on campus<sup>31</sup>. The spatial reorganization of the club room entailed dividing the larger room into a brother’s section and a sister’s section. The door into the Sisters section is covered with flyers of upcoming events, Islamic calligraphy, and a “Welcome Sisters” sign. Once inside the sister’s section, one is greeted by a yellow painted room with a chalkboard to the right of the entrance. The chalkboard would also have flyers taped and instructions for the sisters, i.e. “Please mop up water after you make *wudu!!*” This was in reference to the practice of *wudu*, or to make ablutions, or ceremonial washing, prior to offering prayers. Across the hall from the MSA clubroom was a bathroom where students would do their wudu. There was a large window opposite the entrance, which was also the direction of Makkah which students faced while praying.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ummah* denotes ‘community’ amongst Muslims (Grewal, 2014) and it can be used to refer to a community within a specific mosque, within a geographic area, and a global sense of community amongst Muslims.



Figure 14 Door leading to sisters' section

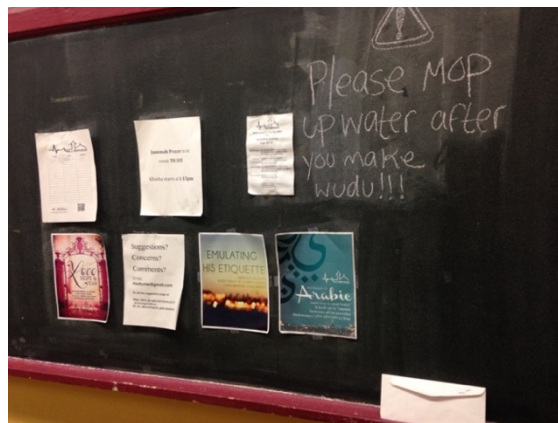


Figure 15 MSA girls section chalkboard with flyers and notices



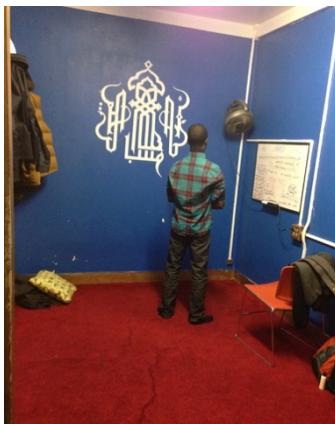
Figure 16 Bookshelf in sisters' section





*Figure 17 View into the carpeted room*

The bookshelves in the sisters' section are lined with editions of the Quran, exegetical texts, tomes regarding the Hadith, and the titles *Family Values in Islam* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Jackets are draped across too little hooks on the far back and the carpeted floor gives room to girls usually sitting against the wall, hanging out or studying between classes. The brothers' section on is a few feet way, on the other side of the door you can see on the left. The room is smaller with blue walls, red carpet, and large calligraphy on one wall.



*Figure 18 Student praying in brothers' section*

While there have been a number of studies of religious practices for Pakistani Muslims, there has been less attention to Pakistani-Americans, particularly youth. A close examination of the NYPC

MSA space allows us to see how these students engage in Muslim piety practices through the development of a campus ummah formation. The spatial arrangement of the MSA clubroom evokes a sense of building Muslim community at NYPC. The MSA students schedule their events around further community-building, both within the club and the larger NYC Muslim community. Within NYPC, they have weekly *jumma* (Friday) prayers on campus. Additionally, the sisters hold a weekly *halaqa*/meeting, an Arabic word denoting a meeting for the study of Islam or the Quran. While there is a spatial and structural separation between the Sisters and Brothers section, the MSA executive board has representatives from both sections. Similar to any student club, the MSA has regular club meetings where they review pending concerns, organize and plan for future events, and have a chance to gather as a group. The assemblage of the clubroom, the meetings, the religious gatherings all contribute to a sense of *ummah*, or community within NYPC. All these practices are diacritics that distinguish non-Muslim social practices in a time-shared way, and this distinction furthers them as metasemiotic formulations that are emblems of Muslim subjects, i.e. if you are a Muslim, you 'should' be at *jumma* prayer on Friday. Oftentimes if some MSA student did not show up for prayer or *halaqa*, her friends would later ask why she missed the event.

In these spaces, most communication occurs in English but with mixing from multiple other languages such as Arabic and Urdu. Depending on the participant framework and the possibility of having speakers and listeners with the same bilingual resources, students would sprinkle non-English forms during their hangout sessions. The use of Arabic greetings and blessings were exchanged publicly and often. For example, when Muslim students saw one another in the hallway or the club room, they would address each other with the common Muslim greeting: *Asalaam-o-alaikum*, denoting 'peace be upon you.' In response, one may say: *Wa-alaikum-asalaam*, for 'And upon you the peace.' This greeting exchange was also observable on their

social media activities, such as when event announcements were made online. Students would also pull from a variety of other Arabic blessings such as *Mashallah* (to express thanks to Allah), *Inshallah* (to say if it is Allah's will), and *Subhanallah* (to express/appreciate the glory of Allah) in offline and online conversations. The reciprocal use of these speech forms constitute emblematic routines of in-group piety-inflected conduct, which are recycled from routines typical of the home/mosque environment and are also recycled into online digitized media formats like YouTube and Facebook.

#### *Vignette 4: The Digitized Ummah*

Since my project focuses on Pakistani-origin Muslim youth, my analysis of the digital ummah demonstrates that Pakistani-origin Muslim youth worldwide, whose media products become a sort of connective tissue, brings this dispersed Muslim youth together. The MSA Facebook group page offered another site to examine how students exchanged information about MSA activities, piety concerns, and non-MSA concerns as well. As a member of the MSA-Sister's page, I observed their social media communicative exchanges regularly. For example, following a bake sale organized by the Sisters section, a Muslim-American student shared the following comment:

*Salaam Alaikum sisters! Alhamdulillah our first ever bakesale for this semester was a great great success!! And it is all thanks to you! JazakumAllahu Khayran! May Allah swt accept all of our efforts! May we all meet in Jannah where we can have the biggest ever feast together Bi'ith'nillah\_❤️❤️❤️ #NYPCMs! #LetsGetThemJannahPoints!*

In this comment, the writer addresses the audience of sisters with the Muslim greeting. She follows with *Alhumdolillah*, or 'Praise be to Allah', to thank God for the success of their bake sale. She then also thanks the sisters directly followed by *JazakumAllahu Khayran*, or 'May Allah reward you [with] goodness.' This is proceeded by more prayers and to meet in *Jannah*, or 'Heaven'. She ends with a final appeal *Bi'ith'nillah*, 'With the permission of Allah,' several love emojis and two hashtags. The first hashtag is a reference to their own MSA. This hashtag falls

under the rubric of searchable hashtags identifying a specific group to create a catalog of updates with the same identifier. The next hashtag is of a non-searchable tag like #LetsGetThemJannahPoints, meaning ‘Let’s get them [heaven] points.’ This single utterance is demonstrative of the way Pakistani-origin Muslim youth would differentially incorporate Arabic religious lexemes into everyday club activities. The reference to ‘Jannah points’ indexes a way to earn ‘*Sawaab*’, an Arabic term to mean ‘reward.’ From a Muslim worldview, *Sawaab* refers to the spiritual merit or rewards one can accrue for the performance of good deeds. Here, the third person pronoun ‘them’ as an emphatic definite plural determiner draws from the African American English register, where ‘them’ can be used to specify a thing, as in ‘them jeans’ or ‘them fries.’

Aside from such reference to MSA club activities, I also observed many students asking each other questions around which course to take in the fall, if anyone has an extra textbook to borrow for the intro to biology course, requests for prayers for upcoming exams, or advertising for some extra employment opportunities. Oftentimes these requests are framed around the interests of maintaining a pious Muslim social persona. For example, the following post is to share an internship opportunity with the Halal Institute of America:

Salaam Alaikum sisters! an institute by the name of "Halal Institutue of America has some internship offerings that some of you may be interested in! "Halal Institute of America is excited to offer internships to talented young Muslims who are enthusiastic to help us realize our dream of serving the Muslim-American community. The institute is dedicated to promoting a Halal and healthy lifestyle through certification of the highest standards. In addition, our vision encompasses the spiritual, business, and educational needs of the Muslim-American community by supporting Halal start-ups, empowering the youth, and partnering with Islamic scholars and community leaders. [sic]

‘Halal’ denotes an adjective used to refer to meat prepared according to prescribed Muslim law. To refer to a ‘halal’ lifestyle or ‘halal’ start-ups extends the meaning to describe any practice or group that follows adheres to a form of Muslim piety. On Facebook as well as during daily social

interactions, students would often exchange information about how halal the food near NYPC actually was. There were intense discussions of whether the sour cream at Chipotle, the Mexican fast food restaurant, was halal or not. A student shared the following news about Shake Shack's meat:

hey sisters i know we were talking abt shake shack being halal but unfortunatly they only supply halal meat to middle eastern countries. the shack shack in NY have extra suppliers *unsure emoticon* [sic]

These online and offline comments with Muslim-Arabic lexical items, occasionally African American English register and style, and related topics (i.e. greetings, prayers, references to halal/Jannah/etc.) index both a pious speaking subject and a pious listening subject (Inoue 2006). This community building through online and offline interactions and spaces, i.e. the club room and its décor, further the sense of a youth-defined Muslim community at NYPC.

The linguistic, organizational, and spatial characteristics of the NYPC MSA's online and offline activities index a local sense of Muslim community, or *Ummah*, an arguably more expansive (less organized) than other notions of community they may be part of. By this I mean, the global *ummah*, which consists of the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world<sup>32</sup>, more of a discursive formation that can be evoked or imagined as part of a Muslim mobility imaginary. By considering students' online social media usage with respect to their offline social interactions at NYPC, I posit an emergent global youth ummah formation.

It follows that if *ummah* is a notion of a worldwide Muslim community, youth ummah-making would be inflected by youth-specific online practices. These practices are inflected by the diverse

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<sup>32</sup> Pew Research Center estimate 2010.

online communities, including the MSA group page, in which Muslim youth participate. On the general MSA page, the following post was shared:

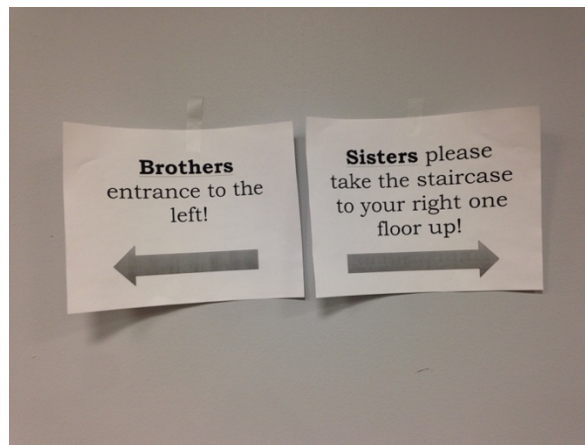
Assalamualaikum Dear Brothers and Sisters. For those taking their finals this upcoming week, remember that every minute you have in this life is a gift from Ar-Rahman. Therefore you should make the most of your studying and strive for excellence. Ultimately your studies in school will translate into a bigger set of skills you can use for your Ummah someday (inshallah). Pray those extra rakats of Sunnah and Nafl; And lastly, make constant *dua* [prayer] for the success of you and your Brothers/Sisters.

Following the linguistic patterns of MSA-talk, the writer also appeals to the reader to consider academic success to the service of the Ummah. The larger religious community benefits from the academic endeavor. In this chapter, I want to call attention to how the online space influences and extends the sense of ummah beyond the physical realm of the university campus to the broader online sphere. The ideological value of a worldwide Muslim ummah and how youth are positioned as a main group of media-makers in this community allows us to another formulation of Muslim youth that is not framed as “between worlds”, rather it is a kind of world-making that demands closer scholarly investigation. Due to the widespread distribution of Muslim youth around the world and even in this ethnography, we can see how this dispersed emergent formation follows along diverse mobility imaginaries and yet with a sense of ‘a’ Muslim ummah that runs through.

*Vignette 4: Gendered Ummah-making and the Female Muslim Subject*

Veiling, or *purdah*, has become a dominant trope for scholars in Europe and America to analyze Muslim women’s (and men’s) hetero-sexual purity standards, also considered the “key to marriage and the formation of Muslim families” (Mohammad 2013: 183). In her ethnography on British-Pakistani women, Mohammad claims that this fixation and its impact on women’s spatial

mobility is especially significant in the diaspora for working-class Pakistani Muslims. While there has been a necessary critique of seeing the veil (or veiling practices) as a “paradigm of comportment” rather than chastity, Abu-Lughod explains: “Veiling communicates deference, but its vocabulary is that of sexuality or chastity” (1986:161). She goes on to argue that for Bedouin women in Egypt, the veil was used based on the participant framework. For example, when they would visit Cairo and see men who are non-Bedouin or of lower status, they would not veil (Ibid.). In this way, the veil is always contingent on who is present in the interactional context. While this view of veiling as a marker of deference and a value for chastity, with regards to particular men, broadened the symbolic value of the veil within scholarly discussions, Alvi (2013) argues that the veil also constitutes a value of concealment. Through this practice of concealment and the separability of male and female members of a family, a mosque, or the MSA clubroom, I would extend this communicative reach of purdah for Muslim youth activities as not only a vocabulary to maintain (sexual) distance between the sexes *before* marriage, but also as a way of creating a gendered space for ‘safe’ conversations within the all-female group.



*Figure 19 Signs directing attendees to Brothers' and Sisters' sitting sections*

In chapter two, I briefly discuss the spatial layout of the brothers and sisters section as a form of purdah or veiling that separates the brothers and sisters. The spatial organization of the larger MSA space into a female and male sections was also how MSA club meetings were organized, with the male students on the left side of the room while the female students sat on the right. There would be a row of desks marking space between the two. During an MSA lecture, I observed two signs pointing attendees to their respective gendered entrances (figure 16). During the event, male and female students would set in separate sections of the auditorium, never together. Afterwards, they took pictures to post on social media of themselves. In these images, distance between the sexes was maintained with all the male students on the left and female students on the right. Sarroub (2005) found a similar gendering separations of common space for Yemeni-American high school students that was reinforced at school and at home. In rural Pakistani settings, Alvi (2013) traces the inculcation of segregation to childhood. She explains that parents feared their daughters losing this embodied sense of shame by moving too much outside the home, including in the the neighborhood to play with other children. Contrasting this more external enforcement of sex-segregation, the gendered practices among Muslim college youth were not explicitly mandated by parents or an imam or religious leader who determines how space should be organized. Neither is NYPC interested in maintaining separations between men and women, as they do to some extent at LCU, in terms of the strict policies of the single-sex dormitory. Significantly it is the students themselves who produce and enforce these gendered spaces as another space to practice their sex-specific ummah-formation practices.

For female Muslim college students in New York City, the Muslim Student Association club room and the ensuing social circles provided a place for them to literally let their hair down. Noreen and other students who wore hijab would often remove their headcoverings and share



stories, jokes, and lunch during the middle of a school day. Noreen, Maria, and Hala all lived on Staten Island, and the daily one and a half to two-hour commute meant that it was usually a long time before they would be home from college. The MSA club room provided that 'home' feeling away from home, and unsurprisingly the freedom to practice and discuss their faith identity was a major part of this space. They would frequently debate and disagree on conversations about faith or practice, but they simultaneously acknowledged the comfort of this space. This is echoed in the online meeting place on the Facebook MSA-girls social group where they post updates about upcoming events, informal get-togethers, or to ask if anyone found a silver ring on the bookshelf or a lost pink umbrella. As I have mentioned, the online space was also gendered with three Facebook group pages for the NYPC MSA: the general page, the brother's page, and the sister's page. By dividing the three, the MSA was able to create a sense of veiling online and offline. This also translated into certain gendered events, for example an Eid (a major Muslim holiday) Formal for sisters only. In this way, their online and offline practices created gendered spaces for students to practice concealment as well as augment their gendered community building.

One such example of this was when I visited Hala's home for dinner. She had also invited Noreen and Maria, fellow NYPC MSA friends. All three Pakistani-origin students began to discuss post-wedding sexual relations. Hala had recently married her cousin-now husband and moved to London. Soon after the wedding, she became pregnant and decided to move in with her parents for a few months. My daughter and I entered the house from the kitchen entrance and were lead directly to the sitting area next to the kitchen. I understood that Hala's father was sitting in the main TV sitting area, and we were expected to stay in this more female space of the house. Over the next few hours, we all caught up on each other's lives. Hala brought up the issue of sex and sexual satisfaction in marriage. She explained that the three of them had shared a YouTube video

where female satisfaction was discussed by Muslim scholars, and emphasized as an important part of marriage. Immediately Maria pointed out that her mother would find this conversation “inappropriate.” Maria’s mother had grown up in a conservative Muslim household in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) and moved to the US after her eldest son, Maria’s brother, was born. Maria’s reference to her mother and the generational shift of being a Muslim college student in NYC discussing orgasms with her college friends demonstrates the reformulation of the purdah, where while gendered spaces still exist, young Muslim women discuss their future sexual lives in the comfort of all-female spaces. In this moment, I observed the ways that gendered spaces for emerging adults in the MSA clubroom created opportunities for them beyond college to create opportunities to discuss topics that are typically seen as not appropriate.

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## **Section 2: Precarious Muslim Demeanors within the Current Global Moment**

The Pakistani-origin Muslim in-migrant youth in my research were highly cognizant of how Pakistan is formulated as, Rana describes, a “feeder state” that produces and exports terrorism but also stands on the frontlines of the “War on Terror”. In Rana’s ethnography (2011), he chronicles the worldviews of Pakistani labor migrants in a larger global racial system; and while my ethnography focuses on a very different population, these young people are also familiar with the fear associated with migrating terrorism and with the expectant gaze of both their universities and respective state actors who hope that the students do not become like ‘them.’ Rather they should become more like ‘us,’ a somewhat reformulated version of Mamdani’s critique of the public

distinction of ‘good Muslims’, those that side with Western powers, versus ‘bad Muslims’, or those who disagree and protest Western national interests<sup>33</sup>.

This tendency to read Muslim populations through a binaric morality has been preserved and extended onto college campuses and the classification of Muslim Student Associations as worthy of surveillance. For New York-based Muslim college students, the question of their membership and positionality in society is a concern perhaps best exemplified by 2012 breaking news report that NYPD was monitoring Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) chapters across universities in NYC as well as other northeast universities, including the University of Pennsylvania. This news story was an instantiation of the state’s surveillance of youth subjects as ‘potential’ extremists that need to be monitored. The story also demonstrates developing ideologies of Islamophobia across the American public sphere that Muslim youth subjects must face today. In one NYPD report, an undercover officer details traveling with 18 Muslim students from the City College of New York to upstate New York on a whitewater rafting trip. The officer noted the names of participants who were on the CCNY MSA board. While there was some initial outrage from Muslim students about the deep level of investigation of student clubs, there was also a deadening silence from non-Muslim students, faculty, and administration. This particular event provides a frame to this study where not only are Pakistani-origin Muslim youth seen as threatening by the state, local state actors, i.e. policy and city officials, also view MSA-type groups as worthy of surveillance.

The lack of generational specificity with regard to the category of youth is problematic, especially for contemporary Muslim college students. In a shocking news story, the *Telegraph* reported a

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<sup>33</sup> In his book, Mamdani argues that terrorist acts must be understood as a thoroughly modern construction at modern, civilizational politics.

UK government proposal on Counter-Terrorism and Security required that every educator, including pre-school teachers, should monitor students to prevent them from being drawn to terrorism (Mendick and Verkaik 2015). The satirical hashtag #ToddlerTerror began trending on Twitter as many officials and civil rights activists responded that the government should be finding ways to support vulnerable students, rather than creating fear and paranoia both within Muslim communities and in schools. The notion that toddlers are included in security monitoring is demonstrative of how youth is an unstable category that may not align with notions of youth found in other moments of encounter. While toddler counter-terrorism policy seems patently absurd, for NYPC Muslim students, the NYPD surveillance of their club activities in New York City and the tri-state area was also equally problematic.

In order to understand how emergent adulthood can be a more useful generational category for anthropology, I want to particularize it for Muslim youth subjectivities. In contrast to many of their peers, the notion of ‘emerging’ is not structurally afforded to Muslim youth as they reach college age. While there may be a sense that college is a space-time where new freedoms are allowed but regulated by an adult-run administration (Nakassis 2013), Muslim college students are not regulated not only by an adult-run administration but by familial expectations *and* by state actors and institutions. For example, while the NYPC, and LCU, students are enjoying free-time on campus, they are also balancing expectations to get married after college (for the young women), to find employment (for the young men), are vigilantly mindful of the state’s gaze on any public actions or markers of their own Muslim-ness. Arnett (2000) states that, “Emerging adulthood is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations.” Extending the utility of this concept for Muslim youth, I posit that the ‘emerging’ aspect of emerging adulthood is conferred to Muslim students only if they are willing to divest, even if temporarily, their more pious Muslim practices and to be good liberal and neoliberal

subjects. Otherwise, Muslim youth are seen as Muslim adults whose piety can mark them as possibly divisive, worthy of surveillance, and not afforded the category of youth.

*Vignette 1: Surveillance Perceptions at NYPC*

Muslim college students remain cognizant of their position in the national and global discourse on terrorism that implicates them as possible extremists simply by being explicitly Muslim. A NYPC student, Jamal, wrote an article titled “The culture of Muslim surveillance in the [college] system has to stop” for an online college student news platform, where he referred to the 14-year history of the NYPC Muslim Surveillance Program (see ACLU) which has targeted MSAs as part of this policy.

“[NYPC]’s very own MSA at one point in time had a sign placed up in its clubroom that read, “No politics allowed.” It was a very problematic sign to have up in a time when (this sign was up during the 2011 and 2012 semesters) drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen, the Arab Spring, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were occurring simultaneously. Despite the fact that a large number of Muslims in the CUNY system are immigrants, or are children of immigrants, they were unable to comfortably discuss political realities that affected their families overseas, as well as the realities of Islamophobia within the United States. “Political discussion” (i.e. anything deemed controversial like discussions of human rights abuses and war crimes done by America) was effectively censored within the MSA, not for any religious or pragmatic reason (like avoiding fights or disunity), but due to the fear that some in the MSA may be working for the NYPD... No one wanted to be that guy that ended up on a news reel being labeled a terrorist because the NYPD deemed Muslims that are anti-Iraq and Afghanistan war, that don’t support the troops in unjust wars, or that don’t support Israel, to be a threat to national security.”

Jamal’s reference to the policy to avoid political discussions was indicative of the sense of fear within the MSA to ensure the safety from NYPD’s gaze. This paranoia around surveillance for showcasing sympathetic viewpoints to Muslim communities facing war and violence extended to a conversation I had with the female participants. During the dinner at Hala’s home that I described earlier, Hala, Maria, and Noreen were discussing some strange comments that they had read on the NY College MSA Facebook group page. Maria explained that this person, a fellow MSA brother, was purportedly voicing support for extremist ideas and anti-American sentiment.

As I asked more questions, Noreen laughed, “He’s probably a NYPD informant!” I asked how does one identify an informant? They explained that oftentimes there would be a student who has been getting into trouble for drugs or some social misconduct issues. After a few months, that person would come back to the fold as a reformed Muslim and make provocative comments on social media, sometimes sympathizing with extremist ideas. Hala explained this was a red herring for them because everyone knew better than to make such comments publicly. She elaborated that they were aware of the surveillance program. “The only reason anyone would say that is if they are already working for the police.” In his article, Jamal expresses discontent that the CUNY system has made no serious effort to protect the civil liberties of its Muslim students. These surveillance measures play an important role how Muslim youth are not afforded the ‘emerging’ aspect, but rather are seen as adults whose demonstrations as a pious Muslim subject deem suspicion.

*Vignette 2: Diversity and Core Values at LCU*

The Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (also known as the Global UGRAD Program)<sup>34</sup> offers Pakistani college students an opportunity to spend one semester at a liberal arts college in the US. This exchange program is part of the US government’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The ECA website describes is the bureau’s purpose:

In an effort to reflect the **diversity** of the United States and global society, ECA programs, funding, and other activities encourage the involvement of American and international participants from traditionally underrepresented groups, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.

(ECA website, my emphasis)

This effort to encourage educational exchange program that reflect the ‘diversity’ of the global society aligns with the interests of a liberal subject who would fit such state-approved cultural

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<sup>34</sup> <http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/global-undergraduate-exchange-program-global-ugrad#sthash.LBrkOkDX.dpuf>

exchange programs. For LCU students, the opportunity for a fully paid semester at a liberal arts college in the US was very enticing. They applied to this heavily and as I discussed earlier, many of my participants were able to take part in this program.

In chapter three, I discuss my visit to Lahore and meeting with Shan before his UGRAD interview at the US Embassy in Islamabad. Shan had discussed how he highlighted his Pathan identity in order to mark his diversity both within Pakistan and more generally. In some ways, he strategically deployed his ethnic identity to appeal to the counselors and make a claim for an emerging adulthood, interested in learning about American culture and people. By mobilizing his ethnic ‘diversity’, Shan was able to show himself as a worthy aspirational liberal subject. In the transcript below, Shan gives his perspective on the purpose of the exchange program and what they are looking for.

1	M: You're leaving for the..	
2	S: USEFP interview.	
3	M: What is this?	<i>Yeh kya hai?</i>
4	S: It's like a cultural exchange program.	
5	M: That the other students are currently doing.	<i>Jo ye kar rahay hain.</i>
6	S: Where the others are right now.	<i>Baqi geya hua hai.</i>
7	They give some priority to Pathans.	
8	M: Why?	<i>Kyoon?</i>
9	S: I don't know. They want to change us. (laughing), maybe something like that.	
10	They want to change our core values. Basically it's like cultural exchange program so...	
11	The rest of the LCU students have already gone on exchanges (abroad) on their own money	<i>Baqi wo patha hai LCU walay saray <u>already exchange pe ge</u> hothay hain</i>
12	Something like that, so it's a free opportunity for us	<i>apne paison se, <u>something like that tho</u> it's a free opportunity for us</i>

[March 28, 2014, Lahore]

For Shan, such programs are a way to balance the opportunity to experience the world compared to other LCU students, especially for scholarship students who cannot afford to travel abroad. It is notable that Shan focuses on the notion of ‘changing’ the students and their core values and aligns that the desire for diverse student-applicants has something to do with this. Shan and other students in Lahore seem to understand that while within Pakistan and beyond, their less privileged backgrounds and class-coded, ethnic minority status could be interpreted as deficient, this also can be mobilized to gain greater access and mobility. By portraying an interest in becoming Pakistani-origin Muslim subjects that align with liberal subject values, they can make a clearer argument for mobility. All the while, Shan points out that there may be some perception of his ‘core’ value as needing to be changed. For Shan, his ‘emerging’ status viable as long as he self-presents as someone interested in changing himself and being open to other cultures and communities. Further, this reflects an aspect of the MSA surveillance vignette in that, Shan’s mobility is bolstered by the current US policy regarding educational exchanges for Pakistani-origin students. Contrastively, for the Pakistani-origin MSA students, it is more about not suspending their mobility as long as they remain guarded and mindful of the counter-terrorism policy filtering into their student organization.

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### **Section 3: Muslim Fashion Styles and Passing as a Liberal Muslim Subject**

In this section, I present examples of participants mobilizing the multiple readings of their Muslim identity via fashion choices, in favor of passing as a liberal Muslim subject and thereby accessing greater opportunities of mobility.

#### *Vignette 1: Sadiq*



Sadiq, an NYPC student, and I were having a conversation near the library about Sadiq's work life. As an undocumented student, Sadiq relied on his earnings to pay for college. At first, he would work using his younger brother's identification. His brother was born after they moved to America, but then he tried working on his own. He detailed working over 60 hours a week at a Pakistani-owned restaurant for a mere two hundred dollars. Then he began to describe the job search after receiving a work permit.

1 S: But yeah so when I got the work permit, I started looking for jobs. I applied to retail  
2 positions, but you know my beard, especially in retail cuz they like that clean shaven,  
3 prim and proper look. So I wasn't getting callbacks and then you know, one of my  
4 friends, he, the internship I was speaking about, he um...he got this internship first year  
5 of college over here. And it was for a firm on Wall Street. The name of the company is  
6 Bamco? It's a manufacturing company, where they manufacture things for major  
7 companies like Coca Cola, for Mars, M & M's, whatever, and, uh.. after 6 months they  
8 hired him. So he's basically like an assistant to an assistant. He makes like about 70K.  
9 He's..

10 M: This is like that guy...? (referencing an earlier conversation)

11 S: No, no, no, no. This is random. Someone else that I also went to high school with that  
12 goes to NYPC. So I told him that like you know, can I get an internship? And he told me,  
13 yeah yeah sure, of course. And then a week later, [his friend said] you can come in for the  
14 internship but you're most likely going to have to shave your beard before you come. And  
15 at that time, my beard did mean something more than just a beard to me as it does now.  
16 So at that time, I didn't want to shave it off. Then a couple of weeks later, I decided  
17 to trim it down so I look my clean. And then my friend told me we are hiring a bus boy,  
18 and we need, you know, if you wanna come in, it's good money. It's tips. it's a  
19 neighborhood where people tip well. So I said, might as well give it a try. I worked there  
20 the first day. I made a hundred and fifty dollars my first day working over there for a  
21 7-hour shift

22 M: That's great.

23 S: Yeah so, my beard was, not falling off my face. Very, like much smaller than it is now.  
24 And I remember when I first started working over there, like, I have a full beard. So they  
25 came up to me like, (chuckle) like they thought I was just like someone of the crowd, and  
26 they just started talking to me.

27 M: How would you, like... what would you call the crowd?

28 S: Hipsters. (laughing)

29 M: (laughing) That's funny.

30 S: It's just like very like hipster-ish. The way you would perceive Williamsburg or you

- 31 perceive, Astoria now.
- 32 M: Yeah... I know.
- 33 S: That's what Long Island City is becoming. (laughing) And uh, you know, even like, even  
34 now, they compliment, like, I get compliments on my beard.
- 35 M: What do they say exactly?
- 36 S: I'll be like
- 37 M: How do they compliment your beard?
- 38 S: I'll be like putting food down, and they'd be like you have a very magnificent beard. and  
39 then I'd be like...
- 40 M: Who would say this?
- 41 S: Customers, anybody. it's been like
- 42 M: They're just admiring your beard.
- 43 S: Yeah They're just (laughing) and then for a while, I just, I still used to trim it, because I  
44 didn't know. And I was kinda scared to ask if I can grow it or not. Only until recently,  
45 where I asked a manager who does keep a light beard. I asked him if I can grow it out, he  
46 said yeah, go ahead, go for it. I'll grow it out with you.
- 47 M: (laughing)
- 48 S: I was like, great! (chuckle)
- 49 M: But it's like the significance is totally different.
- 50 S: Yeah for them it's just a trend, a fad. **But for me, it means so much more.**

Sadiq's beard was a semiotic marker of his religious practice and identity for himself but turned out to mark hipster style for his boss. For many students, the external markers were a reminder of their identity as Muslims. Over the background noise of a library group study area, he explained that before considering an internship in a corporate environment, his friend said that he may have to shave his beard. He found a similar stigma when interviewing for retail positions. As an undocumented student, Sadiq has fewer opportunities for employment mobility and yet, he refused to remove the beard. Finally, he found a job as a bus boy that was well-paying and where

his beard was not unwelcome. As he explains, he was still concerned that he could not grow it long, as he would like to. At this restaurant, his boss, the manager, also has a beard but his beard passes as a marker of a male hipster fashion. In this environment, Sadiq's beard is appreciated and considered 'gnarly', as he told me laughingly later. In this vignette, Sadiq's beard leads to multiple readings of what kind of Muslim subject he is. In the retail and corporate sector, his beard is considered not suitable. Sadiq does not spend too much time speculating in the conversation, but rather moves on to a job where the beard is seen as aligning with a hipster social type. In this environment, his 'magnificent' beard is not an impediment to his employment mobility. This form of passing as hipster allows Sadiq to find socioeconomic opportunity that may otherwise be inaccessible to him.

In *A Chosen Exile* (2014), historian Allyson Hobbs analyzes the historical pattern in African-American communities whereby those who could pass as white would leave behind families and communities in order to escape slavery and ante-bellum racism. This shift to gain socioeconomic opportunities through the mobilization of racial indeterminacy positions mobility imaginaries within an extraordinary framework. While I want to be clear that the current stigmatization of Muslim communities in America is not analogous to the story of racism against African-Americans, this concept of 'passing' in order to avoid stigma and humiliation does provide an interesting framework to think about how the beard can become a shifter that allows some male youth to pass as liberal subjects in contemporary NYC within particular participant settings. Following this job, Sadiq found a better paying waiter position at a restaurant in the upscale Manhattan neighborhood of Chelsea. He has kept his beard and finds that it still allows him to be seen as 'hipster' in this context. This form of passing as a hipster became essential to Sadiq's aspiration for greater financial and economic mobility.

*Vignette 2: “Hot” Beards in NYC*

The construction of a uniquely Muslim community within the larger college campus was evidenced by their linguistic practices, by their social group formations, and by their fashion choices. These fashion choices were also construed by other students in unexpected ways. After Friday on-campus prayer in the club room, I joined Maria, Noreen, and Hala for lunch at a local pizza spot. Between bites of cheese pizza, we began discussing a fellow Pakistani MSA member, or one of the ‘brothers’, Osman. Noreen and Hala were gushing over how ‘hot’, or attractive, they found him. The markers of attractiveness they pointed out were atypical from mainstream markers of ‘hotness’ for American youth. For example, they remarked that Osman has “such a nice beard.” Maria added that he orders his *thobes* (floor-length male shirt worn as traditional male fashion in the Arabian Peninsula) and *shalwar kameez* from Pakistan. She gushed that he orders from the male fashion line of Junaid Jamshed, a former pop icon turned evangelical Muslim figure in Pakistan.

In conversations with Osman, we discussed his Muslim fashion choices, which, aside from his beard, are somewhat unique compared to other NYPC Muslim students. Osman grows his beard to about a fist-long length and he shaves the facial hair above his lip. This beard is considered according to the Sunnah, or the set of practices recognized as ways of emulating the Prophet Muhammed. Additionally, Osman frequently wears *shalwar kameez* or a *thobe*, regardless of the weather. I mention that because typically these forms of dress are not designed for cold and snowy weather conditions. After all, the thobe is indigenous to the Arabian Peninsula, typically a much warmer climate than NYC. However, Osman’s answer for why he chooses to deliberately wear Muslim male fashion is that he believes this to be a way of showing solidarity with Muslim

women who wear hijab. He believed that the mandate within Islam for modesty was for both men and women. If his fellow Muslim sisters adhere to these philosophies throughout the year, he would rather wear a *thobe* or *shalwar kameez* than jeans and a sweater, even when it is snowing out.

From this vignette, the Muslim beard, an enregistered emblem of Islamic piety, is valued and admired by young Muslim women. While physical attraction itself can be seen as a transgressive act within conservative communities, the piety-based fashion choices of Osman allow them to admire him from within. The beard becomes recontextualized as a way of expressing piety and public expressions of piety are seen as admirable and desirable.



Figure 20 Screenshot of Facebook post about Fitnah beards

For Hala and Maria, this public representation of his solidarity with the sisters was powerful and shared in multiple mediated settings. In the Facebook screenshot (figure 18), Hala shared a picture of a magazine article from *Sisters: the Magazine for Fabulous Muslim Women*. She captioned the article, “Tending your Facial Forest: 5 Steps to a Majestic Beard,” with “Them beards are *fitnah* lol.” The term *fitna*, meaning ‘temptation,’ ‘trial,’ ‘torments,’ ‘discord,’ or ‘civil strife,’ appears many times in the Quran (Goto 2004). Within the register of American Muslim youth, this term becomes significant as the hijab, or veiling practices, are also seen as a kind of *fitnah*. These gendered forms of *fitnah* practice allow both men and women to take part in public forms of piety display that are simultaneously a trial during a moment of xenophobia and discrimination for Muslims in the US—a challenge during a moment of heightened Islamophobia. In the literature on Muslim youth, the identity categories of ‘Muslim’ and ‘Arab’ are often conflated with one another so that the gradations and differences between a South Asian Muslim, an Arab Muslim, a Muslim-American all converge into one nebulous category. In their daily choices however, these cultural differences are observable and differentiated, specifically through hairstyles, dress, and linguistic practice.

### *Vignette 3: Noreen and the Hijab*

While my fieldwork commenced during the summer of 2014, I continued being in contact with participants at LCU and NYPC over Facebook and other social media. Noreen was experimenting with the hijab then. She would sometimes wear a dupatta to college and then take it off. During the MSA’s Islamic Awareness Week, she participated in the “Wear Hijab for a Day” even to help create awareness about Muslims. Within the last year, she decided to wear the hijab more regularly and she also began to use her Instagram profile to showcase her Muslim fashion sense.

As she explained her decision to wear the hijab in a thoughtful Facebook message between myself and another hijabi NYPC students:

1        So by no means do I ever think hijab is supposed to cover your beauty ‘cause men think  
2        you're attractive or anything. For me, it's a reminder or just a representation of my own  
3        personal god consciousness. It just reminds me to be more mindful of my words or my  
4        actions, it reminds me to be nicer to random people because they clearly see that I'm a  
5        Muslim. It makes me more mindful of issues that are far greater than not wearing a hijab  
6        lol for instance lying or talking about someone behind their back. I find myself  
7        consciously holding back on saying anything about anyone that they wouldn't want to  
8        hear of they were there.

She describes the hijab as a representation of her own personal god consciousness, echoing a similar sentiment to Osman and Sadiq’s wearing of the beard. For them, it is a very personal decision, but they acknowledge that due to its visibility, it marks them as Muslim subjects. This marking of Muslim social persona may be perceived as ‘cool’ to non-Muslims, or a form of passing as in the case of Sadiq’s beard, and as ‘cool’ to other Muslims, as in the case of finding Osman’s beard attractive or Noreen feeling that it is a way to be visibly Muslim for her own sense of self. These multiple readings of Muslim signifiers offer a rich site to consider how mobile Muslim diacritics are reformulated by the local and global context.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have attempted to reformulate how we understand Muslim youth social personae in the contemporary moment through an analysis of their college practices in NYC and use of religious diacritics to further their mobility trajectories in multiples ways. For them, it is not always about becoming more mobile as liberal, modern subjects of the state. Mobility itself can have a more expansive analytic reach if we consider how Muslim youth are cognizant of multiple

stereotypes and norms and find ways to subvert these notions to become, at times, more successful students or more financially stable, but also to become better practicing Muslims, however that may be defined for them. Through these multiple subversions, we can see how everyday Muslim youth are engaging in extraordinary practices that may not be seen as such by researchers and scholars. An understanding of Muslim youth subjecthood would humanize their intellectual mobilities that are often disguised within public discourse as an inaccessible, pre-modern religious sociality. Instead by reformulating the social meaning of how college youth aspire to construct themselves as a globally situated kind of modern Muslim subjects and through the notion of ummah-formation, we can see how Muslim youth social personae do not fit neatly in the liberal subject-making models that circulate in scholarly circles, especially given the precarious nature of this social persona. In this chapter, I have argued how the mobility approach offers a viable alternative for this project.



## Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have outlined one potential direction for the study of and the methodological approach to transnational, or mobility-based, social lives. By conceptualizing mobility as a central analytic, this dissertation explores how Pakistani-origin Muslim youth in two different locales develop embodied and semiotic narratives about where they come from and where they aspire to go after their college education.

In order for migration studies and transnational anthropology to speak to the lived experiences of individuals, I argue that we must reorient how mobility trajectories are observed, how we understand mobility imaginaries, and migrant encounters with conflicting metasemiotic frameworks in the destination locale. In other words, if mobility is understood as a premise for our social lives, rather than an anomaly, it becomes possible to see how our notions of locality have always been reconstituted through mobility trajectories and imaginaries. Through this approach, I posit that mobility offers a constructive configuration to read and interpret the multiple metasemiotic frameworks that we encounter every moment of our lives. The migrant finds herself having to always to negotiate the metasemiotic framework(s) of her specific origin with the frameworks encountered at the destination locale. This encounter comes to define the choices that migrants must make in order to become legible subjects within the locale-specific formations they join. But the striated valuations of different frameworks can lead to some of the tensions and frictions that migrants typically face.

For example, in chapter two and later in chapter five, I discuss how Zara and Noreen negotiate contextually located expectations regarding veiling for female Muslim students. Each negotiation is contingent on the participant frameworks in which the student is positioned and the choices she makes, whether to instantly don the veil as Zara does in Lahore when she sees a teacher from the village, or Noreen's more playful displays of multiple forms of veiling (*dupattas*, hijabs, and sometimes a hoodie if that's the mood she's in). In another example, from chapter three, Shahid encounters norms of public affection displays between non-kin male and female when he is walking through the LCU campus. In that moment, he stumbles upon an incongruent set of metasemiotic frameworks about a coeducational college campus that contrasts sharply with the all-male schooling environment from his past. In chapter four, I discuss a conversation between three LCU students, where Shan is identified by himself and his friend, Taimur, as somehow 'backward' compared to the other LCU students. His clothing, his demeanor, and even his supposed lack of English competence are all cited as evidence that he is not adequately representing the LCU brand. The metasemiotic framework of the university culture seems to clash with Shan's social persona and the two are seen as incongruent by Shan and Taimur. In another set of examples in chapter four, I follow several social stereotypes, mocking both rural and urban personae, as they are enacted and satirized through campus activities. In this stereotypic figures, we find embodied representations of mobility imaginaries and youth contestations regarding these imagined types, i.e. the 'paindu' type, the 'burger' type, the 'mummy-daddy' type, the 'yo' type, and so on. Through all these various ethnographic moments, we can see how encounters with unfamiliar metasemiotic frameworks yield various interactional schema that can have powerful consequences for the concerned students.

It is important to note that the migrants who arrive in Lahore are not concerned with their Muslim identity in the same way as NYPC students were. Rather it is the metasemiotic framework of the destination locale with which they must grapple. Migrants at LCU encounter class-based cultural norms as a minority class group and were perceived to be from some rural hinterland compared to their elite, upper-class peers. Similarly in NYC, students found themselves encountering a non-Muslim social environment, particularly in their interaction with the SACC club (discussed in chapter four). In this context, Muslim youth of Pakistani-origin, but also non-Pakistani youth including those with Somali-heritage, Lebanese-heritage, Indonesian-heritage, and so on, created and maintained the Muslim Student Association as one of their primary socializing spaces. This club became an on campus instantiation where students could perform Muslim social personae and position themselves within an ummah formation that is both locally and globally situated. In all of these examples, the motivating factor behind alignment with any particular metasemiotic framework draws on locale-specific and historically situated mobility imaginaries and the alignments depend on the participant framework in which students find are positioned.

During fieldwork, I moved between college campuses in America and Pakistan to investigate the transnational lifeworlds of Pakistani-origin, Muslim youth. What I found is that youth in two very different locations navigate the educational space with strikingly similar notions of mobility trajectories that are positioned along a continuum that connect rural imaginaries to increasingly urban and cosmopolitan aspirations. These mobility trajectories were observable through the decisions they made about where they wanted to study for their undergraduate education, how they moved in the college campus space, and what they aspired to do following graduation. At one level, I have tried to provide a glimpse into each campus space, using brief life histories and narratives about being a college student, to frame the mobility trajectories that students embark

on as they become ‘emerging’ adults. Concurrently I found that their experience of being ‘emerging’ adults can be short-lived given particular familial obligations, especially for female students, and contemporary Muslim subject-making processes, especially for youth living in the US. At the very least, the variegated stories that participants told me make obvious the heterogeneity of concerns held by Muslim youth subjects during a moment when the American media discourse consistently tries to represent the Muslim identity as a fixed, stable, and homogenous form, which is often painted as threatening or dangerous. In contrast, this study finds the rich complexity of Pakistani-origin Muslim youth lives as they aspire for greater visibility and mobility. Moreover, I explore the ways that Muslim youth personae are differentiated between two poles of sociality. If they choose to highlight a liberal persona, they can be construed as liberal Muslim *youth* subjects; however, if they portray a more piously Muslim persona, students find themselves as pious Muslim ‘adult’ subjects. This pivotal identificatory bias emphasizes the precious nature of Muslim youth subjects and their fraught public social personae.

This dissertation opens up several questions around several themes that remain under-examined. For example, regarding the ways that digital sociality elucidates the tensions and conflicts that accompany migratory trajectories, I draw from multiple online sources including social media platforms to examine data that support the findings I observed in face-to-face social interactions. In the future, I hope to revisit these observations to further examine how the online space facilitates greater possibilities of creative expression and social connection for Muslim youth, who are certainly not well represented in most Western media discourses. Additionally, in chapter four I discuss certain aspects of a hybridized linguistic performative economies in Lahore, analyzing syncretic forms of English and Urdu/Punjabi language use. This is a very rich and

understudied field of inquiry that would facilitate a deeper understanding of youth register formation, but also expand the theoretical bandwidth in the field of linguistic anthropology. These syncretic forms are innovated upon in the online world, as Romanized Urdu speech, and in the oxygenated world. An investigation into these co-constitutive forms and emergent youth cultural formations would be illuminating to the study of youth forms of mobility and mobility imaginaries observable through discursive acts.

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One of the central challenges we face as social scientists is how to carefully and ethically describe social phenomena. This challenge guides much of our work, our methods, and our research products. In this product (this dissertation), I have attempted to describe the process of migratory trajectories and mobility imaginaries as experienced by a particular sub-set of Muslim youth. I have argued that the international and intranational migratory trajectories must be seen along a spectrum that connects the rural to the urban to the cosmopolitan, and is not place-based, in the traditional sense of a geographic locale. Instead these trajectories laminate onto mobility imaginaries placed along this spectrum and manifest in different kinds of behavior that are tailored to the local social context and specific interactional participant frameworks. In this dissertation, I argue that mobility should be considered, not as epiphenomena of migratory practices and narratives. Rather mobility elucidates the multiple layers and connections between variegated social and cultural phenomena that can begin before the act of migration itself, and then continue in the negotiations and calibrations made by migrants as they encounter multiple (and often conflicting) metasemiotic frameworks, offering fruitful ground for continued scholarly inquiry.

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