

“Pray for My Results:” Making One’s Self Worthy for Employment in Lahore

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ABSTRACT

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In this dissertation, I explore how male university graduates in Lahore go about securing employment. Ethnographic exploration of what seems to be an individual quest in the temporal juncture between completing a degree and securing full time employment is in fact an intensively social and political process. Participant observation of these career-building endeavors in and around a hostel, an ‘academy,’ and in a call center speaks to the way graduates orient themselves and endeavor to create their future in a stratified society. Accounts of experiences of job seekers reveal how different forms of capital are mobilized in the processes. The goal that often drives aspirations and strategies is that of elite government service, indicative of a time of anemic economic growth and perceived political instability. The state then sets the standard for achievement of graduates’ career goals, motivated by security, status, and stability. Thus, the state looms large in the ways young men figure their future, in a way, becoming an arbiter in an encounter between job seekers and the structure of power relations. That is, unemployed graduates need to become worthy or achieve merit, adjusting or cultivating one’s habitus in order to get there.

The foregoing suggests power relations in the eyes of young men are configured not only through social or cultural capital but by political capital. I thus highlight power in the self-making process that produces what I argue could be seen as a culturally-specific middle class subjectivity. I make the case for a ‘habitus’ that can be cultivated and shaped by political and economic conditions, loosening theory’s conceptual rigidity while highlighting the ways it

mediates the temporal juncture between education and employment.

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In Memory of Dr. George C. Bond

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

While hanging out in his hostel room one afternoon in the fall of 2013, Umar Saith asks me if I would like to eat something. He always finds something for me to munch on from his mother's kitchen; this time, he pulls out from his mini-fridge some *bedian* [sweetened berries]. He flips open the tupperware lid and offers them to me, in fact, presses me to eat them. While I enjoy a few sticky *bedian*, I notice his room is nicer than mine; it not only has an AC but is furnished and more spacious. While I swivel around on his faux leather computer chair, he reposes on his *charpoy* [light roped bed stead] while he recalls in a mixture of Urdu and English his recent attempts at securing government jobs. In the last few months, he's applied for 'high grade' positions in the federal Ministry of Social Welfare and in the Ministry of Defense, among others, joining almost 100,000 other applicants for the latter position.¹ This means he has taken at least two 'merit-based' exams and is waiting to hear back. Like other residents of the hostel, he has not had much success but that has not shaken his faith in his ability nor in the principle of merit.

His aspiration of working in the Central Superior Services (Pakistan's elite bureaucracy) on his mind, Umar Saith is smiling and with wide excited eyes, he puts me in the role of a teacher and himself into the role of a student: "I do not get an opportunity to speak English; I never have in my life. *Bhaiyya* [brother] I want to speak English with you." Our discussions tend to be dominated by topics that are relevant for the Central Superior Services (CSS) qualifying exams such as poverty or education in Pakistan. Sometimes he asks very specific questions: "Do you have any advice on how to improve my grasp of synonyms and antonyms?" In fact

¹ Also mentioned by hostelites like Farhan, and by Fawad sb, the academy teacher at Bagh-i-Jinnah, and on a popular online forum, www.CSSForum.com.pk

everything he does is oriented around becoming an elite civil servant and he has been at it for years. Umar is highly determined, patient, and intently focused on becoming a high ranking government officer, shrugging off what I encountered as a widely-held skepticism about merit. “*Sifarish* [intercession] and *paisa* [money] are just terms we use when we talk to our parents about why we still don’t have jobs.”

A tall, slim, well coiffeured young man with a crisp *shalwar khomeez* [long tunic and pajama], Umar² has never worked before; like many others he is supported by his family. In fact, he ties his family’s interests to his aspiration of a career in the civil service. “Some landlords have only power in their area, say, in their 100 acres or 1000 acres. They want power outside of that.” When I inquired why, he explains:

For influence! Civil servants are very powerful. If a guy gets into an accident with someone from the elite service - suppose the guy is a rich landlord - the civil servant still has power. Civil servants train with a whole cohort at an academy. They’re part of a strong chain. So if something happens, one civil servant can call up another. Landlords have many problems in their land. They need to be able to resolve those. People come to them, and they can't influence people, such as the police, and so on. If my father, who is a farmer, has someone come to him for some work, he will call me, and say do it. In Pakistan, there are many hurdles.

Umar, who is better known in the hostel by his last name (which is also a caste) *Saith* [boss, approximately], is in his mid-20s and has lived in the hostel for many years. He earned a

² A pseudonym as all names in this dissertation are

bachelor's degree in economics from a well-regarded and historic institution in Lahore and is currently a law student. Umar is not unique by hostel standards; in fact Umar is one of the hundreds of university-educated men in their early to mid-20s from all over Pakistan residing in this neighborhood tucked away behind Jail Road that has recently come to be dominated by multi-story purpose-built hostels. Many if not most hostelites (hostel residents) tie their futures to passing qualifying exams of one sort or another, including the CSS exams. What these men have in common is that many have come to Lahore to improve their career prospects, ostensibly, through education. Usually living in small rooms in groups of two or three, many hostelites in this area are preparing for the Central Superior Service (CSS) exams in order to qualify for Pakistan's elite bureaucracy. Meanwhile, they are applying for the same jobs Umar Saith is through the Federal and Provincial Public Service Commissions. A couple of hostelites come from Karachi, the country's business capital, but many come from towns and villages from every corner of the country. Some hostelites' parents are doctors or government bureaucrats, though many families make their livelihood from agriculture like Umar Saith's.

I use the term 'CSS aspirants' reflecting the way Umar and others refer to themselves. It is an index of a social status that Umar exemplifies - those who spend years at time preparing for government job exams; those who aspire for the elite bureaucracy and are working towards in some way. A CSS aspirant is a recognized status, used to introduce one's self to others, well known in central Lahore where a small economy is built around them. It is also a sign of sorts, signifying a three year quest that thousands embark on every year.

Not everyone in the hostel zone is a CSS aspirant. There is some diversity in this area. Other hostelites are recently graduated medical students doing their year-long 'house job'

(clinical work or internship) in order to attain their license as a doctor. Some hostelites are pursuing a professional qualification instead of a university degree, for example those who want to become accountants by preparing for the ACCA. Others are studying for the USMLEs to travel to the US for a postgraduate medical degree. A few hostelites I met were preparing for the TOEFL and IELTS with a view to leaving Pakistan. A few university students, government servants, engineers, and lawyers also reside here.

The unlikely concentration of so many highly qualified young men - who are 'killing time,' to use Umar Saith's words in an unusually cynical moment - raises a number of questions. How is it that university-educated young men in their early-mid 20s are not working? Is the economy in such bad shape? Does education not lead to employment? One productive approach to thinking about the problem of highly educated unemployed young men - in a society in which there is low attainment of higher education - is to explore the temporality of youth through the aspirations and strategies of young men as they go about 'figuring their future' (Cole and Durham 2008) in a society in which there is considerable doubt about merit. By figuring the future, I mean the way one orients oneself to and creates one's future by designing and normalizing new kinds of practices (Cole and Durham 2008).

With the temporal juncture between education and employment in mind, I re-articulate the question: how do young men pursue their career goal of securing high-ranking government employment? In short, how do they make themselves worthy of selection? To answer these questions, I explore in this dissertation what these young men aspire to do and how they endeavor to achieve those goals.

This ethnographic study's focus on the hostel foregrounds the ways the residents

endeavor to transform themselves, many with limited social and political capital. I focus on the nonformal educational processes that take place in the hostel. The study includes their study habits, routines, and the studious environment that is enabled by the hostel. This dissertation is focused mainly on CSS aspirants but also includes the accounts of other unemployed men (and irregularly employed) to strengthen my arguments and to provide different perspectives on the fraught pathways to securing employment. I ground this study in the political and economic conditions that shape educational and career strategies.

Figuring the future, I argue, is intertwined with the shaping of a middle class subjectivity. In an ethnographic study that encapsulates hostel life, job searching, studying, and working - all part of 'figuring their future' - I explore the underlying processes of self-making, as well as the ways in which their subjectivity is shaped. Engaging with Butler's (2004) conceptualization of the discursive and social formation of the subject, I focus on the ways in which young men endeavor to achieve their career goals. Specifically, I look at how young men strive to achieve a desired social status through constant performance - learning the norms, repeatedly practicing the skills, and regurgitating the knowledge required of a civil servant. In this dissertation, I make the argument that efforts to secure government employment through testing and contingent processes engenders a middle class subjectivity, one that could be called 'aspirational' (Schielke 2012). In that figuring of the future is a process of conscious fashioning of subjectivity and being fashioned, in relation to a set of norms I argue are constituted by a 'middle classness.'

I argue pursuing merit-based government employment by unemployed male graduates with limited social and political capital is to fashion a middle class subjectivity or cultural position that is mediated by the state and shaped by nonformal education as well as the

educational *mahol* they come to Lahore for. Implicit in this inquiry is a question about ‘habitus’ – an internalized generative scheme of dispositions as Bourdieu defines it. Can it be changed, or cultivated anew under different conditions and social space?

(Re)Thinking South Asian Middle Classes

Through this ethnographic study, I contribute to a limited literature in Pakistan on the ‘middle class(es),’ though it is not a new category by any means (Akhtar 2008). Economists have thus far dominated the conversation in Pakistan, employing quantitative approaches (Durr-e-Nayab 2011) in order to estimate the size of the Pakistani middle class. This theorization does not reflect the complexity of social stratification in contemporary Pakistan. Given recent research on the global middle classes (Fernandes 2000, Heiman et al 2012), along with socioeconomic changes in South Asia, it is imperative that anthropological contributions engage these ideas and approaches to further understandings of the meaning of ‘class’ in Pakistan, and for theoretical debate to better reflect social and cultural changes taking shape. Without these tools the discourse is bereft of ways to think about social and cultural dimensions of Pakistan today and the way class is shaped by globalization, urbanization, and demographic shifts.

Research on aspirations and employment strategies in Pakistan contributes to the larger academic discourses on social stratification and education. Research studies on schooling have shed light on social reproduction rather than mobility (Lynd 1937, Willis 1977, Bourdieu 1984, MacLeod 1987). Studies in South Asia specifically focus on educational choices in maintaining class advantage (Chopra 2005, Jeffrey 2010, Rahman 2010).

Similarly, Ishrat Husain (2005) describes the education system in Pakistan as fragmented

along the lines of class. Recent research (Riaz 2014) notwithstanding on the way these lines are being blurred by the mushrooming of private Islamic schools, Husain outlines three parallel types of schooling. Families and students have a choice to send children to either private English-medium schools, public Urdu medium schools (about 73% of the total enrolment), or *madrasahs* (which enrolls a small minority). The English-medium schools are further divided into elite and non-elite. Husain points out that enrollment rates vary at provincial and sub-provincial levels and that literacy rates are low in comparison to other South Asian countries. Literacy rates (nationally approximately 60%) vary by province ranging from the single to double digits from Balochistan to Punjab.

Rahman (2010) argues that the stratified education system is a legacy of the British colonial education policies which overlaid indigenous systems which included both *madrasas* (Arabic schools) and *maktabs* (Persian schools). The British Raj substituted English for Persian and introduced Urdu to the education system. Meanwhile, the poor had little access to education and elites attended English-medium schools. “Working class, lower middle class, and middle class children attended the vernacular-medium schools established by the British authorities. The upper class and children of the higher Indian officers of the British bureaucracy and military attended English-medium institutions” (Rahman 2010: 234). Rahman argues that the language of the medium of instruction continues to be an index of social class in contemporary Pakistan.

Although research indicates that education plays an important role in social reproduction, the discursive importance of education in Pakistan seems to go in only one direction. Quantitative data suggest education attainment is growing (UNESCO 2014) and education is becoming more accessible. For this reason, an increasingly educated labor force in Pakistan

raises questions about what it means to be educated, particularly with regard to social stratification.

A unique approach to stratification and mobility is to ‘processualize’ class rather than think in static categories and dualistic structural oppositions (Liechty 2003: 21). Instead of conceptualizing class as strata, I conceptualize class as processual to open up the possibility that it is through performance that is perpetually “reenacting and recreating class culture” (Liechty 2003: 23) to use Liechty’s terms. This dynamic view allows room to highlight the ways the subject encounters the job market as well as with how they think about and orient (and reorient) themselves with regard to power relations.

The temporal juncture between education and employment is an important period in which to explore the formation of class subjectivity, particularly, how men cultivate and attempt to transform themselves using the resources available to them. The job search is constituted by a number of activities and process through which to critically think about the choices and decisions that unemployed men make in their effort of finding work, or more specifically, making themselves worthy of selection.

Complicating Class and Mobility in South Asia

The central inquiry of this dissertation is temporal. What are young people’s relationships to time, and specifically, to the future? Two approaches may be discerned; one highlights social mobility and the other social reproduction.

Dickey’s (2010) study of a young woman’s education, business, and marriage brings up a progressive relationship over time between the acquisition of education and employment (and

social mobility). Osella and Osella (2000) as well as Benei (2008) move away from individuals to families as the unit of analysis in their exploration of social mobility through generations. On the other hand, Radhika Chopra (2005) and Patricia Jefferey (2005) have shown in their own respective work on Dalit and Sardari families in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab that the purposive use of education point to implications for thinking about the relationship between education and stratification while factoring in time, gender, and parental involvement.

With a temporal perspective in mind, Jeffrey in Timepass (2010) makes an argument about employment and social reproduction among middle class Jat farmers. That is, for unemployed youth to do ‘timepass’ is to wait to cash in on investments families make through education and by cultivating social networks with local government functionaries. Jat families thus use their class advantage in securing government employment while Dalits who have more limited social capital face greater difficulty in securing jobs and upward mobility. Meanwhile Mains (2011) challenges the proposition of the progress of time, education, and the achievement of aspirations altogether in his study of educated young educated men in urban Ethiopia who do not find employment they expected.

Mains’ and Jeffrey’s studies of educated men are not surprising; they rely on Bourdieu’s (1984) theories of class which allow limited scope for mobility. Bourdieu describes class as both a social position in a field of unequal power relations as well as status. He offers a theoretical framework through which to think about conditions under which these positions are shaped. He highlights competition over status claims in ‘fields,’ and explains ‘power’ as the domination of one class over others. Power for Bourdieu engages with Weber’s (1978) definition of the power that social honor entails (926) which should be distinguished from ‘coercive power.’ Liechty

(2003) helpfully clarifies: Weber “agreed with the equation of property with power,” though he insisted that economic dominance is culturally mediated in patterns of socialization, lifestyles, and discourses of honor and prestige (Liechty 2003: 14). As Pakistan and other societies experience economic change, Bourdieu’s framework may be used to theorize about the hierarchical dimensions that constitute social difference and the ways that difference is preserved or challenged.

Using Bourdieu’s framework, a number of authors have explored the implications of globalization and economic change for thinking about class. In other words, how does one explain the appearance of new occupations and apparent upward mobility? Exploring stratification amidst economic and political change in Barbados in the 1990s, Freeman (2000) raises questions about gendered and cultural dimensions of ‘class.’ Further, her research connects class with larger economic transformations and the way the changing labor market articulates with notions of status. Focusing on both occupations and consumption, she proposes that informatics workers represent a gendered, culturally specific class. For example, for informatics workers, dress and the type of office-based work serve as forms of distinction.

As economies become interdependent and liberalized, how do we think about a middle class category in the first place? If Freeman (2000) moves the category of the middle class from a universal to a culturally and gendered category, how might education relate to middle classness in South Asia? Thus, as migration, urbanization, and economic change transform societies, education’s relationship to social stratification could be considered far more complex than exclusively a mechanism of social reproduction. Freeman’s (2000) inquiry opens the possibility of exploring how education is associated with a culturally constituted middle class. A more

contextual understanding rather than taking a ‘universal’ middle class category for granted help gain insight into the power relations that shape young men’s aspirations and strategies.

Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty (2012) broaden theoretical perspectives on ‘middle classness.’ Starting with Bourdieu’s framework, they conceive of a middle class category as a hierarchical cultural position and explore its cultural dimensions in everyday life. They connect cultural aspects of class with globalization, forging a theoretical framework linking the state, space, and affect. They propose ethnographic approaches to the middle class as a set of subjectivities articulated in shifting terrains of gender, nation, among other constructs.

Carla Jones (2012) and Li Zhang (2008) contribute to this scholarship with a focus on subjectivity; Zhang’s intervention opens up the possibility of broadening cultural conceptions of class such as by shifting academic focus from occupation to housing. Further, Zhang contributes to the studies on the middle classes in her argument that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus may be cultivated. Following the contributions to the theoretical connection between economic change and class formation, Jones highlights a discursive formation of the class subject. Illustrating how middle class women are at the center of anxieties about consumer culture’s influence on morality, Jones argues that the ‘disciplinary’ discourses’ (of the state) influence on female class subjectivity is one response to Indonesia’s economic growth.

Following Zhang’s approach to class and subjectivity in particular, young people’s agility may be understood in relation to the dynamics of urban space. Engels (1950) in 19th century Manchester drew attention to the relationships between class and space, and much later in northeast America Warner (1945) saw the dimension of geographic mobility as a dimension in his understanding of social mobility. More recent research has shown how space constitutes class

(Low 2003, Zhang 2008) - illustrating how housing influences subjectivity and a class milieu. Such research contributes to a nuanced approach to cities that connects macrolevel change with microlevel urban life (Leeds and Sanjek 1988).

Like the rest of the world (WHO 2014), South Asia and specifically Pakistan is undergoing a rapid shift of population to cities (Hasan 2006). The way in which South Asian cities' demographics and landscape transform opens up a conversation up until now dominated by research that focuses largely on urbanization and poverty in Bombay (Hansen 2001, Anand 2011), Delhi (Tarlo 2001), and Calcutta (Roy 2003) that partly reflect older approaches to urban studies that link the authoritative state with poor urban communities (Southall 1956, Epstein 1973, and Safa 1986).

Following Zhang's broadening of anthropological research on urban stratification using housing, I propose to look at the relationship between education, class, and subjectivity. Weber's intervention in understanding stratification has linked education with class and researchers have explored how formal schooling shapes class position. Studies in the United States have linked class, language, race, and schooling (Bowles and Gintis 1976, Brice-Heath 1983), and research in the United Kingdom has looked at class culturally (Willis 1977) rather than structurally in the relationship with education. If formal education is associated with social reproduction, how might nonformal education articulate with power relations?

Where 'academies' or cram schools are a vital cog in the education sector in Pakistan (Siddiqui 2010) and India (Chopra and Jefferey 2005), an ethnographic focus on such non-institutional settings may shed light on how education shapes class subjectivities. Lukose (2009) shows how in Kerala education conditions a gendered, modern, English-speaking subject while

Demerath (2006) explains that youth along with their peers socialize themselves into an authoritative subjectivity. Though Lukose (2009) and Demerath (2006) focus on formal institutions such as a school and a college, my contribution to studies of education and youth is to look at how young men author their own subjectivity through deliberate educational processes at unstructured times and spaces in order to ‘move up.’

Having highlighted the importance of space and education for shaping a middle class subjectivity, I make the case that subjectivity is also shaped in relation to the state and more specifically to ‘power’ which the state is thought to bestow. I use Weber’s (1978: 926) definition of coercive power as the ability realize one’s own will despite resistance. Hull (2012) refers to this as being “close to influence” without connecting it to debates about power or the state.

For some theorists of the postcolonial state in South Asia, the state is ‘overdeveloped’ or overdeveloping, signifying a stronger role of the state and weaker society. Akhtar views the state as constituted by elite classes in a system of patronage in its hegemony over society. “The state and dominant social classes have created a patronage-based political order in which the vast majority of working Pakistanis have been coopted” (Akhtar 2008: 7). This view implicitly highlights the imbrication of the state in power relations.

Further, Hull (2012) and Gupta (1995) have shown in studies of bureaucracy, the state mediates class position. Using Gupta’s definition of state as a “highly complex array of institutions with multiple functional specializations, modes of operation, levels, and agendas” (Gupta 2012: 45), I explore more specifically ‘power’ referred to in research in South Asia as ‘force’ or political capital in the form of *sifarish* [intercession] (Hull 2012, Gupta 1995). Such research suggests this more specific form of political capital is a relevant theme for exploring

social stratification. Hull shows how bureaucratic rank seems to determine social status. Further, Hull (2012) without defining ‘power’ in his study of bureaucracy points to the *parchi* [chit of paper] and *sifarish* as instruments of power. Complicating the direction in which patronage is used and the way in which power is exercised, Hull shows how citizens manipulate the state using their ability to procure favors and cultivate relationships with bureaucrats but fails to theorize about this system of power that brings together the citizen and the state. Jefferey et al (2009) refer to ‘source’ and ‘force’ but leave the empirical and theoretical categories largely untheorized. What is important for understanding the desire to work for the state is the everyday representation or imagination of the state which is not just one of patronage but involved in a commodified system of patron-client relationships. ‘Power’ for unemployed graduates then is as much economic as it is political.

This approach broadens the discourse around the state in literature on Pakistan being strong or weak (Lieven 2011), or successful or failing (Zaidi 2014). The way unemployed graduates view the state speak to the way the state is changing, yet persists in its vital importance for young men. Though neoliberal economic change and globalization are thought to undermine the state, cultural representations or ‘imaginings’ of the state in Lahore suggest otherwise.

A focus on these complex conditions and overlapping processes will address the jobs crisis that became more visible in the wake of the 2008 recession. By highlighting attitudes of unemployed men, by making visible the styles of learning, and by shifting analytical focus from an economic problem to the political processes involved in commodified *sifarish* may offer perspectives and ideas for practitioners, educators, and policymakers to engage in the problems of unemployment. For example, higher investment in education may preserve the political

economy of employment and structure of opportunity. A detailed, ethnographic perspective into the aspirations, strategies, and barriers at play here gives a more nuanced approach that can help tackle a major problem that has global political implications.

Economic and Political Conditions of Unemployment

The global financial crisis at the end of the last decade focused attention on unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. According to the ILO, 73 million people between the ages of 15-24 are unemployed (2015). The concerns are the impact on workers and the likelihood of long-term unemployment of youth, the impact on economies, not to mention political implications (Barnes 2012). Meanwhile or perhaps despite the challenge of unemployment, the growth of higher education around the world continues as young people angle for an advantage in finding jobs (Economist 2015). Advocates like Malala Yousufzai (2013) continue to champion the cause of education. Yet some young people I spoke with echo the findings of scholars (Jefferey et al 2009) as well as media (such as the Economist) who are starting to connect these two apparently discursively disconnected issues of economic and educational change. Some are beginning to ask the question - is education worth it? And for whom?

Pakistan's manifestation of this global issue of unemployment features a familiar though odd combination of economic stagnance along with education growth. But unemployment in Pakistan's case is unique. As I found in Lahore, this issue brings out local issues of corruption and cronyism. Unemployment is particularly relevant to the political climate in India and Pakistan in which a proportionately large segment of the population is under 30 years of age, and

where corruption and education have become central political issues (e.g. the street demonstrations of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf against electoral fraud in 2014, or the Aam Admi Party's single issue platform of eliminating corruption).

Power relations and class advantage play out in the education sector. The Vyapam Scam (BBC 2015) in India saw high level corruption in state employment recruitment and college admissions.³ While this level of organization in cases of corruption may not have yet been recorded in Pakistan, cheating is endemic in the Pakistani education system (Tunio 2015). Cheating in job and admissions tests evoke deeper issues than just corruption; cheating is implicated in power relations and class advantage. Jeffrey's (2010) description of young men who collude with university staff and with politicians in cheating illustrates how young men leverage political capital.

Intertwined with matters of corruption are aspirations of young people and their families who have invested in their futures through education. For many families, 'merit' achieved through education is the only way 'up' and for others the only way out of poverty. Unsurprisingly, educational institutions in Lahore as I found advertise their highest exam scorers (known as 'toppers') to communicate to potential students and parents their ability to secure high scores. Academic achievement then is no small achievement and merit more generally is a central political issue. Thus, corruption is more than a middle class issue (Mazarella n.d., Jones 2012); it is a field of inquiry, a systemic phenomenon that speaks to anxieties of youth and families that is an index of the structure of opportunity. In other words, the issues of education and employment index the complex relationships between class, state, and power.

³ Vyapam is an independent organization set up to conduct entrance tests for the state jobs and admissions in colleges and universities.

That corruption and cheating undermines merit is such a major issue is arguably because of the combination of Pakistan's dismal economic performance, changing demographic conditions, and engagement with globalization. Pakistan's economic growth is sluggish (around 3%), which may not be enough to absorb the three million new entrants into the labor market (Oxford Analytica 2012) every year. The Pakistan Economic Survey estimates unemployment at 6% (State Bank 2015) but this number is thought to disguise more accurate data that is not available because of Pakistan's large grey economy (Oxford Analytica 2012). The unemployment problem, therefore, is likely to be much more critical than official figures indicate. 60% of the population is below 30 years of age and the workforce is growing faster than the overall population.

Meanwhile, the impacts of the Green Revolution (and mechanization in agriculture), industrialization, the growth of the service sector, not to mention economic liberalization, structural adjustment policies, rural-urban migration, migration to the Gulf, and the emergence of the media has affected economic development and the standard of living for some (Addleton 1995), as well as the development of a 'middle class' (Zaidi 2015). Further, Ahmad (2010) and Maqsood (2014) link the 'Pakistani middle class' to economic changes, which as they show, are important to thinking about the cultural dimensions of the middle class. This serves as important background that helps makes sense of a contradiction between educational and economic trends.

Indeed, education and economic indicators are moving in different directions. Zaidi's (2015) study shows that GNP per capita has more than doubled from \$430 in 1993 to \$1120 in 2011. Yet, the formal economy has grown slowly since 2007 after a period of rapid growth, adding insufficient jobs to cope with population growth and advances in education attainment.

The annual Pakistan Economic Survey 2014 indicates that the share of agriculture in the gross national product is declining while services dominate; Reza Ali (2002) shows that more people live in cities than ever before. Meanwhile, literacy rates have improved from 13% after Partition to 58% this decade. The number of primary schools has shot up from 17,000 in 1960 to 154,000 in 2011, and the number of middle schools and high schools have seen similar growth. There are 139 universities in 2015 whereas there were just 29 in 2005. Crucially, the number of enrolled students and graduates are growing rapidly post 2004 higher education reforms (HEC 2013) from some hundreds of thousands to over a million.

One consequence (or index) of this paradoxical situation is incredible competition for government jobs. Though it is not formally lucrative, it offers opportunities for growth within the bureaucracy, particularly if one passes the CSS exams.

The Central Superior Services

According to Kennedy (1987), the Pakistani bureaucracy is characterized by a rigid system of rank which corresponds to occupational type and with 22 national pay grades. There are four avenues of recruitment to the officer corps of the federal bureaucracy. The 'direct' path is through the Central Superior Services examination which in conjunction with regional quotas determines both initial selection into the public service and assignment to occupational groups. CSS candidates must possess a Bachelor's degree from a recognized university, and must be between certain ages (21-28). Candidates may appear up to three times. The exam consists of four parts, the written exam, the interview, psychological testing, and a health check up.

Kennedy (1987) notes that the compulsory exams are designed to test candidates' facility

in English as well as general knowledge of Pakistan's sociopolitical environment. "Whether the examination provides an adequate measure of such dimensions is problematic" (Kennedy 1987: 115). The exam can be taken at 18 different testing centers across the country, but Lahore is where majority of the candidates pass, according to Shan, who came from Sindh.

Over 14,000 candidates applied to take the 2013 CSS exam, competing for 222 positions. Just one year later, over 25,000 applied to take the 2014 CSS exam against which there were 315 vacancies in the Central Superior Services. About 400 candidates passed the written exam, and 233 were allotted a position.

Some hostelites describe the CSS exam as the 'father' of exams because other qualifying exams are administered throughout the year and structured similarly to the CSS. For example, through 'general' recruitment in which the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC 2014) administers exams on behalf of specific ministries such as Defense, Intelligence, or Oil and Gas. Umar Saith applied for and took a test along with nearly 100,000 individuals for a limited number of positions in the Ministry of Defense in March 2014. In its annual report, the FPSC notes in regard to general recruitment that over 300,000 candidates applied for around 3200 posts, of which, 794 candidates were recommended for appointment (FPSC 2014).

Further, provincial public sector jobs appeal widely and are similarly organized. Umar Saith prepared for the Provincial Management Service which also would put him in a 17 grade position. There are a host of other exams offered at the provincial levels to fill specific provincial ministries. Manzoor, a former CSS aspirant from Karachi I met in Lahore, told me he and 30,000 other applicants were due to take a screening test for the Sindh Public Service Commission in December 2014.

This crushing competition should be seen in the context of an increasingly educated labor force. The Higher Education Commission statistics indicate that more than half of those entrants may have a university degree; approximately one million students graduate with a university degree per year (HEC 2015).

The numbers tell a depressing story. Not only is there low economic growth and limited prospects in critical areas of the economy, but questions about the existence of merit. Class advantage is asserted by those who can afford to pay for bribes and who can leverage political capital as Tunio (2015) and the BBC (2015) illustrate in their coverage of corruption in education. Yet the number of graduates is growing fast as more and more institutions open their doors signaling the investment in time and money being made, and perhaps high expectations of the type of work.

An Ethnography of Unemployment and Youth Culture

To contribute to the inquiry on subjectivity and mobility, I focus on the experience of unemployment and job searching in Lahore. This study provides perspectives on the cultural meaning and dimensions of the ‘middle class,’ on how unemployment is experienced, and how young people are dealing with it, with reference to their aspirations and understanding of power relations. Thus, I undertook a year-long ethnographic study of the quotidian experience of young male job seekers in Lahore in their endeavor to create their future and craft their class subjectivity in Lahore while they stayed in a hostel and sometimes studied at an ‘academy.’

Being a participant observer in the space of a private hostel between July 2013 and July 2014 lent perspective into larger processes that shape young men’s attitudes to work and

experiences of attempting to secure employment. Participant observation over time provided insight into hostel life and how hostelites, CSS aspirants as well as doctors and other professionals- in- training went about trying to build their future. Participation in that *mahol* [environment] allowed insight into an important period in the lives of the hostelites that blurred the neat classification of ‘students’ and ‘unemployed.’ I learned about what motivated them, what caused anxiety, the choices they had, and how they made decisions. Thus I understood what this time and space in their lives meant with regard to what they wanted to achieve. Seeing these processes unfold and how they shape (and are shaped by) the *mahol* would only have been possible with an extended stay in one of the hostels and being a participant in the ‘communities of practice.’

Other than a hostel, I was a participant observer at a CSS ‘academy’ called Excellent Coaching Center at a local park. To better understand the CSS system and learning processes, I spent 6 months, 3 days a week for an hour or two, as a student usually during the English sessions. Most of the students were from outside Lahore [*pardesi*], staying at hostels because they came from various parts of Punjab, Sindh and other provinces. I was able to do ethnographic interviewing after and before sessions with the instructor, as well as students, and visit their hostels. To sit in the ferocious heat of a Lahore summer gave me an idea as to how much and it meant to secure elite government employment or how vigorously it was pursued.

As I became familiar with students preparing for government employment exams, I had very little exposure to other employment pathways. I also had very little exposure to employment strategies of *desi* [local] Lahoris. Hoping to learn about the ways *desis* maneuvered from education to employment, I spent 5 months at an outgoing call center on the night shift, 3-4 days

a week, as a volunteer ‘English language teacher.’ My role was informal and spent 15-30 minutes per evening working on accent and grammatical practice. I was aware that university-educated youth would be working at call centers for short periods of time. I learned that these individuals would work at call centers if nothing else was available and for short periods of time in order to burnish their English language skills. In this way, I interacted with a range of people from different backgrounds, locals and migrants.

During the year, I was invited to two villages in Punjab, to other hostels in Lahore, and some family homes in Lahore too. I met parents and siblings of research participants including Imran, Shahid, Ahmed, Shan, and Nadeem. These trips were not planned but I gained a nuanced understanding of the difference between being at home in a village and being in Lahore. I also gained a deeper appreciation for the factors that shaped the compulsion to leave home in order to study and fulfill their goals. I gained insight into how family expectations weighed so heavily, and began to appreciate the gulf between being with family and on one’s own.

Throughout the year, the focus of my research was on aspirations, on job applications, work experience, job application processes, and histories of their educational careers. But over the year I began to see the interrelationship with corruption, perspectives on respect and power, and more. As a result, my questions grew to encompass perspectives on Pakistan too. My goals were to learn what young men were doing, how they thought about what they were doing, to give an in depth look at the process of figuring their future.

As I regularly met more and more unemployed young men and got updates on outcomes and shifting strategies, the study took the form of panel study. I would record research participants’ activities of where and how they applied for jobs. Starting in the fall of 2013, I

began to meet up or call regularly with 10 of the young men from the hostel and call center (see Appendix 1). I wanted to know how they fared during the course of the year in their job applications, how their strategies may have changed, and how they reflected on what they were doing. These included 5 hostelites at Choudhury Mansion, 3 call center agents at International Call Center who had quit in search of other opportunities, 1 restaurant worker in the Choudhury Mansion area, and 1 Forman Christian College (FCC) graduate who neither did the CSS nor the call center.

All 10 were approximately the same age, having graduated from a bachelor's degree within the last 2-3 years (usually less) wanted to work in the public sector (except one), struggled with English language skills, and found it difficult to find work regardless if it was in the private or public sector. Further, what they all had in common was that they spoke Urdu as a second language because their mother tongues were Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, or Siraiki. They were all products of the matriculation/intermediate educational system, and university graduates though their educational backgrounds ranged from the Bachelors of Commerce (B.Com) to the Bachelors of Medicine and Bachelors of Surgery (MBBS).

The study of 'figuring of the future' is enriched by the participation of other hostelites not doing the CSS, and by youth from Lahore, and some other university-educated young migrant men from other parts of the country that are not studying for the CSS. For example, some call center agents also desire to be 'officers' - in the military, or in other levels of the bureaucracy. They have similar education profiles to the CSS aspirants, but have taken a variety of jobs, traineeships, or internships in the private sector. Some of these research participants were call center agents and other university graduates trying to find government jobs. They were working

or living nearby to Choudhury Mansion that I came to know. Research participants' aspirations and strategies are different but their experience illustrates the context that youth navigate is not significantly different, as they encounter corruption, often needing *sifarish* [intercession], *paisa* [money], and usually trying to operate under the purview of 'merit.'

I supplemented the ethnographic study of the hostel and job searching with participant observation and photography in the *mohallah* [neighborhood] learning about the area, history, and destination for CSS aspirants and other men mostly on the cusp of beginning their careers. I would pray at the mosque periodically, forming acquaintances with some of the shopkeepers in the *gulli* [lane] behind the hostel. I explored the interaction of the hostel with and the maintenance and security of the area. I would regularly hang out in The Cafe which acted as a kind of spatial and social pivot around which the hostelites of the area would go about their days. I found out about what brought people to the area and about the rhythm of the year as well as the impact larger events had on hostelites such as parts of Ramadan 2013 and 2014, political conflagrations such as *sania* [incident] Model Town⁴ and *sania* Peshawar, as well as the response to the PTIs discourse on corruption.

I also visited the local bureau of statistics, the local police station, town planning office, and union council to get information on the demographics and history of the neighborhood where I stayed. In this work, I sought some assistance from a recent Forman Christian College graduate, Mr. Qasim during interviews in offices and with some individuals in the *mohallah*. Mr. Qasim's significant contribution was in understanding one of the responses which included some Punjabi idioms and meanings I didn't catch.

⁴ In which 14 members of a political party were killed by the police, January 2014

The central focus on young male hostelites almost exclusively is due to Lahore's spatial separation of gender. The socio-spatial implications of gender meant that the hostel I lived in was entirely occupied by men, as all of the hostels in the zone were. Unsurprisingly, women's hostels were not in the same vicinity of men's hostels. I also focused mainly on men because access was much easier, though there were women's hostels and migrants from other parts of the country who similarly came to study and work. My focus was on young men as sons and often as the eldest in their families which I realized was perceived as taking a specific and crucial economic role in not just a nuclear family but involved larger extended family.

By youth, I mean as a social category, not a physiological term, to signify one life-stage in advance of another (to paraphrase Cole and Durham 2008). In a way, it is to explore the 'here and now' in preparation for the future (see Bucholtz 2002 who separates these two inquiries), a conscious 'forging of the future' (Cole and Durham 2008). 'Youth' may precede locally understood normative adulthood which I understood in the field to mean earning a living and becoming husband and father and taking care of parents and relatives. The youth I engage with are physiologically adults but mostly have no income, dependent on their families financially, living in rented accommodation, and single. I thus have chosen to use a term that they themselves sometimes use along with *jawan* [youth] and 'student' to signify where they are in their own understanding of their life course. A minority of research participants who I consider 'youth' are husbands and fathers - yet - they are not with their families but 'studying' in Lahore. That seems to indicate the way they see themselves as working towards that role.

Organization

Chapter two focuses on career aspirations and strategies of young men most of whom look for government employment. Where does a highly qualified man apply for jobs, and how? I explore the different processes involved in applying for jobs in the private and in the public sector, foregrounding the search in economic and political conditions. Further, I look at the way aspirations and strategies are conditioned by discourses of *sifarish* [intercession] and merit. I show how important the state is in aspirations of educated young men and argue that the state figures in the shaping of class subjectivity in their desire for secure employment, respect, and even power.

These themes open up a perspective that is not only economic but also hierarchical. To think about where job-seekers see themselves and where they aspire to be speaks to their understanding of and their attempts to negotiate their relationship to the state. This, I show, has implications for thinking about class as a cultural position and as a subjectivity. In a sense, the state is implicated in the configuration of power relations.

Unable to get a foot in the door in public sector employment because of a lack of political and social capital seems to leave young people to rely on education as a means to achieve their goal. Thus, Chapter Three is about how young men are forging their futures through nonformal education in which they study for merit-based exams for government jobs. I focus on educational activities in the hostel as well as at an ‘academy’ (a type of cram school) through which men prepare sometimes for years at a time - learning English, history, science among other subjects. This chapter illustrates how educational processes are thought to bring the subject closer to their literal achievement of middle classness. Such processes index the formation of a certain kind of political subjectivity - as what is thought to be ‘competent,’ pro-establishment, brought about

through constant practice with fellow learners in person and even online.

Nonformal education is shown to be a form of cultural capital where stress is on achievement and high scores, involving a competitive-collaborative environment with fellow learners of different skill levels and experience. The data in this chapter are based on education experiences, methods of learning, the educational exchanges in the hostel and in the academy, styles of test preparation, and reflections of young men on education in the process of job applications.

Such educational processes are enabled by the space of the hostel that is the focus of Chapter Four. Urban space is important because it brings together young men with similar aspirations and indexes larger forces at work. This chapter highlights the importance of the space and the changing neighborhood that accommodates hundreds of unemployed (and some employed) young men. A spatial focus allows insight into the way larger national economic and political conditions shape attempts of men to secure the prestigious employment they covet via the formation of a class cultural milieu. I show how the management of the space serves to produce a distinct environment - a ‘VIP environment’ - through purposeful inclusion and exclusion of residents. The way the hostel and the neighborhood enable young men to pursue their goals illustrates how class and space articulate in urban Pakistan.

Finally, Chapter Five explores the subjectivity of the ‘educated person’ and what it means to be educated for CSS aspirants. I focus on some serious critique as well as ludic gestures to show they author their own subjectivity in relation to discourses about being modern, educated, and being Muslim. Humor and critique are ways to think about how young unemployed men understand and make sense of their perceived class position, their political subjectivity, and their

relationship to the conditions that they face.

The Researcher and the Setting

What I learned in the field was deeply affected by my background but also by my experience in the initial weeks and months. The time and spaces in central Lahore in 2013-2014 shaped my perspective and understanding of the issues. Further, who I met and when, how I met them and where, determined the course of the study and the process of discovery. My perspective and arguments are based on what I was shown or was allowed to see, as well as by my own inquiry and evolving identity and status. In the course of the study, the experience of fieldwork itself - at each step of the way - led to shaping what I know and argue here.

A newcomer in Lahore in the spring of 2013 before I moved into Choudhury Mansion that became both my fieldsite and my home for one year, I heard frequently about such '*parhe likhe*' [educated] who were '*farigh*' [free], though I met very few 'unemployed' males who were university- educated. They weren't found at universities, nor at two job centers where I conducted interviews, nor at a network marketing office (basically a pyramid scheme). Through informal interviewing and visiting different parts of the city, I gradually learned many of the university-educated and unemployed young men could be found at public parks, tuition or cram centers, and made up a large part of the hostel crowd.

In meeting a range of young male migrants, I visited a diversity of hostels from sparse concrete structures to somewhat furnished lodgings with meal facilities. One was a bungalow in a leafy residential neighborhood that had several rooms and a shared bathroom. One hostel was a large building on a major road with more than a dozen rooms that accommodated 6 people to a room. It was unique in that it had a little internet cafe on the ground floor. Space in hostels were

often described as ‘seating.’ I decided not to go for a seat in the ‘6-seater’ with the internet cafe. After visiting a number of hostels throughout the city, I fortuitously came to Choudhury Mansion in which there was a room available (with an air conditioner).

Choudhury Mansion, and its location, was attractive because of its size and spatial layout. I would have lots of people to talk to, and there would be social spaces in which to strike up conversations. Choudhury Mansions was one of the largest if not the largest I had seen, and is a purpose-built hostel. It offered a small ‘mess’ where hostelites can get a quick meal (fixed menu and fixed timings), and was centrally located in the city. It wasn’t very different from the other hostels. Students lived two to a room, had a basement for parking since many hostelites got around on their motorbikes, and a local internet company had set up their routers (not everyone had access, and some shared their access key with their floor mates if they subscribed). My favorite feature was the water cooler available for anyone to use (fortunately located just one floor below my room). My roughly 8 x 9 x 10 ft room (not all rooms were identical) ended up being expensive relative to Lahore’s hostel scene, though in dollar terms, it seemed like a decent deal at \$85 a month. Everything was on the books, there was a file made with a record of my payments, my photograph, and identification card, and emergency contact numbers. My motorbike got a sticker with my room number on it. Also, I had my own room and bathroom whereas in many other hostels that would not have been possible.

Living at Choudhury Mansion gave me the chance to get to know dozens of people in the hostel and nearby who are at a critical moment in their own lives. Hostelites were without exception focused on one task and almost all were in some kind of transition. Doctors did their ‘house jobs’ in anticipation of completing their MBBS qualification, while aspiring CSS officers

crammed day and night. Being at Choudhury Mansion gave me a good vantage point; it was through the location I came to know about the ‘CSS *mahol*’ [environment]- the importance of Jinnah Library, the stomping grounds of the Board Office, and networks and dyads of friends who came up together to study. I was also able to easily access the call center which I discovered by walking down Ferozepur Road.

When Farhan, my neighbor in the next room, casually asked me if I wanted to tag along for a meeting with his CSS ‘sir’ [teacher] one morning at the nearby park, I took it. I met more *pardesis* [not local] who would sit on concrete floors, in cold, in rain, or in scorching heat, attentively listening. I would observe, and also participate in lessons, English practice dialogues, and learned a few things along the way. I finally began to understand how so many of the CSS aspirants spent their time. To use a cliché, I appreciated that for them, this ‘knowledge’ was to be translated into ‘power.’ And Sir Fawad Khan was their steward. As teachers are often referred to as ‘sir’ or ‘ma’am,’ Fawad was never referred to by his first name alone or ‘Mr.’ Instead, ‘sir’ would be the polite form of address.

Almost all of the CSS students and Choudhury Mansion hostelites were ‘*pardesi*’ or from outside of Lahore. So I decided to find a second fieldsite to meet some ‘*desi*,’[locals]. Later as I learned about the call centers in my area, I visited a few and decided to join one. I spent 5 months there but as I felt the agents were more important than the space I felt less like going to the call center, and I kept in regular touch with some of the call center agents as they pursued a range of different career options (though all aspired for government work). The work of the call center became less important and the efforts to find work and how call center agents did that became much more important.

I took a job teaching an anthropology course at Forman Christian College in the fall semester of 2013, a very limited responsibility. I found that teaching there raised my profile in the hostel zone considerably. I was no longer just a hostelite or ‘researcher from America,’ but a ‘professor.’ A few people would call me ‘Professor *saheb*,’ helping to start conversations. Hostelites began asking for help in learning English, and giving me essays to proofread. Teaching affected my perceived status. I’m not sure I would have gotten a room at Choudhury Mansion if it weren’t for my appointment letter (I doubt the hostel manager would have heard of Columbia University let alone Teachers College).

There was a power dimension I experienced during the course of fieldwork. I soon learned that I lived some yards from where Raymond Davis shot and killed two locals. Being a dual citizen helped greatly in assuaging hostelites and others concerns about what I was there to do. Though there were jokes made about me being ‘an agent,’ I was still accepted and many hostelites would not mind sharing their attitudes and experiences. My language skills were not very strong initially but was able to gain the trust of many of the hostelites and call center agents. Some humor helped, like when Ayub the hostel manager - who was my sometimes Urdu coach - teased me by speaking in the feminine aspect - about where I was going one morning. “*Kaha ja rahi ho?*” I responded in the feminine and got him to laugh. “*Samjh gey ho,*”[you have understood] seemingly satisfied that I had understood the gender aspect which I had struggled with. Yet I was discreetly told once by a CSS student at the ‘academy’ that some students there (Excellent Coaching Center) felt I could not be trusted. I understood, and didn’t coax or encourage anyone to share more than they were willing to. In any case, I always introduced myself as a researcher, and I made it a habit, in the course of conversations, to ask if I could

record some of the ideas and experiences that they would share, and almost always got permission. I never let them forget I was more than a hostelite, I was a researcher.

I am not from Lahore and do not speak Punjabi but I did feel at times like an ‘insider’ (Jones 1970) though I acknowledge the many ways that I was sometimes aligned with and sometimes apart from while in the field (Narayan 1993). Being Pakistani-American gave me a different perspective, not better, just different as Jones argues. At least by skin color, faith, and citizenship I was an insider. I was anxious about my dual citizenship and did not want to be treated differently; I sometimes felt that I was considered, at times, as a guest. As time went by, that quickly faded away as I entered into relationships of steady exchanges of tea, biscuits, books, jokes and more. I was worried about the effect of being more educated, that it might impact how others talked to me, and molded their responses. Faiz, the cook at The Cafe, sitting cross legged on the floor of my room smoking a cigarette, made that crystal clear pointing out that I had an iPad, and laptop. “There’s your kind and there’s my kind. You’re rich.” But over time I felt that I was able to overcome such barriers with familiarity and regularly hanging out. Finally, I thought maybe hostelites and others would ‘suck up’ to me, hoping I would sponsor them for a visa. When I explained the rules, surprisingly, no one cared, though they would sometimes ask one more time just in case. There was an undeniable power dynamic that I tried to resolve by taking the same role they did. Sleeping on the floor, participating in religious rituals, studying, having a laugh - I tried my best to maintain my researcher's role without letting inequalities be highlighted.

CHAPTER 2

Getting “Up There:” the Search for ‘Respectful’ and ‘Powerful’ Positions without *Sifarish*

Introduction

Late one chilly evening in February of 2014 Dr. Nadeem, 25 years of age and from the southern-most province of Sindh, knocked on my door. “*Chalo*, let’s go. I’ll meet you downstairs.” Since I was two doors down the hall, I noticed that Nadeem in these days would get home from the library after spending 12 hours preparing for exams. His first exam was around the corner, and he would be anxious, tired, and hungry. His roommate Shan had gone back to Karachi and I would frequently accompany him at dinner. I got on my jacket, met up with Nadeem at the hostel gate, and we walked some 30 yards down from the hostel. We walked past car showrooms, a colonial-era bungalow on a well-paved Jail Road towards a still busy Mazang *Chungi* [former octroi]. Traffic flowed steadily in five directions in the sometimes well-lit transport hub. Nadeem, from a much smaller town in Sindh, directed us into Butt Hotel, where young men with tired eyes would be eating 80 Rupees [75 cents] a plate *daal* [lentils] or *sabzi* [vegetables] with *roti* [bread] in groups of two or three. We signaled one of the waiters and gave our order.

I asked Nadeem why he was driving himself this hard when he was already a doctor (which he jokingly reminded me a little earlier, was on ‘merit’⁵).

You can get status, you can get ‘source,’ [political-social capital] and people do it for power to do their illegal work. The poor feel CSS is the only medium to get social status,

⁵ Implying he had actually worked for it rather than pulled any strings or bought the degree

because in Pakistan there are no jobs, no job security, so what do they do? This is the only exam based on merit.

Emphasizing his own status as ‘lower middle class,’ he started to explain a little more. He gives an example of a minor favor his brother back home in Larkana asked for.

Had I been in Larkana I could have arranged concert tickets for my little brother but this far away it’s not possible. If I was a CSP [Civil Servant of Pakistan] I could. Pakistan is about getting things done from others. We do this [CSS] to break the law.

Having finished dinner we shared one 20 Rs cup of tea in two small ceramic cups outside on the service lane of Jail Road. I never saw Nadeem drinking tea and when I pointed this out he said he needed to stay awake for some time to study. These nights I noticed him ask the *chai wallah* [tea maker] to ‘parcel it’ and would take a cup of tea to his room in a little plastic bag.

Curious about his blunt statement about the law, I asked, “You can’t be aiming to break the law can you?” Nadeem gave me a simple answer. “I want to help my family, and myself.” I pointed out one can do that as a doctor, they are the highest paid profession after all. As we walked back up the stairs of Choudhury Mansion, Nadeem replied:

But what about my cousins? They are illiterate. A guy trying to live today has much to do, it’s partly about money but there’s also a need to make social relations. In Pakistan, society is social-status oriented. I am doing things for family, and the need to do several things as an adult in Pakistan: money, status, and social relations.

Some weeks later, having endured more than 6 months of intense preparation and two

grueling weeks of examinations, Nadeem was able to rest for a few days. Modest and tightlipped about how he performed on the exams, he took it easy in his last week in the city and gradually began to clean and pack up his things. On his last day, I helped him take his two suitcases down to the ground floor while he hailed a rickshaw on the main road. “Pray for me,” he said as he was about to pull away headed for Laari *Addey* [station] to begin his 12 hour bus ride back to Larkana. “Pray for my results.” We kept in touch over the next 18 months and found out he began studying again soon after he returned to Larkana, long before his exam results came in.

Nadeem’s decisions were puzzling but his choices started to become apparent. I realized his relationship to the future pivoted around his desired government posting. Who and what he would be depended on whether he would be selected for elite government service. That is, he seemed to link personal efficacy and ‘being somebody’ with his relationship to the state. The son of a government employee in Larkana who himself rose from a low ranking government clerk to a more respectable position, Nadeem was not interested in a ‘job’ in the strict sense - or for that matter any job. Rather he made a conscious effort to prepare himself for a selection process for a highly coveted, and prestigious government position that could give him ‘source’ or help enlarge his social circle to include people who could ‘get things done.’ In turn ‘source’ - a form of political-social capital - could transform the role he plays in his family, change his relationship to his extended family, and to society more generally. Finding a job that fulfilled his desire for ‘power’ is a mission for him, made all the more urgent by the way he sees himself with respect to society as well as in relation to Pakistan’s economic and political conditions post-2008. That is, in a society in which few opportunities are thought to be achieved meritocratically, someone like Nadeem who does not have ‘source’ is unlikely to become person he wants to be.

A chat with another hostelite not long after helped me understand Nadeem's aspirations with reference to power relations. A couple of months after Nadeem moved out of the hostel in the spring of 2014, Dr. Taimur, also a trained doctor who was a former occupant of the room opposite mine, came for a visit. Taimur had come back to Lahore from his village two hours away for some work related to completion of the 'house job'⁶ that he had been doing. Taimur was studying for the USMLE exam at home in the village now that his 'house job' was over. Taimur was "crazy about medicine" as he put it, though his parents had tried to persuade him to do the CSS.

Just as he would during his time on the floor, Taimur knocked on my door and greeted me with a friendly "*Assalamalaikum*" [peace be with you]. Standing in the doorway, almost completely taken up by his 6 ft tall hefty frame, stethoscope hanging around his neck, he asked how my research was proceeding. He mentioned he was back in the city to get a certificate or documentation of his 'house job' at the government-run Services Hospital on Jail Road. He was having trouble getting the letter he wanted and I jokingly asked if it was because he didn't have *sifarish*. He responded seriously. "Basically."

Our conversation spilled into the hallway. Taimur and I were drawn into discussion with Taimur's old roommate Dr. Parvez, and two new arrivals on the floor. Taimur joked about the new guys' interest in the CSS and in working for the government. "Don't forget about me when you're up there!" For a moment, he reconsidered his statement, and quipped, "actually, forgetting people is a requirement of getting up there!" A little later when I asked him what he meant, he explained that bureaucrats have power; doctors by contrast do not control budgets or

⁶ Internship

make decisions. “People have no respect for doctors.”

Taimur turned my understanding of social status upside down in two ways. Firstly, in using the term ‘power’ Taimur shed light on how Nadeem perceived the basis of an hierarchy in which doctors were considered inferior relative to the civil servants. Secondly, Taimur helped me recognize that while gaining political capital in an obviously elite bureaucratic position is a central objective, Nadeem and other bureaucrats desired recognition too. In addition to power or political capital, Nadeem desired social status and belonging in a particular social space characterized by power (as an ability to coerce) and status. “Forgetting people” was Taimur’s reference to the important matter of respect (arguably indexing status).

Being a government employee, I would learn, could open doors. For example, it could be useful in the marriage market as Shan, Dr. Nadeem’s roommate, explained, or in finding housing, as our hostel manager once mentioned. In fact, respect and power both are distinct but intertwined elements of the person CSS aspirants wanted to be.

The way Nadeem and Taimur highlight their position in the relationships of power and the way they specifically associate social space, ‘power,’ and government employment illustrates how important the social and political context of the job search is. Finding a job then, and positioning one’s self for a career is explicated in this chapter in relation to the way power relations condition the quest to transform one’s subjectivity and secure employment. In short, this chapter is about the navigation of the job market and power relations in which Nadeem and his fellow CSS aspirants seek a higher hierarchical position. In both doctors’ explicit references to larger political and economic conditions above - which will be discussed in depth in this

chapter - they see themselves as part of a social hierarchy in which rank is determined by respect and power. So what does ‘up there’ mean and how does one get there? What does the way Nadeem and others navigate the job market and power relations say about the state and their relationship to it?

In this chapter I argue that unemployed young men in preparing themselves for exams could be seen as jockeying for cultural position amidst what Bourdieu (1984) calls a field of struggles. Further, the way young men seek employment through a merit-based process as well as through *sifarish* (which are not mutually exclusive) speaks to Fernandes (2006) and Liechty’s (2003) arguments about the formation of a middle class culture precipitated by globalization and larger economic change. Liechty in particular understands middle class space as “space as opposed to others, and constantly a renegotiated cultural space ... in which the terms of inclusion/exclusion are constantly negotiated, tested, affirmed” (Liechty 2003: 16). Though Liechty’s focus is largely on consumption as the space where middleclassness is enacted, I show how this competition and negotiation of the boundaries of the Pakistani middle class culture involves occupations and types of work, some of which bestow ‘power.’

Thus, in this chapter I argue that Bourdieu’s (1984) concepts of cultural and social capital are important but not entirely adequate to understanding young men’s aspirations or their navigation of power relations. ‘Getting up there’ involves attaining ‘power’ and ‘respect’ made possible by state employment. ‘Respect’ corresponds to Weber’s (1978) ‘honor’ and ‘prestige’ in his move away from Marx in thinking about class. For Weber, status is the esteem in which individuals are held by society. Status is premised on their mode of living, education, or occupation.

But what Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualization of social and cultural capital do not anticipate is the high importance given by hostelites to what Weber defines as coercive power: as the chance of a man to realize his own will in communal action in spite of resistance (1978: 926). 'Power' helps explain what young men say when they want 'to get things done.' It speaks to an element of a desired subjectivity made possible by elite government service and the social network that comes with it. I make the argument that aspirations for employment are at the same time aspirations to be 'somebody' or to become someone who commands power. Liechty (2003) would refer to this as class as cultural process in the 'becoming' transformations of self that have to be seen in process rather than as 'outcomes.'

This transformational process is of course shaped by power relations in which having 'power' is valued. Thus, young men's endeavors, experiences, and efforts could be seen as attempts at orienting themselves in and negotiating with the job market in the context of norms conditioned by power relations. In other words, young men want to do the kinds of work and achieve the status and personal efficacy defined by middle class norms. Like Liechty (2003), I use Butler's (2004) theories of performativity to highlight 'class as process' or the "deliberate behaviors and behaviors that are enacted and embedded in complex cultural contexts that shape or script cultural performances" (Liechty 2003: 23). I refer to power relations as part of that cultural context that supplies the discursive norms that shape the aspirations and practices of unemployed men.

Negotiating Power and Respect

For job seekers, what constitutes 'respect?' While there are periodic bans on hiring in the

public sector and though some jobs are contract-based, there is still a great desire for ‘permanent’ jobs. Economic security is one important reason these jobs are so attractive. In the mid-2010s this is an important factor amidst Pakistan’s barely growing economy. Further, government jobs the men I met are generally interested in are white collar, office-based jobs. Whereas Shan, Shahid, AbuBakar describe travelling across Sindh, carrying bricks, and working the night shift at a net cafe. Though earlier Nadeem and Taimur refer to authority, Shan refers other elements of respect such as ‘protocol’ that officers get: officers are treated with deference, and explains government servants (officers or not) are treated favorably. In short, the state is imbricated in the honor and prestige of occupation.

Respect is not restricted to the jobs in the elite civil service. Ahmed, a call center agent from Lahore, finally found a full time job handling the accounts at a factory after being unemployed for a month or two. I was surprised that continued to apply for work. The son of a former public sector bank employee, Ahmed was not satisfied with his job which he admitted was quite a decent job. Like fellow call center agent AbuBakar who left after a period of months at the factory, Ahmed wanted job security, a steady pay-check, but also ‘respect.’ It is a crucial difference between government and private sector jobs, and why government jobs are so attractive. But what is the connection between government jobs and social status? I saw the linkages unfold in the way men discussed employment.

Shan, a trained computer engineer from a well-regarded university and aspiring officer from Karachi, highlights how status is expressed or manifested - as ‘respect.’ Underlying this is job security, compensation, but also the pension and bonuses. Shan articulates this in English like Dr. Nadeem: “status.” I thought about it in relation to his tedious first job out of university

working for his architect uncle or in relation to his being unjustly fired from a World Bank project. I thought about respect in relation to Ahmed who worked tirelessly at the call center and at his low paying book-keeping job at a factory in Shahdara. There was really no contest. One had difficult hours, was insecure, offered low pay if at all, not very attractive work conditions, and besides, case cold calling and making tea felt demeaning for a highly educated man. Shan thinks of government work in relation to the private sector which is a “lot of hard work and one can be let go at any time.” Government employment sounded far better than what these young men were doing at the time.

As Ahmed from the call center pointed out to my surprise, there are perks associated with provincial and municipal government employment as well. He explained his electric bill is not as high as it would be were his brother not a peon in a provincial government job. It struck me how unpredictable and how powerless they felt in the midst of Pakistan’s flagging economy and merit-less job market. State employed seemed very appealing set against the context in which these young men sought employment.

In another way, Shan explains of elite government service such as the CSS “*muashrah mein izzat milti hai* [you get respect in society]” He goes to explain it to me in English. “Government jobs have honor and prestige.” Shan also gives the example of a utility bill like Ahmed. Shan, whose father is a government servant, gave an example of settling a gas problem or bill. Shan explains that an average person (say, a bank manager) would get mistreated but a Civil Service of Pakistan Officer (CSP) would be treated with respect. Any such problem would be sorted out immediately. Ahmed does not want to be a CSP but identifies lower ranking government employment with status as well.

Dr Nadeem has a slightly different perspective but affirms these perceptions. In the run up to his 2014 CSS exam, Nadeem talks me through his dilemma of whether to pursue medicine or the civil service. One of the main reasons he explains is that doctors do not have the same respect as ‘officers.’ For example, in the winter of 2013 the Young Doctors Association (YDA) were carrying out strikes in Lahore and elsewhere in the country. I shared my opinion - this was to highlight the lack of funding and corruption in management of public hospitals. Nadeem disagreed; in his opinion, this is about how they want doctors to become like bureaucrats. Seeing my confused look, he explained: “The YDA wants the salary and the perks and privileges of a bureaucrat - salary increases, cars, drivers, houses.” My hallmates Farhan and Shan call this ‘protocol.’

The way the state influences the lives of young men and class relations is through the anticipated status it bestows in the eyes of unemployed men. In addition to status, aspiring officers desire personal efficacy. Through one’s position in government, the CSS aspirant imagines the anticipated social capital through which one ‘gets things done.’ As Nadeem points out at the beginning of the chapter, they give a vast, powerful network through one can get one’s work done. Young men are not only applying for public sector employment for financial gain (though Nadeem hints at that) but for the social capital, political capital, and for the status that comes with it. As several hostelites including Umar Saith explained in the introductory chapter, working for the elite civil service would give him the power to resolve any conflicts that may arise for his family.

I saw this exclusion clearly when I was preparing to leave Lahore in the summer of 2014 in a discussion with Ahmed. I asked him about power because it was a recurrent theme in our

discussions.

Power is the person who uses their influence for doing work. Power could be 'money power,' 'reference power,' 'authority power,' the ability to hire more or less people, for example, power of the police in Model Town.⁷ The power to get things done. The problem is that money is power. You can get a degree for 3 *lakhs* in Karachi. Not in Lahore however...There is recruitment power for government jobs. *Sub sey bara power!* [The biggest power!] I will not look at your abilities, though you may have it. I will ask for money, then will clear the tests for you. Then I will take some money. Half is taken, and half is given to the boss. I will enter you on the tests. The power is in clearing everything - qualifications, tests. The recruiters have power, the job seeker will have the reference of the recruiter. Negotiations do go on, but you must pay an advance. Take another example - power in the case of the landlord in the Shazeb case⁸ – who hired a lawyer. Using someone's power is not good through reference. Power is used negatively. *Majboor - us ke saat chalne parega. Manna parega* [One will be compelled to follow what they say]. You have to pay for reference. One may have a reference, but power is with someone else.

The extent to which requirements for government work dictate the educational careers and choices as well as the everyday decisions to travel, go through tests, and indicate how sought after government jobs are. In a way meritocratic requirements are conditioning the decisions of

⁷ Referring to a recent attack on a political party and its workers in which an inquiry absolved the provincial government

⁸ Shazeb was killed by a fellow teen but whose family were paid and inexplicably left the country

young people in their quest for status and power. The state requirements shape how mobility is sought - formally through a qualifying exam but more popularly believed to involve finding an intermediary and paying a bribe.

Though these notions are what Jeffrey (2010) would refer to as state-centric strategies of mobility, they contrast with an argument Jeffrey and Lerche (2001) make in their analysis of a similar job market in Uttar Pradesh. For them, this putative market for government jobs is framed as a vehicle of social reproduction. They illustrate in north India how the ability of a higher caste manages to “maintain their privileged position through co-opting and colonizing the local state” (2001: 108). Perhaps the difference among CSS aspirants and call center agents is that in contrast to state capture by the middle class to maintain class advantage, these young men seek to make their claim as members of the middle class.

In contrast to Lukose (2009), Fernandes (2006) and other scholarship on economic change and the state, the government is at the center of young men’s aspirations. In this way, the possibilities and opportunities of state employment encourage years of study and focus. Men are ready to take tests, travel across the country, participate in timed jogging, pay bribes, and even stretch the truth about one’s age or qualifications in order to secure employment. All this for respect and power.

The Discourses of Merit and Sifarish

To think empirically with these theoretical ideas in mind, the job seeker’s encounter with the job market, the state, and at the same time with power relations may be described by two discourses that speak to the way young men compete in the field of power relations. Specifically,

these two discourses describe how male graduates search for work, and at a conceptual level, how they prepare themselves for selection. The discourse of merit puts young men in a long and uncertain process of job applications in which they follow the procedures. The other is a discourse of *sifarish*, a means of securing work through an alternate set of rules, as well as a way about thinking about one's place or position in the field of power relations in which they try to use or purchase the services of someone who has the power to intercede. These are two ways of becoming 'somebody' that shed light on how young men understand the social and political context in which they are trying to figure their futures. At the center of each discourse is the state and both discourses index the important role the state plays. The state endows status and prestige as well as material benefits (perks, 'protocol' in some cases, a pension, and possibly much more). One discourse offers insight into the formal process of job applications, the other into the perceived structure of opportunity. They are not mutually exclusive and the performances they engender overlap. These two discourses illustrate the relationship between men and the larger political economy; they posit men amidst the structure of opportunity. In a way they are two competing but not mutually exclusive descriptive explanations for how opportunity is allocated.

These two overlapping discourses of merit and *sifarish* exemplify Liechty's (2003) outline of middle class as a site of constant competition and negotiation. The negotiation of that social space through taking countless qualifying exams or seeking out intermediaries or 'source' are muscular claims on social space. The 'up there' that Dr. Taimur referred to is the territory that Shan, Ahmed, Nadeem and others are attempting to negotiate.

Theorizing a Pakistani Middle Class

Connecting aspirations and middle classness, Schielke (2012) in his study of social stratification in a town in Egypt argues that the latter “is a promise, a pressure, and a claim, an imagined site and standard of normality and respectability that directs people’s aspirations and trajectories” (2012: 33). That middle class corresponds to a ‘higher’ cultural position (rather than a class) serve as a standard or set of norms that spur young men into action for years at a time. Aspirations provide a useful perspective into the conditioning and cultivation of class subjectivities, revealing perceptions and notions of middle classness amidst a larger set of power relations. Thus, young men’s ambitions give a feel for the texture of middle classness in their imaginations and for the imagined properties or dimensions of the social space that constitute the contemporary Pakistani middle class. Further, aspirations - and the way they are pursued - offer insight into a cultural position constituted by a set of subjectivities (Heiman et al 2012).

To take the ‘middle class’ as a cultural position as a given category would be difficult given the geographic, economic, political, and cultural diversity and the scope of this study. For that reason, I follow Freeman (2000) in that I view middle classness as a culturally-specific set of norms that are worked towards in different ways. Following LiPuma and Meltzoff (1983), she argues that class is a cultural category and constituted by cultural capital, economic capital, and social capital. The Pakistani middle class that young men want to join, I argue following Freeman’s intervention, centers on the type of labor that they want to do as well as the capital they seek to wield. Thus I add ‘political capital’ to this culturally specific middle class category. Moving away from both a generic concept of ‘social capital’ and a generic ‘middle class’ category allows inclusion in analysis of the different levels of bureaucracy that fuel men’s

ambitions, and for the different ways to work towards achieving it. Not everyone pursues the elite civil service but rather many pursue higher ranking positions in the government and even military. That is to argue that middle classness is not premised on a particular position, income, occupation, or status alone but by the various types of capital one has.

This focus on a culturally specific middle class also indexes the relationship between the state and class. Critical theory has long held that the state is an instrument of the dominant class; more recent scholarship suggests states not only favor but nurture ‘middle classes’ (Heiman et al 2012). For example, Khandaker and Reddy (2015) distinguish the more recent emergence of a middle class that is associated with economic change and in particular neoliberal global policies. They further distinguish the more ‘traditional’ Indian middle class constituted by government workers from a more modern one as Fernandes and Heller (2006) and many others do, arguing that the state both supports its growth and blocks it through economic reform and through corruption. In Pakistan the relationship between the state and power relations, specifically the middle class, are yet to be explored.

While the above authors propose shifting power relations and point to the transformation of the state (Fernandes 2006), Bourdieu (1984) outlines a rigid set of power relations based around status. Using parts of Bourdieu’s framework to explore shifting power relations and the relationship to the state, I stress the agency of the individual with regard to navigating those power relations. The focus is on the different ways young men attempt to overcome their limited political and social capital - whether through credentials, qualifying exams, or money. These are ways that the negotiation of one’s position simultaneously occurs with the negotiation of the boundary between state and society in which young men seek to shorten “the distance to

influence” (Hull 2012). This is often through their own hard work or ‘merit,’ or it could be with money or through combing through one’s social network. Hence I explore ‘middle class’ subjectivities in a field of struggles in which the state appears to play the role of arbiter in the way it defines or delineates the lines that young men use in conceptualizing or crafting their own cultural position. That is to turn around the more conventional question on how the state maintains authority such as Hamza Alavi (1972) and Akhtar (2008).

The two discourses of merit and *sifarish* mentioned above indicate how important the state is, how ‘power’ is a central element to the remaking of self and how the state plays a part in that. The standards set by specific state institutions at different levels (federal and provincial) in the way young men understand themselves and how they attempt to get ‘up there.’ Unemployed men’s subjectivities are influenced by their distance to the state (Hull 2012). In attempting to upend power relations, the experience and perceptions of young men upend Akhtar’s and other similar conceptions of the state. While such activity might be considered patronage and aspiring young men appear to be engaging in what Akhtar (2008) calls the ‘politics of patronage,’ in fact, such ideas overlook the possibility that there might be a change in the relationships of power. Whether or not young men succeed in their goal, Akhtar conceptually precludes the possibility of social mobility. Theories of the state keep in place between patrons and clients whereas aspiring officers and government servants seem to be trying to challenge these positions in different ways, either through merit, or sometimes through money.

Gupta (1995, 2012) in shifting the frame from which the state-society relationship is theorized gives room to explore what the state means for unemployed graduates though he does not attempt to theorize about the implications for social stratification. To explore the state from

the perspective of its citizens allows an in-depth ethnographic approach to conceptualize these subjectivities. Further, Gupta's framework of the way states are discursively understood and the way he conceives of the relationship of the state to society allows room to think about how young men may try to manipulate the state to achieve their ends as Hull (2012) highlights in his study of the municipality in Islamabad. In other words this frame allows perspective into how young men find ways to penetrate the state to gain status and power. Theorization of patron-client relations in South Asia is limited to the exchange of 'muscle' for political support as (Mushtaq Khan 1998) it. The discourse of *sifarish* speaks to more sophisticated subversion of those power relations.

This state-society relationship is understood more clearly in the light of larger economic conditions. For aspiring bureaucrats like Nadeem and our fellow hostelites, government employment remains the goal in spite of growth in other sectors such as the service sector. In fact, I show how the state becomes ever more important in the context of current socioeconomic conditions and political economy. That is, to see the way the state is understood not in isolation but in relation to current social, economic, and political conditions and the way they are perceived by unemployed men.

Finding Work without *Sifarish*

The terrain upon which the contest occurs is that of a highly competitive job market, one dominated by government jobs. The contest configures the kind of employment they want, how they go about it, and the barriers they face. Social and cultural capital play important roles - they can limit but also assist young men in their strategies of unemployed educated men with limited

capital. Yet they leave something to be desired.

As I learned about the experiences working and in searching for work from Shahid, competition for employment varies in the private sector. Some positions are almost unthinkable, ostensibly out of reach. Many of the hostelites and other CSS aspirants would not qualify for work at the well-respect multinational corporations, as I learned from Shahid that they only hire from elite institutions of higher education.

Shahid, an MBA student enrolled at a small private institution in Ichhra from southern Punjab, told me that he harbored dreams of being a CEO of a multinational corporation but knew the odds were not easy. He sees himself very differently from his cousins who come to Lahore to work in the restaurant. The son of a shopkeeper in southern Punjab, Shahid felt vindicated when he quit working at restaurants to work in a call center and then for pharmaceuticals company. “I’m getting paid 17,000 a month, Faiz could not earn that much even after years of work.”

When I met him he had already been in Lahore for several years and had completed a two year Bachelors of Commerce degree from a small private institution called Central College that was affiliated with Punjab University. I learned about his political views and his experience as a political party activist which was curtailed by his family. His overt support for the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) was beginning to roil relations between his family and others in his village. His father asked him to discontinue his involvement.

On a day off from his frenetic schedule, while in a short-sleeved golf shirt in jeans, Shahid expressed that he was conscious of his not having the training or confidence in English nor the contacts to achieve his goal quite yet. He showed me a few job descriptions of teller positions he was applying for at private banks.


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Image 2.1 Job Advertisement for a teller position in Sunday Jung Dec 8 2013

Shahid seemed somewhat hesitant but noted he was qualified for them. He did not own a computer and worked day and night at restaurants or internet cafes to make ends meet while he studied. He borrowed my laptop to email his applications but never heard back. He explained to me that the institution where he was getting his MBA was not nearly as rigorous as others in Lahore, say, LUMS, an elite institution. "They give us a few assignments but we don't do much compared to other MBA students." Shahid thought he didn't hear back from the private banks because he did not have a reference or someone he knew there. By contrast, Shahid explained that he got some of the waiting jobs he had through recommendations from friends including one at a call center.

In the private sector, references matter but *sifarish* is not common. As AbuBakar, a call center agent, explained. References do not mean that the job is guaranteed and depends on whether the individual is competent or not. Shan explained he got his first job with a distant relative and his second job through a reference. But AbuBakar also explained that generally *sifarish* [intercession] was not used in the private sector as incompetent individuals would not be able to satisfy the requirements of a job.

AbuBakar, a recent university graduate from Punjab University who also majored in business commerce, asked his friends to let him know if there are any positions that open up. His father, who carried bricks and is a contractor, found something for him in a shoe factory where he did some work through the foreman who he knew. AbuBakar's father had a '*salam-dua*' [friendly but not close] relationship with the foreman, as he was a work acquaintance. The foreman set up an interview and AbuBakar was interviewed by the factory owners and began work the next day. Though he liked the job and spent most of his time doing the work he expected to do as a book-keeper, he found himself making tea for the factory owners. He decided to leave after a period of some months.

Bourdieu's (1984) framework would explain these experiences through the contradiction of having significant cultural capital in the form of degrees yet limited social capital in the form of contacts. While AbuBakar and Shahid and others sometimes did what Bourdieu would refer to as occupations that were far from 'distinct' and often felt disrespected, they in fact did the kind of occupations that Freeman (2000) would refer to as 'pink collar' - tedious if not mindless office work that struck me as soulless and more importantly devoid of meaning. Private sector employment like working at a call center as I saw it was punishing work; it did not seem to

garner the type of respect or ‘power’ that the men I spoke to sought. Call center agents or restaurant workers was not what university graduates had in mind.

Rather, unemployed men were looking for work that was more distinct and though competition is great - within grasp. Therefore time was spent less on the few banking opportunities or ‘pink collar’ jobs and more time on government jobs. Shan, the computer engineer and CSS aspirant at Choudhury Mansion, explained that he had worked in the private sector for two years but that government jobs were perceived to be more respectable. Even setting up a business could not compare to the esteem in which one is held working for the state. Thus, young educated men I knew like Shan were looking for ‘respect’ and ‘power,’ speaking partly to Bourdieu’s framework. They were looking for occupations that were more distinct.

Public Sector Job Market Strategies

One way to secure that desired position in government is through merit such as credentials and qualifying exams. There is a belief that some positions are meritocratic, the highest level in fact at the federal level whose selection process is run by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC). Though this faith is not universal nor does it apply to all positions, meritocracy flattens the competition in terms of social and political capital. All that is needed is a degree and to pass a few qualifying exams.

Though odds are slim, Shan and many hostelites believed the CSS exam was the only merit-based process. And while there is skepticism, there is a belief that some jobs can be attained meritocratically. AbuBakar told me that he refuses to use *sifarish* or pay a bribe because he believes he can find a job in the government (preferably the military) on his own. “I have an

uncle (father's brother) in the army but I will not ask him." Thus, men turn to the selection process for government positions, rarely contract-based and usually permanent positions.

'Merit' can be seen everywhere - on large sign boards on major roads or on TV and in lunch time conversation. Searching for work on the basis of merit is itself a kind of discursive idea that does have class implications. This discourse is espoused by politicians like Punjab's Chief Minister whose insignia can be seen on the ubiquitous black-colored nylon back-packs in Lahore with bold and stylish inscription in yellow: "Chief Minister's Laptop Scheme." The reason for flashing this sign of merit so visible is ostensibly to promote 'merit.' For such politicians, merit is associated with education. Also, the discourse of merit is articulated by well-known bureaucrats like Dr. Ishrat Husain when he sounds the alarm on *sifarish*, exhorting state functionaries to allocate jobs on the basis of merit (Husain 2014).

Following the rules of bureaucracy, government employment is formally meritocratic. The process generally includes filling in forms, going through an exercise test, and interviews. Some jobs are handled directly through the department or ministry while others make taking a test through a private company, National Testing Service (NTS) mandatory. There are exceptions to that, as other ways are through taking the position of a parent who has a government job if they die while employed, which Shan explained. These are rare cases and it is not clear if that could be considered exclusively merit-based.

Participating in merit-based processes does not mean advantages are not sought. Young men like Shahid and Dr. Nadeem speak English and have university degrees. There are other advantages they try to leverage. Shahid had changed his age on his government-issued identity card by two years allowing him more time to secure government work and duck age limits. In

another example of the use of social and cultural capital, I once walked in to say hello to Shan and watched as he patiently pulled together his application. As he went about collating documents like transcripts and certificates, attestation of said documents, and mailing of CVs along with diplomas, and relevant letters, he was attesting the documents himself with his uncle's rubber stamp. Further Shan was quite matter-of-fact when it came to his *jaali* [fake] Master of Arts degree in English.

The crux of the meritocratic process involves studying and taking merit-based tests through a private organization – the National Testing Service. These merit exams assess English proficiency and math skills. Frequently I heard certain general knowledge questions were asked. Tests were multiple-choice but some consisted of a short written answers as well or short essays. Results were posted online where students could enter their national identity number to get access.

If one passes this point, it means going through interviews. Shahid's provincial accountant's job application is an example. While simultaneously doing odd jobs like working at an internet cafe as well as taking classes for MBA, he applied for two provincial government accounting jobs. After sending copies of his education certificates, a copy of his national identity card, and other materials in for an accountant's position, he went through a written test in Multan, and later did a physical test (including running) there also. Though he was based in Lahore, his domicile near Multan required him to travel 6 hours by road in order to take the test there. He had to take time off from work and from his classes in order to travel twice to Multan. Since his father's cloth shop was not far from Multan he used the opportunity to visit his family.

The difficulty with this meritocratic process was that while Shahid, Ahmed, Shan, and

others passed the tests, they rarely heard back about the next phase beyond the NTS and physical tests. This would create real frustration. Shan got to the interview round for a job with the provincial meteorology department, but did not make the cut. “They asked questions in English, ‘hifi’ English,” Shan recalls, surmising that the other candidate must have “paid off the interviewers.”

“I Don’t Have *Sifarish*”

What does the commonly heard refrain “I don’t have *sifarish*” mean? In the discourse of merit the state could be cast as a meritocratic institution and positions in the bureaucracy are seen as vehicles of social mobility, at least, a way to attain or maintain respect. In that scheme, job applicants are unable to demonstrate their competence, or could be thought to lack social and cultural capital which have been useful in understanding the experience of and how young unemployed men go about securing work. However, the discourse of merit elides a crucial component of stratification - one that makes mobility more complex if not problematic - is seen when the complexities of the state (and of applying for employment) is carried out. This is a crucial aspect of the job search process. That is, a view of ‘power’ that becomes clearer when stories of corruption are taken into account. Competition for employment then is for respect as well as for power, an element which makes government service more attractive but also more difficult to attain. ‘Power’ changes how we might think about stratification.

In the previous section, rules defined the relationship between job applicants and the state as the state - as shown in the previous section - approximately follows the rules of bureaucracy. It is rule based, meritocratic, and ranked (Weber 1978). Young men navigated power relations through bureaucratic rules seeking to test and interview their way in. Yet the state may looks

different from an unemployed man's eyes: impenetrable, unfair, unmeritocratic. Hence, there are other ways to achieve one's goals of respect and power, an alternative means of navigating subverting power relations. This is a more direct view of the power relations that unemployed men face, one in which the young men have no means to penetrate the state. "Nepotism and favoritism," Shan would mutter in disgust when recalling the difficulties he has faced in his efforts to secure government employment.

The section shows more clearly how perceptions of power relations influence an alternative discourse and set of practices, one of *sifarish*. This section also shows more clearly how the state is playing a role in reinforcing power relations: those who do not have the political capital are locked out. It is exceedingly difficult to secure a job and the perception is that there is a systematically operating shadow state consisting of informal networks at play here. This is the discourse of *sifarish* that centers the state in the lives of young men. But, as I show, it does not mean that men accept that cultural position nor are they above bribery or *sifarish*.

How does a job seeker navigate the field of competition with 'power' in mind? A second set employment strategies, bringing into view a very different relationship to the state, offers a lens into the job search that opens up the job search as a lengthy, complex social, political, and economic set of processes that evokes the state. A nuanced look at what Gupta (2012) refers to as 'narratives of corruption' illustrates the state's role in power relations and the exclusion of qualified candidates. Such an exploration of stories of job searching which at the same time are stories of corruption and exclusion from power is necessary because there is more involved in getting work than merit or education. In other words, the search for employment has a political dimension (Hughes 2015, Jeffrey 2010) that belies the discourse of merit. This is the conjuncture

of the market, power, and relationships. Where are job applicants in relation to power and specifically to *sifarish*? What does *sifarish* mean to job seekers? What does this mean for subjectivity?

Prevalent themes in stories of corruption and attempts to find work include powerlessness, money, corruption along with disbelief in merit. These stories featured some outlines of what Gledhill (1999) refers to a 'shadow state' in parallel, alternative institutionalization of power (Reno 1995 in Gledhill: 204). It brings together similar themes to Medard (1996) who refers to 'neopatrimonialism' as a form of rule involving money and politics. As Jeffrey and Lerche's (2001) study shows, this is a useful mechanism of social reproduction, shutting out the possibility of mobility.

For some, young men are locked out. Money and an intermediary are required which at certain levels means many jobs are out of reach. This level varies for young men but the feeling they have is similar - that of being unable to afford to pay or lacking the political capital required to get the jobs they seek.

Recounting his own experience, Ahmed, a call center agent, explained (using English terms) 'source' or 'approach' are intermediaries who help secure government jobs. Often this service requires cash payment up front without certainty it will work. Neither 'source' or 'approach' are necessarily familiar individuals or kin. In fact they are less likely to be.

Ahmed shares some of his research he's done in the course of his job search. Though he wants to work in a bank, like his father who moved to Lahore from the village thirty years ago, Ahmed explores a variety of provincial government jobs including stenography and clerical work

in the judiciary. While he visited the bank where his father worked none of his father's colleagues helped or were able to intercede on his behalf. Thus, he scours the classifieds every Sunday and applies for jobs regularly. The lowest position, Ahmed who was born and brought up in Lahore, explained, "costs some 40 or 50 thousand rupees (or \$4-500). The 'office boy' job is about a *lakh* rupees (or about \$1000). The next level is a '*naib qasid*' (like a postman for court notices, Ahmed tells me). "That's about 1.5 *lakh* Rs. The junior clerk was around 2 *lakhs* approximately."

Later, Shan describes his experience and knowledge of employment opportunities in law enforcement in Sindh, bringing up the systematic nature of this parallel structure of opportunity. He uses a similar set of terms as Ahmed did such as *sifarish* as well as 'source' but a higher range of prices. "To become a cop it takes Rs 6 *lakhs*." I ask him about banking - "To become a banker, the *rishwat* starts at Rs 6 *lakhs* depending on the position."

During a period of unemployment, Ahmed and I went to chat with one of his close friends, Awais. While chatting with his friend while he sold candy and bottles of soda in a residential part of Shahdara, Awais shared his own experience. The *rishwat* [bribe] may not come back and there is no guarantee the appointment will happen. Ahmed and Awais share this as first-hand information from when they applied to work at a government hospital but also some comes from what they learn from their friends and family. Another of their friends hit a barrier in the shape of a manila folder. Mudassir, who works in an administrative position at a nongovernmental organization affiliated with a local political party explains that he passed every written and practical test in order to join the local police force. At the end of the last test and before the merit list was published of those who would be offered jobs, he was asked to deposit

many *lakhs* [hundreds of thousands] of rupees into the folder. Mudassir did not have enough money to be selected.

For Ahmed, he is excluded from the status of government employment firstly because he does not have the political capital he needs but also because he does not have enough money to pay bribes. Ahmed considers jobs to have become commodified. *Sifarish* is exclusive and means paying for jobs with money he does not have. “One must invest in a job, one must buy a job, because there’s no merit here.” In fact he sees a marketplace of government positions. “Look at my cousin, he's educated, older, and he's taken many tests. And he still hasn't gotten a job in a government organization. He's a mathematician and hasn't got an entry because he does not have a reference.⁹”

The type of *sifarish* and money depends on the position and can be exorbitant. These principles extend to the military as well. AbuBakar initially thought that *rishwat* and *sifarish* applied only to the civilian government, but he realizes that it extends to the military. To illustrate his point succinctly, Shahid was asked for Rs 20¹⁰ lakhs for a reference from someone in the military. This was someone referred to him, not personal acquaintance. A closer military acquaintance introduced by his uncle, a member of the ruling PML-N political party, however, did not ask for any money. Though the second person promised to help, he didn’t help get Shahid a job. But this matter that Ahmed is struggling with is beyond economic capital.

Securing employment for Ahmed and others, economic and political capital both play a role, not just cultural capital. As AbuBakar and Shahid imply, in the case of what I blandly call

⁹ By which he means ‘source’ or ‘approach’

¹⁰ 20,000 USD

the ‘job market’ the successful candidate not only has enough money but the right ‘approach.’ References have at least two meanings; when references are linked to someone with *sifarish* they are ‘source’ or ‘approach’ (they could also be ‘introductions’ with no power or promise for employment implied). Finding ‘source’ is described as very difficult not to mention expensive. As Awais, Ahmed’s friend said if he had ‘approach,’ he wouldn’t be working at a *kiryana* (small household items) store.

‘Sifarish Means it’s Done’

Ahmed and Shan’s and others’ experiences in the job market are partly explained by a lack of social capital - network and contacts. Yet the local state is so prominent in their accounts, as are *sifarish* and money. The attempts at securing government employment are certainly illustrations of what Liechty (2003) refers to as ‘class in practice’ in which young men’s negotiations with the job market are constrained by a lack of capital. Young men’s relationship to the state is theoretically possible but practically it is mediated by someone interceding on their behalf who has power, or *sifarish*. This could be conceived of as a bridge created by *sifarish*, a ‘connection’ as Hull calls it, that is embedded in a system of status and even power (2012). Hull calls this a negotiation across the blurry boundaries between society and state. According to Hull, ‘social processes’ shorten the distance between state and society. But what are these social processes?

I propose power and class constitute these social processes that shorten the distance between state and society that Hull refers but does not define. I argue that they are manifest in *sifarish*, a concept that has been a footnote in South Asian anthropology but deserves more

detailed exploration. Further, missing in this debate about the state is the importance of class, and the relationship with power that Jeffrey (2001, 2010) has explored.

Sifarish is a polysemous term used beyond the job market. I personally was asked to intercede on someone's behalf in the spring of 2014. In a dispute between owner and workers in The Cafe, Faiz's young nephews quit and walked off. A day later when they came to get their money owed to them, they asked me to intercede on their behalf ('*sifarish karna*'). I was a regular customer and got along well with Aunty, The Cafe's owner. In this context I was being asked to do a favor, use my leverage, and get their work done.

But how is *sifarish* used in the job market?

Sifarish, Power and the Subverting the Binary

Complicating theorization of social and cultural capital by bringing together theorization of the state offers a lense to think about Shahid's experience with a politician in his attempt to create an opportunity of *sifarish*. Shahid like others do not accept their fate and seek to subvert power relations.

Perhaps the clearest example of the way *sifarish* is a form of political capital and distinct from cultural and social capital - was the way Shahid talked about 'Sultan' several times during the year. Sultan is a politician from Muzaffargarh, where his village is in southern Punjab. During a walk on Jail Road outside of The Cafe where he worked for some time and adjacent to where I stayed, he talked about how Sultan was a very rich man, who sent his children outside for education and there's no primary school in his village. "He owns this car showroom over there, Sultan Motors," pointing across the road.

Shahid shares his attempt to do *sifarish* through Sultan, who I later found out was a legislator in the Punjab Provincial Assembly. Shahid approached him directly in Lahore, not through his uncle, a fellow PML-N party worker. He was applying for a job as an accountant in the Punjab Provincial Civil Service at the time and hoped to leverage Sultan into helping him. It ended, Shahid said, in an argument. "I'll see you," the politician said. Shahid replied, I'll see *you!*

Hanging out on Ferozepur Road in Icchra at night while the MetroBuses and other traffic zoomed by us, I was compelled to ask him - "What were you thinking? Of course he isn't going to help you" I said. Shahid responded, "I thought if I could round up some votes for him. The PML-N isn't looking good in Muzaffargarh, he might not win the next election."

Is this an example of a patron-client relationship? I asked AbuBakar if he was asked to pay bribes in his search for work. He replied:

It's not like I get asked directly. That is not how it works. The way it works is this: A guy applies (for a job). Then the guy asks his contacts or father's contacts if there is someone they know who works there. That is 'approach.' If so, ask if "*aap merey kaam karwasakein?* [can you do my work?]" If they can, then then they will tell you: "*bhai itna lagega*" [it will cost this much] and then, if it works for you, tell them: "*bhai, lagwadein* [connect me, brother].

AbuBakar differentiates between social capital and what appears to be 'political capital' and between a patron-client relationship and an economic transaction. AbuBakar also distinguishes *sifarish* from an introduction. *Sifarish* means getting the job on someone's say,

whether one is competent for the job or not. On the other hand, an introduction is nothing more than getting a meeting with a boss; they may or may not be selected. “*Sifarish* means it’s done,” AbuBakar emphasizes. Further, he explains that the term ‘reference’ is sometimes used for *sifarish* (they seem to be used interchangeably), he sums up his point however about reference: “Reference makes preference,” he says, laughing. Social capital is conceptually inadequate here because the contacts and network that AbuBakar and Ahmed are referring to are not neutral but politically connected. They seem to be referring to ‘political capital.’

Bourdieu’s social capital is generic while *sifarish* implies a vector as well as scale. The ‘source’ could be very high up in the federal government or could work on the level of the local government. *Sifarish* suggests someone with the ability to get things done. *Sifiarish* is explained by political scientist Anwar Syed who offers an in depth look at it in the bureaucracy in which he explains as “getting something done either from getting a ‘higher up’ or as part of a system of exchange of favors” (Syed 1971). In other words it is with the *sifarish* of someone (with power or influence) that work gets done in the bureaucracy. If one party has influence and the other does not, is this explained through patron-client relationships (Akhtar 2008) does?

Shahid’s experience with Sultan could be explained as an attempt to establish patron-client relationship. Shahid did not have any money and mentions the possibility of mobilizing votes. But it is important to distinguish his awareness of the political relationship involved. As an educated man, Shahid seems to see his attempt as transactional rather than accept Sultan as his patron in the long term.

Further, as money is involved, patron-client relationships would be inadequate in

theorizing this competition for employment but also power and therefore mobility. Wolf (1966) describes the patron-client relationship in Pitt-Rivers' terms, as a 'lopsided friendship' in which one partner is superior to the other in his capacity to grant goods and services. Scott (1972) points to the structural conditions of the dyadic relationship as including but not limited to the persistence of marked inequalities in wealth, status, and power. Reciprocal exchange from the patron's side are security, livelihood, and materials for livelihood whereas the client provides labor and political allegiance. There is an element of clientalism in the ways Shan, Ahmed, and AbuBakar discuss *sifarish*. But this should not obscure a major shift away from what Mushtaq Khan (1998) refer to as an exchange of 'muscle' for political support. While there are inequalities in these relationships, there are market transactions taking place, with no evidence of the involvement of political support. For example, Ahmed distinguishes this from the experience of a brother of his who certainly would have been a part of some kind of patron-client relationship and exchange. Ahmed, who worked in call centers for some years before seriously thinking about paying for a job explains he will have to raise over 1 *lakh* rupees to pay for a job with the Punjab government as a peon. He explains two of his brothers have paid to be peons, both university graduates. But the eldest brother who I met got the peon job without money; his father had an agreement with someone who had political power. Ahmed and the case of his brothers demonstrate the contrast between seems to be a commodified *sifarish* and the more widely understood meaning of *sifarish* as patron-client relationship.

To make sense of it in contemporary Pakistan, the commodification of *sifarish* cannot be overlooked. Large sums of money are being exchanged in order to secure employment. Ahmed, Shan, and Shahid's experience illustrate both the intercession of someone 'higher up' as well as

cash in order to get the post. An account of Shan's attempt to 'buy' a job illustrates his exclusion from an opportunity. Sitting on the floor of my hostel room, Shan shared his experience with me in Sindh with an explanation of how *sifarish* works. His experience illustrates shows how politically involved the process is. Shan explained that he had a friend that was an intermediary with someone in a government position. It was a data operator position that became available. "That person was in the government. The job was worth 14 *lakh* rupees." Shan agreed with him for 13 *lakh*. But someone bid 15 *lakh* and got the job. "Everyone is corrupt and that's how jobs are allocated." To help me understand the importance of the intermediary, Shan shared the case of a friend of his who had money but did not have the contacts to secure the job for him.

Both Ahmed and Shan - though dealing with smaller and larger scales - place themselves outside of a putative shadow state. What are the implications for the unemployed graduate's relationship to the state? Complicating the repressive state thesis, Tarlo (2003) proposes a 'market' that helps show how the relationship between the state and its poor could be understood as negotiation. The market concept is apt in thinking about the experience of young job seekers in Lahore. Tarlo explores the way deeds to plots are claimed, even discussing the importance of the 'brokers' (*dalal*) in her study in Delhi. For her, the residents of Welcome colony are not repressed but in her framework their agency is recovered because they maneuver around rules and regulations. Jeffrey and Lerche (2001) shed light on a similar market mediated by the state. Adapting the notion of a market to a commentary on stratification, Jeffrey and Lerche shed light on this 'job market,' arguing that the relationship to the state is differentiated by caste. In a study of the way the boundaries of the state are negotiated through the acquisition of provincial jobs. The authors illustrate this negotiation in a similar 'job market' as I have described in Lahore,

arguing “access to state power is circumscribed by the ability to mobilize resources.” They demonstrate the relevance of stratification for thinking about the state, showing how Jat and Dalit job seeking strategies vis a vis the state differ because of the disparity in power relations.

Yet the class component comes out as a binary between the poor and powerless and the all powerful state. Perhaps the middle ground is when a young man can pay for it and avoid the implications of superiority and inferiority that are implicit in the patron-client relationship.

I see Shahid’s and others’ experience as connected with contemporary political and economic conditions. Not only does a lack of *sifarish* frustrate young men, it is also related to what’s going on around them. If the everyday corruption associated with ‘*halaat kharab*’ [stressful or difficult times] such as being stopped randomly by the police or asked for bribes when applying for jobs, one way to deal with that is to acquire power. Shan repeats: “Pakistan is ruled by the families, for the families. Pakistan has not one problem but lots. Poverty, lack of education, and no merit. Nothing is on merit.” Dr Nadeem sums it up:

I belong to a middle class family. How could I make my dreams come true? This is inequality.” Why do we have poverty? There’s inequality in basic rights, in education and in health. Our kids are suffering from hepatitis and from so many disease, they are our future. And nothing works - not electricity, therefore offices can’t work. How will we run this country? I have to support my family. And I don’t mean just my kids but my cousins and extended family.” Pakistan: “here work is also about making a reputation and making a livelihood.

I asked him what he meant by that. “What does this all mean? Social inequality and disparity.”

Aaj ke Haalaat [The Conditions of Today]

This should be grounded in larger political and economic conditions. To think about exclusion and political subjectivity that I have outlined above should be grounded in the socioeconomic conditions in which they find themselves. As Leichty (2003) argues in his monograph on Nepal, alluding to deep inequality, situates the “middle class in a larger class economy in which power and resources are unevenly distributed.” My final point in this chapter is to show how the state is not seen to be powerful on its own but in relation to the larger inequality, sluggish economic growth, and skewed political economy. The way job seekers look at the state is conditioned by the circumstances they find themselves in.

I was surprised how directly young men strategized almost directly due to larger issues of inflation, a lack of infrastructure, and poor governance. Ahmed, critical of the political elite, was acutely aware of Pakistan’s economic problems. He like others wanted to leave to earn a foreign currency. Imran, whose father was a farmer, couldn’t see himself making a livelihood as a farmer because he said it is getting harder to make any profit from it. The state neglected the farmers and policies tilted towards larger farmers. I also learned about Shan’s aversion to setting up a small business. “I don’t want set up a business though I’m qualified. There’s no guarantee with business.” Shan talked at length one evening as we walked at a nearby park about how setting up a business in Karachi would be difficult considering the *bhatta* [extortion], political unpredictability, lack of security, and inflation. Farhan who was from Quetta (a city that he explained was very unsafe unless you have ‘protocol’ like his uncle does) explained: “We go for the CSS. It’s [Pakistan] not safe. Our mind is disturbed... because of problems... law and order situation is not good.”

Conclusion

Advantage or disadvantage in the job market is not conditioned strictly by social, cultural or economic capital but instead the picture is more complicated when seen through the eyes of job seekers in Lahore. I make the case in this chapter that political capital as well as the terrain of power relations is crucial. An exploration of class as process as it plays out in the negotiation of jobs and careers in Lahore must take into account political capital and the ‘field’ and not just social and cultural capital. This lens offers perspective into both the experiences of migrants who come from other parts of Pakistan and the experiences of local Lahori young men. Both *desi* (Lahoris) and *pardesi* (migrants from outside of Lahore) describe how their job prospects are complicated by money, the type of contacts they have access to, and by the political and economic conditions in which the economy grows very little while the number of university-trained entrants in the market multiplies every year.

Life chances, more generally, and how young men find jobs, specifically, seem to be shaped by more than capital but by the structure of opportunity. This could be seen formally, as in the discourse of merit in which the opportunities are fulfilled meritocratically. The structure of opportunity that parallels this is discussed in the discourse of *sifarish* in which job placement is shaped by a different structure of opportunity, a shadow state, determining where young educated men end up.

The other factor in whether and how employment and careers are secured is the state itself. Accounts give credence to a way that young men imagine the state - to be constituted by a shadow state (Gledhill 1999). This speaks to a larger issue of class relations and of a political status quo in which money, politics, and power go hand in hand.

I have made the argument that navigation of the job market is shaped by power relations. Navigation or how to find work is shaped by the state and driven by ideas about status. It is also influenced by the social and economic time of the 2000s that Pakistan is in. Navigation is told in stories of corruption and in a slight hope/faith in merit.

In addition to thinking about class and mobility, I have contributed to the literature in the Pakistani state. Contrary to what others find, the state has not failed nor does it seem to keep young men in their cultural positions but in fact there are ways to overcome barriers. The state is penetrated for that purpose, in order to secure that political capital needed for “social relations” as Nadeem pointed out once. Who Nadeem and young people want to be is based on their understanding of the state, that it is penetrable. Who they are and the subjectivity they take on has to do with that crossing of the boundary of the state.

For this reason, I argue it is not accurate to say that the putative distance between state and society in Lahore is mediated by a market exclusively. In contrast to Welcome Colony in Delhi of Tarlo (2003)’s ethnography, this is a market for jobs whose participants are socially mobile young men. Also, I argue, this market however is one that serves as a barrier, though it does not stop participants from trying. What is distinct is the importance of *sifarish*, not just money. And to complicate the idea of a pure market, I highlight the merit component in the experiences shared by youth. It is not a pure market, though Ahmed - one of the former call center agents - uses that analogy. Thirdly, there is an element of power and exclusion. *Sifarish* is a critical concept here. I add in the point that this job market is widespread, it is not restricted to any level.

In navigating the job market and power relations, graduates want power and respect, not

just a job. That illustrates their understanding of power relations and where they see themselves. This in turn sheds some light on what constitutes middle classness - which hinges on getting that power and respect without being subject to being a 'client.' The argument is that the search for mobility is not determined by access to social and cultural capital but political capital as well. The belief in *sifarish* speaks to the understanding of self in relation to power relations, it's a kind of explanation as Umar Saith put it, one that does not explain everything but illustrates the the subjectivity and context of job searching and figuring the future.

Meanwhile, having *sifarish* or 'source' signifies one's place in power relations or at least the ability to pay for it. To 'have *sifarish*' also signifies the way one's relationship to the state influences one's position in power relations; that is, ranks in government employment seem to shape social status generally. Not having *sifarish* seems to signify being 'out' or excluded; I show how it is considered a barrier to attaining government employment if a job seeker does not have access to it. *Sifarish* is considered in the literature to be 'pulling strings' or 'favor.' But it also has implications for thinking about class or cultural position. Neither discourse is deterministic but rather are different explanations which describe the ways men go about trying to achieve their goals.

Further, the way larger conditions shape the aspirations and employment strategies speaks to the ways power relations shape subjectivity in a deeply inegalitarian society. For example, Nadeem makes clear that he is 'lower middle class' yet at the same time he wants to 'get things done.' Nadeem and Taimur's views about the civil service seem to suggest that there is a differential ability to 'get things done' in the eyes of unemployed men; perhaps there are more ways than one to be a Pakistani citizen.

My findings are not altogether unique. It is echoed in what Nichola Khan (2010) finds in Karachi in her accounts of MQM party workers whose careers as trained political killers are expressions of a desire for adulthood. Being excluded from jobs meant they sought social mobility in political work. Khan argues the role of the state was crucial in shaping the political subjectivity of young male MQM workers who otherwise had trouble finding work.

This approach prevails in Pakistan to some extent. Failed (Zaidi 2014) and weak state (Lieven 2012) are the modalities that illustrate how the Pakistani state is understood. Yet the state looms incredibly large for unemployed men, considered, as I have shown, to be the best job opportunity available. To look, then as Verkaaik (2004), following Hansen (2001), at the peculiar relationship of youth as violently opposed to the state is to miss the complexities of the state-society relationships.

Yet contrary to Khan's and others findings, Shan and other men persist in their quest for state employment. They are excluded but not defeated; they seek other options and other ways to achieve their goal. This bears on how we may think in a more sophisticated way about the role of the state in shaping the subjectivities of young people. To think about state in its imbrication in shaping middle class subjectivities, different approaches to state are necessary.

Contributing to the literature on state and subjectivity using Gupta's (2012) framework, there is a significant impact on young men but it is not through force or even exclusion. The relationship between state and subjectivity is sought and in fact young men work for years to cultivate a suitable performance. In other words, another way to think about the relationship between state and society is through the conditioning of subjectivity by the state.

CHAPTER 3

Merit or Copy Culture: Being ‘Educated’ in the Shifting Economy

Introduction

Having highlighted the significance of the state in shaping class subjectivities in the last chapter, here I explore the ways in which education (broadly defined) mediates the two. Specifically, this chapter explores the education strategies of unemployed male university graduates as ways to gain government employment. In other words, I explore how efforts to study for government exams illustrate transformative processes through which young men negotiate their citizenship or relationship to the state. I show how in their pursuit of government jobs, unemployed men in the cultivation of their subjectivities effectively draw lines that constitute divisions of class, that is, positioning themselves in another, higher social space.

In an ethnographic study of a hostel and of a small private ‘academy,’ I learned how some of the unemployed residents endeavored to make themselves better candidates for government employment. I did so to understand how education is perceived to help young men get ‘up there,’ to use Dr. Taimur’s words from Chapter 1. In this chapter I argue that this could be understood as an attempt to distinguish one’s self as what Bourdieu (1984) may refer to as a ‘legitimate person’ or as it is articulated in the hostel, a ‘competent’ individual. I situate this in a larger field of relations of power, as well as in a political-economic context. I argue that the way young men transform themselves through education should be seen in relation to family support, to a job market perceived to be rife with bribery, and in a crushing competition for limited job opportunities.

I argue in this chapter that to desire employment in the bureaucracy speaks to the desire

to differentiate themselves with limited capital; it is to reconfigure one's self in relation to power relations, vital in attaining respect and power, as discussed in the previous chapter. Thus the educational process by which I mean learning and studying for exams is thought to bring out a different relationship to the state than what they have.

Following Butler's (2004) theorization and Liechty's (2003) application of subjectivity, I show how education and class (as process) are linked. "Performance perspectives help shed light on how people actively produce class culture," Liechty argues, taking a Weberian view that conceives of class as constituted not by exclusively by the relationship to the mode of production but through education, lifestyle, prestige, among other factors. As Butler's conception of gender precludes a monolithic definition, Liechty views class as process rather than as product. Thus I understand young men's educational performances in their quest to become government officers as repeated instantiations of their understanding of middle class practice. How aspiring officers go about everyday life in the hostel zone as learners imbibing language and conduct are examples of such performances.

While Butler and Liechty are less clear on subjectification or the process through which someone becomes a 'subject,' I focus on the processes of learning how to perform - to be a CSS aspirant and becoming an 'officer.' I argue educative processes such as teaching, learning, and studying are seen by CSS aspirants as a means of bringing young men closer to their desired citizenship, bringing them closer to a notion of an 'achiever' or 'topper' (someone who achieves a high exam score) by learning how to approach government exams. That is, how to reach those standards laid out by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) in the CSS exam - a ramp or even 'shortcut' into the occupation they desire. In the course of what I call a 'competitive-

collaborative' hostel environment in a larger competitive field for social status (to use Bourdieu's terms), I show how nonformal education serves to inform the performance of English learners and would-be civil servants relative to that ideal. In doing so, the outline of an intermediary class subjectivity emerges.

Specifically, I show how in the collaborative environment of the hostel and a nearby academy, CSS aspirants help one another achieve their goals through repeated practice, feedback, and guidance. That is, by learning 'what to write' (worldviews that they imbibe) and 'how to write' (known locally as 'patterns') which involved giving their writing to others, by discussing books and chapters, and by practicing their English - all in a particular fashion with an underlying political outlook, they are practicing what they understand to be expected of them as bureaucrats. That is, a certain repeated form of regurgitation of particular views of state and society. This includes a certain kind of knowledge or outlook or a pro-establishment¹¹ orientation to Pakistani society, along with language skills and knowledge of global political, social, and economic affairs.

Learning what to write and how to write in the space of the hostel speak to the relationship between education and social stratification, and how we may understand 'mobility' in relation to learning and nonformal education. Taking a class cultural view following Foley (2010), I show how young men culturally pursue 'power,' in Liechty's terms, how they construct themselves (in particular their subjectivities) culturally, or how they differentiate themselves through education and learning as aspiring bureaucrats. If the middle class is a culturally constituted space (Freeman 2000), I look at the processes through which young men compete for

¹¹ An ambiguous term that generally refers to the military

government positions that endow respect and power with the resources they have. That is, I show how young men's education strategies reveal the ways in which they are authoring their own subjectivity.

The argument I make is that nonformal education, rather than secondary or tertiary education, is seen as the primary vehicle towards attaining their goals of a middle classness in some very challenging economic circumstances. I show how the teaching and learning that takes place in the hostel is part of that effort, ostensibly making up for what they did not get from their homes or formal education. In this process, learning the English language (along with an analytical set of skills such as writing) in addition to a form of rote memorization of 'what to write' - what I call 'remixing' - is thought to prepare students for government service at higher grades.

Further, nonformal education is part of a larger family strategy of attaining a level of power and respect that benefits the family (Osella 2000, Benei 2010). Families played an important role in morally and economically supporting their young men because formal or school/university based education is not sufficient for aspiring officers and the educational activities that occur in the space of the hostel and academy are thought to remedy that.

I argue that education is associated with mobility and that to fail an exam is not necessarily to fail to achieve one's larger goal. That is, the meaning of education is connected to politics and mainly 'power,' and arguably, a kind of citizenship or subjectivity and that this process opens the possibility of achieving some norm or middle class subjectivity. Thus to study is to put one's self in a position to be selected in a number of different selection processes and to gain access to the state, and therefore, to respect and power. For example, CSS aspirants would

study and prepare for the CSS in addition to similar positions at the provincial level. Thus, to fail the CSS exam is not necessarily to fail to attain their larger goals. Failing the exam does not preclude men achieving other kinds of prestigious employment. Indeed, it could be a bridge and a preparation for other similar exams which bring the unemployed man closer to what Hull (2012) calls ‘influence.’ After taking the CSS, men may pursue other strategies for state employment and are better prepared. A broader view of the way young people remake themselves through education would suggest that it is not a failed performance, per Bourdieu’s (1984) framework, a dissonance between aspirations and reality as he calls it. Rather, the distinction is in the aspiration and effort of preparing to become worthy of selection by the state. This is a more sophisticated cultivation of one’s subjectivity.

This self-making process should be seen in the context of political and economic conditions. Tepid economic growth and declines in manufacturing and agriculture along with rapidly growing labor force are just some of the factors that shape education strategies.

For Farhan Khan, “Nothing is Difficult”

Like many others, Farhan from Quetta was clear about his desire to better his circumstances. A science teacher in his mid-twenties, he articulated it not as a desire for status or power but to improve his bureaucratic rank. Farhan’s father was a truck driver and now successful businessman. Farhan’s fluency of English does not harm his confidence in the least; he does not see his being a product of the matriculation system as a limitation. “Nothing is difficult. One can do it if they decide to do it.”

I shared a wall with Farhan in Choudhury Mansion, who was one of the few Pashtuns in

the hostel. He was not as confident in his English skills as others but was one of the few who had work experience and a very reasonable bureaucratic ranking (16). He had a Bachelors of Education degree from the University of Balochistan at Quetta and his uncle was a DCO (district coordinator, an administrative head of a district). Farhan was already working for the provincial government as a teacher and I noticed he was lightly concerned about his promotion to the 17th grade status which brings a higher salary. While we sat in his room on the carpeted floor casually watching Bollywood music videos on the little TV the hostel supplied us with, I inquired why he wanted to be in Lahore in that case. In addition to learning about his desire to become part of the CSS *mahol*, I learned that being a teacher did not satisfy him. I wondered aloud - why would someone with obvious confidence and social skills who I thought would be well suited to working with youth (having done it myself) be interested in a stuffy bureaucratic job. "I have a passion for the CSS," [*Mujhe CSS ka showk hai*] said Farhan, explaining that he was in a different hostel previously and had already been here a year by the time we met at Choudhury Mansion. "If it doesn't work out, I'll go back to teaching," he explained, expressing his concern about moving up. Like other rooms his room was piled high with books on South Asian, Islamic history, and English grammar. I felt it would be a difficult climb for him but Farhan was determined. He invited me to Quetta where he said he would give me 'protocol' (formal courtesy such as a chauffeured car) thanks to uncle. I smiled, acknowledging the respect he accorded me.

Ethnographic Perspectives of Nonformal Education

Noting the fervor with which hostelites like Farhan and other fellow hallmates studied, I began to look at some of the everyday aspects of their pursuit of mainly elite government work

focusing on their time as ‘CSS aspirants’ or as the term was used, ‘students.’ How does one learn English if it was not up to the standard they sought? Why regurgitate ad nauseum? The study includes the teaching and learning that went on in the hostel space, ethnographically exploring the experiences of unemployed young men who are aspiring bureaucrats, and who participate in education processes in order to better their chances at passing government exams. I also inquire about education histories to help understand why nonformal education is so important.

To explore the learning processes of the CSS aspirants at Choudhury Mansion, I use participant observation data of the educational activities of my fellow hostelites. I paid attention to where they studied, the materials they used, and the pedagogical exchanges of learners. Those who I met were all university graduates, all studying in the hope of securing employment, or working temporarily while they applied for other things. All were aged 22-26. Much of my time was spent as a participant observer in and around the hostel with Shan, Nadeem, and Farhan - all of whom were on my floor at Choudhury Mansion. Umar Saith is included, who lived on another floor.

Secondly, ethnographic interviews and education histories of former call center agents like AbuBakar and Shahid are included because they apply for ‘officer’ positions too including the military. Though education is vital, it is so in a different way, and they cannot afford to study the way CSS aspirants do. AbuBakar and Shahid bring a different perspective to thinking about the relationship between education, class, and state. Their education histories and work experiences indicate their difficulties in upward mobility despite having university degrees. But their cases show that the elite bureaucracy is not the only pathway conceived and some of the points about subjectivity are reflected in their similar if not parallel pursuit. Thirdly, I discuss

some observations and findings from an ‘academy.’¹² The students at Excellent Coaching Centre (ECC) taught by Sir Fawad Khan- had similar profiles to my fellow residents at the hostel. Sir Fawad had years of experience teaching and a steady stream of students. As someone who had passed the exam twice, he had credibility and made (monetary) use of it. He would teach in the ‘*baara-daari*’ [‘twelve door’ brick structure] at the center of a public park and was called ‘sir’ in the conventional way students refer to their male teachers.

By formal education I mean a deliberate process in a dedicated space (Pelissier 1991) that lead to degrees or government-recognized qualifications. But the case of the ‘academy’ and the process that CSS aspirants go through in Pakistan does not always fit Pelissier’s categorization. Thus I depart from Pelissier and define nonformal education as certainly deliberate but done on one’s own time and space and in different forms, be it individually memorizing, teaching one another, or being taught in a public park by a teacher. This accounts for the different settings and styles of teaching and learning.

Educational Possibilities and Pathways

Pakistan’s education system shapes how men go about achieving their career aspirations. Rahman (2010) shows how schooling and formal education enables social reproduction. As Rahman (2010) explains, three different systems of education cater to three social classes including the *madrassa* system, the much larger national education system, and the private education system. The national education system, taught in Urdu, consists of 10 years of education and a two year intermediate qualification. Private education consists of both

¹² Also known as coaching center, similar to a cram school, where students seek out a teacher to help pass certain exams

matriculation/intermediate and the Cambridge system (constituted by the O and A level examination system) and is English-medium. Rahman explains that this tripartite system articulates with social class and is an instrument of social reproduction in which those who have a Cambridge education tend to be better trained while the madrassah graduates attain the least marketable qualifications.

University graduates, though they have useful credentials, do not necessarily secure employment that match their level of education. Farhan for example seems to be unable to achieve his goals, dissatisfied with his employment experience, but not yet able to secure the positions he aspires for. Without attending what Bourdieu calls ‘legitimate’ institutions, and with limited economic, social, and political capital, they face the uncertain job market along with hundreds of thousands of other graduates. However, it does not mean unemployed men are resigned to their fate. The neat discursive lines theorists like Rahman (2010) draw are muddled by the efforts of educated men to transcend those boundaries.

Some of this apparent social reproduction can be seen in AbuBakar’s case. A former call center agent from near Mazang, education meant AbuBakar could stop working with his father carrying bricks. Spells of intermittent employment meant he ended up working with this father. “He didn’t like me doing that work, but it was better than sitting and doing nothing.” AbuBakar seeks white collar work, explaining that for him, getting an education means doing an ‘easy’ job. Having mostly funded his own university education by working as a call center agent, AbuBakar was confident he would be able to achieve his career goals. In his spare time, he continues to apply for government jobs and prepares for government exams that means improving his English.

Similarly, education for Shahid was important for his livelihood but also had class cultural aspects. Shahid studied in both public and private schools in southern Punjab before coming to Lahore to begin university. A bachelor of Commerce like AbuBakar, he expected he would not become a cook like his cousin Faiz who worked at The Cafe near my hostel, Choudhury Mansion. In fact, being educated is what separated him from Faiz and their cousins who all came in search of work. Seemingly convincing himself, he explained how his effort would pay off. He explained that he would never watch Punjabi-language films, he preferred to pass whatever little free time he had watching Will Smith or Shah Rukh Khan's films. Further, Shahid planned to leave Pakistan to help his family and wanted to be a CEO eventually. Shahid had a number of employment strategies and they included studying for the ISSB (InterServices Selection Board) exam for prestigious military jobs (for which purpose he carried around a prep book), as well as planning to go the Middle East. Getting a B.Com and beginning an MBA, along with watching Hollywood movies is his way of strengthening his earning potential in order to help his siblings get a Cambridge education (A and O levels as opposed to regular matriculation). Meanwhile, Shahid continued to work in the restaurant business while he studied, and tried other jobs when he got the opportunity such as at a call center or an internet cafe.

Both Shahid and AbuBakar continued to study, take exams, and apply for jobs in both the public and private sectors. A different way in which education may be seen as a pathway 'up there' is the way education could be thought of as a pathway out of Pakistan. During the year at the hostel, Shan periodically spoke about his cousin who went to Australia and considered doing the same. We spent a day at a local hotel in which Turkish universities had an exhibition. Having a foreign degree was a ticket out, but it was also a way to get a leg up as his engineering degree

wasn't helping him to get to where he wanted to be. Unfortunately Shan's aspirations was blocked, because he was not sure he could afford the cost of at least \$20,000. He continued to study for the CSS, among other merit-based entry tests.

Education, the Structure of Opportunity, and Political and Economic Conditions

The education system, power relations, and political and economic conditions all play a role in helping or hindering one's career prospects. Accounts from Imran about his pursuit of employment in Lahore illustrate his frustration with himself but also with the education system. An Urdu major at a private university and the son of a farmer from central/southern Punjab, his English skills were not up to par in the places where he applied. His sunken face was unmistakable on our way back from an interview at a private firm in a well to do neighborhood. He was asked questions in English which he had difficulty with. "They only start teaching English in my village in class 8." Without *sifarish* and confidence in English, Imran was left targeting lower level government posts.

Education in and of itself accomplishes very little and merit can mean nothing. AbuBakar explained that going to university was almost the same as not going at all while Shan bought his master's degree in English. Shahid explained that his education was not as rigorous as it should have been, acknowledging a disadvantage he faced.

Beyond education, difficulty with English as well as work conditions and a competitive job market all helps one understand how others came to see merit-based government jobs as their primary option. The work conditions at International Call Center on the night shift were enough to make AbuBakar and Ahmed want to immediately quit. Their options similarly limited by their

educational experiences, I could see how those who were educated wanted something more ‘respectable.’

More years of education does not necessarily lead to better job opportunities as Dr. Nadeem, Imran and others illustrate. Thus education strategies are crafted carefully. They are also closely connected with political and economic conditions that young men encounter in everyday life. That Pakistan faced severe economic and political problems impacted Shan and Farhan’s education strategies greatly. One evening on the fourth floor of Choudhury Mansion around midnight in the fall of 2013, when the lights went out (as they did every other hour), my hall mates Farhan and Shan come into my uncarpeted 8 ft x 10 ft room to chat as they often did. I was amused to find out they wanted me to help them find American girlfriends. But why, I inquire, would they want to leave Pakistan?

“Why stay in Pakistan? Terrorism, bomb blasting, suicide bombing. What is in Pakistan? I want to go to New York... either for work or study,” Farhan said. They joke about going to America, asking me to help them, and specifically, introduce them to girls. I resist saying, “it’s not really going to be easy to find women for two Pakistani men!” Finally, Shan relents and says “Don’t worry about the women. Get me the entry, I’ll find love!” quips Shan. Going abroad was not very feasible but it was on the radar because of the challenges they faced in achieving their goals.

While these men appear to be stuck, they continue to work at achieving their goal by continuing to study.

Theorizing Education, Class, and Mobility

The reasons young men seem to put so much stock in studying English and preparing for merit-based qualifying exams is shaped by the structure of opportunity which shuts them out as well as by larger political and economic conditions. Government jobs bestow status, job security, and appealing perks and privileges drawing hundreds of thousands of job applicants. In this competition, secondary and tertiary education seemed to be given less importance than what aspiring officers did on their own.

Literature on the relationship between education and class helps shed light on the educational strategies of young men. Though more focused on secondary and tertiary education, this literature helps think about the relationships between nonformal education and stratification in light of economic and political conditions.

While class could be thought to structure livelihoods or employment (Marx, Weber 1978, Bourdieu 1984), Weber and Marx differ in their understanding of how that structure would work. Though Marx saw class as a form of stratification based on an individual's relationship to production, Weber saw not only a relationship to the market, but understood economic production as just one form or aspect of stratification (1978). Thus, social status, unlike class, could be considered to be constituted 'culturally' - by prestige, by occupation, and education attainment.

According to Bourdieu (1984), class privilege is maintained through education and habitus, the structuring structure mediating the subject and social space. For him, schools and education institutions legitimate the power of the dominant classes, and are the sole "agency empowered to transmit the hierarchical body of aptitudes and knowledge which constitutes

legitimate culture and to consecrate arrival at a given level of initiation by means of examinations and certificates” (1984: 328). Privilege is also maintained through the deployment of social and cultural capital. Social capital may be defined as contacts and social networks, while cultural capital could be defined as manners, taste, charm as well as credentials and qualifications. But what if one and not the other? How does one acquire it?

Though much work on class and education highlights social reproduction following Bourdieu (Willis 1977, Brice-Heath 1982, MacLeod 1987), an important but lesser-explored theme in anthropological research is social mobility. Building on older research on mobility (Weber 1978, Warner 1945), Bertaux and Thompson (1997) argue that education alone can not explain mobility. They argue that social mobility is ‘generated’ by the interaction of education in conjunction with family and migration and even marriage. On the other hand, acknowledging Bertaux and Thompson’s argument, Froerer and Portisch (2012) frame education as a strategy and highlight agency of learners. They highlight political and social conditions that impact the relationship between education and mobility, such as globalization and economic liberalization. While formal education is just one factor in the pursuit of social mobility, “pathways are shaped in relation to family histories, governments and development agencies, and new opportunities afforded (or imposed) by transformations within the global division of labor” (Froerer and Portisch 2012: 8). This jibes with other education research that explores the way social and economic change articulate with education and different forms of capital. In Britain, as Lacey (1970) illustrates, the relationship between class and education may be configured by factors and conditions outside of the school. Britain’s economic change led to greater importance of schooling and schools being reconfigured in their articulation with the system of stratification.

This framework provides a useful lens through which to understand the significance of education in mediating the relationship between the state and the aspiring civil servant. The way they work to remake themselves through nonformal education is part of the conditions through which an urban middle class subjectivity is shaped.

In the subcontinent, the relationship between economic conditions, education, as well as class is explored in recent literature by Chopra (2005), Jeffrey (2010) and Osella and Osella (2000). The latter explore social mobility broadly, with a view to job opportunities in the Gulf, in an approach that adapts Bourdieu's framework - by the relation of the Izhava caste's social status to other castes amidst a competition in a field of power relations (13). Hence, the authors frame the accumulation of capital - through education, migration, marriage, and occupations - as central to social mobility. They show how decisions about employment are taken by families rather than individually, where status has an important place in determining education and employment strategies. The changes in the position of a caste are explained as connected to social and economic changes taking place such as migration of Keralites and Indians to the Gulf, and the emergence of a commodity culture in which consumption indexes social status. While they make an important contribution to thinking about mobility in the subcontinent, other authors look more carefully at how education articulates with mobility.

Radhika Chopra's (2005) focus on education as a purposive strategy of the social reproduction of '*sardari*' families speaks to a form of mitigating risk that is shaped by gender. She shows how socioeconomic considerations configure the choices made by parents to educate their children. Education strategies depends on gender, aspirations, and opportunities such as migration or marriage. In other words, girls may attain more education while boys may be

expected to work.

In a study of young men in Uttar Pradesh (India) involving not only education and class but power, Jeffrey and Jeffrey (2005) contrast differential experiences of low-caste Dalit and higher-caste Jatt landowning young men (Jeffrey 2010) in a neoliberalized Indian economy. Using Bourdieu's framework of social and cultural capital, they argue that education (including higher education) serves as a mechanism of social reproduction. Critical to thinking about youth in Lahore, they highlight the political context, explaining the significance of power to understanding the contrast between Jats and Dalits. '*Source*' [social capital] and '*force*' ['muscle'] are vital resources or advantages in the competition between the two castes.

Following the theme of education, livelihoods, and social mobility, Gill (2012) and Rao and Hussain on Bangladesh (2012) are two of the few contributions that touch on nonformal education. For Gill, writing from Chandigarh in a study of masculinity, looks briefly at the pursuit of learning English and other forms of education through short courses in the desire to migrate outside of India.

For Rao and Hussain (2012), learning represents a vehicle for migration, but not for social reproduction. In working with Lave and Wenger's theoretical framework, Rao and Hussain (2012) argue that men view learning through apprenticeship, in the context that white collar work is not available locally. Men learn technical skills in order to become part of the global economy as blue collar workers. Rao and Hussain are that for working class Bangladeshi men, social status matters less than making money.

This body of literature brings a number of themes into a dialogue. Research linking education with power relations and economic and political conditions form the basis of an

analytical approach for exploring the educative processes of the hostel in Lahore. Specifically, preferences as well as strategies are shaped by the education system, economic and political factors. However, this literature indicates that mobility and nonformal education are seldom explored in the subcontinent. What follows is an attempt to bring these themes into the research literature on education.

Attempts to Break Out of Social Reproduction

Becoming ‘students’ as CSS aspirants called themselves seemed to be a reasonable option. The promise, or possible claim, was more appealing than being ‘unemployed’ or being a public schools teacher as the case may be. Given political, economic conditions and dissatisfaction with the education system, studying history, science, English among other subjects became a mission. The ‘community of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991) that emerges in the hostel becomes a crucial means for unemployed young men of some means.

Like others in the hostel, one of Farhan's strategies of studying included going to the Excellent Coaching Center academy run by Sir Fawad. Other than that he would stay home and read. He would use Facebook and study with Shan too. He would seek advice constantly from others on good teachers and on books to use. This audience he engages suggests something of a community of practice.

While the thought of a merit-based employment exam may evoke images of a highly individualistic and competitive learning process, in fact, such exams have spurred a kind of ‘community of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991) whose participants help one another with preparation. Novices and experienced test takers advise, teach, mentor, and motivate one

another. The learning takes place in the 'community of practice' are in the "structuring resources that shape the process and content of learning possibilities" and perspectives (Lave and Wenger 1991: 91). How the learning occurs depends on the particular environment and the relations between masters and students, the practices of the community (Lave and Wenger 1991: 92). Lave and Wenger acknowledge the diversity of individuals in society views individuals as learners in a community of practice. Such learners are motivated to become full participants in the community; the processes of cognition are the journeys from beginners to masters in the relevant practices. Such learners gain from near-peers, masters, and the cognitive process is participatory. Learners acquire skills by engaging in the process.

Lave and Wenger's conceptual framework offers a lense through which CSS aspirants may be seen as learners overcoming their limited social and cultural capital. They have work experience and got that through their cultural and social capital - network and university training - but are looking to achieve more. Education is instrumental for them; they want to study informally as formal education has not been that helpful.

Learning a Pattern or Knowing What to Write

Adapting Lave and Wenger's framework, CSS aspirants' educational activities may be better understood as revolving around the community of practice formed by migrants who come for this purpose from all over the country.

Though they have a number of fields to cover from science to history, CSS aspirants spent much of their time on English. Most importantly, CSS aspirants need to learn how to write. They also needed to know what to write. The collaborative environment in the hostel was

supportive to both.

As soon as we first met at Choudhury Mansion in the late summer of 2013, Shan began to show me some hand-written 3-4 page practice essays, about drone attacks and economic independence, and about the Pakistani military and constitution. Other essays included one about the role of religion in society. He asked me to make corrections, particularly focusing on his grammar. I would not be the only one to read those essays, he gave them to Farhan as well. Farhan would share with us his outlines which he learned to do with Sir Fawad. He would write them over and over again always on the same few topics. Sometimes Farhan would share these outlines and sample essays on Facebook and get comments.

This focus on writing is clearly because they had a lot of ground to cover in achieving fluency. Or so I thought. I began to see Facebook and peer revisions as much as approval and confirmation as pedagogical. Farhan's Facebook shares generated no critical feedback; rather it was lots of compliments and commendation (i.e. 'likes'). Oddly, it looked like a bit of a hack job. Was Farhan plagiarizing?



Image 3.1 Farhan's status update on Facebook

While I noted the practice in how Farhan and Shan went about writing, I also became interested in 'what to write.' I became more skeptical about 'learning' and saw something of following a formula. I began to see this in Shan's efforts at improving his essays. While CSS aspirants generally focused on a few topics, I saw Shan work to broaden how he wrote about those few topics. In Shan's essays I saw his language skills are quite good but I had to wonder how much of it was original. Some of the problems are in the use of articles like 'a' and 'the' but his spelling is reasonable. Articles aside, he is clearly able to express complex ideas. Why then did it seem like he was copying?

In an essay he shared about the Pakistani economy, I caught a glimpse of the process of how he 'learns' what to write. In the fall of 2013, I read a short passage in the Monday financial

section in the Dawn newspaper, I see a quote from an interview with a business magnate, Abdul Razzaq Dawood, it is identical to what Shan wrote in one of his essays that he wanted me to read. The phrase borrowed, was, 'return of feel good sentiments.' In Shan's essay on Pakistan's economic woes and possible solutions, it wasn't used correctly at all, in fact, in the completely the wrong context. When I ask him about this, Shan explains that he is copying from the paper - "but not exactly copying." He clarifies that he is takes bits and pieces from different places but wants to put it in his own words. Shan states that he "wants to be different," as he expects "everyone is copying." Different? From what, I wondered.

Nadeem a trained doctor, reflected on 'learning' in a different way one evening, explaining to me that as an MBBS he didn't have any of these skills that others did like Shan or Umar Saith. It is through the CSS that he learned how to study, how to read, and how to form arguments. "I have learned a lot in this exam, I can apply it as a doctor, in the medical field." He mentions the ability to think critically, how to read, and how to give criticism. He talks about the cognitive skills he has improved and the study skills too. "I study every day now."

It struck me that he (and other CSS aspirants) were learning how to think specifically in terms laid out by the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), the institution tasked with administering the CSS exam. For example, one important element in the organization of these compositions is the identification of the 'problem' and offering some 'solutions.' Interestingly, the problem usually lay in Pakistan's politicians. In essays Shan, Farhan and others would stress that Pakistan's troubles lay in their civilian political leadership. In his essay on the economy, the solutions were quite simple really - as they were in most essays. Namely, halt corruption, hold politicians accountable, and end 'nepotism and favoritism' (the key words that signal *sifarish*).

Learning to some extent meant learning the pattern, as Umar would explain.

“They don’t know how to handle a new situation, they don’t know the way, the method, the pattern,” as Umar articulated it. “I’m trying to learn it,” he said. Umar’s room usually had a few books lying around which were old exams published together. Along with notes, old exam papers were vital. As Dr Nadeem explained, students read past exams to guess what would be on the new exams. Not that they were looking for exact questions but roughly what specific areas would be tested. Students at Excellent Coaching Center would attend partly for this reason - Adam explained that he liked Sir Fawad’s ‘pattern.’

I saw this after the 2014 exam while sitting with Umar afterwards at the entrance to Choudhury Mansion as hostelites came back from the CSS there was a feeling of panic. Umar, myself, and a number of others stopped for a brief rap session. I learned that not only could they not understand some of the essay questions, but what they had prepared for was not on the exam!

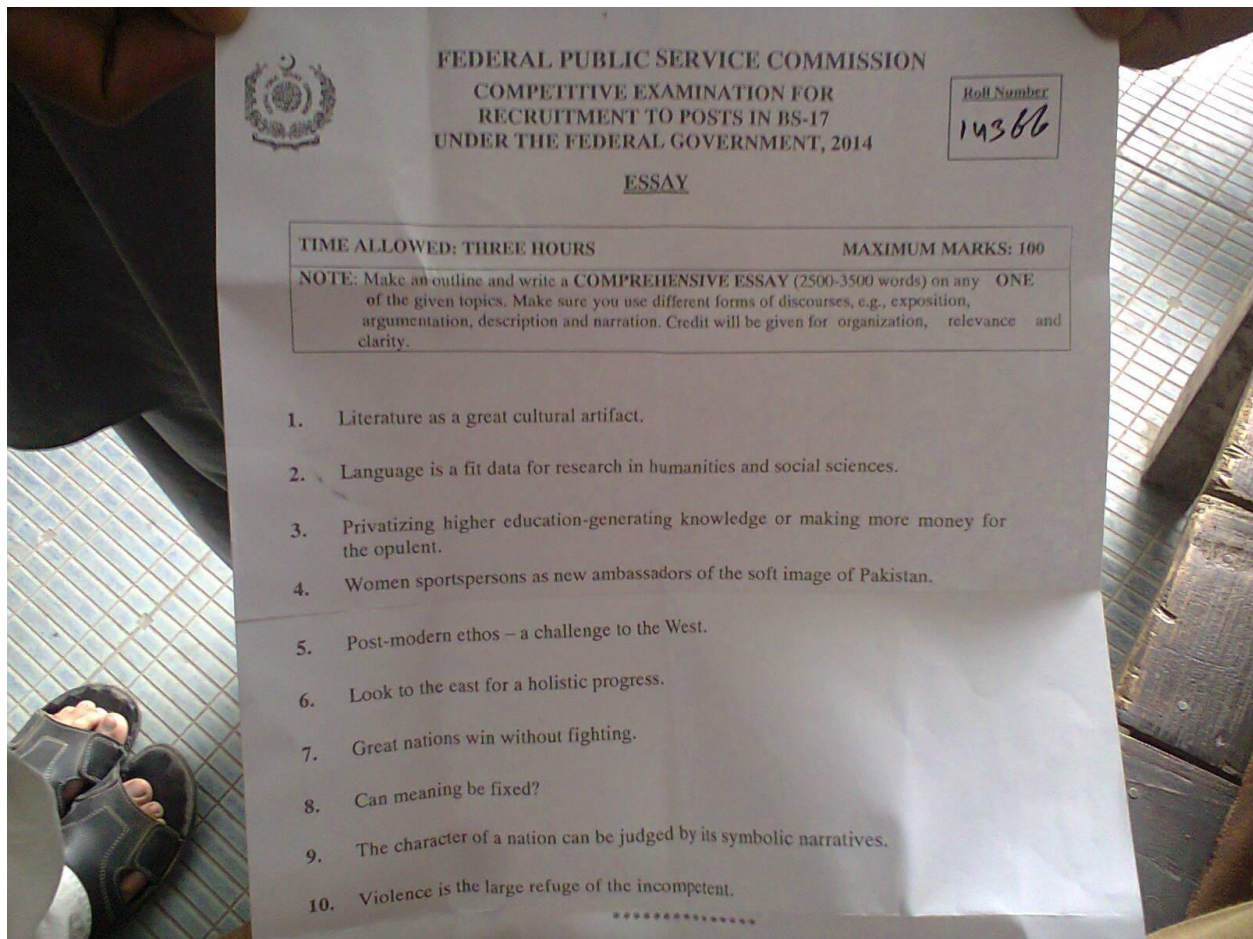


Image 3.2 The CSS 2014 English essay

That's why notes were so important. Shan knew what he was looking for, usually, 'notes.' Once at Punjab University, he said that textbooks give him the knowledge, but not how to study. Shan said that buying notes from previous CSPs will give him a "way to study" so that he can succeed. In one of the bookshops, photocopiers sat on one side and bookshelves of 'notes' on the other.

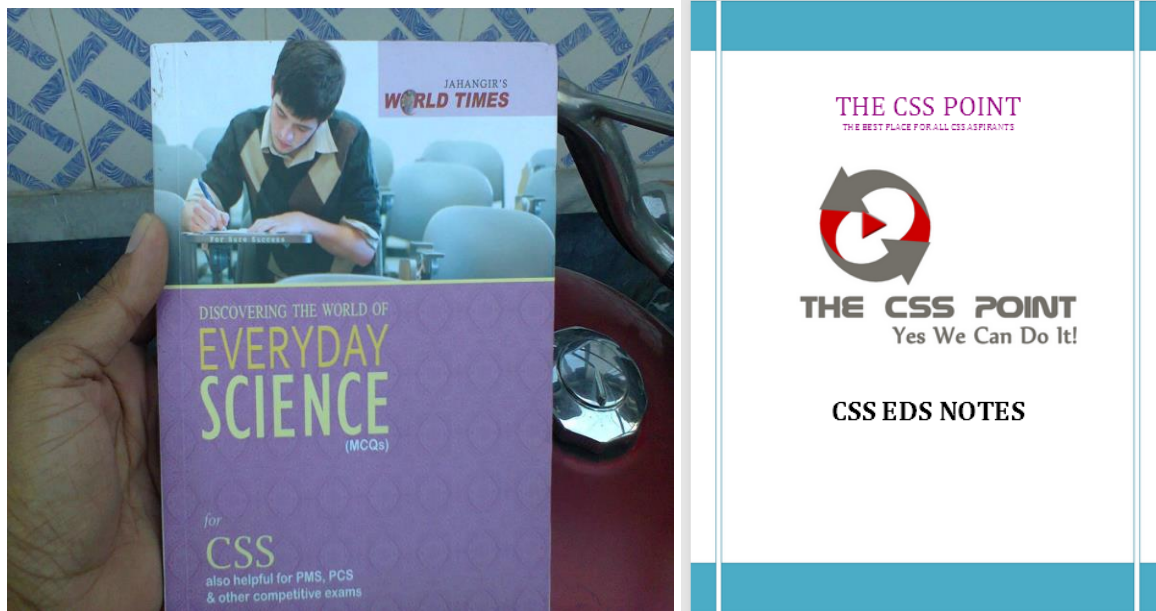


Image 3.3 CSS Notes

‘Notes’ referred to a variety of types of knowledge - from lecture notes at academies to notes from textbooks to ‘solved’ papers and multiple choice questions (MCQs). Notes were a crucial form of knowledge and were found all over Shan’s and Dr Nadeem’s room. The importance Shan attached to notes was elaborated on by Dr Nadeem. While books contain knowledge, notes guide learners on the ‘pattern.’ That is, the Federal Public Service Commission gave very little guidance on their homepage. A quick perusal of their guidance shows that they publish syllabi including topics and suggested authors. What to expect is anyone’s guess. Hence, notes and the community of practice become very important for the CSS aspirant.

This ‘formula’ had a political undertone, just the way Shan and Farhan’s essays routinely framed problems as laying with politicians. When I read Umar Saith’s essay on education in Pakistan, I was surprised how well he articulated the problems yet his reluctance to make any sort of critique of the state itself. His essay was somewhat positive and as soon as I start to give that critique of the state, Umar’s eyes grew wide, “No no!” he exclaimed. He starts to spill it out

- “actually they [the state] are doing nothing. But I was told by a teacher to be optimistic, in fact be patriotic. If you do not, you’re done.”

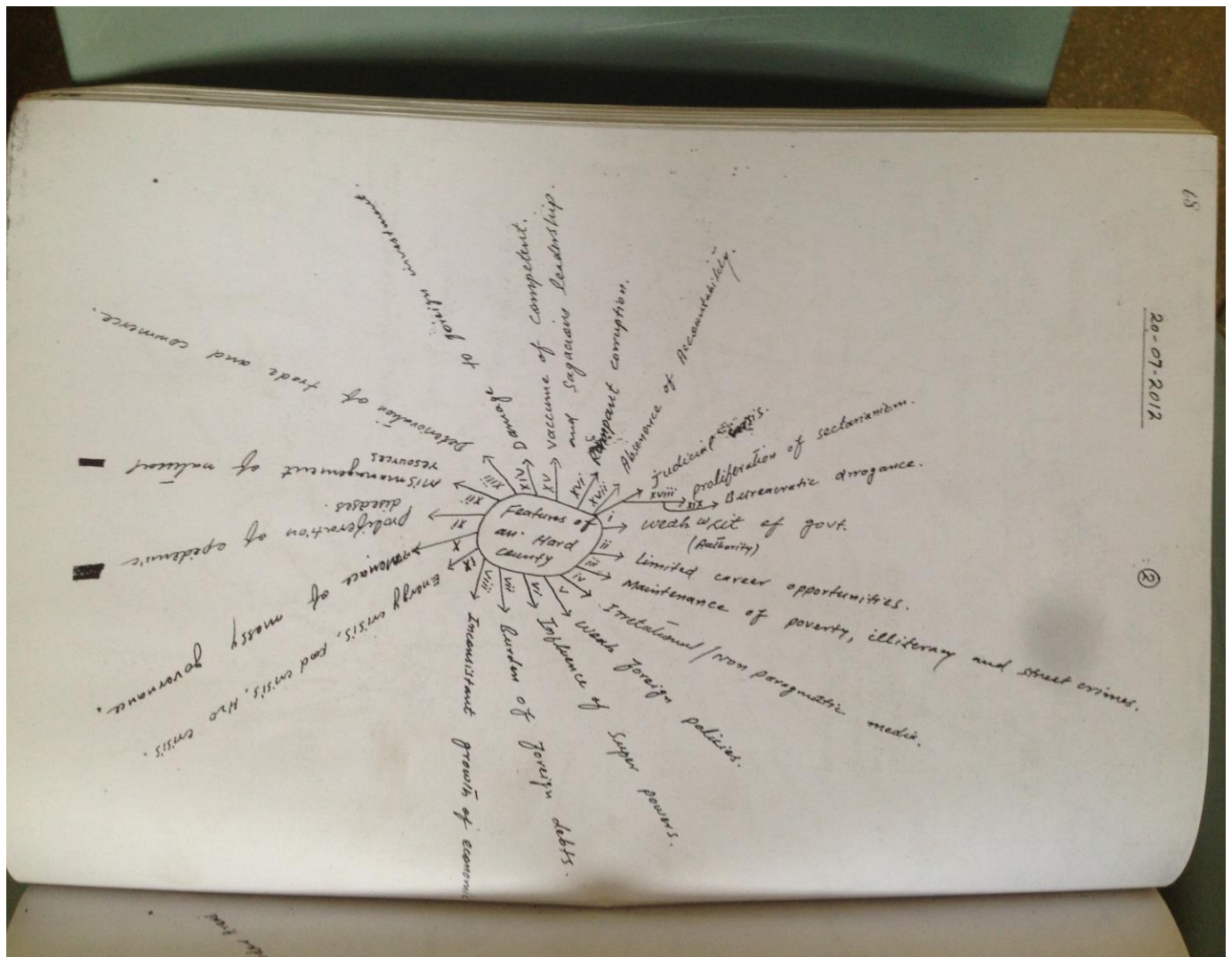


Image 3.4 Sir Fawad’s Lecture Notes, Excellent Coaching Center: “Pakistan A Hard Country”

Some of these issues are relevant to what Rahman (2010) calls education apartheid in Pakistan. As a student at ECC, Ali H. from Larkana in fluent English explained to me that most students failed the CSS because of their language ability. But the look of panic on the faces of

the CSS test takers told me that the lines dividing the classes are not as clear-cut and not as concrete as Rahman argues. One of the reasons is nonformal education's significance and 'copying but not copying' that seem to exemplify the impact of 'copy culture' on merit.

I saw this repetitive practice - online and in the hostel as well as at the academy - as a kind of 'remixing.' Ideas and points of view on certain topics would be learned, and then regurgitated in a style chosen by the learner.

I got a deeper perspective at the academy where I would participate in the daily sessions held by Sir Fawad. Some of the same sets of ideas would come through in his lessons and the repetition and remixing among his students. He taught several subjects for an hour each. English was the first one taught; there would be 3-6 students, sometimes more at these sessions. Students would pay 4,000 Rs a month to attend one of the sessions. Over the course of six months, English lessons would consist of essay writing, precis writing, and the organization of essays. Sitting on the grass or on the concrete *baara-daari*, we would turn our attention to the lecture once the banter would subside and Sir Fawad would start the lesson with a religious invocation, "*Bismillahirrahmaanirraheem*" [in the name of God]. The lessons speak to the desire to not only pass the test but to do the things that bureaucrats do, as Sir Fawad put it on morning. He would explain that bureaucrats need to learn how to write a precis and needed to be able to read critically.



Image 3.5 Sir Fawad's Session in progress

Sir Fawad would always speak in both Urdu and English in order for the students to understand. Students came from all over Pakistan, and the abilities would vary wildly as it became evident, some struggled mightily.

Part of the goal of the sessions at academies, as Shan told me (who did not attend Sir Fawad's sessions) would be to find out what will be on the test. Indeed Sir Fawad did discuss what he called 'anticipated' essay questions on the test. Here I present my observations at one English lesson.

March 3, 2014 10 am

The lesson itself was about how to write an essay. Introduction - and three variables - and a conclusion. Sir Fawad took an example and helped them structure it, the topic was: 'Is

Pakistan a failed state or hard country?’ Went thoroughly into each item of support. In doing so it looked like he was critical yet in support of Pakistan, and tried to coach them in a way that was a fine balance between the two. For HW, they will write, and make outlines. It’s cold, hard to sit for a full hour. A girl gets notes from one of the guys. Another group forms after the session with Fawad, he seems to be getting payment but in fact it’s more of a discussion. Fawad is pushing them to think about what’s happening in Pakistan and make an argument. But he gives them the argument! In essence, it is Anatole Lieven’s actually. It’s a hard country - it has so much diversity, so many challenges, yet it still grows economically.

I see in learning how to write is in fact a lesson in ‘what to write’ or what I call remixing or following of a formula in which young men improvised in their own very limited way. Fawad’s explaining of the argument indicates that he is teaching ‘what to write’ along with ‘how to write.’ It is a preparation for a performance-to-be; students learn in order to put the argument in their own words or phrases. While trying to figure out what to know, they attempt to re-arrange what they learn and articulate it in their own way. The first step was to read notes, particularly those authored by ‘toppers’ or high achievers who scored well. As the example of Shan and others show, the trick is to regurgitate it in their own style. In this way then do they search for what they believe is expected of them, and attempt to emulate it.

‘Great Nations Win Without Fighting’

I saw this exemplified in everyday educational activities at Choudhury Mansion. Getting

together casually was just as important as ‘self study.’ When fellow CSS aspirants were in the same room, they would talk about the exam from every imaginable angle, from what English essay they selected in their previous attempts, how they answered it, to particular MCQs they did, to jobs they have applied for and the corresponding bureaucratic ranks (almost always involving grades 17-18). For example, one dominant theme of discussion was “Great Nations Win Without Fighting.” The conversation was seared into my mind because I heard the discussion dozens of times. It was an essay question on the 2014 exam that most test takers seemed to opt for. Farhan, Shan, and Nadeem even discussed it over the phone when they were travelling outside of Lahore (as Shan took the exam in Karachi). “I wrote about the case of Japan and Canada,” Shan told me a few days after the exam period ended. “How does that sound to you?”

In another example, across the hallway on Floor D at Choudhury Mansion, hostelites would go at it. One afternoon in Shan’s room, Shan, Farhan, and I talk about inflation. “What is it? Is it a cause of effect?” I explain it as best as I can. Then Farhan gets up and goes somewhere. Shan and Farhan start talking across the hall. Farhan asks about the relationship between corruption and democracy, about defining corruption, and asks about holding institutions in check, all while roaming in the hall. Farhan is taking the student role and Shan is taking the role. It was not always this role, however.

There was also a guidance or pedagogical aspect. Rasheed (a recent business graduate from Sindh) would take advice from Umar Saith (the law student in Lahore who came from Gujranwalla) about ‘academies’ or testing centers or Shan would give unsolicited advice to Hamza, a fellow Sindhi and engineer, about which teachers to study with. Farhan sought advice

from Rasheed about geography teachers (“who has more students?”)

The other way subjectivity is shaped is by grooming, as when Dr Nadeem during a bike ride told me he was happy he came to Lahore. As we sped down Canal Road, I heard him talk about the experience of learning with Shan and with his study-companions at the library. Nadeem emphasized how he learned to think. He felt encouraged by meeting other aspiring elite bureaucrats and was determined to carry on.

Sir Fawad conveyed a slightly different understanding of being an ‘educated person.’ At the end of a lesson at Bagh-i-Jinnah, Fawad started collecting money. He began to talk about his plan for arranging a dinner for students. Here I present notes from my participant observation from that morning.

June 6 2014

Sir Fawad talked about the value of this dinner event. "This is about grooming and socialization. How to joke, how to sit, how to get up, how to communicate." For example, Fawad talked about Hillary Clinton and how she joked about the shoe which came at her. Or a PPP politician who when a shoe was thrown at him, joked and said ‘we need to reduce the prices on shoes.’ Fawad *sb* said, “We’ll be seeing who dresses nicely and has a haircut.” Talked about how to use the knife and fork, about the sense of leadership. “It’s not about who dresses *lush push* [fancy] but who is clean and simple. Says there is a decorum in every place. This is about moulding.” Fawad talked about behavior and gives an example that this is not how you want to conduct yourself. Warned us of using pronouns like ‘*tu*’ or ‘*tum*’ and feigns a Punjabi accent to joke about not referring to

people with “OYE!” Recounted his work experience with bankers when he was working at Standard and Chartered Bank. Mentioned he is himself is an educated *naujuwan* [youth].

Short Family Section

Individuals like Farhan, Shan, and Nadeem whose efforts may go on for years would not achieve much if not for their families support. When I skeptically asked why Shan continued to study when he had failed the exam twice, Shan explains that his parents want him in Lahore preparing for the exam more than he wanted to. Nadeem felt grateful if not a little anxious as he waited for his father to go to the bank to send him more money. This support meant Nadeem could go on with his own quest. Of course that would not be possible had he not trained his brother to become a nephrologist. “I told my parents, here, I have done my duty as a brother. Now let me go to Lahore.”

Nadeem had a visceral reaction to a phone call from his mother who “told me to chill.” When I expressed my surprise that his mother would use English slang, Nadeem explained that she calmed his anxiety and yes obviously she did not use English slang! But in effect that was what his mother expressed. On the other hand, Shahid was doing this for his siblings. Like Nadeem who had in mind his family and cousins, Shahid considered his effort in Lahore as a way to help his family. “I want my brothers and sisters to do their O and A levels.” Another student of Sir Fawad was an engineer who explained he was here to take lessons because his parents thought it would be a good idea. Another student of Sir Fawad is Adam from Larkana. His father has land and his brothers are doing different things. One is in business, two in

multinational corporations in Saudi Arabia, one is a 17 grade officer in education, one is 16 grade officer. The family does not yet have an elite CSS officer yet but that is what Adam hopes to change.

What does Education Mean?

Have they failed? Data from the hostel and from Excellent Coaching Center seem to indicate that much is invested in preparing for the CSS. However, it was clear that other tests were going on that seemed to overlap with the type of knowledge required of the CSS. Umar Saith, a long-time resident at Choudhury Mansion, explained to me that he was also preparing for a provincial management position called the Punjab Management Services. Shan prepared for a similar exam run by the Sindh provincial government.

A student of Sir Fawad at Excellent Coaching Center once explained that he valued the guidance he received from Sir Fawad. When I met him, Imtiaz had begun to study for a second year for the CSS exams. When I asked why university graduates (and some masters in fact) from well-reputed universities needed such basic instruction such as grammar, organization, among other things, Imtiaz explained that it was because of the poor education they had received in their universities. As I participated in the sessions, I noticed some students could hardly put together a coherent paragraph. Imtiaz says, “this education is enough, it is a form of education, of change, of literacy. No one can take it away from me. I can apply it.” Imtiaz helped me recognize that this learning went beyond the CSS exam.

Excellent Coaching Center’s students hint at what education means to them - a way to make up for the basic skills they did not acquire in their schools, colleges, or universities. These

are skills critical to white collar work. Aspiring officers like Imtiaz also hint at alternative plans. I contend that it may not be explained by divisions in opportunities because of class difference. To read, write, and converse in English indicates that language may not be the problem. Shan's, and Nadeem's language skills improved in the year I spent in Lahore. Instead, I argue that 'copy culture of education' or '*rutta*' [memorization] are what seem to inhibit the achievement of their goals. But their failure does not seem to matter as much as I thought, as they had other exams and back up plans to fall back on.

Conclusion: Culture of Copying or Achievement as Subjectivity

In some sense, Shan, Nadeem, Umar and others voice their desire to become part of what Bourdieu (1984) might refer to as 'legitimate culture,' embodied and produced by the dominant classes. In the field of competition for social position in power relations, these young men work furiously to acquire it to become 'legitimate individuals,' resembling Bourdieu's 'pedants,' making up for what they did not acquire at home or at school. Bourdieu's conceptual framework is useful because it helps explain what some structural explanations from Rahman (2010) and other scholars cannot. Showing in detail how social and cultural capital explain the life chances of individuals, Bourdieu's two forms of capital are useful in explaining how those who study and work hard may not achieve their goals. They do not have the 'head start' that cultural capital endows, nor they get much from educational capital from schools, colleges, or universities. Lacking contacts and *sifarish* they try to acquire it on their own in a way, what he calls an 'achievement,' which for the '*mondain*' would be a blemish.

However, Bourdieu may have never anticipated the formation of the CSS *mahol*, that is

to say, collaborative efforts of individuals from a variety of backgrounds to study and practice their performances. In the case of the CSS *mahol*, young men are attempting to learn, teach, and guide one another in the form of regurgitation. Even without cultural capital, unemployed graduates pick up certain knowledges and skills through sheer effort. The fact that they fail is distressful but they seem to gain from the time studying. They become CSS aspirants, take on an important status, and learn skills they can use elsewhere.

In the case of CSS aspirants, I have tried to show that a pro-establishment political attitude, written English in which copying is as or more important than reasoning, and test taking skills constitute what is considered important for achievement. Their education strategies are shaped by the ‘copy culture’ but also by the standards set by the CSS and interpreted by the thousands of young people studying for the exam. For those who can afford it, pursuing merit-based positions is thought (or hoped) to lead to inclusion in a higher stratum, though my findings show that the pedagogical approach of CSS aspirants seem to militate against that. However not passing the CSS does not mean they are excluded or fail to achieve their goal. Also, I show that the state is the reference point for social status in the process of studying for the CSS exam. In other words, the state sets the standards for what achievement means. Preparing for the ‘father of exams’ then is what helps them become who they want to become seemingly regardless of whether they pass the CSS exam or not.

The desire for state employment and the educational efforts I argue is part of a family strategy and related to political and economic conditions; a perception of economic and political instability as well as state corruption, a lack of *sifarish*, and extraordinary competition for limited job opportunities paradoxically turn candidates towards government employment. In this context,

education as credentials is devalued, as Bourdieu anticipated, though nonformal education becomes more important. Applying some of Bourdieu's concepts, I have argued that CSS aspirants try to compensate for what they did not get at home or in formal schooling. In the space of some years, they try to learn English and master the content laid out for them by the state, and in so doing, cultivating their subjectivity.

Though identifying a new class may be outside the scope of this study, I make the case that this is a class subjectivity emerging through educational processes. That is, young people strive for the standards set by the state; by sharing their ideas, they practice their ability to write and think as close to that norm as possible, effectively an endless cycle of regurgitation with their own accent improvised. Aspiring and practicing the knowledge they understand as belonging to elite bureaucrats, they muddy the neat boundaries created by structural explanations. These are young men who speak, read, and write English, just not in the way demanded by the Federal Public Service Commission.

CHAPTER 4

Making the CSS and VIP Mahol and Being Made

Introduction

The CSS *mahol* [environment] was both what attracted young men from around Pakistan and what was created by them. In spring, each annual cycle of arriving aspiring officers replenished and sustained the *mahol* as others left. CSS aspirants would concentrate in hubs largely around Quaid-e-Azam Library in Bagh-i-Jinnah in the center of Lahore, often arriving in pairs. Adam and Shahzaib were had newly arrived from Sukkur (Sindh) when I met them. They lived in a neighborhood called Patiala House where hundreds of other CSS aspirants lived, walking distance from the library and Bagh-i-Jinnah. Hundreds of fliers were stuck to the walls advertising CSS academies, teachers, and notes.

On a cool evening in the early spring of 2014, we chatted sitting on the concrete floor of the sparsely furnished room, one of about a dozen such rooms in a modest brick three floored building. We sat with backs against a wall in the faded-blue first floor hostel room that they shared. I was familiar with this room arrangement; CSS notes lying about, a laptop, and sheets and pillows shoved into a corner. My eyes were fixated on an old dusty calendar that hung on one wall. The picture was of an oil refinery. It was from a petroleum company, and from the year 2005.

Adam and Shahzaib formed an unlikely pair. Adam is short, clean shaven, and struggled with English while Shahzaib of medium build with a smart beard speaks it fluently. Adam, who had never held a job, had come earlier and found the room. His father is a doctor and several of

his family members work in the government in Sindh. On the other hand Shahzaib, whose father was a shop-keeper, previously worked for an NGO in Sindh.

While in Lahore, Shahzaib took ‘tuitions’ [lessons] with a Persian teacher but mostly studied on his own at the Dar-us-Salam Library (Bagh-i-Jinnah’s other library that had much less security where practically anyone could sit without becoming a member). The library would be packed with students coming early to claim a space at a desk along with a chair. Meanwhile a dozen yards away Adam would be sitting on the floor, at the feet of his teacher, Sir Fawad at the *baaradaari* [12 door arched brick structure] before finding his way to the library in the early afternoon. It is a more general *mahol* [environment] that these two young men and many other of my fellow hostelites had come from far flung parts of Pakistan for. As Shahzaib put it, they can easily find a place to study in the library and coordinate with fellow aspirants, especially seniors who have experience. “Just today one of my seniors who failed his CSS English essay told me about the importance of keeping calm and nerves in check.” That was a luxury compared to the limited number of libraries back home where students would not have access to a library. My hall-mate at Choudhury Mansion, Dr Nadeem explained that in Larkana there was only one library and there would not be any space to study. Hence, a thousand if not more had come up just from Sindh, he said, and I would meet many others from different parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. I would see them in groups or in pairs at the Dar-us-Salam Library at Bagh-i-Jinnah [Garden of Jinnah]. I could hear them practicing English in the *Bagh* and could identify them from their smart pant-shirt dress and the books they carried. These would include books published for specific exams like Every Day Science, Pakistan Studies, Islamic History. Sometimes one would see occasionally something like a photocopied

contemporary book like *Why Nations Fail* by Acemoglu and Robinson or a recommended book published a hundred years ago such as *Precis Writing* by R. Dhillon.

Routines and spaces they traversed were predictable. We would be either at Bagh-i-Jinnah, the hostel, and rarely at Punjab University where notes were available. One of the students at Excellent Coaching Center explained to me he did not know Lahore well at all though he had been there for two years. Rizwan's father was a landowner who had recently sold his land and moved the family to Karachi. Like many CSS aspirants, Rizwan spent his time between the library, the hostel, the park, and occasionally Punjab University. These are the spaces that constitute the CSS *mahol*. Most of the time is spent at the hostel though.

The way the CSS exam brought many young people together in hostels and study groups with aspirations and education attainment in common but apparently very little else illustrates how space and class are intertwined. An ethnographic study of the way young men build their futures in Lahore is an opportunity to explore the spatialization of class (Zhang 2008, Srivastava 2012) in an urbanizing society (Qadeer 1999, Ali 2002). This means exploring - as Zhang (2008) shows - the economic as well as cultural production of space in which space takes on class-inflected meanings.

In exploring this relationship, Zhang brings subjectivity into the study as she shows how “real estate development and exclusionary residential space provide a tangible place where class-specific subjects and their cultural milieu are created, staged, and contested (Zhang 2008: 25).” Zhang shows how exclusionary practices on one hand, and competing claims made of status through lifestyles and consumption on the other, illustrate the formation of classed subjectivities of residents in new private housing developments in Kunming (China). Srivastava (2012)

describes Indian economic change in which private residential gated communities and lifestyles index the formation of a post-liberalization middle class. Thus, such residential communities are the locales of identity, arguing that such spaces post a model of “postnational citizenship that constitutes a gloss on the relationship between the state and its citizens” (Srivastava 62).

Through the theorization of space and class and subjectivities, I explore the formation and maintenance of the milieu of the hostel which I refer to as a ‘VIP *mahol*’ - part of the larger CSS *mahol* - that are important in drawing young men to Lahore in achieving their goal of becoming elite bureaucrats by passing the CSS exam. I argue in this chapter that the congregations of CSS aspirants in Choudhury Mansion (and similar areas like Patiala House) where I lived form class-cultural milieus in which subjectivities are formed, which in turn are conditioned by larger urban and political economy as well as the state. I show how in the milieu (i.e hostels and zones of hostels) collaboration - not strictly competition - such as guidance and moral support as well as education, can shape a kind of rites of passage that involves learning as well as constant practicing or performing their skills and knowledge.

Broadening approaches to thinking about ‘middle classness’ beyond occupations, Zhang suggests other cultural markers such as housing allow perspectives into contemporary middle classes. Crucially, Zhang paves the way towards thinking how dispositions are cultivated rather than only displayed, allowing a more dynamic approach to thinking about Bourdieu’s (1984) habitus.

Zhang’s (2008) approach to a major shift from state-managed housing to private housing communities in China reflects that of other urban anthropological work in Leeds (1994) and Lamphere (1992) which demonstrate how social relations of urban denizens articulate with

political and economic change, in explaining how institutions - such as housing - mediate these larger conditions. Leeds links the local with the supralocal - be it the government, the job market, or electrical company - while highlighting flows in and out in offering a lense into the life of a neighborhood. In Lahore, Pakistan's education system and job market seem to explain much about the development of the commercial *mohallah* not to mention the continuous efforts of test-takers. At the same time, urban anthropological approaches shine a light on urban space in mediating young men's approaches to achieving their goals, but also, on how the city and neighborhood itself is changing, spurred by the demand from hostelites. The *mohallah* [neighborhood] itself seems to be a development conditioned by larger economic and political conditions discussed in chapter one - an education explosion, rural-urban migration, along with economic changes and urban planning.

This chapter responds to questions raised by contributions to urban studies in India and Pakistan (Tarlo 2003, Nair 2005, Hasan 2006, Zaidi 2013, Ring 2006) about (the middle) class, housing, and the state. Studies in other parts of the subcontinent highlight caste (Kumar 1988), religion (Jaffrelot and Gayer 2011), politics (Hansen 2001), and ethnicity (Verkaaik 2004) in understanding urban stratification of space but Hasan and Ring highlight class. For example, Ring explained high rise apartment buildings are a unique space featuring ethnic diversity bringing together upwardly mobile business and professional families. She contrasted the distinct form of sociality with what are thought to be more homogenous residential spaces in other parts of Karachi. Nair (2005), Tarlo (2003) among others explore the role of the state and the market in planning and urban change. Tarlo shows how the reach of the state extends in the life of citizens. Further, she shows how they negotiate with the state through a kind of market exchange

in order to secure property deeds in state-designated urban space.

In theorizing about how space and class constitute each other in the center of the city in a dense area rather than a suburb (Low 2003, Zhang 2008, Srivastava 2012) this chapter reflects on the importance of class in the constitution of space illustrating the impact on the stratification of the city, conditioned by larger domestic structural changes (Zaidi 2014, Hasan 2006), less so by globalization (Sassen 1994). Thus, the Jail Road *mohallah* and its ‘youth-economy’ illustrate one aspect of the growing city that addresses what is thought to be the alternately diminished and expanded role of the state and market.

In a time when security concerns are foremost in urban Pakistan¹³, I show in this chapter the class-cultural milieu that is produced through the careful management of security and selection (including self-selection). While the municipal authority plays an important role in shaping the area, the space of the hostel is produced by keeping up an image - reinforced by warning posters, irregular screening procedures, and through groups and networks of friends who refer one another to the area. The space is made for ‘well-mannered educated people,’ a naturalization of class difference that subtly communicates its legitimacy (to use Bourdieu’s terms). In turn, hostelites value the hostel for the solitude and for the ‘type’ of people who live there. Further, as discussed in the previous chapter, class subjectivities are cultivated there in the daily performances and practicing of learners. In this ‘community of practice’ a milieu forms in which grooming, teaching, learning, and mentoring shape classed subjects. In short, the hostel allows a convergence of people doing similar things, as Rasheed puts it, who can help one another. It is a place to gain knowledge, to practice doing the things a bureaucrat does, and to

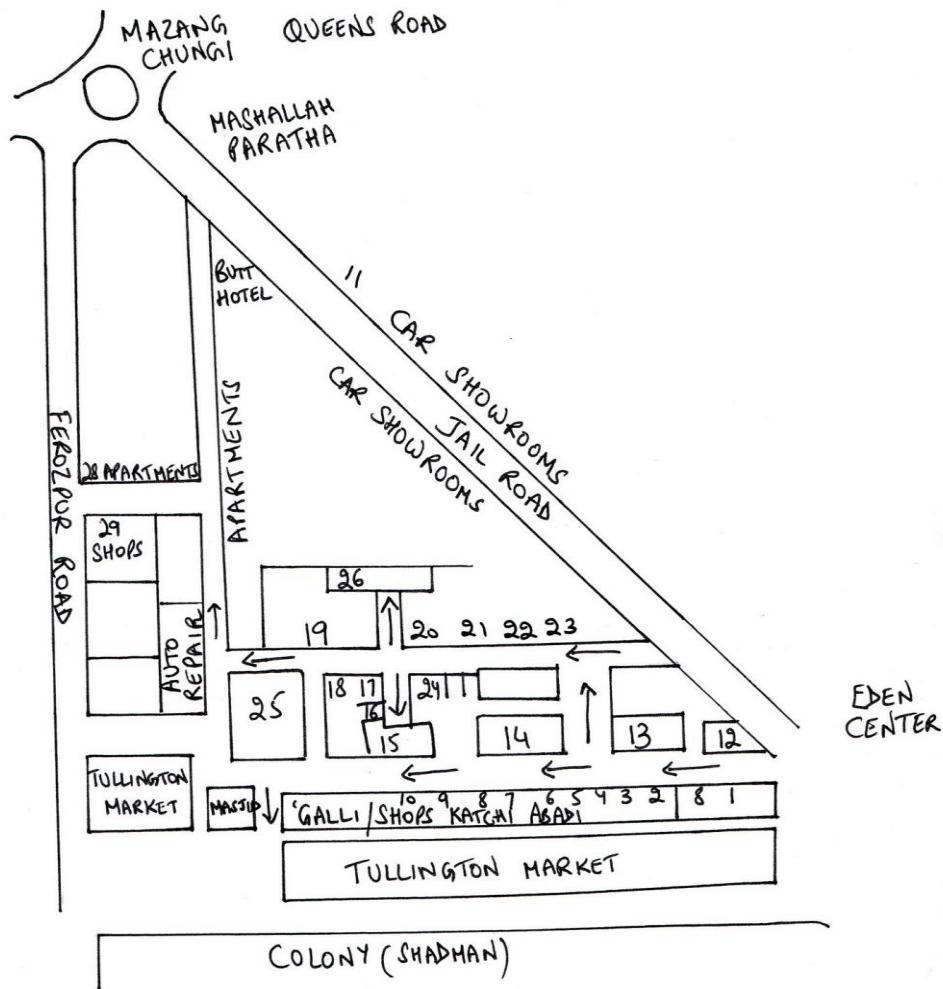
¹³ See Policing Urban Violence in Pakistan by ICG

speak like a bureaucrat.

Moving about the *mohallah* (and beyond)

Through an ethnographic study of the space of Choudhury Mansion and its environs, I learned about what made Lahore a CSS '*mahol*' and what made it so important for aspiring officers. I would learn and teach in individual rooms, and accompany Nadeem, Shan, and others around the city to bookstores, or to the university to buy supplies. I would get the opportunity to meet their teachers and fellow students, conversations with whom would give me insight into the educational processes. I would loan my bike out so my friends could meet current CSS officers or perhaps help their 'sirs' (teachers) with one thing or another. I learned that way that the effort to study for the CSS in Lahore was as much social as it was geographic, and how it connected with the *mohallah* in which CSS aspirants stayed.

In the *mohallah*, I met the hostel owners, shop-keepers, and hostelites from all over the *mohallah*. I recorded what I heard, what I observed such as the different ways hostelites lived - from the simple fashion without beds or embellishment to the AC-using, UPS-dependent hostelites at Choudhury Mansion. I participated in the constant food and tea runs, often 80 Rs meals and 20 Rs cups of tea, the cooperation that was needed from one another, the steady operation of the local economy, and of course the way the two different sides of the *mohallah* were seamlessly part of one another yet totally separate. I observed how two at a time, men would find accommodation, and slowly work to achieve their goals over the course of exactly one year from summer 2013 to summer 2014.



- KEY
- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1) KIRYANA STORE | 8) SYALVI TEA STALL | 15) CHOWDHARY MANSION | 22) BUNGALOW |
| 2) MOBILE SHOP | 9) ASMER HOTEL | 16) THE CAFE HOSTEL | 23) AUTO REPAIR |
| 3) DHABI | 10) ROTI SHOP | 17) THE CAFE | 24) BUNGALOW |
| 4) NAAI / HAJJAM | 11) CAR SHOWROOM | 18) FAISAL HOSTEL | 25) MR. YOUSUF'S BUNGL |
| 5) REAL ESTATE OFFICE | 12) TEA SHOP | 19) HARI'S HEIGHTS | 26) SHAH APARTMENTS |
| 6) KIRYANA STORE | 13) KHALEES TOWER | 20) MUR. TOWER | 27) ABDULLAH HOSTEL |
| 7) SYALVI HOTEL | 17) SANA MANSION | 21) AUTO REPAIR | 28) HOSTEL (NAMELESS) |
| | | | 29) SHOPS |

Map 4.1 Rough map of the hostel zone

Exclusion and the Development of the Milieu

To understand the space of the hostel for young men, the hostel has to be seen as part of the development of the *mohallah*. Some statistics, oral history, and background information on the hostel industry and on how what I call the hostel zone or commercial *mohallah* was shaped, will illustrate the ongoing change, and clarify the larger conditions and forces that shape the subjectivities and futures of its residents.

Statistics on Lahore's demographics are outdated¹⁴; estimates indicate the population is around ten million¹⁵, and that Lahore is Pakistan's second biggest city. Its officially estimated population of 7 million does not reflect the expected growth rate; it exceeds it by 3 million in fact, perhaps reflecting the impact of migration¹⁶ (Punjab Development Statistics 2013). I stayed in constituency of NA 122, Union Council 78, which had a population of about 6,000 in 1998 (Census 1998). was residential and not nearly the busy commercial space it had become in the mid-2010s.¹⁷

There are no published records on the number of hostels available, but Choudhury Mansion' manager Ayub *saheb* [or *sb* - honorific] explained that there are about 600 in Punjab. Mr. Shahab, the Iqra Shahab Hostel owner in Mazang explained about 300 of those are in Lahore, about 7 or 8 of them are multi-story purpose-built (many of them in the Jail Road Hostel zone). In the Jail Road area, there are an estimated 25-26 hostels that Ayub *sb* knows of, in his 'dall' [grip/hand] or network. Between Mr. Shahab's and Choudhury Mansion's owner, Mr. Choudhury's estimates that there are likely 40-50 hostels in this part of the city, Mazang/Jail

¹⁴ The last Census was conducted in 1998

¹⁵ Punjab MetroBus Authority <http://www.pma.punjab.gov.pk/overview>

¹⁶ It was predicted to be 7 million based on Lahore's growth rate between 1991 and 1998

¹⁷ Indicators on income distribution are not available for Lahore.

Road. The type of hostels vary greatly - some are purpose-built and others are simply homes in which families informally rent rooms to guests.

The Union Council (UC) 78 area was described by officers as a ‘strong area’ [well to do] with three *katchi abadis* [undeveloped living areas or neighborhoods] interspersed. The UC 78 area includes Government Officers Residences (GOR), Jail Road, Patiala House, and parts of Mall Road. Mr. Shafqat, an officer of UC 78, differentiated between types of areas in Lahore, some in which people know each other, others in which people don’t. He characterized this part of the city (encompassing UC 78) as containing those *mohallahs* in which many non-Lahoris lived, where people do not know each other, including government officers but also students including those preparing for the CSS. While data is not available on the number of migrants, Mr. Shafqat considers the proportion of migrants in the area as relatively high.

Statistics on vehicular use bear this out. Jail Road is inundated with auto-showrooms, which less than 15% of Punjab are able to afford. The hostel zone is chock-full of motorbikes, which only 27% of the population can afford (Punjab Development Statistics). Jail Road and the *mohallah* are clearly somewhat privileged. The difference between Patiala House where Shahzaib and Adam stayed and Choudhury Mansion indicates that as well since no one I met at Patiala House drove motorbikes or relied on public transport.

According to Glover (2007) this area was part of Civil Station, built by the British. It is close to Mazang, one of Civil Station’s ‘Indian *mohallahs*.’ Mr. Yusuf, whose family moved into the house behind what is now Choudhury Mansion during the time of Partition around 1947, explained that the area was unplanned, unlike nearby Samnabad, and mixed; his home was owned by a Sikh. He explains that five large bungalows occupied this area, including one which

the President Ghulam Ishaq Khan lived in the 1990s.

The area has changed, Mr. Yusuf explains, as bungalows were sold, demolished, the land split up, and converted into commercial properties including auto showrooms and more recently, hostels. He considers the change the neighborhood has undergone as continuing for the last 20 odd years. Like other neighbors and hostel owners, he explains that this is the open market at work, and that the state has played no direct role.

Mr. Choudhury, the owner of Choudhury Mansion and several other hostels, told me he is a hostel builder, having built five hostels in the last 10 years. He explains that Choudhury Mansion, built by his late father in 2004, was the first hostel in this Jail Road *mohallah*. Since then, other developers followed with Sana Mansion, Fazal Hostel, Haris Heights, and several others (ten in all) coming up over the years. The land had belonged to a newspaper editor Mr. Choudhury explained. Mr. Yusuf's son, Bilal views this hostel domino effect as '*bheer chaal*' in which one cattle leads and a drove follows. Bilal, Hajji sb (who owns Sana Mansion) and Ayub sb all highlighted the prime location because of the proximity to the courts, universities, and to Services Hospital. As Ayub sb said, to paraphrase, a motorcycle ride for 15 minutes will get you anywhere you need to go, as this is the '*dil*' [heart] of Lahore. The result, as Ayub sb put it, is that well over a thousand *pardesis* [from 'another land'] now populate the area, with only a handful of locals like Mr Yusuf. The hostelites, the managers, the *chowkidars* to the cleaning staff are all from outside Lahore. Even Aunty who runs The Cafe and The Cafe Hostel is from Mughalpura, some kilometers away.

Not all the hostels are the same. Haji sb, the owner of Sana Mansion, explains that he, like other hostels in the area, offers 'VIP rooms' which include television, cable, fridge and

carpeting, mainly rented by doctors. He has a second tier of rooms that are cheaper but do not have these amenities. Haji sb claims he was the first to introduce internet. Meanwhile, the manager of Haris Heights which was completed during my year in the area explains that his hostel offers backup universal power supplies (UPS) in each room, “otherwise, how will the residents study?” The hostel manager for Haris Heights explains that his boss, the owner of two hostels side by side opposite Choudhury Mansions, lived in the United States before returning to Pakistan. The Haris Heights owner was not the only owner with experience (and investment) from the US. Mr. Murad who owned Abdullah Mansion, mentions he drove a yellow cab in New York before returning to Lahore to invest.

One of Mr. Choudhury’s employees, Mr. Gul explained this hostel boom, alluding to a rapid growth in the hostel business. I would see him once a week or so as he was also the *malik* [owner] of the Choudhury Mansion ‘mess’ [canteen]. “It’s the best business right now,” he explained. Mr. Gul explained this happened at the same time as Punjab College and other institutions opened up a decade ago, attracting students from all over the province. “At one time there were only 2, now there’s a hostel on every corner,” referring to the informal hostels that are very different from those purpose-built hostels. I was told Lahore was well known for its institutions of education and had been known as such historically.

Dr. Grace Clark, head of the Sociology Department at Forman Christian College, supported Mr. Gul’s assertion. She explained that Pakistan has experienced an education boom since the University Grants Commission was reformed and became the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002 (Personal communication 2013). Indeed, data on the HEC’s website indicate a rapid growth in enrolments; nearly a million students are enrolled in higher education

in Pakistan. Not surprisingly, Lahore (after Karachi which has more than double population) has the highest number of educational institutions (HEC 2012).

Both Mr. Yusuf, the neighbor behind Choudhury Mansion, and Mr. Choudhury, the developer/owner, see a limited role of planning and state involvement in these changes. Mr. Malik, who works in the *galli* [lane] (also known as the *katchi abadi*) in a real estate office and a former councillor in the old union council system in this area of Jail Road, has a different perspective. Mr. Malik explains that the way the neighborhood is now is due to the recent urban planning and some not so recent moves by the Lahore Development Authority. This includes the construction of the MetroBus (a bus rapid transit system), the development of Ferozepur Road, and going further back into the 1990s, the relocation of Tollington (poultry) Market from Mall Road (“cleaning up the mess there by bringing it here to Jail Road”). Not only that, their neglect of the *ganda nala* [sewage canal] and recent interest in clearing it to build a highway plays a part in making this *mohallah* what it is today (smelly, among other things).

There is an interdependence between the hostels and the *katchi abadi*. A number of goods and services are available in the *galli* [lane]. Part of the hostelites’ day is spent there buying credit for their mobile phones, picking up staples like sugar and tea, biscuits and snacks, or getting a haircut among other things. This *galli* was formed during the days of Partition, Mr. Shah explained, whose family are *mohajir* [migrants] from India. He explained that the shopkeepers and residents (including himself) had legalized their land though the WASA (Water and Sanitation Authority) was now keen to evict them. Mr. Malik from the real estate office points out the relationship between the hostelites and the shopkeepers in the *galli* who learn from the hostelites. Indeed I saw Shahzad, one of the *chai wallahs* [tea vendor] at Syalvi Tea Stall take

some advice from Shan one night on reading his daughter's medical report. Everyone throws rubbish in the *ganda nala* [sewage canal] including the Choudhury Mansion Mess staff and The Cafe staff who also come here to buy supplies like ice during the summers.

I have described the heterogeneity of the *mohallah* and traced the development of housing for young university graduates to show how the area is shaped by migration, city planning, education institutions, and larger changes that have been happening in the area and the city. The development of this formal housing arguably grew with and around the *galli* (which many believe is 'squatting' except for Mr Malik, Mr. Shah and a few others), as Haji sb describes. "Ten years ago there was a *koka* [small stand] and now there are a dozen businesses catering to the residents of the diverse *mohallah*." The area has thus seen a gradual commercialization stimulated by migration, property investment, and indirect urban planning. The *mohallah* defies easy categorization, bringing together an assortment of laborers, businessmen, and hostelites. In this larger *mohallah*, how do hostels distinguish themselves? Tucked away between two large roads and a sewage line, what makes Choudhury Mansion a VIP *mahol* [environment]?

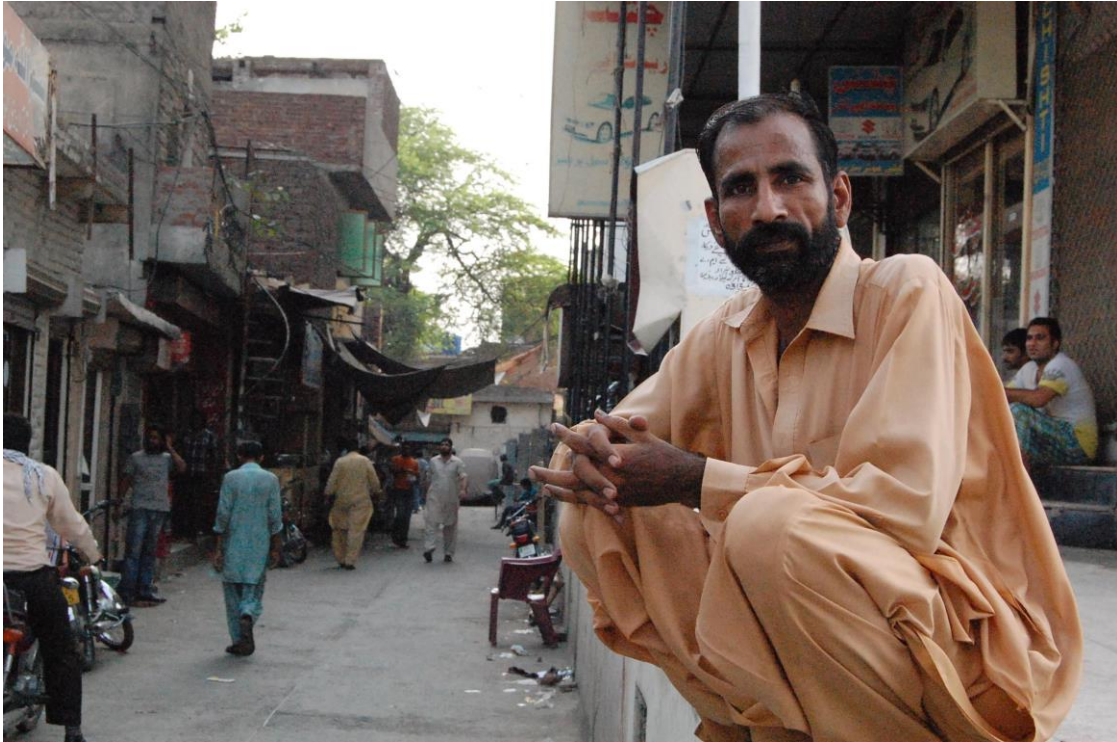


Image 4.2 Serwer sb, a *dhobi*, outside his shop in the *Katchi Abadi/Galli* during daytime

Production and maintenance of the middle class neighborhood and hostel

Choudhury sb, the owner of Choudhury Mansion explains that his hostels are so successful that he does not need to advertise (though he explained he does advertise for his new venture close by on Temple Road - a super-VVIP hostel that charges 13,000 Rs or \$130 per room). In fact, he pointed out, Choudhury Mansion wasn't for everyone, "it is one of the most expensive hostels in Lahore." Some comparison is in order.



Image 4.3 New (VVIP) Choudhury Mansion advertisement at Choudhury Mansion proclaiming fridge, TV, AC and furnishings

A hostel that was nameless in the *mohallah* charged 3,000 Rs or about \$30. Compared with other hostels I visited, and with hostels described by friends and by my colleagues at the call center in nearby Ichhra, hostel rooms can range from Rs 3,000 to 13,000 or \$30-130 (i.e. at the New Choudhury Hostel nearby). There are other hostel concentrations; many CSS aspirants stay in nearby Patiala House, where rents are around Rs 5,000 to 6,000 Rs or \$50-60 a month, according to some residents who lived there and studied at Sir Fawad's academy, like Adam and Shahzaib.

Choudhury Hostel's room rates ranged in 2013 from Rs 8,000 to 10,000 or \$80-100.

Ayub *sb* describes the environment as a 'VIP *mahol*.' Compared to other hostels such as at the local public university and others in the vicinity of Government College, hostels charge less,

offer public bathrooms rather than an attached bathroom, do not offer amenities such as cable TV, any type of furniture, or air conditioners. I found that rooms were not offered, rather, 'seats' were offered in 'four-seater' or even 'six-seater' rooms. Faiz, The Cafe's cook, once looked at my rent receipt. A 20-year old aspiring Punjabi film actor, he feigned stomach pain, saying that he was going to be sick. He pays Rs 3,000 for his room in Samnabad, and that accommodates him and several other relatives from his village who come to Lahore to work. But the price tag is not necessarily what makes Choudhury Mansion 'VIP.'

In Choudhury Mansion, rooms were smaller and limited two residents to a room (in some cases three). Hostelites must sign a contract, provide 2 passport size photos, a copy of their CNIC (national government-issued identity card), a letter indicating salary, or a show of student ID. Applicants must go through an interview with Ayub *sb* too. It is a fairly rigorous process. How does Ayub *sb* select people? "We only select people we like. We first prefer people who have lived here, people whom we know. If there is not someone like that, then we show the room, and keep a waiting list." Ayub *sb* shows me a small note with some names. Ayub *sb* explained further. "If we don't find someone we know, then we go to the list. We show the rooms, look at the list and see who we like." I asked how he determined who he liked? "I ask them what they do, if they're government workers, or I ask what college, and see if it's a good college. Then I decide whether to give them accommodation."



Image 4.4 Choudhury Mansion staff during a monthly water cleaning

Sitting in Ayub *sb*'s air conditioned office one hot summer afternoon, I observed one such interview with young men from Balochistan. Under the gaze of the photo of late Choudhury Sb, father of the owner Choudhury Sb, whose large color photograph hung from the side wall in a way that he was supervising the entire meeting. Their short visit for training in the 1122 government program and their well-spoken manner were greatly helpful in impressing Ayub *sb*. They had cash ready, documents too, and understood their obligations.

I sometimes would see this when hanging out at the entrance to the hostel where prospective tenants would drop in to inquire about rooms. Prospectives would visit some of the hostels one by one. If Ayub *sb* was not around, the *chowkidar* [watchman/guard] Sikander *sb* or one of the other cleaning staff would tell the prospective tenants to come when Ayub *sb* is

around. If there was space or about to be a room available, they would be shown the rooms, given a little tour of one of the buildings. In the case someone moved out and a room became available, the room would be cleaned and sometimes painted. If I was in Ayub *sb*'s office, I would see some discussion with Ayub *sb* about money – the amount, the policy of the deposit, the time to pay, the electricity system (no universal power supply!). A small lock and key would be handed over for a few days or a week, and they would be told to get their own lock and return the lock/key. Finally, a Choudhury Mansion sticker would be given to apply on one's car or motorcycle. This is generally the process that I have seen over the course of the year.

One of the reasons for this selectivity and concern with security was the police who would take lists of residents and copies of ID cards regularly. They would come at night, Auntie explained, and would be given '*chai pani*' ['tea water' - a bribe]. Police did not perform any raids that I saw but noticed when they would periodically come for dinner at The Cafe. Auntie told me once that they came upstairs to the The Cafe Hostel and found a dozen people in a room rented to two men. Perhaps to prevent this sort of problem, Ayub *sb* would patrol the hallways in a light manner, as if to inspect them, from time to time; he would ask people who they were and where they were going. He would often joke that they did not use enough electricity. "Turn the AC on once in a while!"

I saw Ayub *sb*'s vigilance demonstrated one evening. On a busy night when there typically was a lot of foot traffic as hostelites went to grab a quick dinner and when Baba the dhobi [washerman] would go door to door collecting and returning laundry, someone wearing a hoodie neither of us had seen before walked past to visit someone. Ayub *sb*. said to him: "*Ji?*" [yes?] The guy said I'm here to visit so and so room. He took his hood off, as if to remind Ayub

sb who he was. He was not a stranger he explained. Ayub sb let him continue on his way. The reality was that the hostels in the hostel zone were quite open; it was not too difficult for anyone to go in and out. When Ayub sb or Sikander sb or other staff were around, they were vigilant.

Ayub sb also used the effect of posters and signs put up around the hostel in the maintenance of day to day security.

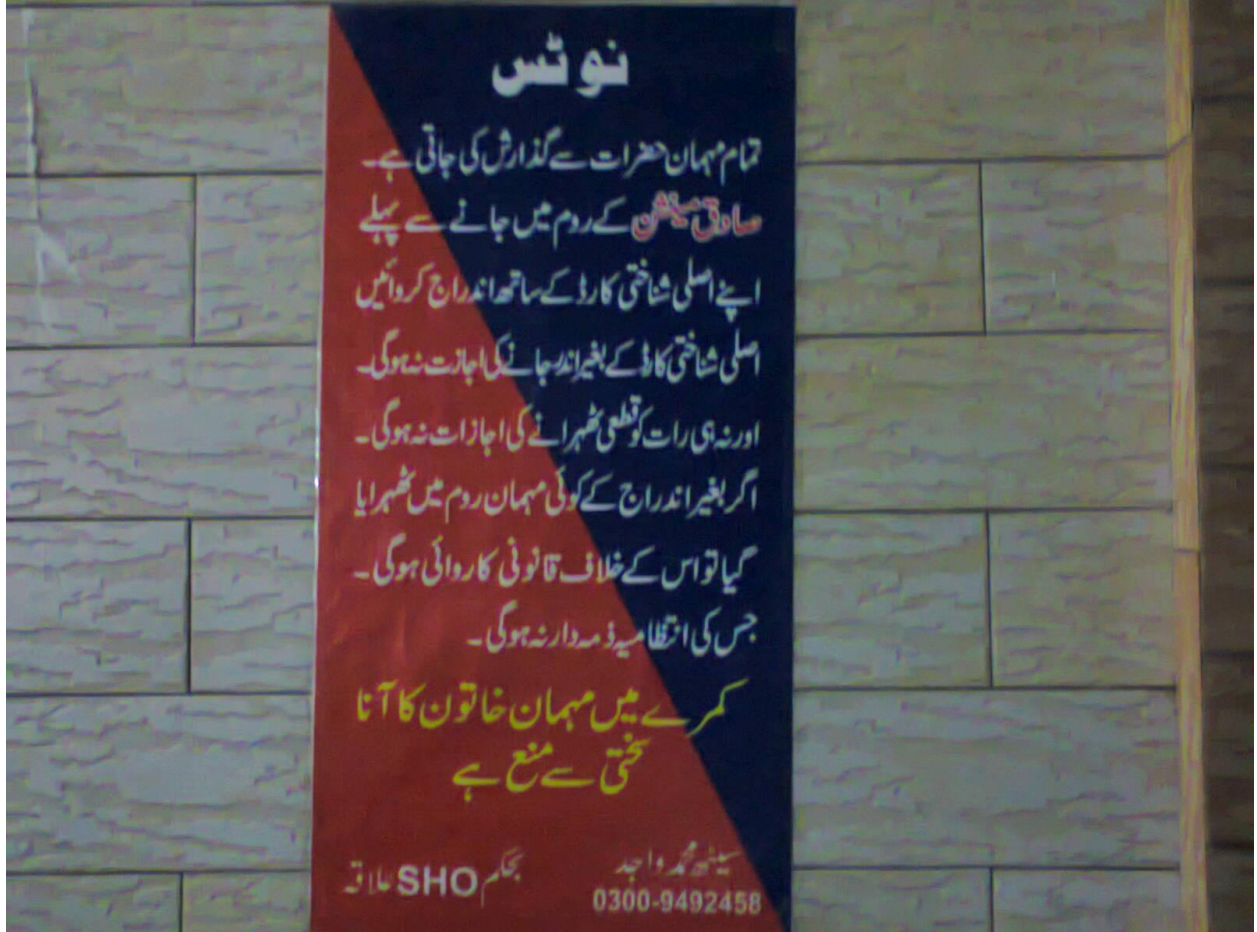


Image 4.5 Notice from *Elaqa's* [area] Station House Officer (SHO) and Choudhury Sb¹⁸ affixed in the spring of 2014

Ayub sb says that he made the sign. When I inquired about it, he responded:

¹⁸ The notice asks residents to show their original identification card upon entering, if there is anyone staying without informing the manager and registering the card there will be legal proceedings. Women are strictly not allowed.

To scare people, and to keep the '*chawwal*' [idiots] out. I don't want the type of person who shows off, acts like he is big... I want people to think that the SHO [station house officer] wrote it. I had printed it myself though! I wanted people to believe that there's an active watch.

Ayub *sb* highlighted management and control, not to toot his horn, but more likely to stress the difference between other hostels, particularly those at public universities. Aside from stray cats and empty food wrappers and random empty plastic bags, Choudhury Mansion was relatively clean. It was even painted once in my year there; from my visits to other hostels I am fairly certain Choudhury Mansion is unique in that regard. In fact, other hostels could be found with peeling paint and smelling carpets if they had carpets at all (by the way Ayub *sb* talked about it, it seemed like carpeting was another sign of distinction, even if they were smelly and stained). Aside from cleanliness, news reports indicated that Punjab University hostels were raided in the fall of 2013 and criminals were found to be residing there (i.e. Taliban). One resident at a public university hostel told me he was staying there illegally for free, his cousin or relative having paid the entire year's fee in one go, at a bargain - some 30,000 Rs for a room that accommodates 2 people. There was no checking he explained, he and many others went undetected.

In a way Ayub *sb* seemed to be pointing a marker of 'distinction,' separating other hostels from the one he managed not only in cost but by the way the space was managed. One segment of making this organized VIP *mahol* was about a crucial exclusion. When I asked

Choudhury sb himself what made his hostels successful, he explained, “we do not allow women. They are strictly forbidden in the Choudhury Hostels.” As Liechty frames it, I interpreted Choudhury Sb’s response in the same way I interpreted Ayub sb’s. That is, the way they “naturalize economic privilege by couching it in a language of honor and morality that excludes its class others” (Liechty 2003: 20). In their careful selection and attention to security, there is a signal of legitimizing Choudhury Mansion, while making an exclusion natural when it seems to be reified in the production and protection of the space.

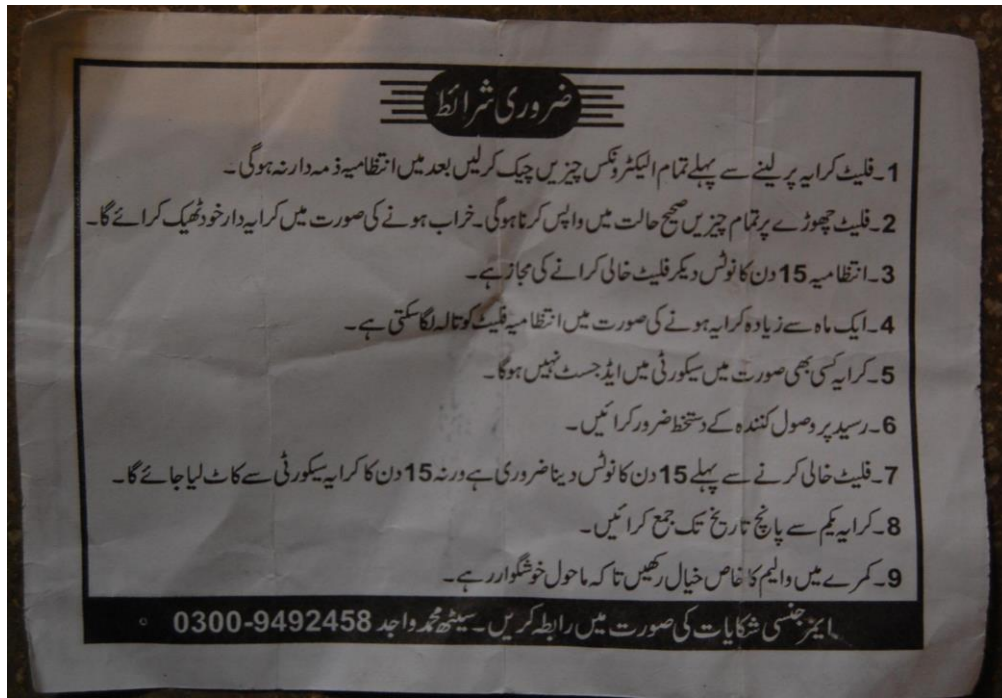


Image 4.6 Back of the monthly rent bill with the list of rules¹⁹

When we talked about the hostel and its residents, Ayub sb recalled that some time ago, one entire floor of the hostel was taken up by bankers from Karachi, and that residents, generally speaking, are wealthy or ‘ameer,’ some have cars, indexing the social status in a city where few

¹⁹ Mainly concerning rent, settling the electric bill, play a role in keeping the environment ‘pleasant’ or *khushgawar*

can afford that. Haji sb, Sana Hostel's owner, explained that he rented to those individuals who could afford the VIP rooms, like doctors. He made a reference to those of his tenants who had studied and succeeded in attaining government and other professional positions.

I understand this selectivity is a form of erecting boundaries. In the space of the hostel and its immediate environs, the attempt to produce a safe, quiet space was not lost on potential tenants.

'Education Makes a Difference'

No less important is the recognition of these boundaries on the part of men who wanted to live in a hostel where there were other 'educated' residents. This effort at boundary management through image management paid off.

For comparison, a brief description of the non-VIP *mahol* of a nameless hostel 25 yards down from it may help. While Choudhury Mansion hosts CSS aspirants and professionals, the others are for workers like *mistri* [mason], explains the hostel owner. "They are VIP," referring to Choudhury Mansion, Haris Heights, and the others, he explains, marking his own hostel as not in that category. He added, this is for the '*darmyani tabka*,' [middle class] costing only Rs 3,000 raising questions about the local meaning of class. The two hostels are not so different; they are sparse, living is simple, but the materiality of the VIP hostel is important. In this sense, the hostelites I met there, Zeeshan, a call center worker, and his roommate, are not very different from residents at Choudhury Mansion. But Zeeshan points to the stained bathroom, to the peeling paint on the walls and to the price difference, indicating how the two hostels differ.

To be sure, Choudhury Mansion and the 'VIP' hostels adjacent to it were valued because

of their ‘cleanliness’ and lack of ‘trouble makers’ hinting at how the space came to be associated with certain qualities, communicating through these distinct symbols what prospective tenants could understand as ‘suitable.’ Amir, a recent engineering graduate from southern Punjab who had come to launch a singing career, told me that the reason he came to Choudhury Mansion is because there is no ‘*shor sharaba*’ [rowdiness or vulgarity].

To illustrate this point in another way, on the eve of the first day of *Ramzan* [a month of fasting] 2014, Dr Kamran, a homeopathic doctor from Karachi, recounts how a neighbor near his shop in Lahore showed him some hostels that were ‘dirty.’ On the other hand, he liked Choudhury Mansion - as it had a fridge and TV and he didn't have to go buy them. Dr Kamran said, “education makes a difference.” When I asked how, he responded: “In the sense of cleanliness,” he responded. I prodded him to explain what education has to do with it, to which Dr Kamran said: “Those who are educated - like people in this hostel - are cleaner.” Choudhury Mansion then came to be distinguished from less costly hostels not just on the basis of cost but on the basis of a marker of class. The space mattered as much as the type of people who lived there. Certain characteristics and qualities went with each of these two types of hostels. Gentle, calm, educated, clean. This dovetails with local ideas of distinction, in which being ‘educated’ is a metaphor for class distinction as Murphy puts it. “Representations of literacy and education are often conflated with class” (Murphy 2010: 345).

Two cultural positions or possibly dispositions are identified here through self-selection that results from the management of the hostel. Those in the hostel are educated, clean whereas others are dirty, rowdy, vulgar and uneducated.



Image 4.7 Laptops are an important study tool, electricity or no electricity

Ducks in a City Well

There is a world of difference between the rural side of Pakistan where many hostelites came from and the hostel. This was also a unique space within the city. For example, my immediate neighbor Farhan entertained some guests during the year. While his younger brother Latif was around, he told me that Choudhury Mansion is boring. Just ‘study, study, study.’ Latif left within a month of coming to Choudhury Mansion. One of the consequences of Ayub *sb*’s selectivity (and hostelites’ own self-selection) is to create a space that is conducive to studying, allowing convergence, to borrow Rasheed’s term. It was attractive to professionals like Kamran and Amir and especially to students like the CSS aspirants. “I’m middle class, and I came here to

study.” For Hamza who stayed in the hostel adjacent to Choudhury Mansion, the city itself is a draw - he learns English from a teacher and came here because he couldn’t find a job in engineering in Pano Aqil. He came to Lahore to “kill time, for a short period, and also for gain.” Anyway, Hamza explained, “It is better than being at home.”

So what makes Lahore a CSS *mahol*, and what makes Choudhury Mansion a VIP *mahol*? A marker of Choudhury Mansion’s role in forming part of the CSS *mahol* that Shahzaib mentioned is in the way housing gives rise to a kind of lifestyle of learning. Tea in hand, book in another, the 'students' or CSS aspirants are doing some high-pressure studying. This seems to be a cultural milieu premised on future success. A part of this is classed subjectivity; I observed that everyone was here to 'do something.' Like Haris Heights’ manager said, he asks people to leave if they are not studying. “We don't allow *hulla gulla* [approximately defined as partying]. If you came for studies, study.” Ayub *sb* echoed this point, saying “we call their parents if they're not behaving and tell them how they're spending all this money and not studying.”

Dr Parvez, who was Dr Taimur’s roommate, spoke of his inability to study at home in his village (north of Lahore). It would have to be here in the hostel and that really is all that he did - sometimes sitting in the hall, sometimes inside his room. I asked him if he could afford it, after Dr Taimur left? He says no, he has to. He described himself as a ‘*kuein ka maindak*,’ [frog in a well] admitting he did not even know where Main Market in Gulberg was.²⁰ Indeed, all he did was study for his upcoming medical exams. Neither Dr. Parvez nor Ali J. the ACCA student nor the CSS students needed to be in Lahore per se.

But having visited two other villages of unemployed men, I could see why it was difficult

²⁰ a well known shopping and commercial area in Lahore a 5 minute drive way

to study at home. Taking the environment of Imran's village as an example, electricity and internet access aside, duties and obligations at home kept Imran busy. Noise from the farm and various disturbances prevented Imran from being very constructive at home in the village. On the other hand, being in Lahore (and at the hostel) gave hostelites the opportunity to access resources easily and study with others as well. Imran could easily pick up the books and things he needed. Hostelites could study on their own without being interrupted. No degree o

r diploma granting institution required attendance in Lahore; they did not need to be here but it seemed to be the *mahol* at work in helping them get their preparation done. The hostel and hostel zone's carefully managed peace and quiet, abundance of fellow test takers, and youth-oriented local economy of services played an important role.

As Rasheed, the son of a doctor in Sindh said, he likes the idea of having people here who are generally in the same position as him. The space really did associate with education, it fostered a certain academic atmosphere. This signaled the social space it constituted as noted by Shan when I asked him why he chose Choudhury Mansion. Shan highlights the '*mahol*.' Why not other hostels or neighborhoods, I ask, like at Patiala House? Shan says, "*rounaq nahin hai*" [there is no life there]. And in Choudhury Mansion, I ask? Shan replies, "Here, one can feel that it is a hostel." He explains that the other hostel he saw was isolating, lacking the 'environment' he sought.

Rasheed, who has lived at Choudhury Mansion for some years, explains how important the hostel is to studying and working toward his goals. Hostelites help each other, he felt.

In Choudhury Mansion I can talk to people about what books they use, where they go for

tutions, and can study together as well. People here are from the same situation - they have also come for the same purpose. They are facing the same issues I am. If I'm depressed, I go to Umar Saith... he takes me out, he understands what I'm going through.

For the hostelites doing the CSS, they oscillate between calling themselves unemployed and students. But they strive towards a goal, calling themselves CSS students and CSS aspirants, reflecting, a kind of subjectivity seeking while living in the hostel. Umar Saith joked and called this attempt as *jaan leva* [life-threatening], emphasizing the seriousness with which they take their tasks. Another aspirant joked, "I will leave in a body bag."

This is an important claim, in which there is a world of difference between being unemployed and being a 'student.' Although they were not CSS officers, they were preparing for it, an important claim on its own.



Image 4.8 Ali J. studying in D13 during 'loadshedding'

Conclusion

The space of the hostel and the *mohallah* more generally is heterogeneous; its slow transformation from a residential area to a thriving zone of hostels is shaped by larger forces, like the job market, urban planning, and Lahore's renowned education institutions but also by the CSS *mahol*. However, the way the space of the hostel itself is produced creates what one hostelite calls 'convergence.' Though the hostel was home to individuals from all over Pakistan and the vast majority of residents had university degrees and though some were more advanced in their preparation for exams and some less confident of English, they were all brought together with a single goal. This classed milieu is a collaborative and also competitive one, enabling men to study and to transform themselves in ways not easily accessible on their own. The space of the hostel serves an important purpose for them, it is not just a neutral background in their quest. The 'community of practice' in the space is involved in the repeated performances of classed practice, as shown in Chapter 3.

The space is important because of the role it plays in preparing students for the merit-based process of selection. It also allows men to make the claim of being a 'student,' and a CSS aspirant, far more valuable statuses than being 'unemployed.' In fact, the way that the milieu shapes the subjectivity is through the community of practice, the interactions, and the pedagogical relationships. Looked at from another perspective, this space enabled young men to make the all important claim that they were not unemployed but they were students. Further, the hostel was the place to cultivate and to practice being students and more importantly being bureaucrats, as illustrated in the last chapter. That of course could not happen without the collaborative space that was produced and maintained by Ayub *sb*.

This articulates with notions of a distinct space; that space is essential for the cultivation of the educated, urban, cosmopolitan subject. This is not easily done on their own in their home towns, villages, and cities which do not have similar book shops, CSS academies, and fellow learners. And that is partly thanks to Ayub *sb* but also to every learner and hostelite that is involved in this community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). This is not the space necessarily of conformity as Zhang (2008) describes but the site of conscious cultivation really only possible with the collaboration of what are ostensibly competitors for the same positions.

The hostel and the *mohallah* represent what Zhang refers to as the spatialization of class. Using symbols, facilities, security, and social networks, the so-called ‘VIP’ Choudury Mansion hostel caters to the ‘educated’ person. Meanwhile, the hostelites in their everyday routine are expected to live up to the expectations of the hostel. Thus, what ‘VIP’ means locally may be understood in relation to Lahore’s housing sector. On its own, the hostel is not very different from any other hostel in the city. The constant stench from the *ganda nala* [sewage canal], electricity problems, cramped in little rooms sprawled on the floor with books everywhere, where cockroaches roam about. On hot sweltering days and no electricity, on cold days with no gas and cold water running from the shower illustrates some of everyday experiences of living in a hostel. That Rasheed sits in the dark for two days because of electrical problems indicates the challenges of living in a ‘hostel’ and how ordinary it is. Yet with carpets, small TVs, peace and quiet, and men from similar backgrounds with serious ambitions constituted this hostel, making it distinct in the eyes of the hostelites. As Zhang argues with regard to housing developments in Kunming, residential spaces are milieus where class specific subjects are created, staged, and contested.

In turn, this *mahol* allows residents to study to fulfill their goals; indeed most people have their nose in their books day and night. In some sense the space produces a classed subjectivity of the aspiring professional (and frequently aspiring bureaucrat). This is reinforced by exclusionary practices in the selection of who is allowed a room. The hostelites - in Ayub sb's terms - *ameer* [wealthy] and in fact *sharif* [honorable]- educated migrants coming in groups of two - reflecting and producing the *mahol*, set up and maintained by the hostels.

While the hostel is important as is the small economy based around hostelites, Lahore as part of the larger CSS *mahol* matters too. But the CSS *mahol* seems to be also the city of Lahore itself; it is safe, and it offers 'exposure,' as some call it, a kind of cosmopolitanism that comes with being in a big city. It is a chance to leave the village for an experience of being on one's own, and to be recognized as a student even though they are unemployed.

In sum, this chapter has brought out some of the context of this self-making endeavour. What young men are doing is part of a rural-urban migration, driving the stratification of Lahore and in turn, their own strategies and choices are shaped by the space. I have tried to show how important the city is as well as the hostel, but to also connect the attempted transformation of self into an officer with the larger demographic, economic, and political changes seen in Pakistan. The endeavor to present one's self as belonging to another stratum exemplifies the contradictory ways the job market articulates with the economic growth in the services industry.

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That the young men change and drive urban change speaks to the relationship mutual constitution of space and class subjectivity. In their arrival in central Lahore on their quest to better their career prospects, they drive the growth of the hostel zone. In fact the hostel zone that

Choudhury Mansion has formed in response to this demand, while larger changes also continue to shape it. In this way, class and space is mutually constituted. With this contribution to literature on space and class, I build on previous contribution including those that highlight the state's role in mediating the relationship. My contribution to the approach to housing contrasts with previous conceptions of urban space and youth in South Asia.

Previous research on cities highlight the state's role in the formation of slums (Tarlo 2003, Van der Linden 1983), while Roy (2003) shows how the change of Calcutta into a bourgeois city expands the urban boundary further into the periphery bringing female laborers into the city's economy. Whereas caste (Dumont and his students), ethnicity (Hasan 2006, Zaidi 1999), and religion (Jaffrelot and Gayer 2012) and politics (Khan 2010, Hansen 2001) have been amply described with relation to space, I demonstrate the relevance of thinking about space in relation to social stratification.

Further, the commercial *mohallah* connects but contrasts with other notions of residential space in particular. Nita Kumar (1988) explained in Benaras, *mohallahs* are not homogenous but clusters are observed. What she found was that a *mohallah* has an official name, its own register at the local police station, and a *sardar* or *choudhary* and an *akhara* [gym].... a *mohallah* also has certain features by which it is identified such as a temple, mosque or *mazar* and there is an identity associated with the neighborhood. Meanwhile, I found that in Lahore, the commercial *mohallah* is a deterritorialized place in which residents do not know one another, where the population is transient. This *mohalla* has only a mosque, its constitution is quite different; it is a nameless space of transience, a space of flows perhaps (Appadurai 1996).

The Pakistani city - its demographic composition and urban landscape - is thus changing,

growing taller, and becoming more densely populated. The way the city is changing is shaped by the property market and by the larger economy, with an important, but limited state role. The changes certainly reflect a global dimension (Sassen 1994) because some come here with the aim of going abroad and in fact two of the hostel owners lived in the US before investing in the area. More importantly, the locality of the area is shaped then by business and commerce, it becomes a *mohallah* very much residential but also commercial, transient, for consumers who have a certain lifestyle, but heterogeneous, one dependent on the other.

Following Leeds' emphasis on the articulation of macro perspective and locality, this type of locality in which young men come for a short period, brings together people not exactly in a 'community' but in commercial relationships. This is not an a priori 'community' nor a natural area and there's very little that suggests any sense of cohesion (Engle Merry 1990) but I would argue a *mohallah* is a commercial zone, shaped with/by larger national changes (pointed out by Hassan 2006 and Zaidi 1996) and by the emergence of the consumer-youth market.

What I have proposed in this chapter is to describe some of the complexity of the organization of space in South Asia and the ways class, gender and age shape the space of the commercial *mohallah*. In no way is what I present this simple but an attempt to create a sophisticated picture of a heterogeneous space that defies the previously easy categorization of slum, *basti* etc. What's happening is a changing and urbanizing society is criss-crossed with an education explosion and globalization. Nobody has any reason to stay in the village; thus creating an incredibly interesting urban youth dynamic. Class is, I believe, a useful way to get to some of these complexities.

The transformation of one part of urban Pakistan illustrates the significance and unique

qualities of Lahore as a developed city with lots of investment, something of a regional or geographic imbalance, borne out by statistics (Punjab Development Statistics 2013). As hostelites and friends in the *mohallah* told me, the city is not cheap (“you have to have money to live here,” said Faiz) but has resources that few other cities do. It shows the way a space is carved out, shaped by migration, economic and political conditions, and by urban planning. It illustrates the work that goes into making of the locality, into the definitions and boundaries and qualities that come to be attributed to space (housing). The state is not a passive role player here. The *mohallah* - a complex social formation or node (to use Leeds’ terms) - is a neglected space in contribution to Pakistan studies though it plays a vital role in how young men figure out their future.

CHAPTER 5

Being Educated as a Classed Subjectivity

Introduction

In previous chapters I have shown how making one's self worthy of selection involves education and space as well as in relation to the structure of opportunity. I show how the transformation of the self means learning 'what to write' and 'how to write' and that the hostel plays an important role in that process. Here I apply discursive subjectivity to explore the ways male university graduates figure out their future as well as author the self in the context of social relations and power relations more broadly. In this chapter, I show how young men reflect upon their experience in the interaction with the relations and conditions of power that shape their lives. The way I go about that is to explore the ways in which 'being educated' is understood. I go about this by exploring the way youth use the terms of discourses such as merit, money, corruption, status, and faith. I focus on their sociopolitical critiques, jokes, and other ludic gestures - to illustrate how they employ or distance themselves from discursive ideas in the cultivation of their own 'educated' subjectivity.

Vignette of Faiz and his Nephew

In the *mohallah*, what does it mean to be 'educated?' Among university graduates as well as the larger neighborhood, being 'educated' was explained in different ways by hostelites, including Aunty, her son Luqman, and Faiz, the cook at The Cafe. Education was distinguished from *tarbiat*, or nurture or upbringing, explained Luqman. Luqman explains that "schools teach skills but do not impart values," he lamented. The connotations of education came from formal

education - schools, colleges, and universities. Parents, he explained, want their children to learn English and put them in English-medium schools.

I shared a reflection that this seemed to be the case with everyone I met, particularly at the hostel, although the ability to speak English was very limited. Luqman exclaimed, “That’s the key, not what you can do, but how you speak English!” In fact, he and his sister, who sometimes took orders from hostelites at The Cafe requested that I speak English with them when I came for my daily breakfast.

If Luqman links being educated with English, the cook he hired, Faiz, saw being educated as something more to do with what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as *habitus*. It was about the ‘*uthna bethna*,’ [literally sitting and standing, or more generally disposition] as Faiz, the cook explained while sitting on some motorcycles parked outside of The Cafe. He dragged on a cigarette while his cousin did the same, looking on. It was the dress, the manner, the comportment, he gestured, before sitting down again and resuming the twirling of his mustache.

Pointing to a cyclist quietly making his way past us, his teenage nephew joined the conversation. “Look at that guy riding the cycle.” The cyclist was the counter-example for someone who is ‘educated.’ The cyclist rode a black steel frame locally manufactured *Sohrab*,²¹ wearing a *shalwar kameez* [traditional South Asian dress consisting of loose trousers and a long tunic]. “There’s a *paindu* [country bumpkin], who is from the village.”

Cousins who were both in their early 20s, once when we sat together, Faiz and Shahid described this binary in their tastes. Faiz adored Punjabi language films and derided Shah Rukh Khan and Bollywood films. Shahid, on the other hand, saw Shah Rukh Khan as a role model,

²¹ Locally manufactured steel bicycle with a double top tube

explaining in English that he too wanted to be ‘dashing.’

Many of these ideas were seen at the call center. At International Call Center on a day shift in the early fall of 2013, I overheard one call center agent quip, “There is so much English being spoken, it is hurting my ears!” Ahmed felt that English language skills lead to job opportunities; English is also a sign of distinction. “Children are taught English but they don’t understand it. Families want their children to speak English but the system is based on memorization.”

At the training institute behind Choudhury Mansion where Farhan’s brother and cousin attended an English course for a month, I participated in a few sessions. The teacher, a retired banker, was blunt: “English is a mark of superiority, it signifies good schooling and this is important socially.”

So what then does being educated mean and why is it so important?

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As education becomes more accessible than ever before, it becomes the pivot around which larger changes in contemporary Pakistan are differentially experienced. ‘Wandering graduates,’ *‘parha likha jahil’* [educated but uninformed] and the desire for the ‘foreign degree’ are some of the tropes through which those anxieties about differentiability are expressed. Perhaps it is no surprise that it is in terms of education and access to education through which we think about social class. For example, it is revealing how Shahid’s goal is to ensure his siblings enroll in the Cambridge system rather than the matriculation system.

Why is ‘being educated’ so important, and how does it factor into an exploration of subjectivity? In Mains’ (2011) study in urban Ethiopia, getting an education and being modern

have implications for the construction and attainment of aspirations. For example, Mains argues that “the notions of occupational status that cause young men to reject certain types of work are influenced by a desire to be modern as it is defined locally” (2011: 9). In Pakistan, Richard Murphy (2010) makes a similar claim in a study in Lahore in which he argues that being ‘educated’ is imbued with meanings of class and modernity. Lukose (2009) illustrates how education in Kerala is similarly associated with modernity and sophistication if not globalization.

The context serves as an important backdrop to the multiple meanings of being educated. The social and political context is what makes being educated so important. The meanings of, desires for, challenges to, and anxieties around education after all formed in relation to a rapidly changing Pakistan due to urbanization, global emigration, and economic uncertainty. In other words, it is important to frame being ‘educated’ against the backdrop of an increasingly educated society experiencing globalization and contingent changes.

My argument here is that being educated is to bring one’s self into the discursive middle class. To be educated is a form of distinction; being educated is by no means encapsulated by middle class subjectivity but is an important element of it. And discursive middle class subjectivity is that which puts the young person squarely in the middle of all overlapping discourses which encompass globalization, state, religion, and class.

To think about the relationship between discourse subjectivity and class, I employ Butler’s emphasis on subjectivity constituted by being outside or besides from ourselves, and as being linked to norms, desires for recognition, and power. “I cannot be who I am without drawing upon the sociality of norms that precede and exceed Me” (Butler 2004: 32). However, bringing discourse and subject together differently than Foucault’s repressive and productive

forms of power, she highlights the subject's 'performance' in light of norms, speaking to the possibility of improvisation. The 'I', Butler argues, is shaped by norms but exists in critical distance/relation to them. In addition, Ewing's (1996) argument is that the subject should be considered as agential, decentered, and by recognizing the fragmentary hegemony of the educated man. The subject is constituted by conflicting desires and signs; recognition is inconstant. Ewing (1996) questions some of the assumptions made about hegemony, identity, and subjectivity. Ewing proposes understanding subjectivity as a part of social and power relations, rather than thinking of it as totally determined by hegemonic discourse.

Applying it to the context of class, an example is Carla Jones' (2012) approach to the relationship between discourse and middle class subjectivity which helps forge this association. In a rapidly changing Indonesian economy, Jones argues that female virtue is at the center of anxieties about social difference (2012). She explains that "gender has long been a mode of identifying social difference, especially by the state and more recently by ... religious organizations" (146). Specifically, pointing to the way women's income generation is considered tainted, she shows how consumption and femininity are components of class subjectivities. Taking state's training programs seek to control women's consumption as examples, Jones argues that the discipline discourse by the state produces a kind of gendered subjectivity. Other work by Rollier (2010), Khan (2010) and others forge associations between subjectivity and political and religious discourses. Rollier (2010) rejects the deterministic framework of religious discourse over the subject while Khan (2010) argues that agency and aspiration for upward mobility are intertwined with political discourse and masculinity in shaping male subjectivity.

The subjectivity of the educated person has hardly been researched, though it is such a

powerful theme in everyday political discourse in Pakistan today. I show that being ‘educated’ serves as the discursive dividing line between being modern, deserving of merit, and between classes.

Getting to the Discursive Subjectivity of Being Educated

As I began to recognize the polyvalence of 'being educated' during interviews and participant observation - I got ideas while listening to young men talk about being Pakistani, and about Pakistan that echoed what I learned at The Cafe and at International Call Center. I noted how they linked themselves to the state and how they understood their labor in an uncertain global economic modernity. Further, I got the sense that unemployed men felt they were subject to corrupt Pakistani society and for some, as subject to a metaphysical power. Another common thread was their responsibility to their families and a consciousness of being part of an hierarchy of social status.

To give some examples, in the course of learning about the way they oriented themselves to the future, I was surprised how frequently I would listen to concerns about inflation and comparisons of the Pakistani Rupee to the US Dollar and UK Sterling and what that meant for them and their aspirations. In some sense they saw themselves in a vast job market without borders, though they acknowledged structural challenges to participating. To me, these were messages about the economically politically precarious time we are in - what was referred to frequently as the ‘age of money’ [*paisey ka daur*] which influences their daily lives as consumers but does not necessarily allow them to participate as producers. Almost in a stream of consciousness during a very intense period of studying, Nadeem brings together some of the

conditions and discourses which are meaningful to him.

Nadeem talked about the schedule he has made (sleep early, get up early, study, prayer break, rest break, and get 13 hours of studying in). In that he began to say that “Quaid e Azam or the Leader of the Nation has ruined us” [*Quaid e Azam ne hum ko khwar kar dia*]. He explained in English - that CSS aspirants that are chasing after money - this pursuit has ruined us. Talks about his study partner, a young woman who he has fallen for, who slept only 3 hours last night. Suddenly he changes the subject and emphasizes the importance of God - if we pursue *deen* [religion], we get *dunya* [mundane life]. Asked to correct his English, I asked him to correct my Urdu. Asked philosophically: am I just busy or is everyone else also busy?

Rather than criticizing M. A. Jinnah, Pakistan’s founder, he was making a critique of the economic conditions we are in. He was in fact referring to money, as Quaid-e-Azam’s face is on every bank note in Pakistan.

Along with the age of money, I noted how frequently the state was brought up - and in relation to that - references were made to the ‘elite’ class, the ‘lower middle class, and the ‘poor’ using the English terms. Relatedly, I learned about the way they distinguished themselves as educated though it was not clear where in the hierarchy they were mapping themselves. While sitting in Imran’s village in southern Punjab, he referred to himself as middle class. While in Lahore and despondent about his prospects, he blurted out his frustration about being poor. Their own positions appeared to shift.

Listening to the way young unemployed men spoke about themselves and the larger conditions and forces in which they are enmeshed, I realized that these discourses were overlapping one another. Being educated helped give them an edge, a form of distinction over the poor and perhaps over the elite even, though it put them in a difficult employment position as although they had education they lacked ‘power’ and could not afford to move abroad to join the global workforce.

To get a clearer understanding of the self-authoring in relation to some of these discourses, power relations, and conditions, I focus on the relationship of the subject to these discourses of as ‘educated’ men. I refer to jokes and critiques in order to explain how it is these men understand and make use of the ideas that constitute discourses as well as conditions that they face. Also, I include more general social commentary and the experiences in power relations. It is a commentary on society and self, about the age we live in, about money, about ethics, about Pakistan and about corruption.

Discursive Subjectivity and Youth Studies

To use discursive subjectivity as an approach to thinking about unemployed men in Lahore contributes to a considerable body of scholarship on youth studies. Scholars including Hebdige (1979) from the Birmingham School sought to recover agency from earlier critical theory in his exploration of resistance. To this semiotic approach, more recent scholarship brings globalization into youth studies to add sophistication to subjectivity in youth scholarship (Maira and Soep 2004) exemplified by Lukose (2009) study of youth citizenship and global modernity in India. To add to this, Amit and Dyck (2010) give an important perspective in highlighting

political and economic conditions in which young men make their lives.

Accounting for discourse as well as changing economic and political conditions in exploring subjectivities of male unemployed youth, I specifically investigate what it means to be an ‘educated person.’ Levinson and Holland (2000) argue that how personhood forms are in response or against larger structures and forces. They make the case that the notion of an ‘educated person’ vary, and depends on cultural practices and discourses. For Lukose (2009), education is the construction of the citizen, a modern, secular, Hindu, and upper caste. It is also the site for the construction of the modern citizen and for the globally mobile. For Mains (2011) education is for unemployed educated Ethiopian men associated with modernity but also a sense of progress.

How then do we study the relationship between the agent and discourse? Humor as well as serious critique offer such perspective. The accounts young men give in their social critiques and their jokes are windows into how they see themselves in relation to larger discourses. Humor can be political critique; it can do political work, as Bernal (2013) shows, even “fostering the development of new subjectivities by showing people the status quo from a different perspective than the dominant or official one and also by making visible the act of representing reality.” Bernal seems to build on Mary Douglas’s argument that humor is an anti-rite or as disorganizing, arguing that political humor is an epistemological response to what is ‘known.’ Humor in this case serves to challenge what has been established to create new possibilities of what could be. Willis (1977) in the case of the Lads in Hammertown High among other theorists see humor as subversive, but I show that is not necessarily so. Humor is an important lens that allows perspective into not just why something is funny but opens a view into the circumstances of the

humor (Carty and Musharbash 2008). At Choudhury Mansion and at International Call Center (ICC), I find that humor can certainly be subversive, but also it is revealing of the status quo from a different perspective, and involving a positioning of the self. Humor seems to be associated with distancing one's self, a distinguishing of what young men are not. While creating possibilities (at least mentally) of what could be, humor, laughter, play are in subtle ways, an expression of who they are and their context: educated, achieving, but participating in an absurd system defined by the age of money [to use Shan's terms].

Verkaaik (2004) explores ludic practices as transgressive, and fun as an inversion of power in the context of power relations. Specifically, he suggests this fun is directed at relations between the *ashraf* [noble] and the *ajlaf* [local low caste]. Fun bestowed a sense of agency, and it served as an expression that challenged propriety and "challenged the symbolic coherence of the dominant discourse" (117).

Religion/Politics

One of the types of discourses that shape the ideas and behaviour of hostelites and call center agents is that of religion. Though little time would be spent at the mosque, discussions would index aspirations and anxieties of the men. Dr. Nadeem frequently quoted sayings of Maula Ali, an important religious figure for him. One *farman* [saying] consisted of counseling believers against asking for too much and too soon. Nadeem would share them casually and I could see how such wisdom applied to his tireless effort to transform himself.

I frequently heard elements of those from Dr. Taimur and others who would share videos and quotes from Maulana Tariq Jameel and similar pages about corruption and about

faithlessness. A look at his Facebook timeline shows some of these shares. Taimur's anxieties about his career and his preparation for the USMLEs were assuaged by the certainty of a larger plan that he believed in.



Image 5.1 Dr. Taimur's Facebook post

Political and religious discourse sometimes converged. As seen in a YouTube video (not shared with me but consisting of a very familiar kind of discourse heard in the hostel) Maulana Tariq Jameel draws a parallel between religious figures and contemporary political figures, presenting corruption as a major theme. To give an example, in a news broadcast on a private

channel that is available on YouTube, Jameel recounts an interaction between the Prophet Moses and God. According to Jameel, Moses asks how he would know if God was angry. God explains that when He is angry He destroys the system of rainfall, and gives us corrupt rulers, and bestows benefits on the miserly. When God is happy He does the opposite. Jameel clearly is making references to and in fact linking both Pakistan's climate change and the country's corrupt leadership. It is these kinds of ideas and views that I found being drawn upon regularly by hostelites.

A recurrent theme at the academy with Sir Fawad was a kind of personal corruption. "We are not good Muslims, we are disloyal, and opportunists." He described the frequently cited refrain of nepotism, favoritism, and shortcuts that Pakistanis take, including unethical business practices. These are elements of ordinary everyday discourse. When I asked Fawad about this after class one day, he explained that "we are dirty" [*hum gandey hein*], reinforcing Maulana Tariq Jameel's spiritual lashings. Sir Fawad is referring to not the corruption of the government but the ethics of Pakistanis themselves.

Neither does religion completely dominate the subject nor does a religio-political discourse take the form of the oft-discussed discourse of radicalization. For institutions like Brookings, British Council, and USIP, a too-easy relationship between religion and radicalization is forged, outlining the discursive figure of the Pakistani folk devil, an 'Other,' one who poses a challenge to the symbolic political order (Hebdige 1979). Underlying this discourse appear to be assumptions of (political) subjectivity conditioned by Islam, affect, and politics. While this research stresses economic disparity as a contributor to radicalization, local researchers like Siddiqi focuses mainly on education and university (read: middle class) students

in her study of the process of radicalization.

The ‘us versus them’ categorization, which is popularly viewed as evidence of radicalism, is driven by an identity issue or crisis of ego rather than an understanding of certain morality which would bring about a fundamental change within the society. In this respect, religious, social and political conservatism is part of a popular culture which is not necessarily a response to a particular event or a factor, but the culmination of a process that dates back to the 1980s (Siddiqi 2015).

Contrary to deterministic notions that religion or religious identity totally dominate the agent, Rollier (2010) suggests it is a discourse that indicates how 'Islam' comes into the public sphere and has implications for the formation of the subject but not dominate it.

This is important to overcome the kind of unthinking ‘Muslim’ subjectivity evident in policy research. Religion is an important aspect of subjectivity, it shapes practice and ideas but as Schielke argues, he tries to avoid “over-emphasize the coherence of ethical self-fashioning among piety minded Muslims” and instead highlights the “incompleteness that often characterize everyday forms of religiosity” (2010).

I walked down to the mosque as I usually do on Fridays. I was wearing my *shalwar kameez* and *topi*. It was really strange though. None of the rush, the crowd that is usually there. Nobody selling food on carts. There was no *khutbah* [sermon] either. So I asked what was going on. Someone told me, it wasn’t Friday, it was Thursday.

- *Shan, on mixing up the days for Friday prayer*

State, Politics, and Personhood in a Corrupt Society

Merit is a consistent political theme in public commentary from politicians and by youth as discussed in Chapter 2. ‘Merit’ comes up regularly in political and policy discourse, a mechanism of undermining political opponents for some and a critical component of social change for others.²² Merit is a symbol of an aspired modernity, one just out of reach, one that contrasts Pakistani society that is currently symbolized by *sifarish*.

Merit indexes inclusion and a form of citizenship. Merit is a form of distinction, differentiating men from those who took short cuts and used *sifarish* in order to secure employment. “I’m an educated guy, I should get jobs. Jobs should be given on merit, even if I don’t get one, it should be on merit.” Shan would heap derision on those who got jobs on the basis of powerful contacts. “They are all thieves,” he states flatly. He describes his difficulty finding work, attributing his failure to his lack of *sifarish*. He rhetorically asks: “how much more flattery can I do of my country?” Anyway, he sighs, this is his destiny [*naseeb*], whatever we get, it’s from God.”

Though he was not above these tactics, merit served as a form of distinction as an ‘educated person.’ Merit overlaps with a discourse of power in which one popular understanding is that it is concentrated in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. The educated person is the subaltern, in this worldview.

Power, and specifically exclusion from state employment is treated differently by Nichola Khan. For her exclusion leads to a violent political subjectivity, one borne out of political and violent resistance and a desire for an adulthood that included respect and power, income, and

²² Seen in a weeks-long rally by a political party, Pakistan Tehreek i Insaf

fraternity. Khan argues that violence constitutes a force for “aspirational becoming, for restoring fractured selfhood” (Khan 2010: 10). Though Khan’s study also refers to power and social mobility as self-making, violence was the means rather than education.

Friday June 27

On the way back to the hostel from our walk Shan jokes.

I'm planning to make my own party. Imran Khan will be in it. Zardari will be in it. Sheikh Rasheed will be in it. It'll be *Bachao* [Save] Pakistan Party, BPP. Farhan - he'll be information minister. People will ask him for information. He'll say, “Huh? What did you say?” And Rasheed - he'll be law minister. He will have the one position you need to be *tagra* [tough], he'll play that role. And you - the ministry of defense!

I objected, stating my pro-democratic inclinations, and Shan replied, “exactly!” Those who are the exact opposite in character - that's the ministry they will get!

Later at night the BPP idea comes up after dinner. Rasheed exclaims “What party! This guy changes his allegiance all the time...” Rasheed is laughing... “he' says he's going to Sheikh Rasheed's rally and on the way saying *JEAY* [live on] BHUTTO!

Shan quips, reflecting his Larkana upbringing, the home of the Bhutto family. “it's an ingrained habit! Makes an important decision after thinking about it. “Oh actually Rasheed will be the information minister. He'll just sit, quiet.”

What Khan and Verkaaik miss is a more complicated relationship young men have with the state. They do not opt for political parties but satirize them and continue to seek government employment though their prospects are limited. Yet dissatisfaction with the state is palpable.

Waiting for Fawad sb in Bagh-i-Jinnah, Rizwan tells me about yesterday when he and Quraishi were stopped by the cops. All their pockets were checked. They told the cops they are students, they should get a concession, and the cops kept them for a while. Rizwan thinks it is about money. He had only 50 Rs, and was going to withdraw money from the bank. They ended up leaving, not paying anything. Rizwan then says, wait ‘til I am a CSP, then I will see him. I will humiliate him. We for some reason start talking about the law and about power. It's like a

Black Law, said Rizwan, “one rule for some, and another set for others. We are the ones getting searched. Why?”

Rizwan I believe saw himself as powerless and like a second class citizen. He managed to resist paying the bribe that he felt was expected of him. He however is not satisfied with this and seeks a much higher ‘position’ achieved through becoming a CSS officer.

The educated person is not characterized by ‘resistance’ to power but cooperation. While there is a distance from the state, young men are clearly confident, though thwarted in achieving their goal. This is getting at some of the same conditions and factors that came up in the second chapter on *sifarish*.

Shan has a sharp political humor, and since he participated in student politics in university, his sometimes satirical sense of humor extends from personal experience. He constantly belts out slogans at random, ‘*Jeay Bhutto!*’ His irreverence for politics was clear in how he said he would shout slogans from the toilet (which actually happened). When he did absent-minded things like going to the mosque on Thursday for Friday prayer, he would say, “I’m a political guy, after all - *mein to syasi admi houn!*’ He would relentlessly, and humorously I think mostly, raise slogans for former prime minister Asif Zardari. *Zardari, sub pe bhari, Zardari sub ke bari*. “It has a double meaning. It means everyone gets a turn with Zardari.” I picked up from there: I said it “could mean weight on everyone!” Also, he would emphasize, satirically, that he was with “People Party,” making sure I noted the grammatical mistake (people’s/people). In a way, distinguishing himself. Shan took a liking over the course of the year for the PTI, though he would still raise slogans for Bhutto. “*Zinda hai Bhutto Zinda hai!*” [Bhutto is alive]

Relationship to the Market

My arguments follow from more nuanced youth research exploring the ways education, globalization, and the economy shape subjectivity, citizenship, and belonging (Lukose 2009, Amit 2012, Liechty 2003). Lukose shows how globalization and commodities have transformed

citizenship into ‘consumer citizenship.’ “The intensification and expansion of commodity flows through the liberalization of the Indian economy have made consumption of goods and mass mediated images a key site for producing youth identities (2009: section 248 of 4754).

Farhan or Shan did a Facebook check-in at the prestigious (and very expensive) Pearl Continental on Mall Road. I felt left out so I confronted them about it. They smiled and said “we went to meet girls!” They spoke at length about how beautiful the women were and what great fun it was. I realized they were messing with me, they were obviously at the hostel studying the whole time.

One angle Lukose did not take with that is the expectation of employment. This comes up in Jeffrey (2010) and in other texts as well in which there is an assumption (perhaps an implicit one) not looked into which links education with employment. The idea is that ‘being educated’ is thought to lead to gainful employment. Dalits in Jeffrey’s study, Jats in Gill’s (2012) study, and Izhava youth in Lukose’s study seem to have similar ideas that in the liberalized economy their chances of employment hinge on them getting a degree. In other words, just as globalization and economic change shapes notions of consumption, it seems to also impact notions of production.

In Lahore, said social and economic transformations open up opportunities in information technology to some extent but other industries transformed in the last 10-15 years include media and banking. Such changes also seem to shape notions of status, which help understand what kinds of jobs are more desirable or less.

Jokes about work and the job search process are insights into subjectivities shaped by globalization. The absurdity in the humor is linked less to the subversion of ‘*ashraf*’ and more to the journey on which they embark as educated men. Jokes give insight into elements of the effort

to secure work and the absurdity of the application process. Surely they are more qualified than to deal with this? AbuBakar after quitting International Call Center struggled to find work. We would meet every month and I would ask him to share his experiences, which he would do, laughing, I think, at what he was going through to get a decent paying job.

March 23 2014

It turns out that there are 1200 employees at this place where AbuBakar applied in the Shadman area. He described the tense atmosphere of applicants waiting to be called in. Finally the Assistant Manager was free, and started interviewing the guys one by one. In great detail he explained...

There were 5 people, one being called in one by one. Each guy got 15 minutes. We, the remaining candidates were wondering what was going on in there. None of them came back through that room, they all went out another door, adding to the mystery. I was the 4th guy. I finally got my chance, I go in say, Assalamualaikum... and the guy says Walaikum Assalam...and the Assistant Manager asks me, "What are you doing?" I responded: "looking for a job." The guy asks, "What have you done?" I said "BCom." The guy says "from where?" I said "Punjab University." The Assistant Manager asks: "What comes after BCom? I replied, "It depends, it could be MCOM, MBA, etc." The guy says "OK. But what comes before BCOM?"

At this point I start laughing as does AbuBakar. He seems to think this is funny. I certainly think it is ridiculous. AbuBakar resumes his story.

Sir, it depends, some do ICOM, SCI, FSC or FA. The interviewer asked how long does it take to come here? I said "25 minutes." The Assistant Manager says "sure?" I said: "yes, including time it may take if the bike fails, and if the traffic light is green." Then the Assistant Manager says, "OK sell me a laptop, in Punjabi."

AbuBakar said to me that since it is his mother tongue that is not a problem, and he did his best, said whatever came to his mind. "I said I would give internet with it free, and tried in every way possible. Then the Assistant Manager said, I already have one at home, why are you trying to sell me a computer?"

At this point, I get the notion that AbuBakar thinks the guy is a moron and not asking relevant questions. I started laughing, appreciating AbuBakar's style of narrative, AbuBakar laughs too.

AbuBakar wasn't the only one shaking his head at the job application process.

When I saw Shan, every now and then, he would submit job applications. He borrowed my laptop once to actually make an application form. I asked him why wouldn't he just go online and download it? He said no they don't make it available, "They're *pagal* [crazy], like me!" He jokes about the low capability of the institution that he's applying for, but "it is important, it is 17 grade."

Urban Middle Class Citizenship

The terms that young men use in and around the hostel reveal the associations between the educated subjectivity and the city. Being 'backward' was commonly the opposite of 'modern.'

Talking about an Anil Kapoor movie we were watching at The Cafe, Hamza tells me that's how things are in his village. "It's backward" referring to the way one of the characters (a feudal lord) was treating his workers. Hamza's friend from the same town, also an engineer and currently employed in Lahore, tells me that Hamza himself is 'educated,' that he's different from others. Hamza is not backward, he has 'exposure.'

Their social commentary, critiques, and jokes are all indicative of the subjectivity that they are pursuing.

Shan's roommate Nadeem was less cynical, focusing more on himself and on his fellow CSS aspirants. Dr Nadeem was constantly trying to improve his English, insisting I not speak Urdu with him. He would check with me periodically during conversations - "did I say that right?" Trying his best not to speak in his Sindhi accent. "Oh shit *yaar* [friend], I have to improve my English!" Once I joked with him about his use of pronouns - particularly - his reluctance to use 'us' and instead use 'we people.' Like others in the *mohallah*, CSS aspirants would correct themselves. Nadeem jokingly began to use 'we people' in casual conversation, giggling, and lightly making fun of himself, also purposefully using English-Urdu redundancy '*chalo* let's go' and '*bus*, enough!'

Commentary and humor reveal something about their aspiring officers' desired cultural

positionality - how they position themselves and how that is conditioned by the opportunity structure that features the English language as a necessary qualification. Jokes are not transgressive in these cases, they show a willingness to play by the rules of the opportunity structure.

Shan would humorously pretend to get mad, becoming jokingly frustrated with articles ‘a’ and ‘the.’ Once he gave me an essay to read over, grinning mischievously, “This time I added ‘the’ *everywhere!* In every sentence! So now you can’t fault me for not using it!”

Conclusion

There are a number of ideas, norms and worldviews from which young men draw their own practices and aspirations. Though power relations and competitive struggles for claims of status influence the educated subjectivity, there is no single dominant discourse which on its own dominates the individual. The subjectivity of the educated person is configured by metaphysical beliefs, by an official discourse of merit, as well as by the interaction with power relations, and by a tenuous relationship to the global economy.

I present jokes, laughter, ludic gestures, and some serious critique to illustrate a classed subjectivity, a kind of agency that is perceived to be constrained by power relations. I refer to this idea as the Pakistani ‘educated person,’ marked by a desire for power, status, both of which are perceived to be configured in reference to the state. The ‘educated person’ is also characterized by an emphasis on achievement - a form of distinction; by preferring (or being forced) to look for work through merit rather than through other means that I discussed earlier in the dissertation. Thirdly, being ‘educated’ is marked by a sense of distinction, a contrast to ‘backwardness.’ Jokes (and critique) illustrate where young people see themselves in power

relations, where they see themselves in relation to the locus of power.

There is no indication that the educated male subject is totally dominated by any one discourse, radical or Islamist or otherwise. But their aspirations, taken as desires constituting an 'educated personhood' are oriented towards "getting up there." The subject then is not so much defined by faith or politics but by something else entirely: power. Given the way that is achieved in this case, by students with differential language abilities and resources, can be an arduous process of self making through learning language and studying.

Rasheed and I would constantly talk about pedagogy and learning - taking keen note of my own preparation for my PhD certification exams. Once we talked about textbooks as Rasheed would constantly ask about advice and guidance about how to study. Knowing my interest and experience in sociology and anthropology, he asked me about it since it was one of his optional CSS exam subjects he had chosen. We came upon Umar Saith's suggested textbook for sociology authored by Tagga that Umar called the "Bible of Sociology." I described to Rasheed how Umar Saith climbed upon a plastic chair to get to the top of a closet containing CSS materials he had stored up there (his room was filled with materials and his walls covered with maps). What was this bible Rasheed asked? I said Tagga's prep book. Rasheed asked me, is this not the Bible of Sociology? I told him I considered Weber's Protestant Work Ethic the bible if there was one. Rasheed roared and laughed all evening at the idea of Umar presenting a sociologist with a so called bible to a sociology instructor. I thought it was a little absurd to think of Tagga's book as important in any academic way but I think Rasheed laughed so much because of what is arguably a cheap substitute for the knowledge of sociology. As Umar himself told me, they're not really learning but just taking these short cuts for the test. That such a rip off was considered as something as important as a 'bible' I think made Rasheed laugh so hard, which has epistemological implications for the entire process of 'studying' that they do to secure the position, the power, and the status that they desire. Rasheed had made light of Shan's studying methods as he rarely read anything except 'notes.' To elevate Tagga's book to a 'Bible' I think was what elicited so much laughter.

The way Rasheed laughs about the passing of a prep book for an academic text, or AbuBakar rolls his eyeballs and laughs about his job interviews point to the status quo, revealing another perspective or an alternative to the status quo. Such a perspective indicates a reluctant,

questioning participation with the status quo, working to meet the standard. Humor evokes perhaps not a very different subjectivity than that explored by Lukose. Like some of Lukose's research participants, hostelites and call center agents saw themselves as modern, unassociated with political parties, and who sought to forge their own path. The difference here is that globalization and liberalization play not as large a role as the state and aspiration.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Those young men I got to know over the course of about a year - particularly the hostelites - call themselves students. They do not refer to themselves as unemployed (not usually anyway). Instead, they call themselves students and more commonly ‘aspirants.’ They spend all their time in books, a lot like students do, but there is something about them that differentiates them from high school or university students. ‘Aspirant’ as a label speaks volumes about what they are doing.

Such aspirants live in a hostel labeled as VIP though no very important people live there. There are no desks but plastic chairs and old small fridges and little TVs. A few rooms are fancier and have an English style toilet, but most of us have to squat. The symbolism of the VIP label is important, attracting ‘educated’ residents and men who have aspirations. It is in a desirable area, a busy transport hub, near government officer residences and a historic park. Hostelites mostly share rooms and split the rent, roughly forty dollars a month each. A few drive cars but the majority have motorbikes to get around. In the evenings, it is not unusual to hear someone singing a few lines from a Bollywood song.

Many hostelites dress in slacks and collared shirts when going to the academies, and crisp white *shalwar kameez* when they visit the mosque on Fridays. They spend no more than the equivalent of two or three dollars a day on food, including two cups of tea, a couple of chapatis, some eggs and vegetables. Chicken *biryani* to say nothing of meat-based foods are a rare luxury.

Hostelites read and write in English but speak in Urdu, among other languages. Their

homework and readings are in English, their so called ‘textbooks’ are not really textbooks but elaborate notes and old exams. They ‘study’ and ‘learn’ though it seems that they are memorizing. They are all products of the matriculation system, and a few were products of private schooling while many attended public schools.

Many of my friends use Android phones, peruse Facebook, posting selfies, sometimes on their own in the hostel, sometimes with friends when they go out, posing with symbols of distinction if they can, such as at a fancy hotel or in front of a random luxury car if they see one. On Facebook, they chat up women in their spare time, flirting online, with other CSS aspirants they encounter on CSS Facebook groups.

Facebook is a place to literally ‘share’ their religious convictions in the form of memes. Such religiosity is rarely expressed otherwise offline. Prayers are quietly observed, God and other figures are casually invoked every now and then, and frequently *dua* or supplications are sought from one another for their success. Stress and anxiety and pessimism is rife. No one seems to know what will happen the next day let alone the next year. Often we wonder what will become of Pakistan, and what will become of ourselves. I often hear, and often also requested, ‘*dua karein*’ [please remember me in your prayers]. I realized at some point I was an aspirant too. Perhaps of a different kind than they were.

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I begin the conclusion in this manner to bring out the relatively modest symbols associated with the time and place in which young men are attempting to cultivate their subjectivity. The above description reveals something of the space and its residents: who they are now and who they want to be. Motorcycles and Facebook and living in a hostel in arguably the

most developed city in Pakistan are the preserve of those who can afford it. They are culturally meaningful; they are on their own indicative of a social space neither in poverty nor in prosperity. Moreover, these markers reveal desire and effort to change who they will be. In preparing for the CSS exam in this transitory, if not liminal, space their presence is an index of their future selves. In other words, the above description of symbols speak to individuals with little in common except aspiration, the desire to change their life chances and their circumstances, a class analytically linked, if not determined by larger changes in society.

In the remainder of this concluding chapter, I explain more thoroughly how the transient men through this time-space, are attempting to remake themselves in relation to the competitive field of struggles in a collaborative, urban educational environment. I briefly retrace my steps before grappling with the theoretical implications of making one's self worthy.

Education, Subjectivity, and Mobility

In this dissertation I have explored the way young men work to make themselves worthy of employment. In the process, they seem to be attempting to remake themselves in an attempt to figure out their future. By exploring the process by which they clustered in study groups in high rise hostels in central Lahore imbibing Pakistani history, reading notes and old exams, and constantly practicing what they were learning speaks to the way the state figures so prominently in their lives. I argue that the pursuit of their goal to 'achieve' high scores on government exams, and to attain government employment more generally, is to refashion their subjectivity in accordance with the standards determined by the state. This is in a way to change their relationship to the state.

Dr. Taimur's casual quip - "don't forget me when you're up there!" - encapsulated one of the questions of this study. What does 'up there' mean and how does one get there in a society in which there is wide skepticism about 'merit?' Taimur's remark gave my more general research questions some direction. I could not tackle the question of how young men figure out their future without the dimension of power relations.

The connection between getting 'up there' and the state became more apparent as I gradually came to understand that power (discursively) and state (materially and culturally) had roles in configuring the aspirations of unemployed university graduate males. Why young men were unemployed and highly selective about where they applied became more clear. That is to say, why work for someone else with a "sword hanging above your head?" as Shan put it. In spite of considerable growth in services, the private sector did not seem appealing from where male university graduates were standing. The idea of state employment seemed to explain much. For example, Nadeem among others wanted to 'get things done.' I saw an example of this when Shan once lied at the Lahore train station telling a coolie that he was an officer in a dispute about payment. The perception that the state could bestow job security and status were important themes. But how should 'power' be understood? Was it simply to be understood as 'status?'

The connection between the state and power seemed to highlight several dimensions. One dimension was of personal efficacy; it was Weber's coercive definition of power in which an individual carries out his own will in spite of resistance. Aspirants see bureaucrats as enjoying respect (power and status) and having the 'ability to get things done' as mentioned above (social capital). In addition, to work for the government meant having job security, pensions, bonuses

and the honor and prestige of being able to say one was a civil servant or an officer in the military. Status matters in many ways, from marriage prospects to family relations. Rank mattered to unemployed men, though it mattered to some more than others. Even at different levels of government (encompassing civilian and military) the state I saw is a major player in the job market.

Why the state was such an important institution might be because of the social and political circumstances they faced. To paraphrase Farhan, ‘bombs are falling on us.’ Further, Shan and Ali pointed out that ‘20 families rule Pakistan.’ How young men saw the state was oddly to lose trust in it yet to see it as even more important to have on their side. The perceived lack of law and order and general political instability, I argue, paradoxically makes government even more important as an employer. The state as a political institution is the target of derision; yet it is economically and most importantly culturally central to young men’s futures.

Yet the desire to penetrate the state turns the question of state hegemony and repressive power on its head in their desire to penetrate state-society boundaries to get to the center of influence. It seemed that they wanted to work for the state for the same reasons they were being rebuffed. Since they did not have ‘source’ or ‘reference’ they sought to secure government employment to secure it. *Sifarish*, a form of socio-political capital, served as a type of barrier towards achieving their goal while simultaneously being the goal.

How does one find government jobs if there is no merit (to use Ahmed’s cynical stance)? Faint as Shan or Ahmed or Nadeem’s hope was, the discourse of merit kept them going. Securing the higher levels of government employment drove men to leave home with family support (and encouragement) clustered together in groups in hostels in Lahore to study together

for merit-based exams. It drives others like Ahmed to apply and take test after test, Shahid went to Multan and Shan went to Larkana to take their exams. The hope of an accountant's position in the Punjab government even took Shahid to Multan to take a timed running test.

This slim chance seemed to be why education is considered vitally important to succeed in these exams. But formal education had limited impact for Shan who was a trained engineer or for Nadeem who was a trained doctor. AbuBakar who studied commerce at a private college associated with Punjab University spoke of the poor level of education he encountered during his undergraduate degree and earlier education. "The same as not attending," in his view. I could see why being 'educated' did not always correspond to securing degrees but seemed to express what Bourdieu may refer to a scheme of dispositions.

A certain habitus then perhaps could be cultivated through educative processes such as with Fawad at Excellent Coaching Center. Perversely, knowledge was seen as power; nonformal education becomes critical to achieving their goals. More accurately, high scores corresponded to power; on the other hand, "knowledge" as such could mean 'you were done,' as Umar Saith said, alluding to the political orientation that unofficially is suggested as to what to write in the CSS exam. Becoming a good candidate or 'competent' - on a meritocratic basis - took months if not years. There was a specific competency inculcated that consisted of learning what to write and how to write. This was an attempt, I argue, to cultivate their cultural capital, to know how to express one's self and what specifically to express. The objective was not to learn English only, they could have done that at home. This explained why so many came to Lahore - to study at academies and join the informal collaborative-competitive environment or what was known as the CSS *mahol*. Hostelites had different approaches; some would study with others, some alone,

some with teachers individually, and others in groups. Some would attend well known academies, others lesser known. Education then becomes both meaningless and critical. Previous training in engineering and medicine became nearly redundant for Shan and Nadeem or became clear that it was insufficient. Reading notes, memorizing, learning, particularly, what I call ‘remixing,’ demonstrate how education is instrumentalized on the way to trying to secure ‘top marks.’

Part of the quest for some meant moving into a Lahore hostel and becoming a part of a study ‘environment.’ Here, general knowledge of global politics was important, as was Islamic history. English was the central preoccupation; students would spend 8-10 hours a day reading, writing and discussing. Nonformal education was the means to cultivate this ‘competent person’ or as Levinson and Holland (1996) put it, “educated person.”

Why leave their homes? The hostel I showed fosters an environment in which everybody is studying. Because hostelites kept their windows and doors open, I could see that virtually everyone was busy. Whereas hostelites when at home in their villages, towns, or cities, had trouble going to the library and finding peace and quiet and freedom from distraction. Dr. Nadeem explained that it would be impossible to get a space in the library back in Larkana. Instead in Lahore they could become as Dr. Parvez called ‘ducks in a well’ at the hostel. The space allowed them to be ‘CSS aspirants’ rather than unemployed men; only those here for a reason could stay. Particular exclusions based on their job or educational background illustrated how the environment was purposefully managed.

The carefully managed ‘VIP *mahol*’ where the emphasis is on setting up a good environment to study enabled the CSS environment, bringing CSS aspirants together in

‘communities of practice’ (Lave and Wenger 1991). Many of the hostelites I met came with a mission and worked in different styles to achieve them. The ‘*mohallah*’ is a not an ordinary residential *mohallah*. It was a temporary home for many ‘*pardesis*’ few of whom knew Lahore very well and focused on their own goals of making their future. Hostelites would explain that though they could study at home, those who studied in the CSS *mahol* of Lahore tended to do better.

While educational processes and urban space were instrumental for aspiring civil servants, the self- authoring process should be seen in relation to the larger discourses and social relations in which they are ensconced. I argue humor and social critique offer a window into the way young men engage with discursive ideas and power relations as ‘educated’ men. Jokes and comments indicate how and where they see themselves as ‘educated’ in the midst of social and economic change and political instability. These comments and jokes also revealed the way they were attempting to live up to particular standards such as English grammar, or constrained by their exclusion from party politics. I use sociopolitical critiques, jokes, and other ludic gestures to give perspective into what ‘being educated’ means when access to education is proliferating.

Subjectivity and the Political Economy

To study for years for an exam with a less than 5% pass rate is difficult to explain. Applying Bourdieu’s (1984) conceptual framework - though developed in a context in which power relations has a different texture - would appear to justify literature on social reproduction.

But using such experiences of learning in the hostel and dedicating years to the exercise, this dissertation is an attempt to maneuver with and around habitus and the theorization around

social reproduction. My attempt then has been to explore emic expressions of distinction and social space to understand how university graduates think about and maneuver in or through power relations.

Like other researchers of education, I take into account schooling and university education. But what I have done in this dissertation by focusing on nonformal education, is to begin where many studies of education leave off. That is, with the departure from formal schooling that many theorists have conducted including Willis (1977) and Jefferey et al (2008), among many other studies. I pick up with the educational activities that take place after leaving university, in fact, the activities that take place concurrently with initial years of work in some cases. By doing this, I have tried to make the case, using theorization of subjectivity and class as process, to think about the achievements that young unemployed graduates already make when referring to themselves as CSS aspirants. This is an upgrade on their status.

Further, exploring the time and space of their attempt to cultivate their personhood, they are attempting to learn and apply the skills of the civil servant. Gradually, their confidence with English, their familiarity with the topics that merit discussion, the political orientation required, become second nature. This transformation begins to blur the putative concrete boundaries proposed by theorists of social reproduction. To take class as process, not as a product, is to open up the possibility that through effort and time, men may be able transform themselves, if not to transform their life chances and circumstances.

What's more, by thinking broadly about the various stages and possibilities that young men are pursuing raises questions about whether they 'succeed' or not. On the face of it, the fact that so many fail at the CSS would suggest that the strategy of devoting time to entry level exams

for government jobs is futile. But young men begin with this and continuously apply to a range of jobs that use similar styles of recruitment -for years. What appears like failure at first could be one contingency among many others. Thus, I argue that studying for the CSS (and for other exams) is to transform their personhood, to attempt to gain the cultural capital (and perhaps even social capital) necessary to be considered worthy of selection by the state for employment. Hope is not cut, contrary to what Mains (2011) argues.

Habitus as a scheme of dispositions or a structuring structure allows little room for what Zhang (2008) refers to cultivation that can occur in a new luxury housing development. Thinking about the different ways this effort is being made gets to the ways state, space, education as well as larger socio-economic and political conditions are all relevant to this subjectivity. Could there be a more dynamic way to think about class subjectivity, one that could take practice and conscious performance? I employ Butler's (2004) framework to think about 'middle classness' as a set of norms and to think about education as connecting with the subject. That is, to think about learning as working towards subjectivity as achievement. If there is a norm of middle classness, could there not be multiple middle classness, or many instantiations of middle class subjectivity and practice?

The aspirations, I argue, stem from perceptions of political and economic uncertainty, and about the discursive understanding of power. Why is this political-economic uncertainty significant for thinking about the emergence of a class category? I argue that it is the political-economic uncertainty and the effort to mitigate risk that compels young men to pursue merit-based white collar work via elite bureaucratic employment. Aside from economic uncertainty, it has to do with the perception of being 'powerless' in the face of adversity. The

cynical view of Pakistan as an oligarchy with flimsy rules and regulations and a vast inequality, I argue, encourages young educated men to seek a 'safe' position which bestows a modicum of economic and political security. The state may look like a roadblock but in fact it is thought to be a vehicle, culturally represented and understood in certain ways. That is paradoxically how the Pakistani state is 'imagined' in Gupta's framework. That is, the state is culturally understood and experienced in everyday life (Gupta 2012). Living through the experiences of young men gave me some insight into what the state means to young aspiring professionals and how they try their best to position themselves.

Policy Implications

Perusing through the classifieds at the time of the fieldwork, it was abundantly clear that there was no shortage of jobs. With random posters up on walls and SMS messages being randomly sent to mobile phones, there were plenty of job opportunities. The problem was that these were not prestigious, well paying, challenging, or of any interest to well-educated men. I would be reluctant to frame the frequently heard anxieties as a jobs crisis, or even as an impending demographic disaster. I think this applies to many other countries in which the 2008 economic crisis affected. Unemployment and youth unemployment became serious political issues not fully resolved. I would like to propose rethinking unemployment as not only economic but cultural and tied to notions of status.

Generally, I would hope such candor would pave the way for national discourse and debates about education and training, and give pause to the rush for education and degrees. It would be worth assessing the social value and meaning attributed to education because as I show

in my dissertation, doctors and engineers and others invest in education but do not apply their skills. How much do we really need?

In this vein, while some societies push its youth to attain as high a qualification as possible, it is worth formulating policy around career education and selection. Youth and families should be encouraged to think about their options without investing time and money in degrees that may go wasted.

More specific to Pakistan, the bureaucracy is considered to be rent seeking, corrupt, ineffective, and politically limited by Bhutto's and Musharraf's reforms in the 1970s and 2000s. Reform will have to make the bureaucracy an efficient administrative institution and remove political interference. An important part of this is the recruitment process which though nominally merit based jobs are widely believed to be on the basis of political capital. Further, devolution policies have not been fully carried out, leaving confusion between federal and provincial roles.

Globalization and liberalization have been experienced differentially and one way to correct that is to reform the examination system that characterizes primary and secondary education. Curricular reform and teacher training means significantly larger budgetary allocations.

More than 2% of the budget must be spent on education in order for young people to have the opportunity to compete in a more advanced economy. Currently, Pakistan's budget is dominated by debt service payments and to fund the military with little left to pay for education. The results are widely reported in the news: 'ghost' schools which exist in bureaucratic records only, schools that become shelters for animals, and private institutions which function more or

less as profitable enterprises rather than imparting education.

But what good is that if education spending and employment generation leads to often humiliating jobs for night-time telemarketers? As Pakistan develops and shifts towards an urban society, while the economy shifts from an agriculturally dominated to a services dominated one, and while its middle class continues to grow, there seems to be a disjuncture between the increasingly educated labor force and the structure of opportunity. It is a frightening prospect if 14 or 16 years of education leads to call center work or something equally demeaning.

The tension, then, is a political economic one not easily resolved. The rural-urban and linguistic divides are inadequate indexes of stratification that entrenches difference on the basis of political capital. This really speaks to tackling inequality and ending the domination of the state by the landed elites. Not that they are in the driver's seat- that would be the military. Until such institutions are held accountable, why would anybody else be?

Future Research

During the course of research, I found out about the relationship between status and work as in the work ethic as well as the type of work (labor). That is to say I learned about importance of office work as well as 'chill *mahol*.' I wonder how these ideas develop, how prevalent they are, how education plays a role, and what might be connected with these ideas. Could they be connected with a resistance to the impacts of globalization and capitalism?

I learned about instrumentalization of education and while I realize there is some historical research (Seth 2008), I think it might be important to learn more about how education is perceived. That is, to compare strategies involving gender as Chopra (2005) does, and to do a

study with parents on their expectations. A few research participants separated education from *tarbiat*, which may give some clues as to how education has become largely an economic matter for many. A study within universities of the teaching and learning of English might shed some light on the challenges young people have in preparing for the job market. Quantitative and qualitative work would be helpful to approach the question of whether higher education is even worth it. Do young people feel prepared? In hiring policies, is there strong justification for hiring university graduates?

Quantitative studies might be done on the occurrence of bribery, and qualitative studies could be done on the nature of *sifarish* - looking at successful and unsuccessful cases. Just how does one find a 'source' anyway? Network studies might be conducted on how 'sources' are found, and the economic dimensions of finding a 'source.' How important is kinship or *biraderi*? A case study on the real 'job market' might illuminate the gravity of the situation of unemployment. How does *sifarish* work in the case of money and without. What kinds of contacts are sought? And why is money involved, is that a recent phenomenon?

Another index of social change are marriage patterns and the changing relationships of patrons and clients. In terms of marriage, an important study would be the dimensions of class in arranged marriages and how marriage is seen in regard to social mobility. How important is class in marriage searches for men and for women? How prevalent is hypo and hypergamy in cities? With more data on hostels, it might be explored what proportion are coming for the CSS or for other reasons. A study including Urdu speaking families and what are the factors involved in deciding to do the CSS. A study on the views of human resources staff on hiring. What makes candidates in their eyes attractive?

CHAPTER 7

Epilogue: Revisiting the Discourses of Merit and *Sifarish*

What I learned after fieldwork ended gives an important perspective on some of the outcomes of that navigation. Firstly, experiences in the job market suggest that it is possible to effect change in one's life chances (for some individuals). Secondly, whether job seekers succeed in their goals or not, a common theme among young educated men is a desire for more, a continuing aspiration. Relatedly, there is a desire to 'get things done.' Thirdly, the competitive field of power relations, operating at least on the surface through test-based mechanisms, makes it highly difficult to achieve one's goals. It does not mean the possibilities of entering a distinct social space is precluded. It does not mean there aren't other maneuvers to be tried.

Overview

In previous chapters, I showed how popular government employment is among educated young men I met in the course of fieldwork, and how crucial the state is in conditioning aspirations and strategies of securing jobs. Larger economic and political conditions were important too, seen in the way the neighborhood enabled a learning environment, and playing an important but quiet role in the subjectivities of its residents.

Ambivalent perceptions of the state were partly shaped by political and economic conditions. Though government jobs were thought to be allocated on the basis of one's political connections and the government was frequently denounced as corrupt, it was seen also as a

reliable employer. As some put it, working for the state brings a steady income and (perhaps consequently) respect. This association was not surprising considering recent inflation, (perceived) political instability, and global migration trends. Nor is it surprising that these ambitions were articulated in a society where one can literally get away with murder. Ahmed who I met at the call center cited - among two other examples - the Model Town incident of 2014 in which the Chief Minister was implicated in the killing of more than a dozen political party workers but remained in his position.

This made education a way out of financial and physical insecurity for some and a short-cut up the ranks for others, in spite of low odds of achieving their goal. Education, broadly defined, was a vehicle for overcoming the lack of connections or social capital, a way to achieve high scores on government job exams, and what I understood, to change their life chances. Education was commonly synonymous with ‘merit.’ Education and the types of degrees a job seeker had, determined what he could apply for. Education had another role to play; in getting through their merit-based employment exams. This means passing dual language exams and getting through interviews as well. That was what worried most job seekers. Degrees on the other hand could be bought cheaply.

Social stratification has a critical role to play here, indexed by the frequent discussion of ‘power.’ ‘Power relations’ meant an arbitrary system of allocation. One may not be of a particular class or may not have political connections but they could be bought or attained one way or another. Power worried everyone; rather, not having power worried everyone. This anxiety was expressed through a cynical view of *sifarish*. It seemed as if CSS aspirants, call center agents, and fellow hostelites were navigating around it in similar ways - learning, moving

to Lahore, and competing through exams - in order to attain.

It worked out for a few men while others remain engaged in their quest for government employment.

Success

None of the men I met changed their life chances drastically through the CSS (Central Superior Service). However, there is evidence that shows that young men can achieve their goals to attain the status that they seek. The discourse of *sifarish* is not totally borne out; some of the young men who participated in my study did in fact find government jobs through merit-based processes. Their effort in securing degrees but also learning English among other techniques paid off.

AbuBakar called me out of the blue in early 2015 to share some good news. I was surprised to hear his voice more than six months after he shared the realizations he had about *sifarish* and his feelings of being subtly conned in the process of applying for jobs in the private sector. AbuBakar told me he had gotten a job as a signal engineer (or operator, it was not clear) with the Pakistan Army. AbuBakar had taken a mixed English and Urdu exam and was selected ‘solely on merit.’ I congratulated him and wished him luck with training.

When I got in touch with him in the fall of 2015 to find out what he was up to, I found out that AbuBakar was stationed in another part of Punjab. Though he has some of the job security and smaller financial incentives he hoped for, he was still not quite satisfied. As a non-commissioned officer in the Pakistan Army, he took orders from commissioned officers. Fortunately, in his training for the signal engineer job he had distinguished himself and been

recognized with an opportunity to prepare for the Inter Services Selection Board Exam (ISSB), a prestigious exam, setting up a pathway towards leadership positions within the military (opening the door to the possibility of being a Captain or General even).

As I listened to him speak about him being a non-commissioned officer, I thought about the psychological elements he was raising. He wanted to “give orders, to lead, to explain.” His English had improved markedly, and in fact we spoke the whole time in English. What a far cry from cold calling in a dingy call center and from his carrying bricks with his father in the Lahore summer.

Another call center agent, Kamran, was applying for a position in the Pakistan Navy. We had kept in constant contact as he had found a job in Karachi. In our latest exchange, our SMSs were completely in English. I knew Kamran was happy in Karachi though he was working heavy hours and not getting paid as well as he would like to be. I was surprised to find out he was in the process of getting his application ready and preparing to take the ISSB exam in March like AbuBakar. A permanent job is what he wanted along with the allowances and other ‘facilities’ like pensions.

Among all the young men I met regularly, there was one officer. In 2014, just before summer, Imran from southern Punjab sent me a text message and put something similar up on his Facebook wall. He had been accepted for a headmaster’s position at a school near his village in Jhang, Punjab. He was ecstatic.

Alhamdulillah [praise God], *Allah* [God] Almighty blessed me with a gazetted post as SSE (secondary school education) in BPS (Basic Pay Scale) 16. Joining an Elementary

school adjacent to my village as headmaster is an experience beyond words making me float in 7th heaven. On this proud moment I want to pay homage to my parents, teachers and friends who contributed in bringing me up. May Allah Almighty give me the strength to accomplish my responsibilities to the best of my capacities. [Slightly edited, April 11 2015, 103 likes]

I saw further posts in the summer and fall, with pictures of him sitting magisterially in an office set up with a Dell computer and flat screen monitor, as well as with a photo of his ID card. He wasn't married yet; in an SMS he said he was happy but not satisfied. Imran like the others had work to do. Crucially, when I asked, Imran told me he got the job on "100% merit."

The success of these three men - Imran, Kamran, and AbuBakar - should be seen in relation to their families. Like many of the men who participated in my study, these three men have varied backgrounds but many of their parents have small businesses or work in the government at lower or medium ranks (like Shan's father who is a gazetted officer or like Ahmed's mother who is a public school principal in Lahore). Imran, Kamran, and Umar's fathers' are farmers cultivating a number of different crops but the former's father is in major debt. AbuBakar's father was described to me as carrying bricks for a living, something AbuBakar began to do for a while between jobs. Thus, some find themselves in situations their parents or family members never encountered.

Others find themselves facing the need to consider other options. They too find themselves in situations their parents never encountered.

Frustration

Meanwhile, a number of men are still looking for work and beginning to change their goals like Shan. While some are working like AbuBakar and Shahid, the latter is still frustrated with the entire process. Still, others like Dr. Nadeem continue to study for the CSS and compete for government jobs.

I am in touch with Shan constantly. We visit each other's homes periodically for a cup of tea. In the peak of the humid Karachi summer after *Ramzan*, I get a call as he wants to meet, he needs help to send some money via 'PerfectMoney.'

What's that, and what do you need that for, I inquired.

"I got a database management job, but need to buy some software to do it."

I was suspicious but found out how to go about it, even emailing the software manufacturer online (based in Europe). I take my skepticism to Shan on the other side of the city which his parents bought recently, a tidy 4 bedroom flat on a first floor of a relatively small flat building. We chat with his little brother, usually away in Hyderabad at a boarding school. "I got a job he says." I was delighted for him. He showed me his application form and the email correspondence trail in his Gmail account. I saw the contract and looked carefully. I told him the news that I was unable to send the money or figure out how to send it, but I said we could go together by motorbike to Saddar and figure it out. But as I looked at the contract, I noticed something odd. Why was he being paid 1200 Euros for 2 hours worth of work per week? On his little Android tablet, I decided to use Google Maps to find the address of the office given in Italy. It didn't exist. Shan's eyebrows furrowed. He is quick to anger but he was calm this time.

Having sent out his information and about to send out his bank account information, he was beginning to realize that he had been fooled. “I knew something was wrong,” he said. “That’s why I called you.” I was sad for him. As he began to get over the deception, he began to talk. “I knew it, 1200 Euros is a lot of money.” We searched for the name of the person who had emailed him, and the information turned up on Google on a scam warning website. He would have lost 60 Euros buying the software but that wasn’t too bad compared to what would happen a few weeks later.

After *Ramzan* [month of fasting] we met again. “I have good news,” Shan said as we sat down in a *dhaba* for some tea and cake. He was communicating with a ‘travel agent’ to buy his ticket. The job this time was being an ‘au pair’ in Scotland. This time he came to me, opening his Gmail on my little iPhone 5 screen. Again the details came up on a scam website. “Where the hell are you getting these job postings,” I asked. A Facebook group I found out. I didn’t feel as bad this time but I began to see Shan’s employment strategy had changed completely.

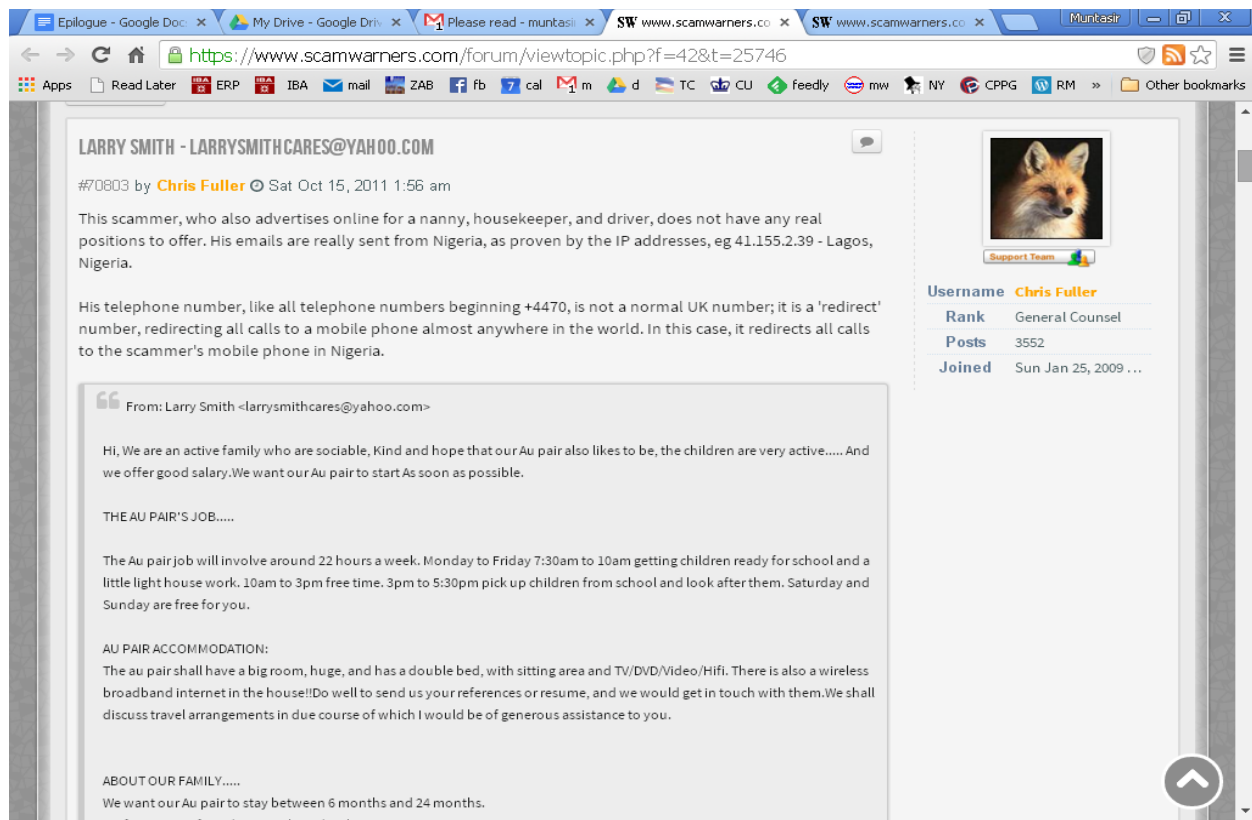


Image 7.1 A clip from the website warning others about the ‘au pair’ scam

No longer was he only applying for government posts. Shan explained to me in the late fall of 2015 that his strategies had changed. “After all, conditions have changed,” echoing some financial news from Moody’s and from the IMF about upbeat expectations about the Pakistani economy. Shan explained that he was applying for positions everywhere - and not only applying for government posts. But it seemed as if his heart was set on leaving. A few days before submitting my dissertation draft, I saw a Facebook post of himself in a window seat on a plane. “Fly Emirates!” he wrote facetiously.

I was in touch with Shahid pretty consistently over Facebook and an occasional SMS. I stayed at his hostel in the summer of 2015 for a day while I was visiting Lahore. Once a

server/waiter at The Cafe next to Choudhury Mansion, he was working for a local pharmaceutical company without pay, but oddly, was given a Samsung tablet. He was still 'in trial' after a few months of working but was eager for his salary. He got the job through a friend. His hostel room was stacked with drug samples.

I spent some time with him but didn't understand how he was supporting himself. He stayed in a mosquito-infested hostel room with a geologist from near his village who was his age and working with a German company. He harbored dreams of opening his own company. We did a few exercises from his Inter Services Board prep book. He wanted to see how sharp I was. He realized I wasn't as sharp as he was!

I asked him about that accountant job that he went to Multan for, the position he went to Sultan to ask his help with which led to a heated argument. He said he passed the tests (physical and written) but never got a call. I wasn't surprised by that. But I didn't expect that he would know someone who did get a call for an interview even after having failed the written exam. How was that possible, I said? "His uncle was a PMLN ticket holder," he explained. Shahid understandably was angry. "That's merit in Pakistan," he said.

Dr Nadeem also kept in touch. He left Lahore months before I did and spent the rest of 2014 and all of 2015 preparing for his second and third attempts at the CSS. I sensed his positioning of self in the hierarchy again when he told me how his brother's trajectory was very different. For him it wasn't enough to be a wealthy doctor (in any case there are too many doctors he said, "one on every corner"). He explained:

I told my parents, 'please take my brother, he is a MBBS. Now please let me go and try.'

A doctor gets no *salam* [greeting], while a grade 16 does.

Dr Nadeem echoed something he said to me much earlier, echoed by many I spoke to.
“There is no justice in Pakistan.”

Nadeem was not the only one studying for the CSS now, more than 2 years later after I initially met them. Another one was Farhan, who I had heard had quit his teaching job in the public school system in Balochistan. It made sense because he seemed to spend a lot more time in Lahore. When I spoke to Farhan in October 2015, more than a year and a half after saying goodbye in Lahore, I asked him what he was up to. “*Shughal* [having a good time, roughly],” he said. “Timepass? I asked?” “*Bus*, chilling” he responded. When I asked if he had taken the CSS exam, he explained he had, and was awaiting the results. Meantime, he was studying on his own and working with the teacher Fawad sb who ran Excellent Coaching Center. How regularly he was going he didn’t say. His English was still not in shape.

Stepping Back/Away

In this chapter, I discuss some experiences that have been shared with me in the last few months. What I learned with some brief follow ups is not very surprising. Some stories are edifying in some cases, frustrating in other cases. They respond to questions about class, subjectivity, and mobility.

One theme that stands out is the continuing ambition to achieve more. Imran, once on the verge of depression, calling himself ‘*nikumma*’ and ‘*beykaar*’ [incapable, useless] who is now a school principal and therefore a government officer (16 grade), still wants more. In a way this speaks to a high locus of control, seeking more responsibility, and desiring more authority. A

related theme is satisfaction that job seekers can find work without *sifarish* or *paisa*. Similarly, Shahid is relieved that he does not have to work in an internet cafe or serve food any more. He's proved his relatives wrong who suggested he give up his white collar dreams to work as a cook or server. Even with a 'white collar' job, Shahid remains frustrated.

For others, not finding work is a subjectivity put in check, being blocked by not having *sifarish*, or more accurately, being wronged as Shan articulated back in 2014 when he talked about being a student and who thought of himself as one who had worked for 'merit.' For Shahid, failure to attain bureaucratic or military employment is confirmation of the discourse of *sifarish*. But he, like Shan and Nadeem, have backup plans as Nadeem would go back to medicine and Shan found a way to the Middle East.

Are Shan, Nadeem, and Farhan not worthy, are they incompetent? There could be a number of reasons from mind-boggling competition to limited access to quality education. There is for these men the claim that they are competent but they have not managed to cross the blurry boundaries of the state. Their failure means that the personhood of that boundary crosser has yet to change, specifically their status. Subjecting one's self to the process is to invest certain belief in what one's doing and what one wants to be. What I found after fieldwork is more detail of what that means. Someone who gives orders, or someone who 'gets things done,' as AbuBakar and Nadeem put it. What they say crudely is going from being common men to being 'somebody,' as Umar Saith says. Education, and learning on one's own is a claim - even a promise - in a competitive field even if by their own measure they are not 'somebody.'

It would be difficult to claim that this is a middle class or that education has led to

mobility. But what I find they have in common is that they are ‘wanting,’ looking for status and/or other benefits of working for the state, and left them being constrained in some way. Rather than articulating a structural or hierarchical position, they see themselves in what they can and can’t do, prevented from something and able to do more. All of this pivots around the state, if not the bureaucracy, then the military.

Taking class as a cultural position and more specifically as a set of subjectivities rather than a relationship to the market or to occupations allows richer insight into how young men go about preparing and presenting themselves as class subjects. Having a certain set of skills to go along with their degrees, those young men who aspire for elite government service have a number of other options and social, political, and economic conditions could change ideas as they have for Shan. They may not enter the civil service but some other form of government employment or something they feel is appropriate for them. To me it suggests, to some extent, agency at work, some achieve their goals and others revise their plans. In another way, not having political capital or connections does not prevent young men from aspiring to lofty positions. And even if they do not succeed quite in reaching that goal, there may be a number of other ways to be ‘middle class.’

This is how I look at Shan’s shift in attitude in the fall of 2015 after almost being scammed twice. When I asked Shan about his changing strategy, and where that desire for ‘power’ went, I was surprised by his statement that “not everyone wants power, though the CSS aspirants do want it.” He went on to explain that “things are getting better in terms of the economy, and part of that is because of security, law and order.” When I asked what of the hypothetical situation with regard to officers getting respect when resolving a problem with the

gas bill, he explained that those get resolved, just takes a little more time.

I end with one account from a CSS officer, Mohsin, a good friend of Nadeem's who passed the exam in 2013 and is currently stationed in France in the Foreign Service. It is not surprising that he too wants more. Mohsin's example speaks to the continuing ambitions as well as the linkage between subjectivity, personal efficacy, and the state.

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Dr Nadeem connected me with Mohsin, a friend of his from childhood who was in France with the Pakistan Foreign Service. Though Mohsin had attended government schools, and not received as strong an education as Nadeem, he had passed and begun working in the Civil Service. Explaining that it was thanks to his mother, and his family and his own love of reading, Mohsin answered my question about whether anything had changed and whether working in the Civil Service met his expectations. "Well, the grass is greener on the other side." Though he explained he got his driving license in a couple of hours and is able to arrange things for his family. He doesn't get paid very well, making half of what his fellow engineering graduates make.

What Mohsin likes about his work is that it allows him to do whatever he wants, more or less. Referring to the enormous power it gave, he explained:

Privileged classes have it easier *to get things done*, as compared to people who are poor or backward. If you enter the service, you are poor no longer. You enter the corridors of power, you're no longer the *aam admi* (or the common man)... You have the ability to direct the lives of your fellow countrymen. [my emphasis through italics]

I asked him what he meant by that? “I no longer have to queue up, I got my driver’s license in a couple of hours,” he volunteered. He made some indirect references to connecting people with Tax ID numbers and explained that he planned to take the exam again in order to secure an even higher position. Towards the end of our whatsapp call, he explained, “the law bends for those who have the ability to bend the law.”

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