Media and Youth Identity in Pakistan: Global-Local Dynamics and Disjuncture

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Abstract: *The paper critically analyzes the engagement of a group of Pakistani urban youth with global cultural flows through media, and their responses to those flows. The discussion mainly centres around an analysis of a re-make of a drama-skit performed by a group of Pakistani urban high school youth during their school's annual function which could be regarded as a kind of satire providing a cultural critique on the way cultural globalization, through media (especially cultural production through Indian Bollywood film/soap media-industry), is influencing urban Pakistani youth's perception of 'local' values, norms and identities. For the analysis, the paper draws upon Anthony Gidden's theory of structuration (Giddens, 1986) (relationship between structure-agency) as a framework to understand and analyze 'flows and disjuncture produced and experienced due to globalization and especially the interaction between media-scapes and idea-scape/value-scapes of 'local' youth agency who are found to be not only consumers of media, but also critical interpreters and agents, engaged in a relationship of structuration involving experience and interpretation of the media-texts that flow across and around them.*

The analysis is based on data generated through a year long critical ethnography conducted with urban Pakistani high school youth, who were studying in their final year of higher secondary education in a school in Karachi, especially with reference to exploring how media is functioning as a key globalizing site and how that, in turn, produces cultural hegemony in relation to constructing perceptions, attitudes, values and identities of the youth in question. The data collected was through focus group discussion and participant-made visual 'images'. The analysis suggests an interplay of global-local cultural dynamics operative at the levels of youth self-perceptions, values, meaning and norms of cross-gender socialization. The research reports on key debates through an analysis of discussions held with the youth participants about issues like; the role of women, youth socialization, imagined and mediated discourse of Muslim identity and its juxtaposition with self-assigned meanings and perceived realities of being Muslim. The paper concludes

by drawing some implications for the formation of gender and youth cultural identities in the Pakistani context.

1. Introduction

Youth have been identified as a social group, most influenced by the phenomenon of globalization, especially cultural globalization, through media (Dolby and Rizvi, 2008). They increasingly engage with different kinds of media, movies, news channels, the internet—which in turn, are linking their identities to the currents of globalization and political economies of culture that flow across and around them. The same holds true for the majority of youth living in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the youth population is estimated to be around 83 million, of which, 41 million are between the ages of 15-29 years (Qamar, Umrani, Fatima and Bashir, 2010). Social shifts/change are increasingly more evident as in the case of gender relationships and the rising incidence of unmarried couples (youth) from working class and lower-middle income backgrounds and/or the shift from extended family to the nuclear family structure, especially in urban context of Pakistan (Hasan, 2010), to name but a few examples.

Moreover, Pakistani youth, from urban as well as rural contexts, are actively engaged with media and information technology. Having said that, one can also not deny the fact that a substantial number of youth, due to the digital divide, cannot access media, as in some other developing countries.

Being active consumers of media and other forms of information technology, youth are likely developing a transnational subjectivity, which in turn is placing them 'betwixt and between' the global and the local, between the world out there, and the world at home/family. This paper will explore some ruptures or breaks that are experienced by the youth as they interact with the global media, especially with reference to their normative interpretations of the social world and ways of socialization in the contemporary world.

The paper draws upon an ethnographic study of a group of urban high school going Pakistani youth living in Karachi (a metropolis of Pakistan, with a population of 18 million people from diverse ethnic and linguistics

backgrounds) and their engagement with the global media and their responses to it, especially with respect to Bollywood and other global news channels. The data was collected through participant observation in and outside the school and classrooms (including some home visits), focus group discussions around youth engagement with the media and internet (including social media: Facebook and Orkut; social networking sites) and semi-structured interviews.

For the purposed of this paper, the analysis mainly focuses on the performance of a drama-skit by my research participants: high school youth. The skit was a re-make of an old Indian/Bollywood film titled "Mughal-e-Azam" (translated as the great Mughal), which is an epic tale around the story of the Mughal emperor Akber and his son Salem's love affair with a courtesan called 'Anar Kali'. The script performed by the youth was re-named "Anar Kali" (explanations follow below). The performance offers a satire, a cultural critique on the way globalization in general and media globalization in particular, is influencing Pakistani youth attitudes towards socialization and their family norms and values. A brief discussion centered around a particular data-set has been presented and analyzed in order to understand how the global media is influencing youth Muslim identity. The paper also elaborates on some critical ethnographic insights into the ways that media is functioning as a key globalizing force and the manner in which youth agency reacts/acts towards it.

Four related sections are considered. The first section presents theoretical/analytical references, specifically, the theoretical notion of "disjuncture" proposed by Appadurai (1996), to explore 'breaks'/ruptures caused by interactions of various types of 'scapes' and the notion of 'structuration'—a synthesis explaining the interrelationship between structure and agency (Giddens, 1986) to analyze how youth respond to media. The second section presents ethnographic data around the performance of a skit by the youth, as cultural 'text' produced by the youth themselves, 'text' which acts as a 'critique' of the dominant media in a globalizing world. The third section engages a critical analysis of the skit-text with a view to highlight the nature and complexity of local-global cultural dynamics and the ensuing 'disjuncture' experienced by the youth in question. The final

section is a deliberation on the emergent data-theory connectivities and some related conclusions.

2. Media and Youth Agency: Local-Global Dynamics and Disjuncture

Media and migrations have been identified as key globalizing forces (Appadurai, 1996). Through these forces global cultural flows across and around 'borders'- geographical, socio-psychological as well as cultural, influence the way individuals relate the self with the world. In this section, the focus is on discussing the youths' interaction with the global media, especially with reference to some ruptures that they experience and respond to as a result of their exposure to the media. In order to understand youth interaction with global cultural flows through media, the notion of 'disjuncture' as espoused by Appadurai (1996), will be used as theoretical construct to help analyze the complex processes and interrelationship involved in the youths' interaction with global media.

Notion of 'Disjuncture': Theoretical Foregrounding

Globalizing forces are generating processes of global cultural flows that are characterized by interaction of various kinds of 'scapes' (Appdurai, 1996). These 'scapes' include: a) *Ethnoscapes* that refer to the 'borderless' world and people of the move (through migration or travel) which in turn are influencing social, political and economic scenarios in the world; b) *Mediascapes* which refer to the context created by the flow of images, ideas and narratives of life-styles across the world through the electronic medium—these moving images and texts trigger 'new' desires and possibilities of being in the world; c) *Technoscapes* signify exchanges of machines, devices and information (techniques/knowledge) across time and space regarding development and the application of manufacturing and production processes in society; d) *Financescapes* refer to the complexities of the global capitalist economy, affecting local currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity prices; and e) *Ideoscapes* refer to the set of ideas and ideologies that are

often rooted in a philosophical outlook promoted in the period of the Enlightenment. These could be ideas/ideologies pertaining to notions such as: nation, democracy, freedom, rights and so forth, which in turn are often seen in use for addressing political motives articulated by certain social groups.

These 'scapes' are not only interactive in nature, but are at the same time disjunctive. The disjuncture gets generated due to overlapping and intersecting of 'scapes' in multidimensional and asymmetrical manner which in turn creates the disjuncture; a kind of rupture or break between the contexts and contents of 'scapes', and more importantly these are experienced by those who are nested amidst these 'scapes' in our contemporary globalizing world. The notion of disjuncture—as a complex rupture creating experience—and its multidimensionality (as discussed) provides a partial analytical optic to understand the complex processes that are involved in the way the youth group in the study encounters and responds to the global media (the focus of our analysis in this paper). In this regard, the notion of disjuncture is instrumental here as it relates to the idea of rupture or a break. This rupture refers to an occurrence that is disjunctive when different 'scapes' interact. For example, a certain way of dressing (fashion) promoted by the media, financed by a huge multi-national capital enterprise, may not be seen as acceptable within a particular mind-set or context as has happened recently on Facebook when certain actions by some (hurting Muslim sensitivities), disturbed Muslim sensibilities across the world, to such an extent that in Pakistan (at the time of writing this paper), Facebook is temporarily officially blocked. This is an example of how media-scape has generated an emotional and ideological 'disjuncture' amngst the people.

A second aspect to keep in mind, as I include this in my analysis, is an awareness regarding the notion of 'scapes', i.e., a particular perspectives in involved relative to a certain location from where 'viewing' is done. Therefore, like globalization, media too is not viewed by all from the same vantage point but rather from different historical, political and ideological locations from where youth exercise their agency. It is these disjunctive nodes where 'difference' gets generated (in terms of meanings, ways of socialization

and exercising gender relations, for instance, which in turn influences identity-making) as a result of the youth-media encounter, which is analysed in the following section. In the case addressed here, analysis of interaction between two 'scapes' will be considered specifically, i.e., primarily the disjunctures between media-scapes and ideo-scapes.

The disjuncture between media-scape and local ethno-scape/identity references or for that matter, between media-scape and local idea-scape or among media-scape, finance-scape and the very life style of agency, generates a world that now seems "rhizomic, even schizophrenic, calling for theories of rootless ness, alienation and psychological distance between individuals and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 10). Furthermore, Dolby and Rizvi (2008: 19), find that "media-scapes not only provide a resource out of which social agents "script" their own "possible lives" but also the "imagined lives" of others living elsewhere." Therefore, in this view, agency is not only influenced by the media-text that it receives from various scapes, particularly media-scapes through forces of cultural globalization, but youth are also active and innovative agents manoeuvring the same media-text for their own sake by creating spaces of their own (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1986).

With regards to the active role played by agency in and through the forces of cultural globalization as Giddens (1986) and Bourdieu (1977) point out, media-scapes have become vehicles for cultural power (Dolby and Rizvi, 2008) and globalization is thus characterized by competing tendencies of cultural homogenization (convergence) and heterogenization (divergence). In such a context, culture becomes a contested terrain; a site of power negotiation and production.

With respect to the above, the structuration perspective proposed by Giddens (1986) is a suitable framework to represent these tensions within the ongoing debates on global-local dynamics in relation to the active role of agency.

The structuration perspective views the global as partial (Giddens, 1986). It argues that the global is experienced, contested, appropriated and re-articulated in

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the local (Arnove and Torres, 2003; Sassen, 2003). Hence, this view presumes a dialectic relationship between the local and the global. It acknowledges the role of the particular in its historic, political, and cultural expressions and manifestations. It presumes interpenetration between the local and the global, viewing the relationship between the global and the local as dialectic and not binary; opposite, or un-dialectical. This view accommodates the notion of a fluid cultural dynamics which is central to this inquiry. It perceives globalization as a process inherent with tensions, contradictions and countervailing forces and interests, having multiple centres and peripheries and therefore, multiple globals and locals.

Hence, in light of the above, agents/youth are not passive recipients of the dominant structures of media-scapes but are creatively using and reinventing media spaces for self-representation.

For instance, Abu-Lughod (2002) observes how generational conflict emerges in modern Egypt in the wake of the global and local dynamics through popular cultural songs and their commercialization on national media. In contrast, Ginsburg (2002) points out that different communities, traditionally being the objects of ethnographic representation, are now taking up media to screen their memories and thus, are creating an indigenous media. Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin (2002: xv) go further to assert that:

> [the structuration perspective] offered an exciting way to rethink some of the questions about reception, reflexivity, and the politics and poetics of representation that have been central to visual anthropology…indigenous media opened up thinking about the role of media as a dimension of cultural activism in identity-based social movements and became a major preoccupation.

The above remark is central to the theory of structuration. It highlights the important role that the structuration perspective offers to ethnographic representations: of representing how power oscillates between the structure and the agency in the contested

terrain of cultural production and reproduction. Moreover, it further emphasizes the neglected participation and space of "subjects" as central actors for cultural production and as generators of social and cultural activism. Above all, the works devoted to the role of media in cultural globalization seldom portray "the dialectic between the disciplinary power of technology...and the unexpected way technologies are reworked within local cultural logics" (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin, 2002: xv).

The following section deploys these theoretical/ conceptual constructs in an analysis of a media-text, i.e., a drama-skit performed by the youth during the school's annual function that I attended as a participant observer in relation to the development of this ethnographic study.

3. Exploring the Remaking of a Postcolonial Drama-Skit: A Tale of Anar Kali

For the purposes of the analysis that follows, I have selected 'text' data of a drama skit performed by the high school youth who were key informants in my research. The drama skit is a satire on the current influence of media (especially the impact of Bollywood films and Indian drama serials telecasted through channels like Star Plus, Zee and Sony television channels) on Pakistani society, especially with reference to its impact on socialization of youth and gender roles/relationships and on the traditional institution of the family (where elders typically have authority). Before sharing the skit-text, a brief background of the actor-participants is shared in order to give the reader some sense of location of these youth actors/agency in order to provide a sense of where they are acting out/critiquing/interpreting the world "from".

The group, who directed and performed the skit included nine high school youth or five girls and four boys. These students were in their final years of higher secondary studies in the medical sciences track. Most of the students were aspiring to be medical professionals/doctors, except for a few who wanted to shift their field of studies from science to business management (in the near future). Majority of these students had had an opportunity to travel abroad to

the US or Middle-East countries and/or have relatives living there. One of the students had returned to Pakistan after living in the US for five years. Taken together, they represented four ethnic and linguistic groups. All the students were Pakistani nationals at that point in time.

The students were active consumers of media; they were watching Western and Bollywood movies, as well as soaps and drama serials produced by local and global media. While the students could be seen as consumers of media, they were not passive participants but active ones, who critiqued the media.

This critique was enacted/performed through a skit presented by the students titled *Anar Kali.* Anar Kali was the name of a courtesan in the Mughal King Akbar's—Akbar's son, Salem, fell in love with her. She met a tragic death on the path of this love, as the King buried her alive as punishment. Based on this love story, the Indian film industry (Bollywood) produced a film called *Mughl-e-Azam* (The Great Mughal). The skit was named *Anar Kali* by the students and was part of the activities presented at the school's Founder's Day celebration; an event that the school celebrates every year and where students and alumni get together.

The performance was video recorded. Below, I have re-constructed an account of the performance based on the field-notes and a viewing of the recorded video.

The students begin the skit with an announcement stating that they will transport the viewers to the olden days through the movie *Mughal-e-Azam.* The movie, *Mughal-e-Azam,* the students tell the audience, is a film-lover's delight. The students add that for those who haven't seen the movie, they will bring them up-to-date with this classic love story and proceed to do so. The female MC (master/mistress of ceremonies) asks the audience to imagine what would happen were this story to be portrayed in modern times. Soon the following number gets played in background "We will, we will rock you!" as King Akbar comes on to the stage.

The skit begins with the booming voice of King Akbar who is shouting for his son, Salem. Prince Salem, dressed in jeans, a hooded T-shirt, and wearing Nike shoes enters the stage, dancing to the popular Bollywood song: *Bachna ae hasino lo main agaya* [watch out beautiful ones here I come].

The music stops, and Prince Salem turns to his Father, "Hey Pops, I wanted to talk to you," he says, "I want you to meet someone. Her name is Annie; she has a strange name, Anar Kali."

At this very moment, Anar Kali or Annie enters the stage to a Punjabi song in the background: *Pitche pitche* [As I look for my nose ring, he follows me]. Annie is wearing a *gharaara* [long flowing skirt with a short tunic and a *dupatta* (shawl)]. She yells at Salem in Punjabi. Salem introduces Annie and the King to each other in English. Music with another popular Bollywood song: *Chand mera dil Chandni Ho tum* [Sweetheart you are my moon] is heard in the background. The King, falling in love at first sight, starts dancing to the tune chasing Annie around in circles in typical Bollywood fashion. Salem responds by saying "Hey dad, what you doing?" The King replies by telling Salem in Urdu: "Don't you have any work to do, go away." When Salem refuses, Akbar commands him to leave utilizing the excuse of sending him to get a CD so that he can be with Annie.

Salem leaves and another Bollywood song is heard in the background, depicting the romance between King Akbar and Annie. Annie flirts with the King, telling him in Punjabi, not to feel too bad, that it isn't his fault but it is just the magic of her beauty that burns everyone.

Salem comes back, complaining to his father about his behaviour. He says to his father: "Hands off, this is my girl!" His father responds by saying in Urdu that he (Salem) would find many more beauties and wasn't that the reason why he had sent Salem to America? "Bring a woman from America, this one is mine. Can't you make this one sacrifice for your *pitah* (father)? Think how she would look in your mother's role." Salem protests, "But Dad, this is my girl!" Akbar responds with "So what?" (Actors start laughing and both actors exit the stage).

Birbal (Akbar's *Vazir,* his minister) enters the stage, meets Annie, while in the background a Bollywood song is heard and a new romance begins. The skit ends with Birbal and Annie going off together (field-notes, August 6, 2006).

Based on the above representation of the experiences of the high school youth as a result of global cultural flows and disjuncture in particular, the following is an analytical

discussion pertaining to the above skit performed by the research participants.

4. Analyzing Nodes of Disjuncture: Local-global Dynamics

Disjuncture is experienced by agents when their own values, ideas, meanings of the world and the self, meet a counter narrative of the same, produced by the media. The skit issues a statement about the present state of socio-cultural affairs whereby, the media-scape has greatly influenced the domains of concepts of love and fidelity which in turn shape contemporary social relationships, values, authority structures and roles within the family (which is seen as a fading social structure in the local context among these youth). Hence, the skit demonstrates existing tensions between local perceptions concerning the social structure of the students' context and the global projection of multiple cultural spaces. I elaborate on this tension in the following segment by drawing on more details pertaining to the skit.

The Role of Women in Traditional and Modern Societies

The *Anar Kali* skit presented by the research participants portrays shifting images of the gendered self and social values in contemporary society. One of the dimensions highlighted in this data is the image of a modern woman represented through the character of Annie, who expresses herself openly and flirts with three males, irrespective of their social positioning: the son (the Prince), the father (the Emperor) and a minister (the *Vazir*). Such a portrayal attempts to reflect contemporary social dynamics between male and female members of the society. Such a depiction generates a disjuncture between the media projected global image of a woman and the local perception of the image of a woman. Moreover, related to the image, is a disjuncture represented between the manner in which gender and social dynamics and relationships are enacted in contemporary society and the locally held norms and perceptions about inter-gender social interactions and relationships.

In this regard, during a focus group discussion, when asked how she felt about Annie having three affairs, one female participant responded: So what's wrong with that? Haven't you heard the famous saying...? "Survival of the fittest"? So Annie flirted with Salem [the son], Akbar [the father of Salem] and Birbal [the *Vazir*/minister], and she found Birbal the fittest...so she went with him (Focus group discussion, September 7, 2006).

This survival of the fittest image, where a woman exercises her choice in selecting or rejecting men, seems to be conveyed by the very immediate media-context with which the students interact, especially the Bollywood films and dramas.

These media sources can be accessed very easily through the local cable operators. Some examples of such drama series that are very popular among the students are telecast products by a popular TV channel "Star Plus." Some examples include: *Kuon Kay Saass Bhi Kabhi Bahuu Thi* [Because mother-in-law was once a daughter in law], *Kahin to hoga* [Somewhere someone will be there], and *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki* [Story of every home]. These media texts portray such images where a woman may have multiple relationships during her lifetime. Apart from the above, both locally and globally produced TV commercials expose females as highly contributing members, both, at home and at places of work and also show men as subordinate. Thus the image of the woman is represented as self-sufficient, confidant and an opposite equal to men—a depiction that often comes into conflict with the local gender-based social structures.

Perceiving the role of woman in the local societal context, one male student remarked, "In Eastern culture, woman does home-management work and man goes outside to work." In reaction to the question that why that happens in the context of Eastern culture an interesting answer was produced: "According to our culture they are still less competent than males... [but] I am not saying that females should not work." As a result of this apologetic remark, a debate ensued with respect to the nature and competency of women. Some male members of the group were of the opinion that the role of woman is confined to do certain chores and not others because according to one group member: "she is biologically weak", as "she cannot lift the

bag/sack", for example. One girl reacted to this statement forcefully and said, "She can lift [the sack] if she wants to." The reference to biological 'weakness' was also somehow equated as referring to a lack of competence and hence, a justification for the limited role of women. Female group members reacted sharply and argued "Women can do everything. Women are joining military forces." One male member added, "Women are also becoming pilots today" (Focus group discussion, October 31, 2006).

The discourse then went on to contrast the role of women in the West with the role of women in the local context. A female participant pointed out the following:

> A Western woman has to work at home as well as outside. In the East, a woman's priority is her house and they don't actually have to work, they are not made to work, but it is an option for them if they want, but there is a compulsion in the West (Focus group discussion, October 31, 2006).

The Image of Islam and Muslim: Disjuncture Between Mediated and Lived Realities

Another aspect (beyond the skit now) that the students were quite critical about was the way global media in general and Western media (BBC and CNN) in particular were seen to be distorting the image of Islam and Muslims. The students were concerned about the narrow and misleading portrayal of Islam as negative; as a religion of conflict/terror, neglecting its broad and rich socio-cultural and lived diversity.

The media was critiqued for equating 'Islam' with terrorism and portraying 'Muslims' as suicide bombers/terrorists. This caricaturing of Islam/Muslim hurt the sensibilities of the Muslim youth students in this research and generated some strong emotions and reactions against the Western media. The students regarded these media-based images as a disjunction—a disjunction between what is portrayed by the media on the one hand and what was their perceived reality, where they felt the majority of Muslims were peace-loving, kind and ethical.

The Media and Islamophobia

Frustrated by this predicament, the students shared the following perspectives in a focus group discussion: One student said, "Media has blamed us, media tells, we are terrorists". One of his colleagues added, "Those who keep beard are labelled as terrorist" (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006). This was said in the context of the way the 'beard' has been politicized in and through media. Also, these stereotypes were confronted in travel practices/experiences or observed by some of the students, where it is a well known fact that often Pakistani citizens (with Green passports) in general, and those who wear beards are reported to have been treated suspiciously by the immigration authorities or during visa processing. The youth were well aware of these issues, and were blaming the media for manufacturing such images that could lead to such stereotypical thinking.

On a similar point, one female student lamented the media's portrayal of Muslim women wearing the veil, since, according to her, such an image is depicted as a "sign of backwardness." She went on critiquing this tendency of Western media by adding that "it is my choice whether I wear a scarf or not. I should have that freedom" (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006).

Such media images of Muslim women were reproducing social stereotypes in the very locality where the students were situated, and were influencing intra-local socializing. Paradoxically, quite often, the peers in the school were seeing the boys who wore beards or the girls who wore *hijab* (scarf) with some sense of ridicule. As one girl who was wearing *hijab* lamented:

> In our class those girls who wear scarf are known as "Talibans". People think *mere baarey mai; ke is bandi se baat nahi karna, agar karo gey to chamat (slap) maar dey gi*" [People think that we should not talk to this girl. If we do, she will slap us].

Her peer, a male student, interjected, "We call them Ninja Turtles" and the whole group laughed (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006).

The disjuncture experienced by the students was between the way the media depicts Islam and Muslim identities and the students' own lived experience of Islam and being a Muslim in the contemporary world. However, paradoxically, as illustrated above, although the majority of the students critique the Western media and its portrayal of Islam and Muslims (especially females), they themselves are not immune to the rhetoric, as some of them were making fun of their own female peers wearing scarves and were seeing them through a media-shaped/consistent stereotypical lens, while all along being aware of the critique.

5. Re-Conceptualizing Global-Local Dynamics and the Media Flows: Theoretical Rejoinders

Erosion of Socio-Cultural Values: Disjuncture between Modern and Traditional

The performance of *Anar-Kali* by the students can be regarded as a satire of their own contemporary society and culture. The performance produces two parallel and comparative discourses. It juxtaposes the old and the new narratives of *Anar-Kali*, each in its own way, reflecting a clash between what ought to be and what is. The clash can be seen in the realms of the modern and the traditional impacting socio-cultural norms and values pertaining to the father-son relationship, gender social interaction and relationships and the notion of love and fidelity.

Tension between Modern and Traditional

Describing the relevance of the skit *Anar-Kali*, the students mentioned in a focus group "it was re-made for modern times" (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006). When asked what they meant by the term modern, one of the skit writers defined the term as that which is "current and in fashion and full of entertainment." Tradition,

on the other hand, was anything that was "old and out of fashion" (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006).

For the students, the notions of modern and traditional were also embodied in the names of the characters. Anar Kali, for example, was perceived as an old name, hence, as one student said smilingly:

> We changed the name of Anar-Kali to Annie, because Anar-kali is a very old fashioned name, and Annie is short and mode. Here in our school also people use their nick, for example, Talat Jawed [one of the teachers] is called TJ and my friends call me Musfi. So the name should be short, because it sounds good and takes less time to call, as in today's modern times everybody is so busy. (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006)

In this manner, the student expressed a perceived difference between modern and traditional as binary terms, where the difference is expressed through the temporal and social dimensions of their lives.

Role of Women: Disjuncture between Global and Local Images/Roles

Many changes were observed in the students' understanding of the gendered self, particularly relating to the role of women. Different opinions were pronounced about the role and social positioning of women in societies. The images that are globally circulated of a modern woman and the local perception of the image and role of a woman did not seem to align with each other, for some. Within this debate, the female participants were inclined towards adapting the modern role charged with the discourse of human rights in general and women's rights in particular. Some resonance of such a debate can be seen in the reform case of the Hudood Ordinance that some female participants thought worth mentioning. This law reform was tabled by the Musharraf government as part of an effort to bring gender equality to Pakistani society. This event is a manifestation of the interplay between the local (Islamic legal discourse) and the global (international and domestic laws, human and

women's rights) discourses. In other words, this demonstrates a case where the Hudood Ordinance, which is based on Sharia (traditional Islamic law), has been appropriated, as being aligned with the modern global discourse of human rights.

Conversely, some male members of the group attempted to define the role of women in the light of locally prevalent socio-religious norms and practices, arguing for the re-claiming of the traditional role of women in society. It is interesting to note that both the female and the male participants were using history of Islam as a reference to advocate their respective perspectives (which again depended on their subjective readings of the past). The female members considered the origin of modern human rights discourse to have originated from Islamic teachings and hence, by doing so, authenticated their modern role. On the other hand, the male participants were doing the same to validate their own arguments against their female peers.

'Liquid' Relationships: Destabilization of the Local Social-Normative References of Father-Son Relationships

In the play, the contemporary relationship between father and son is described as being more informal and casual, even bordering on being disrespectful. This is acted out by the students through the use of slang, informal diction and through the very content of the dialogue. Salem tries to be modern and his sense of modernity is defined by speaking English, wearing Western clothes and adopting a casual attitude towards his father. His father, while claiming Eastern-ness through his dress, his speech and never having travelled abroad, demonstrates his perception of modern norms through his open flirtation with a young woman who is currently dating his son, his openness in replacing his wife for the younger woman and openly discussing his plans with his son. With true dramatic irony, neither of the characters is aware of what he is projecting; however, the student actors and the audience certainly are. The disjuncture is manifested by this clash of perceptions—lived, imagined and influenced by media.

Notions of Marriage, Love, and Fidelity

Through the dramatization of *Anar Kali*, the students were able to juxtapose two opposing perspectives: the traditional and the modern, and to explore their struggle to reconcile these perspectives. In the traditional world, the social institution of marriage, and the concepts of love and fidelity are solidly defined. Marriage, for example, is permanent and forever. One pledges one's love and fidelity to a single person. Contemporary times, however, have challenged these notions and the students' exposure to the media has enabled them to imagine more complex and fluid relationships. More importantly, the distribution of gender power that defines the institution of marriage and the traditional concepts of love and fidelity are also challenged. The data below explore three themes: 1) the understanding of marriage, love and fidelity; 2) challenging gender roles as defined by religion; and 3) the role of women in society.

The reconstructed narrative of *Anar-Kali,* demonstrated the fluidity of social relationships in the modern world. It debunked the previously held social norms and notions of love and fidelity as commitment to one and only one relationship. The students, again, largely blame this fluidity in relationships on the media. Explaining how they had envisioned the new *Anar Kali*, the modern *Anar Kali*, one of the student actors asked me:

> Have you seen *Khushi,* a drama on Star Plus, where the girl Khushi got married to three men in her life [sic: after the death of each preceding partner]? So we thought why not we do the same with Annie [Anar-Kali], and therefore we came up with the idea that Annie flirts with Salem [the son], Akbar [the father] and Birbal [the minister] (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006).

To this explanation, one male group member reacted strongly by asking: "But then, where is the loyalty in love? Our tradition doesn't allow it. Woman has to be sincere and loyal." He went on to blame Bollywood for creating such images of women and influencing what he called "our cultural values." He remarked "*Bollywood ne rishton ka satyanas kar diya haye*" [Bollywood has destroyed

relationships]. "Have you seen that movie *Kabhi Alvida na Kahena*? In that, husband – wife relationship has been destroyed. If one follows that, then anybody can have an affair with anybody else. This is crazy!" (Focus group discussion, September 14, 2006).

The institution of marriage and the notions of love and fidelity clash, when the students try to reconcile the notions of the past with the modern. Neither model seems to fit comfortably with the students as they try to re-define what marriage, love and fidelity mean to them. The resulting disjuncture occurs in trying to reconcile two opposing modes of behaviour.

The disjuncture causes further discord in the realm of religion which also defines social relationships. When I asked the students how they felt about this new flirtatious Anar Kali as compared to the old one, one of the female students responded (as stated earlier in this paper): "So what's problem with that. Haven't you heard the quote of Darwin 'survival of the fittest'? So Anar Kali went [ultimately] with Birbal [the minister] as he was the fittest" (Focus group discussion, September 7, 2006).

Image of Islam and Muslim Identity

The research participants were also articulate about the misrepresentation by the global media when projecting Islam. For them, the West portrays distorted images of Islam as a religion whose followers are terrorists. Similar observations were voiced by Edward Said (1997: xxii) as he states:

> Much of what one reads and sees in the media about Islam represents the aggression as coming from Islam because that is what "Islam" is. Local and concrete circumstances are thus obliterated…. [It] obscures what "we" [the West] do, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature *are*.

The above view clearly identifies what the students themselves were observing in their context concerning the power of representation that the West (global) has over Islam and Muslims (or local) (Ahmed and Donnan, 1994). It seems

that the process of orientalizing the other is still in progress. A female participant recalled one such event, where a high school youth was teasing girls who were wearing *hijab* (scarves), by labelling them as Ninja Turtles—characters in a globally acclaimed cartoon series. This shows how locals (local-self) see themselves through the lens of the global (others), which Sen (2006) describes as the projection of a reactive identity. In summary, the research identified a disjuncture experienced by the students between the globally mediated image of Islam and Muslims and their self-perception of being Muslims. Furthermore, paradoxically, the mediated image of the Muslim, at times, also becomes a standard lens through which a fellow Muslim is seen and judged.

6. Conclusion

This paper re-presented the students' interaction with the global cultural flow through media-scapes, where they experienced disjuncture: a sense and experience of rupture between the haves and have-nots, extra-local foreign norms and values and the local norms and values, imagined possibilities and realities between the global and the local. The high school youth participants experienced disjuncture mainly in the realms of socio-cultural values, their self-image as Muslims, between their past and present and a sense of the loss of local culture and heritage. Most of the students were experiencing ambivalence due to the disjuncture caused by local-global cultural interplay (Bauman, 1991). They seem to find tradition as a burden and modernity and modernization as direction-less and chaotic. Such a scenario depicts a sense of ambivalence, a characteristic feature of "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 2000), as solid social structures and relationships in which agency used to anchor itself remains no more solid but is becoming fluid, which in turn generates a sense of ambivalence; a state of confusion and in-between-ness for the students (Bhabha, 1994).

Hence, as a result of the above disjunctures or ruptures, the paper considers the interrelationship and the dialectic between the media-scapes and urban high school youth agency. In this regard, the paper argues that the

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structuration perspective is at play between the media-text and the response-text, co-constructed by the students' agency (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1986) More so, it represents how global-local interaction is destabilizing a normative sense of values: the role of women in society is debated, boundaries of the modern and tradition are being blurred or the way tradition is reinvented to fit with the modern or how being modern is legitimized with appeals to religious tradition on occasion. Furthermore, in this struggle, students are using media-text to critique the global media, drawing normative reference from Mughals who again, are taken as representative of normative authorities; as the values of those times are revered (as implied by the meanings students seem to associate with the discourse). The very shift of AnarKali to Anny, as an Anglo-Saxon reconstruction of the signifier has come to be understood and reckoned with as a marker of modernity; a notion rooted in Western/modern global/colonial power dynamics and a colonization of the mind.

Hence, it can be concluded that the globalization of values is one of the most contested zones within processes of cultural globalization, where local is universalized through a re-invention of tradition or the traditional (for example, Islamic history and the role of women). In addition, "value paradoxes" are sites of cultural production and a field of inquiry vis-à-vis the other aspects of global/colonial inquiry (political-economic, for instance) along with the various discourses related to globalization (Gannon, 2008).

The values-related paradoxes studied in this exploration suggest that the audience/youth agency is reconstructing media to use the medium to carry out their own projects of self/identity. In this way, the very tools of globalization (e.g. media) are used to counter global/hegemonic narratives of norms and being (competing narratives of self). Therefore, the global media flow is creating both, a sense of anxiety and ambivalence of identity while nevertheless unleashing a reinvention of tradition, through a reinterpretation of history and values and a re-articulation of the same to mobilize some aspects of life—deploying a disjuncture which has emerged as a result of cultural globalization to rejuvenate local conceptions. In this sense, the structuration of global/local self, generates and

perpetuates the dynamics of culture and power in which the self is reinvented and re-imagined and local/societies at large are reconfigured.

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