

NAVIGATING FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND KARACHI:

Lived Experiences of Female Domestic Workers

About the Study

THIS PROJECT IS AN ON-GOING ENGAGEMENT WITH FEMALE DOMESTIC WORKERS RESIDING IN GULSHAN-E-SIKANDARABAD; A WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD IN KEAMARI TOWN, KARACHI.

THIS RESEARCH MAPS THE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING-CLASS WOMEN AND THEIR DAY-TO-DAY NEGOTIATIONS OF SPACE AND FAMILY THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC WORK.

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Rationale

Literature in Pakistan focuses on class alone and presents domestic workers in 'numbers' instead of as individuals



To move beyond quantitative methods and instead approach labor studies through an intersectional lens and individualistic methods



Research Questions



How do domestic workers negotiate household responsibilities and conjugal relations?



What role do kinship networks play, if any, in the lives of the women?



What are their experiences of the city? Discussion on pleasure and violence.

PILER Archives, Karachi: Map existing scholarship and reports on female domestic workers alongside inquiring into institutions that work on supporting them.



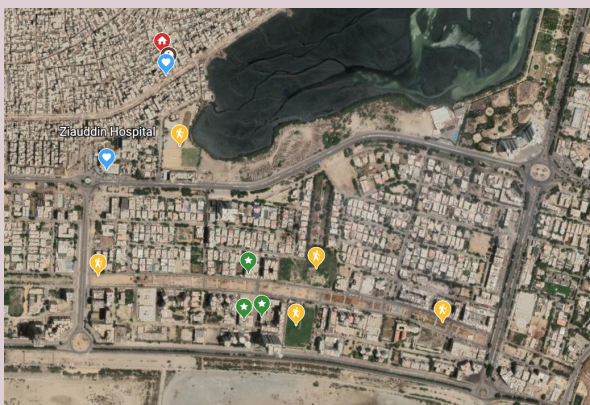
Walking as a research method: To focus on how the city receives women, loitering or commuting. Build rapport with the 'participants,' while walking home with them from work.



Meeting as a group in the neighborhood park allows privacy from the patriarch


METHODOLOGY AND REFLECTIONS

Unstructured conversations, after gaining verbal consent with women of multi-generational households. 18+



TAKING NOTES INSTEAD OF RECORDING DIALOGUE AND MAINTAINING ANONYMITY ENSURES COMFORT OF PARTICIPANTS.

Anthropology romanticizes the streets as a site of spending time, observing, writing, and researching. However, the streets are violent towards female bodies



Gulshan-e-Sikandarabad is situated near the south end of Karachi, along the Shahrah-e-Ghalib Road railway tracks.



1
THE FEMALE DESTINY (HOOKS, 1984)


2
'WOMEN' VS WOMAN (MOHANTY, 1984)



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3
RESPECTABILITY, MASCULINITY, AND MARRIAGE (ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNTS-INDIA)

4
URBAN SUBALTERNITY (ARNOLD, 2019)

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- Currently, there is no ethnographic work on Sikandarabad.
 - According to residents:
 1. The area is often referred to as Shireen Jinnah, a neighboring area infamous for "charas" (hashish) production and dealing.
 2. In the past few years, there has been state crackdown on the area under the banner of the anti-encroachment movement
 3. The area used to be an oil tanker yard before becoming home to Siraiki, Pashtun, and Punjabi families
 4. Most of the residents have migrated from rural settings for work.

Emerging Themes

THE WORKERS FORGOTTEN

The archives lack representation on female domestic workers, as they don't fit into predefined ideas of formal and informal work. Some reports focus on the idea of "uplifting" and "empowering" them.



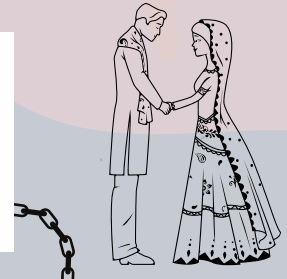
MOBILITY AND RESPECTABILITY POLITICS

The ethnic make up of Sikandarabad leads to a moral shaming of Punjabi domestic workers. There are ethnic conflicts between the residing groups hindering women's access to space and resources.



KINSHIP AND CONJUGALITY

Vata Satta marriages as a form of security and familial obligations for younger women.



PUNJAB: THE BARGAINING CHIP

Sending women and young girls back to the village is used as a threat to police their activities; education, romance, or financial burdens



JUSTICE DENIED

The working-class body is always suspected. False accusations of theft and an unending court trial highlight the inactive role of the state in protecting all citizens equally.



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