The Gay International and Bio-Power: Pakistan’s Upper-class Gay Community.

Areesha Banglani
Lahore University of Management Sciences
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“Whereas, culturally, a gay lifestyle is un-African, situational same-sex activity, at least among males, is not”; this statement that Sanders makes, in *Homosexuality and the Law: A Gay Revolution in South Africa*, can be easily applied to Pakistan and its culture of homosexuality. While it is no secret that Pakistani men engage in same sex activities, those who actively identify as gay and/or bisexual are not only fewer in number but also prefer to keep their sexual orientation a secret. Homosexual activities, in Pakistan, come with a certain social stigma attached. Not only is homosexuality illegal – article 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code, based on colonial law, criminalizes “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” - but it is also against the Islamic values of the state - intercourse against the law of nature is punishable by the Islamic law (Shariah) court by one hundred lashes or stoning the perpetrators to death. Moreover, the dominant discourse links homosexual sex to AIDS and most of the research on Pakistani homosexuality aims to understand the health effects of engaging in homosexual intercourse.\(^1\)

Despite the legal, religious and medical stigma attached to homosexuality, people still partake in homosexual activity. However, one must note that I used the term “homosexual activity” as opposed to “homosexuality”. Homosexuality implies a certain identity which goes above and beyond merely carnal intercourse. “It also refers to an

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individual’s sense of personal and social identity based on those attractions, behaviors expressing them, and membership in a community of others who share them”2.

This demarcation between same-sex activity and homosexuality is a prominent feature of the Pakistani society. According to the Pew Research Center, the rate of acceptance of homosexuality in Pakistan is a meager 2 percent. 3 However, according to Google trends, Pakistan is the world leader in “man fucking man” and “shemale sex” searches. This in itself should be evident of the dichotomy between people’s practice and their beliefs. The concept of “bacha baazi” (child sexual slavery in which young boys are sold to men) is common amongst men in Pakistan; however, it is either kept as a secret or if admitted, is treated as something they engaged in for fun as opposed to their sexual orientation.4

Considering how Pakistan is a dominantly gender segregated society, most men end up having their first sexual experience with male friends. Ahmed, a masseur, who also provides extra services of sexual nature to his male customers told BBC, “Sex between men will be overlooked as long as no-one feels that tradition or religion are being challenged. At the end of it all, everyone gets married to a member of the opposite sex and nothing is spoken about”5. The first statement Ahmed makes is critical in understanding Pakistani homosexuality in the Foucauldian framework. Homosexual intercourse is accepted as long as it doesn’t turn into homosexual identity and challenges the existing power structure: “I think that what most bothers those who are

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5 Azhar, Moeen. "Gay Pakistan: Where sex is available and relationships are difficult." BBC News.
not gay about gayness is the gay life-style, not sex acts themselves”⁶. Modern Puritanism took it upon itself to regulate deviant behavior. The normal became the male heterosexual. Women became an object for the male homosexual’s desire and whatever was deviant of the heterosexuality ended up being silenced and regulated.

The silence is characteristic of Pakistani homosexuality. The acts happen behind closed doors and under hushed tones due to the fear of challenging the national identity and morality. That which is not normal is a threat to the tradition, culture, morality and the nationality of the state. Such is the repressive nature of bio-power; it normalizes control under the pretense of “betterment for the state”. It removes power from the hands of the king/ruler and divides it amongst the state. Challenging national morality is treason against the state and its citizens. Even if one discounts the religious aspect of determining an individual’s identity in Pakistan, the act is still considered shameful in terms of the cultural and traditional identities. Homosexual identity, thus, becomes an attack on the Pakistani identity.

What we must not forget is that homosexuality is a newly emerging identity within the Pakistani context. However, engagement in homosexual intercourse has existed for a long while. Lisa Power, co-secretary general of International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), states “most Islamic cultures don’t take kindly to organized homosexuality, even though male homoeroticism is deep within their cultural roots”⁷. This new emergence of the homosexual identity has resulted in people labeling

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homosexuality as a western import, something that is not a part of our culture\(^8\). Joseph Massad, in *Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World*, takes an approach influenced by Edward Said and his work, *Orientalism*. Massad introduces the concept of “Gay International” i.e. the universalization of the American gay identity.

Massad writes that the non-Western civilizations do not ascribe to the Western categories such of hetero/homo\(^9\). He quotes Shmitt who, talking about the Muslim world, states that “male-male sexuality plays an important role. But in these societies there are no ‘homosexuals’...the concept is completely unfamiliar. There are no heterosexuals either”\(^10\). The demarcation between the two identities does not exist in non-Western countries where heterosexual and homosexual desires often exist parallel to one another. The gay identity is therefore a western import.

This paper will attempt to understand homosexuality as a western import by looking at the culture of upper and upper-middle class, homosexual, Pakistani men. Moreover, the paper will seek to understand the bio-power, as termed by Foucault, which disciplines homosexual activity within a Pakistani context. The paper will intend to understand universalization of gayness and its significance in Pakistan. This will be achieved by engaging with Foucault and Massad along with primary research conducted amongst members of Group X, an online social media group aimed at facilitating the interaction within the homosexual community in Pakistan.

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\(^9\) Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire", 383.
\(^10\) Ibid, 366.
Methodology

The primary research was conducted over a two month period, starting from 2nd March 2014 till May 5th, 2014, with members of Group X, a Facebook group aimed at facilitating communication between men who identify as gay and bisexual in Pakistan. The group, at the time of the research, had a member base of almost 300 members\textsuperscript{11}. The group’s description is as follows:

This is a secret group (no one except the members of this group can search for it or view its members or its content) for gay/bi men who live in Pakistan (expats included) or have at least visited Pakistan. This group might help you find people you can relate to and info about all kinds of things, like the best restaurants in town, about whether or not you should buy stocks in Pakistan and so on because we’re a pretty big and diverse group. And if you get super lucky, you might even find someone to date in here. Please don’t add fake profiles to this group. The best thing about this group is that it's built on trust and we want to keep things that way. Please know that the discussions in here get a little heated sometimes. It’s perfectly okay to express extremely offensive, militant and controversial views in here, but just try to be civil and avoid engaging in ad hominem attacks. Also, please avoid being too forward with people in here you don’t know lest what you say be construed as sexual harassment. Send me a private message if you think the discussions in here are getting too crass or if someone’s harassing you. If you don’t want to be notified about everything that’s posted in this group, click on “Notifications” on the top right corner of the group’s page under the members’ pictures and select “Off.” If you don’t want to be notified about a thread you’ve commented on, click on the “Unfollow post” button, which is next to the “Like” and “Comment” buttons. I humbly request that you don’t send a friend request to a member you don’t know. It’s just not very good manners to do so and bothers some people. Get to know someone before you send them a friendship request so that you don’t weird them out.

Group X had a member base which was diverse in terms of economic and social class. However, only a certain number of members could be approached for research because of limited accessibility and time constraints. The members that were included in the

\textsuperscript{11} Group X was deleted after the story about the serial killer who targeted gay men broke out. The group was recreated after two weeks. However, with stricter privacy regulations and a reduced member base.
research were primarily from an upper or upper-middle class. The primary research included participant observation and interviews with members. The participant observation was done covertly i.e. the members were unaware of being observed. This method was chosen so as to not disturb the natural setting of the field. The observations were conducted at social gatherings of Group X members. There were a total of three such gatherings that were attended.

Two of these events happened at the same place, at one of the group member’s house and, more or less, the same people were present. These gatherings served as after parties to dinners organized by one of the members of Group X as an opportunity to socialize with other members. Since Group X is an online group, dinner and coffee plans are scheduled usually on a bi-monthly basis in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. These plans then usually extend up till late at night when a spontaneous after party is then organized. The two that I attended were held at a member’s basement who lives alone in Lahore.

The final visit was undertaken at “Pink Party”, which was termed as the “biggest annual gay event” by the host. The Pink Party was a grander affair and had a guest list of around 80-100 people. The host is a part of the Lahore’s elite class and takes up the position of a “sugar-daddy” for boys that newly come out. Invitation to these parties was obtained by becoming the part of the gay community and earning the hag status. The hag is a platonic, mostly heterosexual, female companion for gay men. The role of

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12 The names of the members have been changed for the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality.
13 Sugar daddy refers to an older male who has sexual relations with younger men/women. The sugar daddy also takes up the role of financer of the young man as well as his mentor in the gay circle. The sugar daddy helps integrate the man in the gay community.
14 Saarim (member, Group X), field research by Areesha Banglani, 2nd March 2014.
the hag ranges from giving company to the gay man to gatherings to introducing him to potential partners to taking care of him when he’s intoxicated. One can say that the hag is the support system of the gay man in social situations.

The interviews, on the other hand, were conducted with members who volunteered. A post was created on the Facebook group by one of the members on my behalf. Most of the people who volunteered for the interviews were friends of the member who created the post which resulted in the people in the sample mimicking attributes of one another. They dominantly belonged from a similar socio-economic background and had a somewhat similar worldview.

Keeping in mind the limitations of the methodology and the restricted sample, I believe it will be appropriate to state that the findings neither represent all the Pakistani gay men nor do they attempt to. Referring to what Massad writes, “It is amongst members of these wealthier segments of society that the Gay International has found native informants”\(^\text{15}\). Gay International manifests itself with the westernized segment of the society. The people researched not only belong to the upper strata of the society but also pursue a western education, intend to move abroad (dominantly UK or Canada) in the near future and identify as atheist or agnostic in their religious beliefs. This research, therefore, limits its focus to be able to better understand the interplay of Gay International and the Pakistani law.

\(^{15}\) Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire", 372.
Homosexuality as a Western Import

“Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people” (Quran 7:81)

“Do you approach males among the worlds. And leave what your Lord has created for you as mates? But you are a people transgressing.” (Quran 26:165-166)

“Indeed, you approach men and obstruct the road and commit in your meetings [every] evil." And the answer of his people was not but they said, "Bring us the punishment of Allah, if you should be of the truthful." (Quran 29:29)

These verses from the Quran refer to the story of the Lot, a prophet commissioned by God to bring people of Sodom and Gomorrah to monotheism. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah, however, engaged in sodomy and thus, faced God’s punishment for laying with men. I think it is relevant to mention these verses since Pakistan is an Islamic republic and Part IX 227 of the Constitution of Pakistan states:

“All existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, in this Part referred to as the Injunctions of Islam, and no law shall be enacted which is repugnant to such Injunctions”\(^\text{16}\).

It is apparent that a homosexual identity as well as homosexual acts are prohibited in Muslim societies such as Pakistan. However, the question then arises, that has religion stopped these homosexual acts from occurring in Pakistan. The answer is simple. No. People, or rather Muslims, engage in same-sex activities regardless of religious sanctions. Agha’s research, *Sexual Behavior among Truck Drivers in Pakistan*, is one example that shows that truck drivers, who are far from being influenced by the West, engage in homosexual acts\(^\text{17}\). “In Pakistan, it’s illegal because it goes against our culture and it threatens and shocks people, which is why they would

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\(^{16}\) *Pakistan: Penal Code [Pakistan], Act No. XLV, 6 October 1860.*

rather keep it taboo even though everyone knows”\textsuperscript{18}. Stephen Murray, in \textit{The Will Not to Know: Islamic Accommodations to Male Homosexuality}, argues that “the apparent tolerance of homosexual practices in Islamic societies depends on a widespread and enduring pattern of collective denial in which a condition of the pursuit of homosexual activity”\textsuperscript{19}. Let us be wary of the fact that Murray uses the term homosexual activity as opposed to homosexuality or homosexual identity. So while same-sex practices have existed historically in Pakistan, despite religious prohibitions, it is the homosexual identity that is being regulated under the pretense of religious values.

Homosexuality, which in Pakistani is being regulated through the law for being against the “injunctions of Islam”, is a relevantly recent, Western notion. “Only in the late nineteenth century did a new understanding of sexuality emerge, in which sexual acts and desires became constitutive of identity”\textsuperscript{20}. Massad argues that, not unlike the “oriental impulse” under which all human rights missions are undertaken by the West, gay rights is also a missionary task which comes from the flawed presupposition that all societies adhere to the same “sexual epistemology” of the West\textsuperscript{21}. “It is these missionary tasks, these discourses that produce them, and the organizations which represent them” that Massad terms as the Gay International\textsuperscript{22}. The Gay International seeks to transform those who engage in same-sex sexual activities into homosexuals i.e. ensure that they’re idea of self reflects their sexual conduct.

\textsuperscript{18} Fahad (creator and administrator, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 11\textsuperscript{th} April, 2014.
\textsuperscript{21} Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire", 363.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 362.
We cannot overlook the effect of the West in creation of the Pakistani homosexual identity. Article 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code, which criminalizes same-sex activity as being “against the order of nature”, is carried forward from the colonial rule. It is difficult to argue whether before colonization, Pakistan, or rather India, had a more tolerant approach towards homosexuality. However, the lack of official sanctions against homosexual acts shows that homosexuality, even if not accepted, was not deterred. G. E. Vahanvati, Attorney General of India, states “Indian society prevalent before the enactment of the [British] Indian Penal Code [in 1860] had a much greater tolerance for homosexuality than its British counterpart, which at this time was under the influence of Victorian morality and values in regard to family and the procreative nature of sex”\textsuperscript{23}. It was the imposition of British bourgeois morality that silenced sexuality and “it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into serious function of reproduction”\textsuperscript{24}. One can argue that it was indeed the British that brought the sexual discourse to the subcontinent and introduced the initial idea of the homo/hetero binaries. This links back to my observation regarding Group X, in which members were inclined towards a western disposition.

“QueerPakistan” and “Pakistan Queer Movement”, both forums that advocate for LGBT rights in Pakistan have websites and blogs in English. QueerPakistan’s website, which is blocked by Pakistan’s censorship board, states:

We are working to build a volunteer model based community where we are able to work together and help each other. These are the options you might be interested in:

- **Spread the word:** Share our content and social media pages with all your friends and any queer people you know. Help us reach more and more of our people.
- **Write for us:** Another thing you can do is contribute to our blog section by writing

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\textsuperscript{23} Nelson, Dean. "British Raj ‘Victorian prudery’ to blame for Indian gay sex ban." *The Telegraph*. \\
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articles on any topic you think concerns our community.
- **Translate our content:** If you can help us translate and type our content in Urdu to reach more and more people, that’s another way to get involved.
- **Participate in campaigns:** We intend to publish several articles for online campaigning which you can participate by signing the online petitions and forwarding them to your friends.

Parallels can be drawn between these websites and Massad’s example of gayegypt.com: “most Egyptian men who practice same-sex contact neither know English nor have the wherewithal to afford internet access, much less know how to use it.” These websites, thus, become representative of as well as accessible to only a limited number of people. “Efforts to impose a European heterosexual regime on Arab men have succeeded among only the upper classes and the increasingly Westernized middle classes...they remain a miniscule minority among those men who engage in same-sex relations and who do not identify as “gay” or express a need for gay politics.” The interaction I had with the members of the community, during participant observation and interviews, was mostly in English; a few of the members chose not to speak in Urdu at all. The Gay International ends up becoming a cause of a limited few.

While interviewing members, it was revealed that Grindr, a social media smartphone app, now hosts all sorts of people yet there was limited choice as most of them were “peasants.” This term came up in three separate interviews. An example of the peasant is someone who nicknames himself “Punjabi Sexy” or “badaami” on Grindr and has a description that employs incorrect use of English. This is one of the many examples that go to prove that not only do members of Gay International expect a

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25 Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire", 382.
26 Ibid, 372-3
27 Two of the interviewees used the term peasants while the third used the word “painday” which he claimed was his substitute for peasants.
certain Western ideal of homosexual man but also, restrict the identity from those who do not fit the criteria.

Media becomes one of the platform from where these ideals are taken; “models derived from images of the first world are blended with very different social and cultural environments”\textsuperscript{28}. The media portrays the Western gay men in a very stereotypical way but that stereotype is then used by the Pakistani gay men to characterize homosexual behavior.

“I used to have this one kid in my school who came out to us and ever since then he used to exaggerate stuff like ‘look I’m flicking my wrist because I’m gay’...it is [a part of accepting your identity] but a lot of people don’t do it to accept their identity. They do it because that’s what they’re supposed to do”\textsuperscript{29}.

The non-Western world, thus, ends up ascribing to certain qualities that they think are gay because of the way gay men are portrayed in the Western media.

QueerPakistan’s media website works to provide Urdu subtitles for Western movies that deal with the issue homosexuality. One of the movies that is on the website, \textit{You Can’t Curry Love}, is about homosexual men in an Indian society. While, the movie seems to be dealing with homosexuality in a non-Western context, one must also note that the writer and director of the movie, Reid Waterer, is a Caucasian man from Los Angeles. Western media provides the Pakistani gays their homosexual ideals so we cannot deny the influence the West continues to have in shaping the sexual discourse in the East.

\textsuperscript{28} Altman, “Sexuality and Globalisation.”
\textsuperscript{29} Ali (member, Group X), interviewed by Areesha Banglani, 4\textsuperscript{th} April 2014.
The gatherings of the upper-class gay community are organized in a very Western style; dance parties with imported alcohol and dominantly Western music. The Pink Party hosted an all pink dance floor, a bar with 2.5 lacs worth of alcohol and narcotics such as cocaine and a dark room for “clandestine activities”. The event seemed to be highly influenced by the model of Western gay clubs where dark room is usually a feature for men to engage in anonymous sex and orgies.

Usman chased Saqib, barefoot, through the upstairs bedroom, as the rest of the people present stopped snorting cocaine and looked up to see the argument that had just taken an ugly turn. He followed him through the crowds of people downstairs and made his way outside just as Saqib reached his car. He sprinted towards the grey Mehran and pulled Saqib’s white wife beater, “Can you stop overreacting? All I said was that Harris isn’t interested in you. Why are you being such a drama queen?”

Saqib pushed Usman off, “Stop it. None of you ‘high society’ gays will understand how it’s like being in the community and being poor. I see you in your designer shirts and belts and all these other loaded fags and it depresses me. This gay circle is only suited for fashion designers, heiresses, and spoilt college students with loaded parents. I’ve had enough.”

These events and parties do not fit into the traditional culture of an average Pakistani and, as Massad pointed out, are participated in by Westernized, upper segments of society.

Massad quotes Ramzi Zakharia, the founder of Gay and Lesbian Arab Society (GLAS), “since the concept of same-sex relations does not exist in the Arab world, being Gay is still considered to be sexual behavior...Just because you sleep with a member of the same sex does not mean that you are Gay...it means that you are engaging in

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31 “Pink Party”, field research by Areesha Banglani, 8th March 2014.
homosexual activity. Once a relationship develops beyond sex (i.e. love) this is when the term gay applies”32. Zakharia’s views are mirrored by the members of Group X who were interviewed; all of them, when asked about traits of a potential partner, said that they want someone they can connect on an emotional level more than just physical.

Ali disclosed that he did not call himself gay initially as back then it was only a physical relationship he sought; however, he started identifying as gay once he started “connecting emotionally” with men33. Similarly, Bud divulged his experience with a man he met on Grindr who was married to a woman but was engaging in homosexual acts because he was bored; “that’s not homosexuality, that’s just being horny”34. This proves that members of Group X have internalized ideas of Gay International, i.e. homosexuality is an identity and not just the sexual act, and make a conscious effort to distance themselves from men who do not ascribe to the identity but are just “penis-driven”35.

Massad’s argument that homosexuality did not exist in the Eastern epistemology before the influence of the West is in agreement with the homosexual identity pledged by the upper and upper-middle class members of the Pakistani gay community. The influence of Gay International is undeniable. However, the question arises then, what is the relevance of the Gay International in our effort to understand the disciplinary power of law in terms of homosexuality. Massad writes “it is not the same-sex sexual practices that are being repressed by the Egyptian police but rather the sociopolitical identification of these practices with the Western identity of gayness and the publicness

32 Massad, “Re-Orienting Desire”, 373.
33 Ali (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 4th April 2014.
34 Bud (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 9th April 2014.
35 Ali (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 4th April 2014.
that these gay-identified men seek”\textsuperscript{36}. It was, therefore, necessary for us to not only understand the demarcation between same-sex activities and homosexual identity, but also the origin of this identity to be better able to analyze the repression caused on the basis of sexual orientation. It would not be possible to comprehend repression and control of gay identity if we do not first understand its characteristic of being a western import.

\textbf{Bio-Power}

“No only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation—whether in acts or in words”\textsuperscript{37}. Michel Foucault distinguished between the penal law and repression by stating that while the law prohibits, it is repression that silences. He terms the latter as “disciplinary power” and states that law becomes one of the many tools with which disciplinary power is exercised. Thus, Foucault’s notion of law, as Sheila Duncan argues, is “a general notion of power which operates essentially through the medium of prohibition. The juridical notion of power is the notion of the prohibition which may or may not be enshrined in the text of the law, which may or may not be enforced by the law”\textsuperscript{38}. Disciplinary power aims to normalize the repression “as it defines, constructs and imposes what is normal”\textsuperscript{39}. Foucault does not disregard the role played by the penal law but states “rather that the law operates more and more as a norm and that the juridical institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative

\textsuperscript{36} Massad, “Re-Orienting Desire”, 382.
\textsuperscript{37} Foucault, \textit{History of Sexuality}, 4
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 327.
and so on) whose functions are, for most part, regulatory." This paper will attempt to understand the mechanism of law that operates as a norm in controlling people's bodies and sexualities i.e. bio-power.

Foucault starts his book, The History of Sexuality, by analyzing the silence that is characteristic of modern day sexuality, be that normal heterosexuality or deviant sexuality. He, like Massad, blames imperialism for indoctrinating the colonies with Victorian bourgeois morality that focused on making the heterosexual couple and its family the normal, and eradicating whatever strayed from this notion of normal. The heterosexual couple's sexuality was confined to the bedrooms and limited to its productive function and creation of family. The homosexuals were silenced, the same-sex acts regulated –Article 377- and their existence denied. Sexuality, in itself, became a taboo topic, and “then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of deliberate transgression”. Sexuality had a function, which was reproduction creation of family, and since homosexuality was unable to fulfill that function, it was meant to be eradicated.

Moreover, bio-power was used to achieve this purpose. It was not just the state and the codified law that silenced sexuality, this power was manifested in the entire populace. This was achieved by creating such a discourse about sexuality that indoctrinated the values of morality and discretion in the general public as part of national identity. Bio-power would never have flourished if it had an authoritarian nature. For people's bodies to be regulated, people needed to accept that regulation, and then they themselves become tools of regulation. Bio-power, thus, absorbed itself in

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40 Foucault, History of Sexuality, 144.
41 Ibid, 6
everyday institutions and only then was it able to effectively control a greater number of people. Bio-power manifested itself in institutions such as the domestic and the educational and in relations such as mother-daughter, teacher-student, and master-servant.

Sexuality became one of the main aspects controlled by bio-power; “sexuality is tied to recent devices of power; ... it has been linked from the outset with an intensification of the body-with its exploitation as an object of knowledge and an element in relations of power”42. These institutions and relations, therefore, ensured that the discourse on sexuality remained “if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion”43.

“I somehow knew I was gay when I was four, maybe six, years old but I kept quiet. You are not supposed to ask elders about sexual matters so I did not know who to talk to... I always had some idea that it [homosexuality] was illegal. The way Islamiat teachers tell you about it, you get an idea that it’s wrong and haram.”44

Foucault gives the example of the eighteenth century school boy and the regulation of his sexuality. Sex was not something that was out rightly talked about with the children in schools, as children are not concerned with sexuality, “but one only has to glance over the architectural layout, the rules of discipline and their whole internal organization: the question of sex was a constant preoccupation”45. This is not unlike the school structure in Pakistan. The schools are predominantly gender segregated and even in those schools that offer co-education, a conscious effort is made to ensure that the

43 Ibid, 18.
44 Fahad (creator and administrator, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 11th April 2014.
45 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 27.
sexes have minimal contact with each other. This all is done, as Foucault points out, to regulate sexuality of the children as children are supposed to be asexual beings.

However, by orchestrating school structures in a way to deny sexuality, it ends up making sexuality the focal point of children’s lives. “Sex -that agency which appears to dominate us and that secret which seems to underlie all that we are, that point which entralls us through the power it manifests and the meaning it conceals, and which we ask to reveal what we are and to free us from what defines us”. Sexuality, thus, becomes a secret and such is the nature of the secret that it demands to be revealed, its “discovery is imperative”. By orchestrating the discourse to be one of discretion and concealment, sexuality is made to be understood, from a very young age, something that is indecent and something to be concealed unless it achieves a greater national purpose.

So it can be argued that these institutions, of education, marriage, family, attempt to silence the discourse on sexuality and limit sexuality to the married couple. This silence is one of the many forms of repression with which bio-power regulates the bodies of the citizens of its state.

One way in which bio-power exercises its control is by silencing that which does not resonate with it. Another strategy that bio-power employs is that it abnormalizes the other. “The discourse defines the norm, it traces the boundaries of the abnormal and, in so doing, it traces the perversion outside these boundaries”. Power, thus, becomes the authority to dictate what is normal and what is not; what Foucault terms as “The Perverse Implantation”. We have already established that heterosexuality is made to be

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the norm, but this cannot be achieved by first abnormalizing that which is not heterosexual. Up till very recently, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder in the Western world. In the Pakistani context, homosexuality and its acts are often equated with HIV/AIDS. Even though it is true that unregulated homosexual activity could be a source for HIV/AIDS, it is also true for heterosexual activities – something which does not garner equal attention. Most of the research available on same-sex sexual activities amongst Pakistani concentrates on its adverse medical effects.

“The law functions as a technology for the normalizing of heterosexual intercourse and it does so by tracing the female subject and the homosexual male outside the boundaries of the normal by excluding them into the realms of abnormal”\(^48\). This is another way in which bio-power operates; it labels that which does not fit under its control as “abnormal” and “deviant” and strives to protect the state and its citizens from this abnormality and deviancy. Inclusion of homosexual sex under “unnatural offences” is one such way the abnormalization was carried out.

Bio-power, as mentioned earlier, is manifested in the entire population. It is first induced into children at a young age, and they grow up carrying that mentality with them. This makes its control also self-regulatory. It ensures that people not only police others but also themselves. It makes those who deviate from the normal live in a state of guilt, constantly trying to find ways either to correct themselves or to reconcile their deviance by finding alternate understanding of the dominant ideology.

Zahid, who I was introduced as the only straight guy in all gay men group, grinds with Saarim on the makeshift dance floor of Mirza’s basement.

\(^{48}\) Duncan, “Law’s Sexual Discipline”, 330.
flickering disco lights in the otherwise darkened room, I notice he has taken his shirt off and is convincing Saarim to do the same. I ask Saarim about this encounter once we return. Saarim, amidst his drunken laughter, tells me, “Zahid is gay but he denies it. He has convinced himself that he’s straight since he’s religious. He hooks up with someone and then pretends it was a drunken mistake.”

Ali took a drag of his joint and turned to me, “I have a friend who is gay and religious and I told him you’re going to hell. Like if you believe in religion then you are going to hell. Sodomy is punishable by a lot.” He added emphasis on “a lot”. “Well, I don’t believe in Islam, so technically I won’t go to hell.” He responded when I asked if he thinks he’s going to hell. “But yeah, I don’t see how he’s integrating his sexuality with his religion.”

Mustafa shrugged his shoulders, “I know I’m going to hell. I can’t deny the existence of Allah and according to Allah, what I’m doing, my sexual orientation, is a sin.”

Bio-power imposes “meticulous rules of self-examination”. The ideas of nationality and morality are ingrained so deeply in one’s mind that deviating from them puts one in a state of crisis. It creates a dilemma regarding which identity to choose as the two differing identities can in no way be reconciled. It is important to understand that this crisis is usually weighed in terms of “what is right” and “what is wrong”, and is overpowered by social implications. As a result, deviants usually give up the aberrant identity in order to retain the national, communal one. In the majority of cases, the need for acceptance overpowers the need to explore. Thus, bio-power’s self-regulatory mechanism works effectively.

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49 “Mirza’s basement”, field research by Areesha Banglani, 2nd March 2014.
50 Ali (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 4th April 2014.
51 Mustafa (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 6th April 2014.
52 Foucault, History of Sexuality, 19.
Bio-Power and the Gay International: Effects

So far, we have established what the Gay International and bio-power entail. The link between the two isn’t very hard to make. Gay International brings with itself very Western ideals of homosexuality. These ideals are rejected by the Pakistani society as they do not fit into the national morality and therefore, bio-power is exercised to exclude the Western ideals from the national narrative. It is ensured that the alien ideology is eradicated before it pollutes the traditions of the state. This job, of eradicating the other, is taken up not just by the state but by every individual in the country as protection of the state and its ideology entails protection for its citizens. In 2013, a Muslim, Pakistani lesbian couple got married in Leeds, UK. The reaction from the Pakistani community was not just condemnation. People, on online forums, refused to believe that Pakistani women can be homosexual and claimed that the marriage was undertaken with the purpose of gaining British nationality.

“May be for the intention of getting British Nationality.. because nowadays its very tough even to get visa .. so mostly Pakistani guys also moving to gay-ism to claim asylum and in that case you will get your long residency visa with in 3 months ... thats funny like if you apply for genuine visa you will get it in 5 to 8 months .. well that shows British / Foreign policies are supporting Muslims to get marry with same sex.”

“Many pakistani are using such strategy in other parts of europe. Desi people cant be gay.”

Similarly, in 2011, the Jamiat Ulema Islam held rallies in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad to protest the gay rights event hosted by the US embassy. The event was

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53 "Pakistani lesbian couple seek asylum in UK." The Express Tribune.
54 "Thread: The Marriage was just a Trick: Pakistani Muslim lesbian couple seek asylum in UK." Siasatpk Forums.
termed as “cultural terrorism” and “an assault on Pakistan’s Islamic culture” by the city chief of the political party55.

“We condemn the American conspiracy to encourage bisexualism in our country.”56

Homosexuality is, thus, othered due to it not fitting in the national narrative and bio-power is made use of to ensure the other does not harm the own, the tradition.

Let us now consider a few cases of vigilante justice that have occurred as a result emerging homosexual identity. The exercise of bio-power has taken many forms; a reality crime show that takes it upon itself to enforce laws, a serial killer who targets the homosexual community as he believes they are polluting his nation and religious clerics who decree homosexuality against the values of the nation.

*Khufia* (covert), “is an investigative show documenting actual events on real locations with the hope that it will raise awareness in the general public”57. The show claims to conduct sting operations of law enforcements. The episode that aired on December 15th, 2013 dealt with homosexuality. The show started with the narrator stating that the “Western impurity of homosexuality” has infiltrated the “pure nation of Pakistan”58. The show goes on to raid homes where they believe that “gay men reside”59. The host of the show asks the people they interrogate whether they’re transgender or homosexual. Transgender/ transsexual people in Pakistani community are accepted as the third gender (*khwaja sara*). Despite, the social stigma the transgender community faces, they are acknowledged by the government as a separate gender because “God

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55 "'Cultural Terrorism': Protests erupt over US gay rights event." The Express Tribune. May 2014.
56 “Cultural Terrorism.” *The Express Tribune*.
58 Ibid
59 Ibid
made them this way”60. However, for those who are gay, there is no place for them in the Pakistani society.

The houses were raided at late hours of the night to catch the perpetrators “red-handed”61. Not only are the men questioned about their sexual orientation and the kind of sexual conduct they engage in, but they are also humiliated and their privacy infringed. If a victim states he’s transgender, he is taken to a separate room and his anatomy is checked to ensure that he is, in fact, not lying. Even when there is no proof of sexual activity occurring, men are interrogated on basis of being dressed in drag. These “missions” are being undertaken by the support of the local police who go through the victims private belongings such as their cupboards, drawers, bags and even photo albums.

A medical expert gives his opinion that these people contribute to the “spreading of homosexual diseases such as AIDS and HIV”62. Throughout the show, which lasts almost thirty five minutes, the points that are stressed upon repeatedly are how homosexuality is a foreign concept that is “polluting” the nation by spreading diseases and running the sanctity of marriage.

“It [homosexuality] ruins homes, spreads AIDS, disintegrates families, men lose interest in women, it breaks marriages, all because of this desire.”63

The men who are then proven to be gay, based on their anatomy, are taken in police custody where they are manhandled, hit and insulted and finally, put in jail. The show

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60 “Episode 12.” Khufia.
61 Ibid
62 Ibid
63 Ibid
ends with the host pleading the government and the police authorities to give this emerging issue more attention as this is “not the Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam wanted.  

This reality TV show is one of the prime examples of the law is being manifested in institutions such as the media. The media took it upon themselves to ensure that the people are aware of these foreign pollutants threatening the state and its morality. This links back to what Massad wrote about the Gay International’s counterproductive nature; “those countries that already have enforced laws have begun to enforce them”  

The sodomy law has existed in Pakistan since the country’s independence, however, it was hardly ever enforced. Same-sex acts happened behind closed doors and people chose to ignore them. However, it is the advent of the gay identity that has threatened the national morality and has resulted in the enforcement of Article 377.

Another interesting aspect that came up in *Khufia* is that the houses that are raided and the people that are interrogated belong to the lower classes. They’re either male prostitutes standing at sidewalks as they wait for clients, or dancers who live in a single rented room in the run down parts of Karachi. They are asked if their same-sex conduct is a result of their poverty to which most of them responded in affirmative. The people who are targeted by the reality show hardly make up the Gay International. Neither do they live a Westernized life nor are they influenced by Western ideals. They are people who engage in same-sex conduct for either monetary basis or for sexual pleasure. They hardly ascribe to the Westernized gay identity. “It is not the Gay International or its upper-class supporters in the Arab diaspora who will be persecuted but rather the poor and nonurban men who practice same-sex contact and who do not

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64“Episode 12.” *Khufia.*
identify as homosexual or gay”, writes Massad. The Gay International has been successful in making the gay visible, however, it remains protected from the impact of this visibility.

Daniyal looked up, as I asked him the question, with a smile. He laughed slightly, his hands continued toying with the straw of his strawberry milkshake and responded, “My father is too influential for me to ever get into legal trouble because of this [homosexuality].”

Ultimately, it is people from the lower segments of the society, like the prostitutes and dancers in the reality show, who will face repercussions of an identity they neither know nor ascribe to.

This reality TV show has not been the only instance of vigilante justice concerning homosexuality in Pakistan. In the April of 2014, a serial killer, Muhammad Ejaz, was arrested by the police. The serial killer targeted homosexual men that he met on online forums and in the duration of two months, he murdered three men. He was on his way to murder the fourth one when the police arrested him. Ejaz admitted to the crimes and said he started using the social networking website “Manjam” to interact with gay men in Lahore. He would set up a meeting with his victims and then strangle them after giving them sedatives. Ejaz’s first victim was a retired military officer, who was in his fifties and lived alone in an apartment in the city’s garrison area. His next victim was a twenty something information technology worker and his last victim was a student of the Lahore University of Management Sciences. Ejaz has denied police allegations that he had sex with his victims before murdering them. During an interview

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67 Daniyal (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 8th April 2014.
Ejaz claimed that he suffered sexual abuse as child and his hatred for homosexual men stems from that experience.

During an interview conducted in his jail cell, Ejaz states that he “wanted to teach homosexuals a lesson”\(^{68}\). He took it upon himself to remove what he thought was polluting the society. What is interesting in this serial killer story, more than his motives and reasons, is the way the killer was portrayed by the media. The televised interview telecasted two parallel screens: one with Ejaz, standing with his head covered in the cell and the other screen showed the gay social media website, the pictures of the members uncensored. The killer showed no remorse over his actions and stated that he did what he did for the betterment of the society.

“More than my arrest, I want to talk about this issue [homosexuality]... this is now the responsibility of the law and the media to ensure this stops.”\(^{69}\)

“The press and conservative Islamists have begun to call for explicit laws criminalizing same-sex practice. The Gay International and its activities are largely responsible for the intensity of repressive campaign”\(^{70}\). Ejaz’s victims were people who he found on social media and thus, they were part of the Gay International. As we established earlier, most of the men who engage in same-sex conduct neither know English nor do they have access to these online resources. The profile of the victims highlights this point further; a retired military officer living in a posh city area, an information technology worker and a student of Pakistan’s elite private university. It was the visibility that these websites brought the gay community that resulted in backlash from people like Ejaz.

\(^{68}\) "Lahore’s serial killer ‘wanted to teach gays a lesson’." The Express Tribune.

\(^{69}\) *Hum Log*. Samaa TV, 26th April 2014. Television.

Moreover, the interviewer asked the police officer, who had overlooked Ejaz’s arrest, about the steps being taken to ensure the censorship of the gay social media websites. The police officer responded that these websites are already banned in Pakistan but people find their ways though. The interviewer concluding the interview stated:

“These issues [homosexuality] need to be highlighted and not just highlighted but their eradication is also very important. Because if they’re not eradicated, the general public will start taking law in their own hands. Whenever there is vice in the society, it needs to be removed but there has to be a way in which this removal is undertaken and it’s not by taking law in one’s own hands.”

The televised interview, thus, became less about the inhumanity of the killer’s actions and more about the noble cause he had undertaken to ensure the purity of the state. Naila Inayat, in her article, Being Gay in Pakistan: Where Anti-Gay Serial Killers are Applauded, writes, “The sensational interview of the killer by Samaa TV portrayed him as the epitome of righteousness, a view shared widely on the street.” Inayat quotes several people who show their support for Ejaz’s cause.

“I stand with Ejaz and the courage he has showed to wipe these devils off from our holy land — Islam doesn’t approve of homosexuality so who are we to let these people live among us.”

“We can’t blame the killer for his acts, it is illegal to indulge in any homosexual activity and the government has failed to stop such obscenity,” he said. "As a result, pious people like Ejaz are forced eliminate evil themselves.”

71 Hum Log, 26th April 2014.
73 Ibid
74 Ibid
The judgment of Ejaz’s case is yet to be heard. However, his portrayal in the media and his perception by the public has been, if not heroic, then of someone, who disillusioned by the inefficiency of the law and the state, chose to do what he thought was best for the nation. Regardless of whether he is found innocent or guilty, his victims have already been declared guilty. Bio-power manifests itself in people and makes them responsible for upholding the values of the state, in case the law fails to do so.

This is, unfortunately, not the first time the public decided to take the law in their own hands and exercise their power as the bringers of justice. In 2009, a sixty year old watchman was beaten to death by his neighbors after they caught him getting intimate with another man. The neighbors raided his house and after catching him in the act, lynched him. “A senior police official of Bin Qasim Town, on conditions of anonymity, maintained that apparently it was a case of ‘vigilante justice’ as people were enraged over the sexual behavior of the deceased”75. Homosexuality, when visible, no longer remains a private matter, as the Gay International would argue, rather it becomes a threat. Your sexuality becomes a cause for concern for the nation, for your mother, for your teacher, for your neighbor, for your grocer. Your sexuality affects all those who surround you. Deviant sexuality i.e. homosexuality, thus, becomes a threat. It threatens the values that people identify with. Therefore, people take it upon themselves to ensure that such illicit acts are eliminated and suppressed as soon as they’re visible.

The question then arises is that what becomes of the gay men, especially the Gay International, who do not fit into the national narrative. We’ve already covered instances of vigilante justice that seek to remove these men. But do these men wait to be

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taken out by the society or do they exercise their own agency to, if not fit in the national narrative then, to remove themselves from it.

“I do want to be with someone in the long run. I don’t want to die alone. But I think it will just be easier if it is a girl.”76

“Ideally I would like to shift to UK. I’m going there for my masters anyway.”77

“Initially, I planned on going abroad, making something out of myself and then returning back. But I don’t see it happening anymore.”78

“I think we [my boyfriend and I] will probably marry a lesbian couple to get our families off our backs.”79

On the question of whether he planned on staying in Pakistan, he responded, “I hope not...You can’t be open about who you are here. You can get fired from your job or troubled. I want to move somewhere I can relax.”80

The Gay International, unable to fit in the social context and tired of the constant regulation, either end up making compromises, such as marrying women to mask their identity, or leaving the country altogether. What this entails then is that the Gay International are safe from the repercussions of a visibility they worked for, from an identity they created. However, those men that neither identify as gay nor are aware of the Western epistemology of the hetero/homo binary end up facing the brunt of the social controls and the increased law enforcement due to the mere fact that they engage in same-sex conduct, a practice that would have remained unacknowledged and ignored if it wasn’t for the Gay International’s liberatory mission.

76 Ali (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 4th April 2014.
77 Bud (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 9th April 2014.
78 Ali (member, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 4th April 2014.
79 “Mirza’s basement”, field research by Areesha Banglani, 2nd March 2014.
80 Fahad (creator and administrator, Group X), interview by Areesha Banglani, 11th April 2014.
Conclusion

This paper has attempted to link what Massad terms as the Gay International, Westernized ideas of homosexuality, with Foucault’s idea of disciplinary and regulatory bio-power, a power that manifests itself in institutions such as family, media, education etc. to ensure that the law remains unbroken, and has analyzed the Pakistani upper class gay community according to that link. Homosexuality has not existed historically in Pakistan, or at least that’s what the Pakistani community claims. Homosexual acts, however, have been practiced since before the country’s inception. The same-sex acts have happened behind closed doors and remained ignored thus, not threatening the country’s ideals and morality.

It is these foreign concepts of sexuality that introduced the hetero/homo binary which incited the discourse on homosexuality in Pakistan. “By inciting discourse about homosexuals where none existed before, the Gay International is in fact heterosexualizing a world that is being forced to be fixed by a Western binary”81. Gay men who resonated with the Western ideals of homosexuality were a few from an upper elite class as opposed to those who engaged in same sex acts without making it a part of their identity.

Homosexuality, when it became a political identity, made itself visible and demanded to be acknowledged, and threatened the state's idea of morality. And thus, bio-power was exercised. The law against sodomy had existed since the colonial rule and was carried forward after independence, however, the law was hardly ever enforced. The Gay International was an alien invasion which resulted in it being repressed more than

same-sex acts ever were by institutions of power. Not only was there an appeal to the state to enforce the law but people decided to take the law in their own hands to remove the impure and the illicit from their pure homeland. Examples of vigilante justice and media's intrusion are plenty.

However, the Gay International were safe from these increased repressions, they were the ones who brought the visibility but due to their class privilege and access to geographical mobility, they were not targeted by the power of these institutions. Ultimately, it was the man from the lower class, who engaged in same-sex contact, who was repressed by bio-power.

The Gay International incited a discourse on homosexuality and resulted in an increased backlash from a society that was in denial, if not accepting, of sodomy. “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species”82. It resulted in exercise of bio-power to remove the foreign impurity. All the while, keeping members of the Gay International safe from the reaction to the increased visibility and attacking those who did not demand either the visibility or the identity.

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82 Foucault, History of Sexuality, 43.

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"Case No. S147999 in the Supreme Court of the State of California, In re Marriage Cases Judicial Council Coordination Proceeding No. 4365(...) – APA California Amicus Brief — As Filed"


Nelson, Dean. "British Raj 'Victorian prudery' to blame for Indian gay sex


*Pakistan: Penal Code* [Pakistan], Act No. XLV, 6 October 1860.


