

**Warriors of Lyari:
Karachi's Hip Hop Movement and its Impact on Society and Education**

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Abstract

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Globalization, social media, and transnational trends have facilitated the transcension of Hip Hop culture across borders. In Pakistan, the movement gained momentum in Lyari, a neighbourhood from Karachi, Pakistan which was regarded as a no-go area two decades ago. This qualitative research engages with the work, public interactions, and journey of Lyari Underground (LUG) as pioneers of Hip Hop music in town. Using Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014; Alim & Paris, 2017) and Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (Akom, 2009), this work first reviews the work of LUG in the light of youth and community-centred practices, social justice lens challenging hegemony, and reflexivity. Next, this work engages in offering a few educational and social implications of this work. Lastly, some suggestions are offered to educators and educational researchers for further inquiry.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, family, and friends. My father Zarar Khalil Arif, for being the first person to challenge my views and for teaching me to question. My mother Robina Arif, for ensuring that her children receive the best possible education and excel at what they aspire to do. To both, for I could not have reached where I am if it were not for their sacrifices and commitment.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

Educators, scholars, and researchers worldwide continue to debate the purpose of education and schooling and what it means for those closely impacted, i.e., teachers, students, and communities. While deficiency-based educational models and teacher-centred instruction lacking creativity and critical thinking continue to cripple the Pakistani educational system, students' engagement, and motivational levels as well as educational outcomes continue to decline. This research aims to present a case for pedagogical practices that centre the lives of students and communities. This is achieved by presenting the journey of 'Lyari Underground' as pioneers of the rap movement in Pakistan and exploring their early work involving the production of translingual rap focusing on their communities' challenges, resistance, and resilience. Finally, the positive impact of this new approach is explored. 'Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy' (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) and 'Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy' (Akom, 2009) serve as guiding frameworks for this study.

This chapter will serve as an introduction to this thesis by describing the background and context of the study; presenting the research problem; highlighting the purpose and questions central to the inquiry; outlining the significance and limitations of this work and presenting the researcher's positionality statement.

1.1 Background

The educational landscape of Pakistan is highly disproportionate at all levels (pre-primary to higher education) and consists of structures and systems that limit equity, access, and equal opportunity across the board. (Aziz, 2014, p.3). Therefore, educational opportunities available to

the youth are determined by socioeconomic class, gender, family interest, and rural and urban contexts. The developing nation context, geopolitical situation, economic challenges, overpopulation, governmental policies and priorities, and globalization and competition add fuel to the fire. Some of the contributing factors to this persistent downfall of the educational system include the lack of teachers, outdated curriculum, outdated instructional methodologies, promotion of rote learning, and low student motivation and engagement. (Aziz, 2014, p.3).

1.2 Rationale

Following the footsteps of many well-intentioned educators and researchers, I also hope to address some of the issues plaguing the Pakistani educational system. During my own experience of working in this very system for over 8 years, rarely have I witnessed institutions turning towards students and communities as resources and worthy contributors to address these challenges. Even student-centred instructional methods focus more on engaging with pre-proposed content as opposed to using students and communities as sources of knowledge, wisdom and lived experiences to value and build upon. My work attempts to challenge the heavy reliance of educators and schools on deficiency-based approaches and knowledge-transmission-focused outdated instructional models that fail to recognize and value students' voices and agency in the process of teaching and learning. These approaches and models also reduce students to mere recipients of one-way transmission of knowledge with a complete disregard for the realities and lived experiences of the students and communities being served.

1.3 Base literature

Freire (1970) views systemic inequalities practised, promoted, and replicated by educational institutions as inherently oppressive practices since authorities feel threatened by freedom and

liberty. Thus, they promote and reward a culture of compliance. He further argues that the oppressed can achieve freedom and liberation by practising introspection, reflection, and critical thinking to understand the nature of the oppression followed by concrete measures to change the situation. For the past three decades, various scholars and researchers have criticized the deficiency-base lenses and models that view students (mainly students from communities marginalized) as lacking what is needed for academic and professional development (Paris, 2012; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Following the footsteps of Ladson-Billing's Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), "*Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling,*" (Paris, 2012). This is achieved through a focus on youth identity and cultural practices that challenge hegemony while being critical of the ways in which youth culture could contribute to reproducing systemic inequalities (Paris & Alim, 2014).

To illustrate the argument above, one may consider the practice of Hip-Hop, which has transcended borders, cultures, and languages. Born out of racism, injustice, inequality, and the civil rights movement in the US, Hip Hop has empowered youth from all over the world to voice dissent and celebrate resistance (Ishaque, 2017). Proposed by Akom (2009), Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP) is grounded in intersectionality and addresses the issues of social inequalities by offering Hip Hop as "*a tool for social justice in teacher education and beyond*" (Akom, 2009). Grounded in the theory of transformational resistance by Solorzano & Bernal (2001), Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy uses a transdisciplinary approach towards addressing oppression by challenging paradigms, texts, and theories viewing students (of colour) as deficient; keeps at its core students and their lived experiences; and commits to issues of social justice (Akom, 2009)

1.4 What do I engage with and why?

For this study, I question the deficiency-based approaches and instructional models and call for attention towards an alternative strategy of teaching and learning, one that is grounded within the practices and lived experiences of students and communities. I present the journey and early work of 'Lyari Underground,' a rap band hailing from Lyari Town in Karachi, Pakistan. They are the pioneers of translingual rap music in Pakistan. Their choice of language(s), bold themes, meaningful lyrics, raw unfiltered videos, and public interactions in print and video formats not only set a precedent for everyone who followed, but also amplified their message highlighting resistance, hope and resilience displayed by their community. The movement continues to evolve and expand 15 years later with a remarkable positive impact on the youth both from within the community and outside and has transcended into youth from all walks of life, contexts, and linguistic backgrounds. Lyari Underground's legacy and the resultant influence are a testament to how individuals and communities if placed at the centre of the ecosystem, can offer valuable contributions, seek inquiry and creativity, ensure engagement and motivation, engage in critical thinking and steer movements for change and social justice.

1.5 Aims and Research Questions

This research aims to explore how Lyari Underground exercised agency by producing rap music which critiques authorities' negligence and oppression; celebrates youth and community's display of resilience; and practices awareness of the community's internal plagues. It also highlights the lessons educators and educational institutions can learn from a practice centred in the lives and lived experiences of communities marginalized and oppressed, thus offering students agency to ensure engagement and learning. For this purpose, this study centres around the following questions.

1. How has Lyari Underground used rap to highlight their community's strength and resilience?
2. How has Lyari Underground used rap to challenge inequalities and highlight oppression?
3. How has Lyari Underground practised reflexivity and inward gaze towards youth and community practices?
4. How can the journey and work of Lyari Underground transform discourse on social justice in educational spaces within and outside Lyari?

1.6 Significance

It is important to note how this work attempts to contribute to the ongoing body of research engaged in addressing various challenges faced by the Pakistani educational system. These studies include social commentaries, empirical data and theoretical frameworks highlighting various problems and challenges, policy recommendations to address these problems, and quantitative studies attempting to measure the effectiveness of teaching strategies and/or students' motivation, engagement, and learning. The literature available on community-centred and community-engaged practices in Pakistan can be attributed to the fields of planning and development (Raza, 2021); rehabilitation in students with disabilities (Miles, 1998); and the use of arts for terrorist rehabilitation (Gunaratna, 2017). There is a scarcity of literature in Pakistan promoting and applying resource pedagogies that value the languages, literacies, cultures and lived experiences of students and communities or community-engaged educational models. This work is a modest attempt to fill this gap to some extent while acknowledging that there is a high need for research and activism to influence educators and educational institutions to adopt these ideas.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

This work is a small-scale and single-handed attempt at demonstrating the potential of practices that are relevant, responsive, and sustaining for youth. Due to time, capacity, and budgetary

constraints, I limited the scope of this work to only include the work of Lyari Underground considering their journey as the pioneers of rap in Lyari. The work and important contributions from other artists and bands have not been included in this study, thus limiting perspectives and findings. Furthermore, all data collected is secondary and thus there is a chance for the intention and message to be lost in the writing, rewriting, translation and editing stages of articles, interviews, and videos. I could not visit the site of the study in person and have engaged with some community members from time to time to gain insider knowledge. I have also relied on books, articles and accounts of authors and scholars from within the community to ground the work. I am an outsider to the community, though I will speak of my ties, which limits my understanding of certain references. I am not well-versed in the Balochi language which may limit my understanding of certain words, phrases, and references. I have relied mainly on translations available on official videos and external websites but hope to engage in an active translation process to ensure deeper understanding and expand on this work in the future. It is pertinent to note that this project aims to engage with the work of LUG, not for literary critique, but to understand the impact and importance from a pedagogical perspective. Therefore, I would narrow my focus on the educational implications more than anything else. Lastly, I acknowledge my limitations as a novice researcher hoping to do justice to a complex topic.

1.8 Positionality statement

Amongst several associations I have with Lyari, two are the most prominent. Firstly, I was born and raised (for the first five years) in Kharadar, a neighbouring area of Lyari. I have strong connections and memories of the old city area and its vibrance. I remember trips to Kakri Ground with my father on weekends, accompanying him on his daily walk and jog. Secondly, for twelve years after we moved from my place of birth, we had a caretaker/ domestic help. ‘امان’ (Amman:

Urdu word for mother) who was from Lyari. امان was an extremely honest yet bold and courageous woman whose life, journey and values are a living example and inspiration for myself and others to take lessons on honesty, strength, resilience and hard work. She is a Baloch and lived in Lyari in good times and bad, including the infamous Lyari Gang war. We witnessed the rise and fall of Lyari along with the instability in Karachi not just through TV screens and articles, but from personal accounts of امان who would share stories and first-hand experiences of what life was like at the time.

I am not an insider to the community, but I know there were several factors, internal and external, leading to the political instability in Lyari. However, the purpose of this project is not to delve deeper into history and politics or to criticize the community for internal issues. Instead, I hope to learn from the story of this young group who turned the tables using the power of music and rap and spearheaded a movement which diffused throughout Pakistan. I hope to learn from their practices and the resultant impact, making space for acknowledgement and appreciation of their work. My intention and hope are that the practice, with its core and intention, influences the social and educational spaces in Pakistan.

I base my reasoning to study this context on Ladson-Billings' reasons to study the African American community (Ladson-Billings, 2014). I believe that despite their collective experience of facing violence, oppression, and unequal treatment, the work, contributions, and resilient practices of the people of Lyari in music and otherwise speak volumes of their strength and perseverance. It offers hope to others facing the harsh realities of unfair treatment in education and society. Additionally, Lyari's rich history, culture, ethnic and linguistic diversity along with popular youth engagement and activism make it a perfect site for research which can hopefully be translated into the larger context of education in the highly diverse Pakistani society.

I approach my work from strength-based frameworks and will thus refrain from viewing the community from a deficit-based lens. I will also be conscious of respecting the community and their narrative as an outsider and will ensure member checking from community insiders on any such issues. Having said that, following the tradition of offering loving critique (Paris & Alim, 2014), I will not turn a blind eye towards internal practices causing more harm than good. I will invite the community to reflect on these practices and offer recommendations for scholars from within to discuss any such issues.

1.9 Closing

This work stems from my realization and transition during my time at the University of Washington. The readings assigned for various classes emphasized the distinctions between deficient, difference, and resource/ asset-based perspectives towards students, especially those from non-dominant and influential segments of societies. I began to recognize how my experiences as a learner were strictly top-down. There was little to no focus on the identities I associated with, languages I spoke other than English and Urdu, and the culture I belonged to. My peers and I were policed on shortcomings assumed by educators, be it accent, dialect, or how we presented. I was conditioned to think this was the norm and what schools were supposed to do, enforce uniformity, and neglect differences. In my teaching career of 8 years, before coming to the US, I never told my students what my mother tongue was, which part of the country my parents belonged to, and what cultures my family carried. I did so ensure that students didn't feel prejudiced against because ethnic and linguistic backgrounds could impact those relations just like race does in the US. My practice as a language teacher was difference based if not deficiency based. The initial conceptualization of this work emerged in Dr. Django Paris's class on Culturally Sustaining

Pedagogy where I struggled to find practices in Pakistan which were Culturally Sustaining. My work hopes to not only direct my future teaching practices but also offer perspective to my peers.

Through this chapter, I hope to have laid the foundation of my work, explain what brought me here and state what I hope to achieve through this research. The second chapter will describe the context of this research as well as present relevant literature and theoretical framework. The third chapter will present the methods used. The fourth chapter will discuss the work and public interactions of Lyari Underground in the light of chosen frameworks. Finally, the fifth chapter will engage with concluding the study and offering implications.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

This chapter can be divided into five parts. Firstly, I engage with setting up the research setting, i.e., Lyari along with its geopolitical history and importance being briefly discussed. Secondly, I present an overview of how the poetry of resistance continued to operate and flourish in Pakistan before the emergence of Lyari Underground. At this point, Lyari Underground's formation and journey are discussed, while also shedding light briefly on their impact on the movement. This is followed by engaging in literature around education, schooling, resistance, and the unfortunate realities of the Pakistani education system. Next, I present a historical account which led to the conceptualization of *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy*, the first guiding framework for this study, and discuss its core principles. Finally, I engage with research on Hip Hop from a pedagogical standpoint and present the case for *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy* and outline its important tenets.

2.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1.1 The setting, context, and history

Karachi is not only the past federal capital of Pakistan but is also commonly referred to as the financial capital. It is one of the largest and most populated cities in the world (Douglas, 2023). While the recent census surprisingly showed a sudden drop in the city's population by 15%, it is in contrast with the national population increase of 9%. This drop has been heavily criticized to be a political move, lowering the population of a hustling city that is already underreported and underrepresented in the official census (Aamir, 2023).

Lyari is one of the earliest localities in the heart of Karachi. It is one of the few localities belonging to the old city area with histories dating back centuries (Yusuf, 2012) as opposed to most of the current-day localities which emerged as the city expanded. While the population today is a mix of lower-middle-class and middle-class socioeconomic statuses, the community originally consisted of fishermen (Paracha, 2012).

One of the most dominant communities in Lyari are the Baloch and the Sheedis who are also known as the Makranis. The Baloch speak the Balochi language and have their roots in the Pakistani and Irani parts of Balochistan. Whereas the Sheedis speak Balochi as well as Makrani, a language predominantly made up of Balochi, Sindhi, and Urdu languages with hints of English. Historically, the Sheedis were brought as slaves to the Indian subcontinent by the Arab invaders in the 8th and 9th centuries (Paracha, 2012). While the Baloch with roots in Pakistan and Iran can range from being light-skinned and shades of wheatish tones to dark brown complexions, the Sheedis are of dark brown/ black complexions. Colourism does exist in Pakistan supporting the fair skinned and looking down upon darker skin tones. The Sheedis, unfortunately, report facing racism as well because of their African origins and slave history (Minority Rights Group, 2023).

Lyari has been home to several immensely talented individuals over the decades since the creation of Pakistan. Boxing and football have been popular sports with players rising to national and international levels as well. The annual Donkey Cart Race is yet another unique feature of Lyari representing the creativity and adventurous nature of the community. Moreover, several artists, poets, scholars, intellectuals, and politicians have emerged from Lyari, which has led to Lyari playing an important role in Karachi's politics (Yusuf, 2012; Paracha, 2012).

The seeds of Lyari's downfall were sown in the 1980s when drugs, alcohol and ammunition were made accessible to the community. However, the ramifications became extreme as the community suffered poverty, drug abuse, and the constant presence of criminal gangs. As a result, generations lost access to education, healthcare, work, and mental peace. Various evils prevailed as the gangs within Lyari fought each other and the state. The locals called for help and lamented the loss of human lives, opportunities, peace, and lack of support from the authorities. Finally, there were police and military operations after decades of disorder which helped control the situation to a large extent (Paracha, 2012; Arqam, 2016).

2.2 THE TRADITION OF POETRY OF RESISTANCE AND DISSENT IN PAKISTAN

2.2.2 *History, notable names, and their contributions*

In my view, the following verses from Habib Jalib's famous poem "Zulmat ko Zia" - "ظلمت کو ضياء" present the most apt and concise summary of the tradition of poetry of resistance in Pakistan. Keeping in view, Zia-ul-Haq was the then military dictator and Jalib chose to openly use his name, call him out, and still get away in the guise of creativity and expression. This poem has become a symbol of resistance and protest ever since while the once powerful are either entirely forgotten or heavily criticized for their actions.

Zulmat ko **zia**, sar sar ko saba,

ظلمت کو **ضياء** سر سر کو صبا

Translation: Cruelty/ Darkness called **light**, the hot desert wind called a morning breeze,

Banday ko khuda kya likhna

بندے کو خدا کیا لکھنا؟

Translation: how can I write that a human being is God?"

Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911- 1984) and Habib Jalib (1928-1993) are the most noteworthy names in this tradition. They were both left-wing supporters and followed the legacy of Marxism and

Socialism, always standing up against the elite, the powerful. Time and time again both faced trials, allegations and jail time but stayed true to their cause. Faiz also had close ties to Lyari where he served as a teacher and a principal at Abdullah Haroon College (Yusuf, 2012). In fact, on his visit to the court, while being handcuffed and passing through the streets of Lahore, Faiz observed as the common people gathered to watch him pass by. It inspired him to write 'آج بازار میں پابجولان چلو' - Aaj bazaar mein pa ba jola chalo' (Today, let us walk through the bazaar with feet in chains) on return to his prison cell. Faiz wrote,

The tearful eyes, the distressed soul are not enough
The accusation of hidden love is not enough
Today, let us walk through the bazaar with feet in chains

With hands spread, walk entranced and bedazzled
With ashes on head, blood on garb
Walk, as the whole city of the beloved has turned out to watch

Walk past the city's ruler, the general spectators
Past the arrows of accusation, the stones of abuse
Past the morning of sorrow, the day of failure

'دستور - Dastoor' (Constitution) is another landmark work of Jalib where he rejected the imposed constitution by a military dictator. Here is a translated excerpt,

The light which shines only in palaces
Burns up the joy of the people in the shadows
Derives its strength from others' weakness
That kind of system,
like dawn without light
I refuse to acknowledge,
I refuse to accept

It is also interesting to note that while there was the poetry of resistance, there were also writers from both left and right wings critiquing these revolutionary writers (Nazir & Hayat, 2020).

Khwaja (2016) in his book *People's Movements in Pakistan* writes,

“On one side are the writers and artists who raise their voice against the oppression and tyranny elite... who support those who are struggling for true freedom peace democracy and socialism, who carry forward the democratic traditions of old literature... On the other side are those writers who serve to translate the designs of ruling class; hide its oppression and tyranny, oppose democratic thoughts and democratic movements.” (p.455)

In addition to Faiz and Jalib, some other poets falling in a similar domain include Gul Khan Naseer (1914-83), who was associated with the Baloch Nationalist movement; Kishwar Naheed (b. 1940), also known as a pioneer of Urdu feminist poetry; Dr. Sehar Imdad, a professor and poet, who has written on several topics including honour killing, abuse, and femicide. (Nazar, 2021).

In 1996, the band Awaz (Voice) consisting of singers Fakhir Mehmood and Haroon Rashid came up with ‘مسٹر فراڈ - Mr. Fraudiye’ (Mr. Fraud) which was a broader application of their original idea of ‘Mr. 10%’ targeting a specific politician for the allegations of corruption. (Samaa Web Desk, 2020).

The 21st century saw pop singer Shehzad Roy turn into a critic of the authorities. He also created songs to awaken the masses and made them reflect on their shortcomings. Over the years he produced several songs raising awareness of several issues such as corruption, discrimination, and lawlessness. The videos included several apparent and hidden references, such as one song which showed him in an orange prison suit as worn in Guantanamo Bay (Frayer, 2012). Roy addresses the politicians in one of the songs by saying,

"If you had the chance, you'd sell off the entire country — to line your own pockets,"

Ali Gul Pir, a popular comedian released 'Wadere ka beta' (Son of Feudal landlord) in 2012 calling out the feudal system prevalent in rural areas. His song went viral instantly and gained traction within and outside Pakistan. Unlike Lyari Underground, Pir was criticized to have misappropriated and misrepresented his culture and mock at cultural values which he had to offer explanations for. He remarked,

I have 10 bodyguards who are always ready
Will sue a false case and make you prisoner
Once you're in jail, you will yell out "NOOO!"

Boy: Saein (master/sir) is Saein ,
Saein's dog is also a Saein

2.2.3 How Lyari Underground came to be?

Back in 2008, a teenager from Lyari was attending English language classes at an institute where his teacher recommended listening to English songs to improve his accent and vocabulary. He stumbled upon rap music from the West, something he resonated with. The work of Tupac Shakoor along with exposure to the history and wonders of Hip Hop inspired him to start recording rap on his personal computer and add music using online software. He finally formed Lyari Underground with members he met online. In his own words,

"Tupac's Hit 'em Up was the first ever rap song for me to listen to. I liked that and listened more from him. I found out the Harlem, New York City, where he grew up — was no better than Lyari. This became my inspiration to start rap and speak about the injustice and tough time faced by Lyari youth. I found this as a chance to speak as a representative of an oppressed culture." -- Asadullah also known as Anxiously (Bukhari, 2017).

The very name 'Lyari Underground' is representative of their struggle. They named it Lyari underground because they never aspired to be in the limelight, be identified by the politicians and gang members and be forced into making music for them. They did not expect their work to gain so much traction. While the language hierarchies in Pakistan place English on a pedestal, with Urdu (the national language) occupying the second place, and regional languages at the bottom, Lyari Underground intentionally choose to produce translingual rap in Balochi and English which meant an adaptation that incorporated the Western influence to ensure outreach, but mainly used the language, dialect, and culture personal to themselves and their community.

2.2.4 Where the Movement is Now?

Lyari Underground (LUG) opened doors to rap music which led to the emergence of rap bands and hip-hop artists not just locally but throughout Pakistan. Taking inspiration from LUG, these bands and artists are producing Hip Hop music in various regional languages on topics that matter the most to them and their communities. While several bands currently operate from Lyari, two independent artists have swept records lately and have risen to fame internationally. Eva B started her journey with a fake name and a face veil to protect her identity. Her songs highlight the female perspective and gendered challenges for girls and women, and question society for its hypocrisy in addition to bringing up issues surrounding Lyari and Karachi. She went on to create a track for the recent series 'Ms. Marvel' has brought both fame and attention to Lyari (Answer et al., 2023). Kaifi Khalil is another success story to have emerged out of Lyari following LUG. Though operating in a different genre, he continues to stay true to his language, community, heritage, and culture (Khan, 2023). His recent song made it to YouTube's top 10 music videos globally and continues to spread to a wider audience.

2.3 EDUCATION, SCHOOLING, COMMUNITIES, AND RESISTANCE

2.3.1 The Purpose and Goals of Education and Schooling

Most renowned educational scholars, theorists, and philosophers have continued to question the purpose and objectives of education and schooling. Many scholars have challenged, critiqued, and rejected the very purpose and objectives laid down in policy by the governments; their implementation in schools and classrooms through curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and the overt and covert ways in which the experiences, personalities, and lives of students are shaped because of these actions (Eisner, 2002; Freire, 1970). While some scholars have completely shaken the core of the current system with criticism and have presented an entirely different model for education and schooling, such as Experiential learning and practical reasoning by John Dewey (1859—1952) or Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire (1921—1997). Although his work has been criticized for being idealistic or radical, Freire (1970) argues that the status quo where the masses are kept unaware, uncritical, and oppressed can reach liberation by creating an education system for the oppressed in consultation with the oppressed. The problem-posing education model can truly function by breaking the hierarchical structures of power, including the top-down flow of policies and curriculum design; countering hegemony, by engaging students, teachers, leaders, and the community to work collectively; engaging in reflection, by understanding the nature, purpose and impact of the oppression; and finally taking concrete action, with all stakeholders engaging in dialogue and working together (Freire, 1970). Inspired by British Colonial policies and practices, most Pakistani schools still operate with outdated systems (Khurshid, 2009) which crush the independence of thought, creativity of expression, and the ability to question, critique and think critically.

2.3.2 National Educational Policy and the State's Priorities

Before delving into research that critiques the Pakistani Educational System, I referred to the National Education Policy of Pakistan (2017- 2025) to ascertain what seems to be the goals, objectives and priorities as set by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan. While a few goals include the intention to increase literacy, address the issue of out-of-school children, increase capacity, improve logistics, and demand more budget, the policy falls largely under what Freire (1970) described as the '*banking model of education*'. To illustrate the word 'knowledge' or its reiterations appeared at over 85 instances, 'critical' appeared 9 times, 'problem-solving' 7 times, 'analytical' thrice and 'reasoning' only twice. Of these, in most instances, problem-solving was clubbed with basic literacy, numeracy, and oral expression as learning tools. The word 'critical' could be replaced with synonyms like important and alarming in 8 out of 9 instances. The only true use of the word 'critical' is ironically in the assessment and examinations, which state:

“To improve the quality of examination at all levels to shift away from testing of memory to assessment of comprehension, application, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.” (p. 134)

How can a system so heavily reliant on knowledge transmission and reproduction expect students to possess higher-order skills during the assessment? Similarly, while repeatedly emphasizing preserving national identity, ensuring uniformity, and promoting compliance, the policy states 'Mass Mobilization & Community Involvement' as one of the objectives. The points read,

43. ” To mobilize the political will and enhance role of mass media for educational development.

44. To improve and strengthen school community relationship objectives with respect to assessment and examinations.” (p. 14)

2.3.3 The Education System of Pakistan

The volume and demographics of the population combined with the economic conditions help contextualize some of the unique problems that complicate the educational landscape of Pakistan. Firstly, with an estimated population of close to 240 million, it is the 5th largest population worldwide (World Population Review, 2023). Secondly, it is also amongst the youngest nations with 64% of its population below the age of 30. Furthermore, 29% of Pakistanis lie between the range of 15-29 (Ahmed, 2018). These statistics do seem hopeful at the surface level and indicative of a better future. However, with 29% of Pakistani youngsters not possessing basic literacy skills and only 6% reaching college/university (Ahmed, 2018), there are bleak chances of a bright future. While an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 are currently not attending school, Pakistan stands 2nd in the global out-of-school children index (OOSC, UNICEF Pakistan, 2023).

The statistics discussed above reflect poor governmental policies, initiatives, priorities and budgets assigned towards addressing the issue at hand. A lot of the policies and practices in education (in general) and language education (in particular) are rooted in British colonial policies and practices (Khurshid, 2009). To make things worse, the lack of quality in the public education system allows penetration of private schools at most socioeconomic levels (at least in urban areas) which leads to a stratified educational system (Zafar & Ali, 2018) gatekeeping access to quality education and opportunities for the vast majority. This imbalance is reflected across all levels from pre-primary to higher education and includes vocational institutes as well. Pakistan's economic structure and authorities' neglect as well as outdated curricula, lack of teachers' preparation and training and limited resources result in lower rates of engagement and motivation in students (Aziz, et al., 2014).

2.4 CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY

2.4.1 Background

While the stratification of the educational system based on socioeconomic classes cause a great imbalance in the Pakistani educational system (Zafar & Ali, 2018), the remnants of colonization also determine which languages, cultures, and ways of being are respected within the educational spaces (Khurshid, 2009), and which ones looked at from a deficient lens. In line with the Western ways of colonization where traits and behaviours of individuals and communities were viewed as the root cause for their educational failure (González, 2006), the Pakistani educational system majorly still operates with deficient lenses.

Paris (2012) presented a concise summary of the journey from deficient to resource pedagogies in the US over half a century. Although dominant up until the 1970s, the '*deficit approaches*' to teaching and learning looked at students and communities of colour and groups marginalized to be inherently lacking the legitimate languages, literacies, and cultures to succeed. Schools took charge to help these students overcome these 'deficiencies', thus replacing their perceived inferior practices with so-called superior ones aligned with white middle-class norms. The 1970s and 80s marked a progression towards '*difference approaches*', essentially teaching and learning practices that viewed languages, literacies, and cultures of students as different from but equal to the dominant culture. However, the goal remained to assimilate students into the dominant ways of being. Finally, '*resource pedagogies*' emerged in the 1980s and 90s as a reaction to the prevalent deficit frameworks and the languages, literacies, and cultures of students from communities marginalized began to be looked at as assets to be proud of instead of deficiencies to be fixed. Moll and Gonzalez (1994) presented '*funds of knowledge*', arguing that historically developed skills and knowledge should be valued in the classrooms. Ladson-Billings (1995) came up with her landmark

resource pedagogy titled '*Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)*'. It emerged through her work working with and observing successful practices teachers of teachers of African American Students titled, "The dream keepers: Successful teachers of African American children". Ladson-Billings spearheaded the shift in teacher education programs and classroom practices towards ensuring cultural and educational justice (Paris, 2012). CRP involves three main components, namely academic success, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2017).

2.4.2 Important Tenets of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, first proposed by Django Paris in 2012, and later elaborated through various reiterations (Paris & Alim, 2014; Alim & Paris, 2017) is an extension of Gloria Ladson Billings' (1995) 'Culturally Relevant Pedagogy' Paris and Alim highlight the gaps in both theory and practice as CRP is used (and misused) in research and classroom instruction. They offer CSP as a framework forwarding the intent of CRP. Ladson- Billings herself described Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy to have picked up on CRP from '*where the beat drops*' (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 76). The goal of CSP is to support multilingualism, multiculturalism, and multiple forms of expression in educational spaces. They do so by acknowledging the plurality, changing dynamics of demographics and society and evolving nature of linguistic and cultural practices. Filling in the gaps of resource pedagogies, they "*focus on sustaining pluralism through education to challenges of social justice,*" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88).

CSP grounds on two principal stances. In their own words,

"CSP's two most important tenets are a focus on the plural and evolving nature of youth identity and cultural practices and a commitment to embracing youth culture's counterhegemonic potential while maintaining a clear-eyed critique of

the ways in which youth culture can also reproduce systemic inequalities.” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 85)

In summary, CSP is a move from subtractive to additive, from being a passive recipient or subject of schooling to an active participant and critique, and from being deficient to being powerful.

2.5 CRITICAL HIP HOP PEDAGOGY

2.5.1 Background

Hip Hop was born in South Bronx and Harlem areas in the US in the 1970s, firstly as a reaction to the political injustice and economic inequality post the civil rights movement; and secondly, because of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It soon got picked up as an area of academic interest for its inherently political nature, being the voice of resistance and dissent, appeal to the masses, diversity of forms of expression and mainstream traction gained by Black English/Ebonics as well as the culture of African American community. It is due to complexities of prevalent situations at the time that makes “Hip Hop’s origins multifaceted, politically conflicting, consistently debated, and highly complicated” (Hoch, 2006, p. 350, as cited in Akom, 2009).

Ladson- Billings (1995) critiqued the then prevalent ‘difference approaches’ of the time because despite acknowledging the validity of the languages, literacies, and cultures of students from communities marginalized, they did not attempt to question, criticize, or disrupt the existing power structures and existing white monolingual gaze. The National Education Policy of Pakistan (2017-2025) and prevalent practices do something similar in the guise of promoting uniformity and ensuring nation-building. When language policies and classroom practices are designed and implemented while discounting and discrediting the realities of students, they are bound to fail. In the words of H. Samy Alim,

“Before designing pedagogies, we need to seriously consider the language ideological combat that is being waged inside and outside of our classroom walls. Otherwise, we will continue to produce language pedagogies that fail our students.” (Alim, 2007, p. 172)

Within the US, the Hip Hop movement has been at the forefront of resistance, social justice and equity movements and protests for innumerable ills including racism, discrimination, police brutality and miseducation (Rose, 1994, as cited in Alim, 2005). The movement has transcended borders over the past few decades and has become a voice for social justice initiatives and protests globally (Alim, 2005). Lyari Underground also attributes their love for rap music to Tupac Shakoor and his contemporaries (Bukhari, 2017).

The practice of Hip Hop among African American Muslims in the US and Muslims worldwide has been referred to as the ‘*Islamic Underground*’ (Prévos, 2001, as cited in Alim, 2005). Alim (2005) links the misunderstood nature of Islam worldwide with Hip Hop, draws comparisons between the poetic nature of Quranic verses and rap music, highlights the spiritual and conscious raising aspects of Hip Hop as practised by Muslim Hip Hop artists, and believes that the mystery and misunderstanding around Islam and Hip Hop can be unpacked by viewing the two in tandem. He writes,

“... a methodology that considers the networked nature of Islam in order to reveal the hidden aspects of this highly misunderstood transglobal phenomenon, a cultural movement whose practitioners represent, arguably, some of the most cutting-edge conveyers of contemporary Islam.” (Alim, 2005, p. 272)

Forwarding the argument above, Alim draws further parallels between the Global Hip Hop Nation and the Muslim umma, as Hip Hop has believers worldwide and an idea of nationhood based on shared cultural and ideological means. Since these artists have led mass-based and mass-mediated movements to reach out to millions of youths, Alim (2006) calls them ‘verbal mujahidin’. Although Lyari Underground’s journey and work have not overtly been about the Muslim Brotherhood and nation-building, it will be interesting to compare their work with other Muslim rappers worldwide.

2.5.2 Important tenets of Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy

Amongst various theories and frameworks relating to Hip Hop Pedagogy, I have chosen Akom’s (2009) Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP) as the second guiding framework. It is grounded in intersectionality and addresses the issues of social inequalities by offering Hip Hop as “*a tool for social justice in teacher education and beyond*” (Akom, 2009). Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy bases its framework on the ‘*Theory of Transformational Resistance*’ (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001), and borrows the following five elements from their work,

“1) The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of oppression; 2) Challenging traditional paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of colour; 3) The centrality of experiential knowledge of students of colour; 4) The commitment to social justice; and finally, 5) A transdisciplinary approach” (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, pp. 312–315)

Akom’s conception of Hip Hop goes beyond the US origin story and includes work from South Africa and beyond. Thus, he defines Hip Hop not from the forms of expression and where it emerged, but instead based on its singular unifying purpose of refusal to accept oppression and

expressing dissent using multiple forms of expression. This represents the dynamic and collective nature of Hip Hop which makes it a global phenomenon (Akom, 2009; Alim 2005, 2006).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

To summarize, this chapter engages with presenting the chosen design and methodology, data collection sources and procedures and rationale for decisions made in this regard. Furthermore, I briefly comment on my intention and aims while approaching this work and some important considerations and limitations that have shaped this work.

3.1 POSITIONALITY AND AIMS

3.1.1 My Intentions

My work and approach in its true sense are about people and their lived experiences. These experiences cannot be measured or quantified using statistical tools. I step into this world with an understanding and acceptance of multiple realities originating from differences in human experiences and the resultant meaning-making. I am interested in exploring how individuals and communities, especially those marginalized by authorities and dominant groups, preserve their identities and realities, and thrive in structures build to marginalize them (Ladson Billings, 2007; Paris & Alim, 2014; Akom, 2009). I am also aware of my equal participation as a researcher in the process of meaning-making, data collection and analysis and thus avoid any claims of objectivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

3.1.2 Research Purpose and Questions

As discussed in the introduction section and elaborated in the review of literature, I hope to engage with the work of Lyari Underground and observe their journey using strength-based frameworks supporting and promoting social justice and equity initiatives in education and schooling. I use

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy* to study how Lyari Underground's work has continued to challenge authorities and groups responsible; unpacked injustice, discrimination and other challenges faced by their community; uplifted their community by highlighting the strengths and successes; and engaged in critical discourse ensuring reflection and reflexivity. I hope to highlight the strong political, social, and emotional impact that practices grounded in language, literacies, cultures, and lived experiences of students and communities, and the implications such work can have for education and schooling.

For this purpose, this study centres around the following questions.

1. How has Lyari Underground used rap to highlight their community's strength and resilience?
2. How has Lyari Underground used rap to challenge inequalities and highlight oppression?
3. How has Lyari Underground practised reflexivity and inward gaze towards youth and community practices?
4. How can the journey and work of Lyari Underground transform discourse on social justice in educational spaces within and outside Lyari?

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND CONSIDERATIONS

3.2.1 Research Design

“Stories organize and shape our experiences and also tell others about our lives, relationships, journeys, decisions, successes, and failures” (Patton, 2015, p. 128 as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I feel no one can better tell the story of a resilient community or that of adopting global culture (Hip Hop) by youngsters than the very members engaging in these activities themselves. I have engaged in this work using a basic qualitative study design using the intersections of *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy* and *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy* as my guiding frameworks. Considering the nature of my intended work, I would seek support from what Merriam and Tisdell (2015) have described as ‘Arts Based Research,’ which attempts to, “*extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that would otherwise be ineffable*” (Barone and Eisner, 2012, p.1, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This work is still in process, and I hope to expand on it in the future. The references to non-verbal cues are few at the moment.

Intending to engage in an in-depth analysis of an ‘information-rich case’, (Patton, 2015) I have already narrowed my scope to engaging with the body of work and journey of only one Hip Hop band. Therefore, I used unique purposeful sampling to further filter out the work and data relevant to the study and manageable within the given time frame. Since the intention of this work is not to generalize the findings, but instead focus on lessons and pedagogical implications, the methodology and chosen sample work well to support the cause.

3.2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Needless to say, song lyrics alone cannot present a holistic overview of a band’s work, intentions and journey. Therefore, I have relied on documents and artefacts in both print and visual formats. These include books in physical and digital formats documenting the history of Pakistan, Karachi, and Lyari. I considered various research articles on the given context and watched select documentaries and interviews on Lyari and its trajectory. I also collected excerpts from video and print interviews featuring LUG, as well as newspaper articles and blogs featuring their story.

Furthermore, official videos of their songs along with English translations of those videos have been used on resources. Finally, their public interactions, whether through their social media handles or otherwise, were observed. Therefore, pop culture documents and visual documents play a crucial role in data collection. All data collected for the study is through secondary sources, although I have referred to an activist and an author from within the community for advice and questions.

Data collected from these sources was read, re-read, and codified using thematic analysis. I drew parallels between the central themes of *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy* and *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy* and compared the intersections between the two theories to map against and inform my research question. This process, in turn, led to further investigation and discovery, introducing me to unexplored songs, unheard-of public interactions, and unexpected turns.

3.2.3 Consideration and limitations

I engage with this work as an outsider to the community and therefore do not claim complete knowledge or first-hand experience of every issue raised by the band. As an outsider, it is also my responsibility to be respectful and appreciative of the community and continue to view their practices from a strength-based framework, thus relying on the work of authors, journalists, scholars, artists, and activists from within for any constructive critique. Furthermore, I do not know the Balochi language, and thus my reliance on translations and subtitles might limit my understanding in some contexts.

Due to limitations of time, proximity, and complexities around gaining Institutional Review Board approval for engaging with public figures, I decided to rely entirely on secondary sources for data collection upon consultation with my research supervisor. Although I did have access to some

community insiders, I acknowledge that engaging with the artists could help strengthen this work. Finally, I understand my limitations as a novice researcher and present this as a work in progress with a hope to continue learning as an educator and a researcher.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents brings together the two guiding frameworks, i.e., Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy in conversation with the research questions. First, using the overlaps between tenets of the theories with my research questions, I offer four central themes to be analysed. Then, I engage in discussing each theme using data collected and observations made considering the two chosen theories as well as other literature discussed.

4.1 EMERGENCE OF CENTRAL THEMES

The data analysis section of this research happened alongside the review of literature and data collection and the three greatly informed each other. The common themes between *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy* and *Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy* helped streamline the research questions and vice versa. I have mapped the Research Questions with the two theories to come up with common areas to be discussed. For reference, the research questions and salient features of each theory/ framework are present below.

Research Questions

1. How has Lyari Underground used rap to highlight their community's strengths and resilience?
2. How has Lyari Underground used rap to challenge inequalities and highlight oppression?
3. How has Lyari Underground practised reflexivity and inward gaze towards youth and community practices?
4. How can the journey and work of Lyari Underground transform discourse on social justice in educational spaces in and outside Lyari?

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) quoted from Paris & Alim (2014, p. 85)

1. “a focus on the plural and evolving nature of youth identity and cultural practices and
2. a commitment to embracing youth culture’s counterhegemonic potential.
3. while maintaining a clear-eyed critique of the ways in which youth culture can also reproduce systemic inequalities.”

Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (CHHP) based on the theory of transformative resistance by Solórzano & Bernal (2001, pp. 312–315)

1. “The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of oppression
2. Challenging traditional paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of colour.
3. The centrality of experiential knowledge of students of colour
4. The commitment to social justice; and finally
5. A transdisciplinary approach”

It is important to know that race and racism do not exist in Pakistan in the same way as they do in the US. Ethnic, religious, sectarian, and socioeconomic divides among others are the leading factors behind oppression and minoritization. Colourism does play a part in society but plays out differently than it does in the West. Even within Lyari, one can find diversity on many fronts. Similarly, while these theories focus on students and communities of colour, in the context of Pakistan I would interpret them to include all communities oppressed and minoritized, including of course how the masses who are denied access to education and opportunity, a theme central to Freire’s theories, Habib Jalib’s poetry and Lyari Underground’s rap.

4.1.1 Central themes

Through the mapping of Research Questions, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy using Venn diagrams and tables, I came up with four themes. While the first three themes would primarily engage with the work of Lyari Underground, the fourth one would deduce what implications this work could have in educational spaces. This fourth one is the most

underdeveloped part; in that it does not engage in a detailed explanation on how these suggestions could be implemented. There is room for more work in this area in terms of both theorization and planning, and its implementation and assessment to evaluate impact. By impact I do not mean quantitative impact solely or majorly, but qualitative impact for the most part.

The four central themes for discussion are listed below.

1. The centrality of youth and community practices and experiential knowledge
2. Commitment to social justice through counterhegemonic discourse
3. Reflexivity and inward gaze
4. Educational and social implications

4.2 DISCUSSION ON CENTRAL THEMES

It is important to note that although this discussion has been divided into four themes for ease of presentation, all four of these themes are interconnected and bleed into each other.

4.2.1 Theme I: The centrality of youth and community practices and experiential knowledge

The work of Lyari Underground takes from and contributes to the transnational phenomenon of global Hip Hop. While it draws inspiration from Western Hip Hop it does not lose sense of their Balochi roots, the band members' multiple identities and Lyari's essence.

During a video interview with Patari Music (2018), a band member first quoted Tupac Shakoor, their greatest inspiration, and then made connections with rap as a voice for youth, a tool to resist oppression, violence, injustice, and more. He comments, "Tupac said,

Wake up in the morning and I ask myself
Is life worth livin'? Should I blast myself?

I'm tired of bein' poor and, even worse, I'm black
My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch

“If you only replace the word ‘Black’ with ‘Baloch.’ It’s the same situation in Lyari.”

Lyari Underground draws inspiration from and does justice to the essence of Hip Hop by staying true to the art form and its intent. From their conception as a group to their principal stances, from their choice of language(s) to the raw backdrops they opt for, there seems an alignment. Even the variety and depth of their preferred names as rap artists speak volumes of the plurality and nuances central to Lyari. Case in point, the band consists of Asadullah aka ‘*Danger Baloch*’, Hammal aka ‘*Desert Eagle*’, Daniyal aka ‘*Slipknot*’, Abdul Ahad aka ‘*Anxiously*’, Abdullah aka ‘*DJ Khalifa*’, Abdul Wahab aka ‘*DJ Killa*’ and ‘*M4*’. Their choices, conscious or subconscious, reveal the Western influence but it does not overpower their roots.

Over and over, LUG highlights the strengths of Lyari’s community and celebrates its achievements. They do so while being critical of the authorities. In their song ‘Lyari aan player een (Players of Lyari)’, they pay homage to the incredibly talented players of Lyari while also critiquing the system and those in power. This song celebrates the love of sports in Lyari while exposing the harsh realities that these players exist in.

Practice hard all year only for the coach to select a non- Lyari player
Just imagine how disheartened we feel
In Lyari our brothers have been playing
football since they first opened their eyes
You won’t believe the passion they have for sports
Now, listen up here
Their passion takes them to football tournaments all over Pakistan
If you're a Baloch then the football coach looks at you negatively

In their song 'Darkhuwaast (Application)', they draw interesting comparisons between the worst phases of Lyari, while also showing the other side of the coin, the side that has kept Lyari alive, sustaining, and strong.

We are also sons of Lyari
We also have seen hardship
The hardship has its own unique taste
Living in hardship has its own deep knowledge
Visibly you are misfortunate
But factually you are fortunate

In doing so, they not only break the common misconceptions of Lyari prevalent domestically and internationally but also show hope to Lyari's youth.

LUG also stayed true to the community, their culture and language while producing songs. During an interview with Patari Music (2018), a band member commented, "*Up until a few years ago, people used to tell us that the Balochi language wouldn't work. You should rap in Urdu.*" The fact that LUG stayed true to their word and continued to use Balochi as the dominant language in their work while also climbing the ladders of success has given a boost to a regional language, which usually stands on tier three as English and Urdu occupy the first two positions respectively in social and academic spaces (Shamim & Rashid, 2019). This aspect will be discussed in detail under the next heading.

4.2.2 Theme II: Commitment to social justice through counterhegemonic discourse

"Rap is required where injustice takes place, where people are discriminated [against]. My ambition is to let people know what rap music is and what impact it can have on their lives."

(Abdul Ahad aka Anxiously, as cited in CBC Arts, 2017)

While the Hip Hop movement in Pakistan and the work of Lyari Underground is a continuation of the poetry of resistance, it is the absence of filter in their lyrics, truth in their use of language, pride in their regional Balochi accent (often looked down upon in the mainstream society which values English and Urdu spoken a certain way), and raw depiction of reality in their videos that sets them apart from the earlier tradition of being indirect and linguistically complex. One of many such examples is their song 'Kasani (Childhood in Lyari),' where they paint a picture of the harsh realities that they grew up in.

I don't remember a day
without gunshots in Kalakot
Or I don't see gangsters roaming
My childhood in Lyari
Wasn't normal
I've seen killers
dead bodies
and limbs in sacks

As a recurring theme, they continue to challenge how the rich history of Lyari has been tainted due to violence and politics and how the authorities walk away while their people suffer.

We have been living in Lyari for more than 200 years.
But why are we still outdated and devastated
We are still helpless labourers
screaming for our rights

During an interview with CBC Arts (2017), a band member commented,

"Whatever is going on right here — Lyari, the community, the injustice — we will discuss it. We are not afraid of anyone — to tell the truth to the people."

Another important consideration in the work of Lyari Underground is their choice of language, something they have stuck with and are proud of. Due to colonization and global reach, English remains the most powerful language in Pakistan, followed by Urdu, the National Language as the second dominant power. Regional languages, such as Balochi, unfortunately, remain at the bottom of this hierarchical structure, receiving little to no attention and recognition in academic spaces (Shamim & Rashid, 2019). When dealing with the challenge of choosing languages for their work, the band chose to stick with Balochi primarily and then some English. They chose it because of its global reach, while Balochi because it truly resonated with the feelings of their community. Urdu seems to be largely absent from this arrangement revealing a positive leap in the direction of the promotion of regional languages (Saleem, 2019). However, the question remains as to whether these choices would be valued in academic spaces (Rosa & Flores, 2017). Educational institutions in Pakistan usually stick to the English and Urdu binary and avoid using regional languages. This problem is prevalent more so in urban areas like Karachi. In communities where certain varieties of written and spoken English and Urdu are valued over the other, it is so challenging to fight the internalized colonial white gaze. A shift towards CSP and CHHP means an ideological shift on the part of all involved stakeholders. This complexity will be discussed again under theme 4 below.

4.2.3 Theme III: Reflexivity and inward gaze

For the longest time, Lyari was known in the news for all the wrong reasons, i.e., poverty, violence, the infamous gang war, politics etc. What was lost in the process was the ray of hope, the talented and critical sportsmen and sportswomen, artists, thinkers and philosophers, activists, educators and so on. As discussed above, Lyari Underground has done a fine job in highlighting the strengths of their community which helped channelize the existing attention from the world outside. They shifted the deficient, sympathetic and apathetic views to empathetic ones and those acknowledging

and appreciating the strength and perseverance of this incredible community. While doing so, Lyari Underground does not turn a blind eye towards the conflicts and issues plaguing the system from within. While they continue to call out the authorities for their negligence and oppression, they also speak to the community, and more importantly to the youth most susceptible to choosing a dark path. They reflect on the hard realities of growing up in Lyari, and how their childhoods got tainted by the ongoing violence, power struggle and drugs in their song Kasaani (Childhood in Lyari).

Welcome to adulthood
Brought all the misery with myself
Worse conditions than bottles of whisky
Sitting all day and seeing unemployment
Selfishness,
Alive dead body
Brainwashed
I wish I had some realization,
Goons playing Cards, No grocery

They beautifully highlight what went wrong by being an active critique, yet they continue to ponder and reflect and encourage others to do the same. By using themselves as examples, they set forward an example for the children and the youth to be aware, critical and sceptical towards activities and companies that seem attractive on surface value but cause lifelong effects that may not be reversible.

Their song 'Darkhuwaast (The Application)' is yet another example of a highly reflective piece in both the lyrics and the video. They begin with an apology for what went wrong to their loved ones, a realization that while he (the first central character) turned towards addiction and crime after

being jobless and hopeless, the family's sufferings only doubled as they now had to take care of their son in addition to dealing with poverty and injustice. They start with

Please forgive me I was mistaken
My conscience circulates about my wrong doings

The soon turn into painting a picture, one depicting the trajectory of this son who went astray,

In the breakfast, there is only being heartened and misery
For someone the doors are closed
Now there is nothing but to hustle and smoke that weed
The poisonous crows are looking for me
The psyche of dead conscience
The conscience is sold like hashish
The hunger is a tyrant thing
There is no milk for babies.
People are desperate to become beggars

There is 24/7 night
The sun has set out of shamefulness
There is no coming back in this way
But as you sow so shall you reap

This approach of LUG feels so warm, personal, and impactful. They do not go all offensive on the ones who turned astray, instead, they choose to acknowledge the situation that forced them into a situation. This approach can only be used by someone who loves the individual and the community, an insider who has lived through hard times, or a community member who is not ready to ostracize members of the society who can be healed. Right after presenting this image, they turn towards presenting a positive example, the story of countless residents of Lyari who chose the difficult path, withstood each hardship, and stayed true to their values and principles.

We are also sons of Lyari

We also have seen hardship
The hardship has its own unique taste
Living in hardship has its own deep knowledge
Visibly you are misfortunate
But factually you are fortunate

They use various examples and metaphors such as a flower and a thorn and telling apart a friend from a foe to emphasize the need to be reflective. Towards the end, they invite the youth to reflect upon their actions and rectify their mistakes while creating a deep-rooted understanding of why they are beginning to transform.

What sort of days are these that
To tolerate the wounds and misery
Rectify your thoughts
Have a deep inside look of your self
What you have done what your doing
Think of their outcome as well!
Notice the path of success and destruction very well!
Whatever you did in the joyful age of 18
Now I welcome you time of tensions and misery
You have made this world a nuisance to your self
You mave made yourself a hostage
How come you are brave
This is part of your life and examination
Have your mind functioning and move on

The next argument I want to make is regarding the power and meaning of Hip Hop. As Rose (2008) cited by Ladson-Billings (2017) differentiates between the positive Hip Hop and the competing contemporary version surrounding women, luxury, and violence. Lyari Underground started their

journey of producing rap music intending to be the voice of resistance. They even made it known, implicitly through their work and explicitly through public interactions.

“A lot of people rap about cars, girls etc. That’s alright, but that wasn’t what we aspired to do” (a band member’s statement from a video interview with Patari Music (2018).

In my limited understanding of LUG and their music (limited because I don’t know the Balochi language and rely mostly on transcripts), I have found them to be true to their work. However, following the tradition of Paris & Alim (2014, 2017), I would offer a few loving critiques by highlighting a few instances where one might feel the need to revisit the original intentions. The following excerpt from their song ‘Gushagaye’ (Telling) is one such example,

Grew up in the streets and it taught me how to throw hands
I be getting in trouble everyday
None of this shit be new to me
I be knocking niggas out since I was a lil kid
I be turning up and getting lit since I was three
I be taking W's since I was in nursery
I be murdering this beat while I'm that sipping tea
Grew up watching dead bodies I'm a kid from Lyari
We've been dropping bangers after bangers cuz you know this is LUG, Yah, ayee

I am neither an expert on Hip Hop nor historical oppression and the significance of the ‘N-word. However, I recognize that such decisions might be made after firstly learning about the history of such terms, and secondly after seeking approval from and/or being respectful to the communities oppressed and marginalized and their sentiments towards such words. Ironically and interestingly, all such lyrics I came across were the portions of the songs written in English. One could comment

or predict why these choices were made, but I would leave it for the audience to decide. Similarly, in their song 'Boom Boom', they make several references such as,

If you talk about the violence I'm about that
That's the life I be living I'm about that
I'm bad at maths watch out these bullets will come countless
Do, do, do, do, do, do, now these pussies ducking huh
But you was acting really tough like you somethin' huh
When I come around they freeze they hard as pudding huh
I'm tryna get that money but y'all really pulling me in that street shit bruh

I am not sure if these choices were made to fit in to an existing culture and its norms, an inspiration taken from contemporary Hip Hop music or something else. However, practices like these make Hip Hop music a very gendered space, a gated community not welcoming of people (women) from backgrounds the same as their own and lived experiences similar or even worse than these men. The ratio of popular male rappers from Lyari compared with female rappers offers insights for the rap community to ponder on. Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of "*Intersectionality*" fits the situation very well presenting a bird's eye view into the lives of women from a community marginalized and how they face more obstacles than men. Eva B's emergence and journey and the absence of leading women in rap from Lyari offer thinking points, both to the community at large, in general, and the male Hip Hop artists, to be particular. This is an idea for future research.

4.2.4 Theme IV: Educational and social implications

"How can teachers support what they themselves don't possess?" quoted from

Alim & Haupt (2017, p.158)

Schools and educational spaces are often so divorced from the realities of the communities they operate in, that students tend to lose interest. Moreover, they lose their faith and trust in the system

as the very issues that surround them and their communities are either completely ignored or superficially treated in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2017). To expect schooling to be apolitical is a rather bizarre expectation. One cannot hope for transformation, decolonization, and cultural sustenance from a space that censors reality and shies from acknowledging the wrong done. The children of Lyari were obstructed from receiving quality education for decades which led to their marginalization. In many ways, this marginalization and oppression by removing access to quality education is an experience Lyari shares with most Pakistanis. On the other hand, such a state in the nation's biggest metropolitan and financial hub is alarming. To create educational experiences which are engaging, equitable and just for the learners, the lived realities and experiences of students and their communities must be valued and embedded into teaching and learning (Alim & Paris, 2017). Lyari Underground is doing just that, what is needed now is the acceptance of this practice in schools as a valid means of teaching and learning, a position rap doesn't have currently in Pakistan, unfortunately. In a video interview, one of the band members commented,

“There is no shortage of talent in Lyari. The only thing the media highlights is the violence and gang wars, but talent never gets highlighted.” Danger Baloch, quoted from Patari Music (2017)

Lyari Underground views the people of Lyari from a strength-based approach which is certainly not devoid of reflexivity as discussed above. While they lament the injustice around by those in power, they also present a positive image of Lyari residents and shed light on the lives and work of talented individuals who were either lost or destroyed by the system (Ladson-Billings, 2017). This is again an important aspect of CSP and views the learning process as 'additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits' (Alim & Paris, 2017). As a band member rightfully stated,

'The LUG wants to transform the perception of dangerous Lyari into peaceful and human loving Lyari,' Asadullah aka Danger Baloch as cited in Ishaque (2017)

The journey and work of Lyari Underground together with the emergence and evolution of Hip Hop has led to the transformation and democratization of poetry of resistance. These realities along with the growing access towards the internet and social media have offered a voice to youth and communities. There are many lessons educators and educational institutions and communities can learn from this wave.

School education cannot be effective if it is divorced from lived realities and experiences of students and communities served. Therefore, there is a pressing need to create awareness, update curricula, and train teachers. It is through these means and critical teachers that schools can shift from deficit-based approaches to strength-based frameworks that value students with their languages, literacies, cultures, and lived experiences.

This brings forth yet another important aspect of teaching and learning, one that is unfortunately highly contested even after 75 years of Pakistan's creation. The issue of medium of instruction, hierarchies of languages and enforcement of language policies often without the general public's consent has already been discussed in sections 2.3.2- 2.3.3 Similarly, LUG's bold choice to not fall for these language hierarchies and selecting Balochi as their primary language has been discussed in section 4.2.2. The colonial remnants of the English language are so strong that my teachers and elders even frowned upon Standard American English pronunciation and spelling, let alone Ebonics or other varieties. The move towards being inclusive with regards to languages not only opens doors for regional languages, but also World Englishes including contemporary youth language practices. While I support legislation and policy initiatives, a shift in the pedagogy of every single teacher counts.

Since the issues around languages and youth and community experiences have been addressed above, it is also important to acknowledge the new and evolving ways in which youth present and represent themselves. Hip Hop is a recent phenomenon in Pakistani society, and it is thus still largely limited to spaces catering to the youth. The growing interest and impact of this art form and its accessibility are uncanny. It offers greater flexibility to the creator as opposed to traditional forms of poetry. Legitimization of Hip Hop in social and educational spaces, especially in communities where it is popular, is another step forward. This would ensure that students exercise agency to say what they want to say in their preferred language(s), style(s), and form(s). While there may be a concern for the meaningfulness of content produced which calls for educating the youth about several issues, such as the history and origins of Hip Hop, sensitivity towards loaded terms and the values, practices and cultural nuances important to them and their communities.

Lastly, and most importantly, none of these changes listed above are possible without creating a learning environment that prepares and encourages students to be reflective and critical of themselves in individual capacity, and youth and community practices in collective capacities. It is through this realization that the students exercise agency to voice their opinions and concerns and question the authorities. Similarly, it is only through individual and guided reflection that the students would also begin to recognize hindering practices such as varying degrees of oppression based on gender.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND OUTCOMES

Hip Hop is known to be the voice of resistance for minoritized communities over dominant usually unjust forces. It values the linguistic and cultural practices of communities and provides them with avenues and opportunities to be more critical and vocal (Alim & Haupt, 2017). The journey of the emergence of Hip Hop in Pakistan with Lyari Underground as forerunners and trendsetters offer insights for educators, educational researchers, sociologists, social scientists, and communities.

Lyari's long and rich history combined with its cultural dexterity, linguistic plurality, artistic tendencies, and athletic accolades proved to be an interesting site for research. Although I make no claims regarding the generalizability of this work on a large scale, the dynamics of Lyari and the era of Lyari's downfall proceeded by its resilient rising offers numerous insights to learn from. Growing up in Karachi and living through the Lyari gang war era, I have witnessed the perseverance of the residents of Lyari. The intention through this work has been to study Lyari as a success story to help inform my pedagogy as well as that of my peers. To summarize I'd quote Gloria Ladson-Billings' response on why she chose to work on Black students, '*our work to examine success among the students who had been least successful was likely to reveal important pedagogical principles for achieving success for all students.*' (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

Lyari Underground's journey is one that youngsters can relate to. As the band rightly points out, youngsters need better role models, not the seemingly adventurous but toxic life of a gang member. I have viewed the work of Lyari Underground not as an alien phenomenon, but instead as a continuation of the legacy of poets and singers producing poetry of resistance in Pakistan. This

helped me trace the shifts in form as well as the content as different trends emerged and gained popularity over the decades.

While engagement in this work has empowered me to listen to, tell and retell stories, it also added an added responsibility to do justice to the people whose stories were being told (Glesne, 2016). I believe using a strength-based theoretical framework like Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014; Alim & Paris, 2017) and an equally strong instructional strategy like Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy (Akom, 2009) I have had an opportunity to observe and analyse the resilient and community-centred approaches and practices that have helped guide the work of Lyari Underground. What remained important throughout was my positionality as an outsider. Therefore, I tried my best to refrain from turning into a ruthless critic or a distant spectator exoticizing the chosen community. Thus, I have included a few loving critiques following the approach and vocabulary used by Paris & Alim (2014) to offer opportunities for reflection for the band members, educators, and community members.

I divided the discussion section into four interconnected themes. First, I presented how Lyari Underground's work is centred around youth and community practices and experiences. Here I present the case of how the songs (both lyrics and videos) as well as public interactions by LUG celebrated the lives and achievements of their community, focused on their lives growing up in Lyari, exposing the negligence and oppression by the authorities and highlighting the issues (internal and external) that negatively impact the lives of the people of Lyari. Second, I explored how LUG's work presented a counter-narrative to internalized and imposed hegemony, advocating for social justice and equity. Here I also commented on their choice to stick to Balochi as the primary language, breaking the linguistic hierarchies prevalent in Pakistan. Third, I engaged in addressing issues around reflexivity and reflection as highlighted by both CSP and CHHP. I began

this section by appreciating multiple methods and modalities utilized by LUG to project their reflections as well as effective storytelling encouraging the children and youth to be critical and make good choices. Here, I called for a need to revisit the intended mission based on the lyrics of a few songs, ironically parts sung in the English language. This raises questions on misogyny and the lack of female voice and perspective in comparison to male artists. Last, I present a few educational and social implications of this work based on the literature review and discussion sections. These included a call for decolonial practices by centring educational experiences around youth and communities, encouraging a critical approach, promoting students' voices, and a shift towards valuing the languages and literacies of students.

Through this work, I have continued to reflect on my ideologies as a teacher and a learner and offer the opportunity to my readers to do the same. I had to unlearn my own biases and internalized colonial legacies that I was conditioned into throughout my own schooling and teaching career. I think the shift towards decolonial, anti-discriminatory, and equitable practices in education cannot be brought about without teacher education and engagement. These ideas cannot be implemented with a superficial view of culture limited to clothing, food, and festivals. It surely cannot be brought about until governments, schools, and teachers are prepared and invested to make it happen. As an educator, I believe teachers still have the agency, be it less or more, to ignite inquiry and critical thinking in their students. Additionally, teachers are often the first point of contact to observe the multiple talents that students possess. Ideas like CSP and CHHP work best when the boundaries between named language and school subjects are blurred, and student learning and engagement are ensured using transdisciplinary practices.

I acknowledge that the discussion around the implications of this work is still at an infant stage and require independent research of its own, be it theoretical or experimental. I think adding an

intersectional lens to future work along with gender politics would help unpack not only the dynamics of youth culture but also a comparison of how societal practices, good or bad, are adopted and rejected by the youth.

My work is not yet complete. This project focused more on mapping the practices of Lyari Underground with established principles of CSP and CHHP. Although I did engage in discussion on the educational implications of this work, I recognize that these are just baby steps in the direction. I acknowledge that poetry, singing and music may be questionable or looked down upon in certain parts of Pakistan. I urge my readers to look beyond just Hip Hop and search for practices in their communities or students' communities for practices that are culturally sustaining and critical. These observations can surely direct pedagogical changes that are respectful and sustaining for the students and communities directly impacted by the project of schooling. I hope to engage more in this work in the future to see how these ideas translate into classroom practice for educators in Pakistan, especially those serving communities minoritized and oppressed by those in power.

I would end my thesis with a quote from Dr. Paris's book, for he was and has been a great inspiration and mentor throughout this journey. I hope this effort can reach audiences and hope that together we (the educators) can strive to make a difference by seeing the good in our students and encouraging them to experiment with learning, so they enjoy pursuing education.

“CSP positions dynamic dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. Culturally sustaining pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling.” (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 1)

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