

Pakistani Christians

Perspectives on Violence, Identity,
and Citizenship

Introduction

- Scope of today's talk
- Scope of the study
- The interviews

(30 was our target; we have completed 36)

Research Questions

- 1) What perspectives do Pakistani Christians have with respect to the multiple forms of violence impacting their lives? How are these perspectives circumscribed by gender and class?
- 2) How do Pakistani Christians construct identity, belonging, and citizenship? How are these constructions gendered and classed?

Theoretical Framework

- Feminist Security Studies and Human Security Studies – threat of violence is violence
- Conception of violence as multilayered – direct versus indirect or structural violence
- Structural violence refers to “unequal life chances, usually caused by great inequality, injustice, discrimination, and exclusion, needlessly limiting people’s physical, social, and psychological well-being” (Uvin, 1998, p. 145).

Findings: Perspectives on Violence

- “the sword hanging over our heads”
- More recent bomb blasts in church – people have to think about going to church
- Structural violence permeates all aspects of life – e.g., education, jobs, everyday interactions, media representations

Findings: Perspectives on Identity

- “We are sons of the soil”
- “People don’t consider us as true Pakistanis”
- Only one interviewee wanted to leave the country
- Interviewees critical of asylum seekers and brain drain
- Interviewees said they felt freer in Pakistani culture than abroad – middle and upper class had travelled

Findings: Perspectives on Citizenship

- Unequal citizenship? YES
- 5% quotas not observed
- Private sector has its own issues of discriminatory treatment
- “We need elections, not selections”
- Many interviewees objected to the designation of “minorities” – “why can’t they refer to us as Pakistani Christians?”

Findings: Misc.

- Strength derived from faith
- Silence and “*sabar*” are survival strategies
- Interviewees were also self-critical: for instance, lack of unity among Christian denominations; new generation now wants to go to call centers instead of thinking long-term; Christians don’t negate stereotyping as bootleggers; educational standards at missionary schools not so good anymore

Finding: Misc. contd.

- Great schism between upper/middle and lower classes
- Some upper/middle do give back to the community
- People spoke from their class, gender, and geographic (Pindi vs. Isbd) positioning
- Women had specific issues as Christian women

Wrapping up

- Interventions needed at all levels: policy and grassroots
- Where do we start? Question for my audience