



**Tahseen Shams.** *Here, There, and Elsewhere: The Making of Immigrant Identities in a Globalized World.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020. xii + 247 pp. \$90.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-5036-1069-9.

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Scholarly works on migration often consider “assimilation, panethnicity, transnationalism, and diaspora” (p. 17). Home country identities, and the adjustment migrants make, whether we call it assimilation, integration, or acculturation, are worked into migration theories about the new host country context. More recent works such as Russell King et al.’s *Links to the Diasporic Homeland: Second Generation and Ancestral “Return” Mobilities* (2015) offer an edited volume of chapters on the return of second-generation migrants to the homeland, in which many of the authors tussle with how migrants negotiate identity when returning to the homeland. Some scholars have also tried to understand identity construction within the wider context of mobilities studies. [1] Other scholars use the more traditional lens of transnationalism.[2] Tahseen Shams’s excellent work on identity formation of immigrants considers more complex relationships. Through ethnographic research of primarily South Asian Muslim Americans in California, Shams introduces her concept of “elsewhere.” While migration scholars have considered diaspora vis-à-vis the two dimensions of homeland and host country, Shams argues that identity formation of South Asian Muslims in America is additionally informed by the politics of other Muslim nations and the re-

lationship of those nations with the migrant’s home and host land.

In an overview chapter Shams walks us through the factors that contribute to migrant identity formation. She uses Islam as an analytical lens to highlight how a panethnic Muslim identity beyond the migrant’s homeland and hostland influences identity formation in the hostland. Muslims are interconnected through events rooted in spaces that are neither their home nor hostland. She argues that global geopolitics creates a relational framework in which Muslims, whether in their homeland, hostland, or beyond are exposed and made to respond to constitutive events wherever they might live. These events and forced responses are an integral part of immigrant identity formation.

Chapter 2 provides groundwork for the concepts Shams builds upon with rich ethnographic data in later chapters. In this chapter, she connects the relationship between homeland and hostland in a more dynamic way by introducing a multicentered relational framework in which the concept of “elsewhere” is introduced as the foreign places that become salient for immigrants’ sense of self in their home or hostland. She uses the example of the Boko Haram kidnappings of

schoolgirls as an “exogenous shock,” or an unexpected event that impacts the international order of things because suddenly Muslims all over the world are made to respond to the event in question (p. 36). In fact, such an event impacts not only Muslim immigrants in the United States but also those immigrants who are also *perceived* to be Muslims, such as Hindus and Sikhs. These exogenous shocks or events can also be positive, such as Malala Yousafawi being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Shams argues that the multicentered relational framework allows us to see how exogenous shocks elsewhere shape immigrant identity in the hostland.

Building upon how exogenous shocks affect the lives of immigrants in the hostland, chapter 3, the strongest chapter, considers how the geopolitics of the homeland continue to shape immigrant identity in the hostland. Here, Shams provides a fairly quick synopsis of the complex colonial histories of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Expertly, she draws connections between nation building and the modern state of South Asian Muslims in their new hostland. Geopolitics play a big role in how citizens respond to immigrants during an exogenous event, such as 9/11 or locating Osama Bin Laden. She drives her argument home through detailed data from the “Hindus for Trump” rallies in New Jersey during the 2016 election. The hostland politics of Muslim-Hindu discord played a role in the support for President Donald Trump’s Muslim ban in the hostland. Even the political allegiance of South Asian Muslims in the United States is informed by the history of the homeland, as well as by modern-day events such as Indian prime minister Narendra’s Modi’s ambition for Hindu nationalism.

In chapter 4 Shams explores the social pressure on immigrant Muslims to live the “good Muslim” script based on events in the homeland, like the 2016 shooting at an Orlando nightclub by a Muslim, and “elsewhere” exogenous events, such as the 2015 bombings in Paris. Because

Muslims are held collectively accountable, they must overtly condemn these acts or be viewed as silently complicit (p. 103). In part, the “good Muslim” script is a protective shield, but other precautions are also taken by Muslim immigrants in Shams’s study, such as women deciding to temporarily stop wear a hijab due to increased acts of violent discrimination in the hostland. Chapter 5 continues with the theme of precarity by considering how immigrants in the hostland align their politics with the ongoings of other Muslim plights, such as those of Syrians or Palestinians. At times Muslim immigrants do not agree on “elsewhere” politics, dividing the community in the hostland.

Chapter 7 serves as a reflection of the author’s positionality as a Bangladeshi Muslim and a summation of the book. And so, chapter 6 is the last substantive chapter. It provides intriguing data on the bias in treatment by the media, government, and general citizenry with regard to particular exogenous events. Shams provides a useful table that shows six different global events (e.g., Paris attacks, Beirut bombing, Orlando shooting), the level of US engagement based on the country in which these events occurred, and who the victims were (p. 174). When the victims were living in Western countries there was a global outcry and when the victims were in the Middle East, there was none. The US reaction to events was dependent on the cultural and geopolitical relationship with the country and culture in which the event occurred. This is perpetuated by the media response as well.

What Shams does in this book is offer a way to understand how panethnic identity is formed and informed by not just the homeland and hostland as static entities, but also by their relationship with other countries. Additionally, events that occur in “elsewhere” places also inform the migrant identity. She draws upon historic and modern-day events to demonstrate how the geopolitical dance between nations affects the identity formation of those who subscribe to the Muslim community—

sometimes by choice and other times by events that occur far from both their home- and host-lands. The concept of an elsewhere sets up a useful relational framework in considering migration and mobilities. Many scholars have attempted to address integration, assimilation, or enculturation as a way to make sense of the immigrant journey of identity shaping and shift in the hostland. Shams allows us to think on a multidimensional plane where identity can be informed by acts of individual agency, such as supporting Palestine, or acts of protection, such as subscribing to the “good Muslim” script. These examples are influenced by the history and politics of the home and host countries. Shams allows for immigrants to be seen as individuals, without essentializing their stories based on their Muslimness.

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#### Notes

[1]. Pratima Sambajee, “Multiple Mobilities in the Hotel Industry: A Case Study of the North Indian Diaspora in Mauritius,” (PhD diss., University of Sunderland, 2011).

[2]. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc. “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48-63; Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, “Towards a Definition of Transnationalism,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645, no. 1 (1992): ix-xiv.

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