Narratives of Rights, Honor, and Wisdom in a Transnational Women’s Education Project

Ayesha Khurshid
Assistant Professor of International and Comparative Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

(Paper presented at the 2013 American Educational Research Association Conference)

In the post 9/11 era, international interest in modernizing Muslim societies presents women’s education as a solution to issues ranging from poverty to gender empowerment. In this narrative of global modernity, educated Muslim women are viewed as agents to restructure their traditional societies. Using ethnographic data, this paper shows how in a transnational women’s education project, women teachers from low-income and rural Pakistani communities employ the notion of “wisdom” to construct and perform an educated subjectivity that brings together Islamic values with modern educational reforms. Through Butler's performativity framework, I demonstrate how local and global discourses overlap to shape narratives that define individual rights as well as family honor as part of the educated subjectivity of Pakistani Muslim women.