

THE SEMIOTICS OF REVIVALIST ISLAM: WOMEN, SPACE, AND STORIES IN  
PAKISTAN'S ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE SEMIOTICS OF REVIVALIST ISLAM: WOMEN, SPACE, AND STORIES IN PAKISTAN'S ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS**

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Large numbers of urban Pakistani women are adopting sartorial and behavioral markers associated with the global Islamic revival and are participating in Islamic revivalist movements. Many Pakistanis find this increase troubling, and feel that it betokens an increase in “extremism” in Pakistan. Women’s participation in these movements is controversial, and results in conflicts with their families, friends, and social networks. As they participate in revivalist movements, women are introduced to Islamic sacred texts (the Qur’an and Hadith), which movement leadership interpret in ways that support the reformist mission of their particular movement. Revivalist leaders draw on Islamic sacred texts to promote visions of a pure Islamic society, and call on women to restrict their spending and socialization habits, and to reject many aspects of Pakistani society as “un-Islamic.”

This dissertation examines women’s participation in Islamic revivalism in Pakistan through a focus on women’s participation in the Tablighi Jama’at and the Al-Huda Welfare Trust. The relative gendered composition of these movements makes a comparative approach particularly instructive; the Tablighi Jama’at is a male-led movement which incorporates women as accessories, while Al-Huda is female-led and was founded exclusively for women. These movements, and Pakistani reactions to them, illustrate Pakistani beliefs regarding gender, purified religion, and ideas of culture. A study of these movements speaks to theoretical concerns

regarding the Islamic revival as a global movement, and to the role of the religious resurgence in Pakistan.

I explore these movements through the following guiding questions: (1) Are women's experiences in women-led movements different from those that are strongly male-centered?; (2) how do the differences among revivalist movements impact women's learning experience and utilization of sacred texts within and outside revivalist settings?; (3) to what extent do women contribute to the revivalist theology and ideology that guides their lives? Is this process different based on the movement a woman joins?; and (4) how does revivalism impact the social landscape of urban Pakistan? Two unifying analytical themes run through this dissertation and provide a framework through which I answer my research questions. The first is an examination of the contestations and discourses surrounding gendered piety, and the ways in which these confrontations delineate the urban Pakistani discursive field. The second theme concerns meaning-making within the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda, and interrogates the processes through which revivalist knowledges are created and maintained.

My dissertation traces the processes through which revivalist subjects emerge, with a focus on the ways in which revivalist women contribute to the discourses which form their subjecthood and subjectivities. I argue that women's agency is not limited to their self-creation as subjects, but extends to their participation in the creation of the discourses to which they subject themselves. My research reveals that female members of the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda create movement structures and messages through their participation in these movements, actively contributing to revivalist ideology and meaning. The mechanisms of women's contributions are similar across movements, and women in both movements contribute significantly to the revivalist discourse, rhetoric, and theology they adopt.

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For my mother Dr. Iffat Zaman, who taught me how to read, and my father Dr. Azad Zaman,  
who taught me how to write.

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# INTRODUCTION: OPENING NOTES

As a child, I spent numerous summers in my grandmother's house in Karachi, learning Urdu and playing with multitudes of cousins. Transitions between my US life and my summers in Pakistan were seamless, distinguished only by the different playmates I had access to in each location. I felt fairly prepared to live in Pakistan when my parents moved "home" to Lahore the year I turned sixteen. My move to a Lahore-based A'level (high school) life were marked by moments of discovery; my peers operated according to inscrutable codes of dress and behavior, and performed gender and social class in manners that were governed by logics I could not grasp. Islam, which had served to unify ethnically diverse communities in my American-Muslim childhood, took on new meanings and seemed to function divisively in urban upper-class Lahore. One of my male classmates joined the *Tablighi Jama'at*, an Islamic revivalist movement, and went around exhorting all of us "girls" to "do *purdah*" (i.e. to veil our faces). Meanwhile, my female classmates policed each other's dress and behavior, ostracizing some girls for wearing "sleeveless," and others for veiling, condemning some for wearing velvet and others for wearing unlined chiffon. These demarcations drew on ideas of modesty and social class derived from what seemed like an innate sense of appropriateness not linked explicitly to ideas of Islam. When General Musharraf staged a military coup, removing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from power, my fellow students were incredibly (to my eyes) blasé. When I excitedly asked her what she thoughts about the coup the day after it occurred my friend Maheen shrugged and said, "I'm speechless," before switching the conversation to our essays on *Jane Eyre*. Another friend told me that she thought interest in and conversation about politics was unfeminine.

When I started Kinnaird College for Women in 2001, 9/11 and the subsequent war in Afghanistan had impacted public discourse and private lives, and even my apolitical peers had become involved. Religion and religious obligations had become significant topics of conversation. In time-honored tradition, the gates of the college were locked after 8 am to ensure we did not sneak out to meet young men, so when we were free we would congregate in the small open air cafeteria, drinking *chai* and eating *samosas* while discussing Islam, politics, the Taliban, and the war in Afghanistan. One of the professors who had been stridently secular and had promoted *Baywatch* as ideal viewing began arguing that “modest Islamic dress” was required of us “girls.” It was rumored that now that the religious political party *Muttahida Majlis e Amal* (United Council of Action) was in ascendance, she saw this advocacy as part of her bid for promotion. That Ramadan, some of my classmates organized a revision of the Qur’an (*Daura-e-Quran*) after class. This revision was sponsored by *Al-Huda*, a newly popular women-centered religious movement, and was led by one of my classmates who had been attending Al-Huda classes. The objective of this revision was a quick journey through the *tafsir* (exegesis) of the entire Quran. Students, some of whom attended Al-Huda classes, started a communal evening prayer behind the auditorium; some participated, others abstained, and one of my friends offered the comment that she did not think women were permitted to lead other women in prayer<sup>1</sup>.

These introductory notes frame my exploration of Islamic revivalism in Pakistan. My understanding of Pakistani society, history, and the changing landscape of urban Pakistan are the product of my experiences during these transitional moments in Pakistani history as well as an

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<sup>1</sup> Some strands of the Hanafi school of Islamic law, which prevails in Pakistan, maintain that women are not permitted to lead prayer. Al-Huda women draw on Salafi teachings and argue that women are permitted to lead other women in prayer.

engagement with the literature through which I came to understand the country after returning to college in the United States. These intellectual and personal engagements have impacted my exploration of revivalism's intersections with gender, social class, and popular ideas of religion in Pakistan. Living in Pakistan for the two years I conducted fieldwork was, in a sense, returning home. My parents had moved to Islamabad while I was an undergraduate and I lived in their house while I conducted fieldwork. I was able to leverage their social networks in order to gain entree into both revivalist and non-revivalist settings.

This dissertation explores urban middle and upper-class Pakistani women's involvement in Islamic revivalism by comparatively analyzing women's participation in two different revivalist movements: The Tablighi Jama'at and the Al-Huda Welfare Trust. The female membership of these movements has grown in both visibility and importance over the past decade. Al-Huda, founded in 1994, has mushroomed in less than fifteen years from a building in Islamabad to an international organization that penetrates deeply into many elite neighborhoods and nearly every women's college in Pakistan. In contrast to Al-Huda, the Tablighi Jama'at was founded in the early 1900s and is substantially larger, with a global membership exceeding one million individuals. Both Tabligh and Al-Huda's vision of religion focuses on personal piety, and claims to be non-political<sup>2</sup>. Their approach to Islamic reform stresses the creation of social change through education; The Tablighi Jama'at's primary activity is sending out missionary tours to invite Muslims to renewed, purified Islamic practice, while Al-Huda offers classes to introduce women to an Islam cleansed of culture. Islamic sacred texts, the Qur'an and Hadith, feature heavily in both movements' recruitment and reform efforts.

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<sup>2</sup> Both Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at forbid the discussion of politics in movement space. This ban encompasses critique of political leaders and discussions of urgent political situations.

The relative gendered composition of these movements renders a comparative approach particularly instructive: Al-Huda was founded by a woman, and its activities are targeted primarily at women, while the Tablighi Jama'at is a male-directed movement which includes women as a subordinate wing of the movement. Al-Huda's woman-centric approach is relatively recent. In comparison, Tabligh's incorporation of women follows more classical lines, involving women as accessories to male activities. These movements, and Pakistani reactions to them, illustrate Pakistani beliefs regarding gender, purified religion, and ideas of culture. A study of these movements speaks to theoretical concerns regarding the Islamic revival as a global phenomena, and to the role of the religious resurgence in Pakistan. I explore these movements through the following guiding questions: (1) Are women's experiences in women-led movements different from those that are strongly male-centered?; (2) how do the differences among revivalist movements impact women's learning experience and utilization of sacred texts within and outside revivalist settings?; (3) to what extent do women contribute to the revivalist theology and ideology that guides their lives? Is this process different based on the movement a woman joins?; (4) how does revivalism impact the social landscape of urban Pakistan? Two unifying analytical themes run through this dissertation and provide a framework through which I answer my research questions. The first is an examination of the contestations and discourses surrounding gendered piety, and the ways in which these confrontations delineate the urban Pakistani discursive field. The second theme concerns meaning-making within the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda, and interrogates the processes through which revivalist knowledges are created and maintained.

# Theoretical Background: Gender, Religion, and Anthropology

This dissertation draws on anthropology of gender, the anthropology of Islam, and semiotic theory in order to develop a framework for examining women's contributions to Islamic Revivalist movements, and their simultaneous formation as revivalist subjects. I argue that these processes are intertwined; women's participation in revivalist movements exposes them to larger webs of meaning and allows them to shape the theology and ideology to which they are subject. This process is a self-reinforcing one. Female members' contributions to overall revivalist meaning make revivalism more attractive to other women. At the same time, women's interjections into revivalist discourse and space are structured to mimic the forms promoted by revivalist leadership, rendering women's contributions to these movements invisible. I examine women's formation as revivalist subjects through a focus on their rejection of the Islamic practices they grew up with and their adoption of the "true" Islam promoted by revivalists.

The anthropology of Islam has always been faced with the challenge of resolving differences in Islamic practices across and within cultures. This difference was initially understood through a frame which saw religions as consisting of a "great" or scriptural tradition, and a "little" tradition based on local practice (Redfield 1956). Bowen has argued that the distinction between these led to anthropologists prioritizing those elements of Islam which were locally distinctive at the expense of those elements which were shared (1993: 5). Geertz modified this framework to suggest that the different practices of Islam could be understood as the difference between experience and a tradition of meaning (1968). El-Zein argued that it was not possible to locate a single unified Islam in the field, and so anthropologists should just study

local “Islams” (1977). Asad modified this by proposing that Islam be approached as a discursive tradition (1986: 10). This tradition is constituted by discourses that instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given Islamic practices. Authority within this tradition can be linked to different sources.

I draw on Asad’s conceptualization of Islam as a discursive tradition to trace contestations over religious authority in urban Pakistan. Urban Pakistani believe that Islamic authority is based in historical practice and commonly accepted ideas of virtue (S. Ahmad 2009). Revivalists compete with this established religious consensus to offer alternative visions of Islam as rooted exclusively in sacred texts. Women who are educated in revivalist *dars* (religious classes) draw on Qur’an and Hadith to reject well-established social gatherings and religious practices, and in so doing form themselves as revivalist subjects. However, this self-transformation is not driven by top-down discursive formulations promoted by revivalist leadership. Instead women participate in the creation of revivalist knowledges, contributing to contestations over Islamic authority and delineating movement-approved ways of being “good” Muslim women. This dissertation examines the ways in which women are engaging in contestations over Islamic authority, contributing to discursive formulations that seem to flow from (male) revivalist leaders, and creating identities as legitimate bearers of Islamic knowledge.

Women’s participation in patriarchal religions has been understood through a lens that draws on both the anthropology of religion and the anthropology of gender. These approaches have been transactional in nature, and the question underlying them has been “what do women gain from their participation in religious settings?” Answers to this question have implied that women participate in patriarchal religions to gain power for themselves vis-a-vis other women or



society<sup>3</sup> (Boddy 1989; Bartkowski and Read 2003; Haniffa 2008). A presupposition of this literature has been that women's involvement in patriarchal religious ceremonies, rituals, and movements must be accompanied by material gain which provides them with (conscious or unconscious) motivation. This approach is problematic for its assumption that subjects either have hidden motives comprehensible only to the objective anthropologist, or that subjects are engaging in wholesale deception regarding their own practices. Both possibilities privilege the interpretation of the anthropologist over the claimed experience of the subject.

My dissertation sidesteps ideas of the unique gendered oppression to which “fundamentalist” women are subject by tracing the processes through which revivalist subjects emerge, with a focus on the ways in which revivalist women contribute to the discourses which form their subjecthood and subjectivities. My conceptualization of identity as performative (Butler 1993) highlights the process of subjectivation (Foucault 1980), in which subjects are brought into being by the very processes which render them subordinate. This approach points to the complicity of agents in the systems of power in which they exist, and to their ability to destabilize these systems through performance. Conceptualizing identity as performative allows for the possibility that identities shift in time as a result of performative negotiations. Recent work on gender suggests that women in piety movements demonstrate their agency through their voluntary adoption of bodily techniques of discipline (Mahmood 2004). This body of work suggests that women's formation of themselves into believing subjects is itself a demonstration of their agency, and that their desire to become pious subjects should be taken at face value (Mahmood 2004). My analysis extends this understanding of agency, expanding the focus from

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed breakdown of the ways in which anthropologists have understood women's participation in religious movements, see Chapter Four.

women's active engagement in techniques of discipline to their participation in the creation of these techniques.

Revivalist women create movement structures and messages through their participation in these movements, actively contributing to revivalist ideology and meaning. I argue that women's agency is not limited to their self-creation as subjects, but extends to their participation in the creation of the discourses to which they subject themselves. This dissertation demonstrates that women contribute significantly to the revivalist discourse, rhetoric, and theology they adopt. The mechanisms through which these contributions occur are detailed in chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation. Female revivalists also agentively choose to identify as revivalist, prioritizing that aspect of their identity against other subject-positions available to them. Semiotic theory conceives of the subject as split into multiple politicized subject-positions formed through exposure to religious, cultural, social, and political discourses (Murphy 2007; 123). The subject is fragmented, discursively formed, and created through the process of constant re-articulation (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Each subject may possess a plurality of subject-positions, which are demonstrated through performance. An agent picks and chooses which subject-position to portray at any given time, and which groups to affiliate with through performance. Identities are always constructed on the basis of complex discursive practices, and subject's participation in these practices reflects their agency (Laclau and Mouffe 2001).

Subjects are split into multiple politicized subject-positions formed through exposure to religious, cultural, social, and political discourses (Murphy 2007, 123). More simply, subject-positions are formed as the result of the multiple discourses and relationships in which the subject is involved. Subject-positions (such as Pakistani, mother, homemaker, and employee) are shared between numerous people, and every individual possesses multiple subject-positions.

Constant practices of articulation and re-articulation constitute the subject, which is defined in contrast to an Other (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Subjects continuously create themselves as the holders of specific identity-positions, and signal their affiliation to larger groups through verbal and nonverbal codes. These codes include the routine minutia of everyday life – the way individuals dress, the language they speak, the manner in which they speak it, and the ways in which they organize space all provide signs as to their identity-positions. This dissertation explores the consequences of women’s adoption of the physical markers of revivalist identity in urban Pakistan, and makes the claim that revivalism in urban Pakistan has been positioned as a unitary identity which overrides other identity-positions. Thus, the adoption of revivalist identity is an inherently political choice, particularly as changes in upper and middle-class women’s self-representation have historically symbolized transitions in national identity.

## The Islamic Revival

As a phenomenon, fundamentalism emerged as an evangelical protestant framework, when C.C. Law coined the term from the movement that had published a twelve volume work called “The Fundamentals” (Varisco 2005; Almond and Appleby 1995: 70). “Fundamentalism” as a concept was popularly applied to Islam by journalists following the Iran hostage crisis, to denote the extremism and violence of certain Muslim groups (Varisco 2005; Esposito 1992: 8). The label “fundamentalist” is also problematic for its implication that those who adhere to the fundamentals of Islam and consider the Qur’an to be the Word of God are outliers (A. Ahmed 1999; Metcalf 1994). Taken in this sense, all Islamic movements claim to adhere to the fundamentals of Islam (El Fadl 2005). Thus, as a descriptor of Islamic movements, the term

“fundamentalist” is over-broad, analytically vague, and pejorative (El Guindi 1999). “Islamist” is similarly problematic for its delineation of the world into a public and private sphere, and its assumption that an intrusion of Islam into the public sphere is dangerous and unacceptable (El Fadl 2005: 17). In contrast, “Islamic revival” takes into account the diversity of Islamic movements, referring to militant movements, state-oriented political parties, and piety movements which provide services to the poor and engage in proselytization (Mahmood 2004).

The groups I researched are proselytization movements, and can also be referred to as piety movements. However, I use the term revivalist because these movements share an intellectual lineage and historical overlap with other movements of Islamic revival globally. In their own understanding of themselves, these groups are not part of a unitary category. Instead, each movement sees itself as promoting the “true” Islam, and the others as flawed reformists whose methodology is ineffective. At the same time, these movements are aware that they are often lumped together, and couch their critique of each other in mild terms. During fieldwork, I often heard sermons which claimed “some people say...” This discursive maneuver concealed the identity of the movement being criticized from outsiders; at the same time, movement-members were able to identify which of their antagonists was being referenced.

Imam Muhammad Ghazali (1058-1111) laid the groundwork for the intellectual framework of the contemporary global Islamic revivalism. In *The Revival of Religious Science*, Ghazali argued that the corruption of religious scholars and rulers corrupted the masses, and that the existent system of governance might seem pure but was actually full of intrinsic impurities (Ghazali in Rahnema 1994). He identified the clergy and the ruling elite as two forces that perpetuated the corruption of religious practice. Ghazali saw a two-stage Islamic revival; first, the people’s Islamic sensibilities should be reawakened, and then radical political action should

be taken to create a properly Islamic state. Contemporary Islamic revivalist movements draw on Ghazali and other Islamic thinkers, and thus share several ideological elements: (1) revivalists believe that prevalent conditions in Muslim countries are unacceptable, although they disagree on the exact problems, the solutions to implement, and the Islamic thinkers and ideologies to rely on; and (2) revivalist movements are scripturalist, and present themselves as rooted in orthodoxy and the authority of Islamic scriptural traditions. The solutions they propose to social problems, however divergent, are all linked back to religious symbols, primarily Islamic sacred texts; and (3) these movements share a nostalgia for the glorious Prophetic past, which they present as one that can be recovered through a strict adherence to sacred texts (Zeidan 2003: 3). Islamic revivalists aim to radically transform social systems they see as promoting decadence, corruption, social injustice, impiety and immorality.

Rewards for being a good Muslim and punishment for being a bad Muslim have traditionally been deferred to the hereafter by the *ulama* (Rahnama 1994). Revivalists revise this common belief in an attempt to motivate people to join their movements. For revivalists, impiety is punished by the proliferation of bad rulers, social injustice, corruption, and economic exploitation (Rahnama 1994). Piety is rewarded through the establishment of a good social order, justice, and political uplift. The project of revivalism aims to improve conditions in this world as well as the next, through the argument that once every individual in a Muslim country awakens to his or her true religious responsibilities, social change will occur. A significant point of difference is that some movements believe that political intervention can be used to impose Islam on the impious public, and that this will lead to a renewed Muslim community. The two primary groups I examine in this dissertation, Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at, agree that social change is a voluntary personal process. They both fall under the category of pietistic apolitical groups.

Groups of this orientation believe that spreading religious knowledge and implementing the sacred texts in their personal lives will lead to the renewal of state and society (Almond and Appleby 1995: 46). They see themselves as participating in a generation long project of social change, the benefits of which will impact the global Muslim *ummah* (community of believers).

Observers are divided as to when exactly Islamic revivalism took hold among the Pakistani elite; some have traced it to the 1970s when General Zia was in power (Afzal-Khan 2007, Haq 2007), while others see it as starting during the Musharraf era in 2001 (Zia 2009). Regardless of the historical moment at which they locate it, scholars of Pakistan agree that the religious revival has become a significant force in urban settings (Afzal-Khan 2007, Zia 2009, Iqtidar 2011). Revivalists appear, to non-revivalist Pakistanis, quite similar in their sartorial practices and the ways they mark their piety on their bodies. Women don the *niqab* (face veil), while male strategies for demonstrating piety include the cultivation of a long beard along with other sartorial markers. Devout Tablighi men dress exclusively in Pakistani *shalwar kameeze* in opposition to the more elite suit or jeans. Those men who work in places that do not allow them to wear shalwar kameeze often eschew the tie, which they consider a symbol of Christianity. The literature on the Islamic revival in other countries indicates that revivalists are middle-class, university educated, and urban-based (Ayubi 1991; Mitchell 1993; Wickham 2002; Clark 2004). These trends hold true in Pakistan, where the Islamic revivalists I interacted with were identifiably middle or upper-class.

Islamic revivalists refer to sacred texts in order to construct Islam anew, drawing on ideas of *fiqh* (Islamic theology) in order to legitimate their behavior. Locally, members of these groups are seen as part of a unitary category due to the similarity of their dress practices and their common critiques of Pakistani elite urban society. Revivalist movements adopt a variety of

approaches towards social change, including political action, violence, and education. The movements I focus on in this dissertation, the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda fall under the umbrella of what Olivier Roy (2006) calls “neo-fundamentalist” movements in their lack of political agenda, focus on Shari'a in matters of ritual, dress, and behavior, and in their attempt to create a trans-historic Muslim community of believers through their rejection of both contemporary Pakistani social organization and “modern” Western cultures.

## The Tablighi Jama'at

The Tablighi Jama'at, established in 1926 by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, is a trans-national Islamic revivalist movement which incorporates both men and women. The word *Tabligh* comes from the verb *ballagha (b-l-gh)* which connotes the following: to cause something to reach, to communicate, and to report (Masud 2000). The verb appears in the Qur'an (5:67, 33:39, 7:62) as tied to the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (Masud 2000). A *Tablighi* is one who engages in Tabligh. The word “Jama'at” refers to a community or congregation. The Tablighi Jama'at's name claims that it is a “conveying group,” one which spreads Islamic knowledge to the masses. The Tablighi Jama'at was founded to invite the Muslims of British India back to purified religious practice (M. Ahmed 1991: 512; Haq 1972: 119). Its primary labor force is lay preachers, who recruit others to participate in spreading religious knowledge. Revival movements concerned reform often focus on building a power base, raising money, and educating *ulama* to combat un-Islamic traditions (Sadowski 1996). Tabligh reversed this formula, asking members for their time instead of their money, and sending them on distant missions instead of trying to keep them geographically concentrated.

The Tablighi Jama'at has grown into a large transnational movement with a particularly strong presence in Pakistan (Metcalf 2002). Tablighis in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh make competing claims as to which country comprises the movement's international headquarters. Tablighis in India argue that Nizamuddin is the base, since the movement was founded in Delhi, while elders in Raiwind (Pakistan) and Tongi (Bangladesh) dispute Nizamuddin's final authority, citing their countries' majority Muslim populations (Howenstien 2006). The movement based in Pakistan is enormous; more than two million men attend the annual three day congregations held in Lahore (Metcalf 2003: 137). Tabligh has a policy of not keeping records of their membership, and while the number of women who participate in the movement are numerous, exact figures are unavailable. Women have participated in Tabligh since it was founded, but their roles and responsibilities within the movement are different than those of men.

The main mission of the Tablighi Jama'at is to engage in *da'wa*, which literally means "to call" (Masud 2000). *Da'wa* tours, also known as jama'ats, are the primary focus of the movement even today. Men and women are organized into jama'ats either at their city center (*markaz*), or at the movement's national center, depending on the length of the tour. Tours can last fixed durations of three days, forty days, four months, seven months, and one year. Groups on tour live at local mosques and travel a pre-determined national or international route. International tours travel to all corners of the globe, while national tours penetrate deep into the villages of Pakistan. Lengthy tours return to Raiwind multiple times and visit multiple locations. When a traveling jama'at<sup>4</sup> includes women, the women are housed with a local Tablighi family (Sikand 1999). At each stop, the jama'at visits the homes of local Muslims, invites them to the

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<sup>4</sup> Note on capitalization – when referring to the Tablighi Jama'at as a movement, the word "Jama'at" is capitalized. When "jama'at" refers to a group on tour in accordance with standard Tablighi usage, the word is not capitalized.



mosque to listen to sermons, and attempts to recruit them into participating in the “work” of Tabligh. While women have participated in the movement since its inception, their activities in the movement are still limited (Sikand 1999, 43). Women are dependent on men for their inclusion in Tabligh; women cannot go on Tablighi tours without a *mahram* (closely related man) to accompany them. Their daily schedules are decided by the men accompanying them, giving them less decision-making ability than the men they travel with.

Tabligh is relatively uncontroversial within Pakistan; the Pakistanis I interviewed had no strong feelings about the movement, or its incorporation of women, other than a vague sense that it might be “extreme.” The English language press, which represents the viewpoints of elite urban Pakistanis, does not carry much critique of the movement. The Pakistani *ulama* (religious scholars who have graduated from established seminaries) also do not challenge the movement openly. Some analysts have suggested that Tabligh has hidden political agendas, but these claims remain unexamined (Sikand 2003). Studies of the Tablighi Jama’at focus on its calls to spiritual reform (Metcalf 1998), the activities of men on tour (Metcalf 1998; Metcalf 2003; Masud 2000; Sikand 1999), and its intellectual connections to other Islamic groups (Sikand 1999; Metcalf 2002). Work on female Tablighis is limited due to the strict seclusion practiced by the movement (Noor 2012). The work that does exist is based on the official statements of leaders of the movement and movement texts, coupled with the occasional conversation or interview with Tablighi women (e.g. Metcalf 1996). Works on Tablighi women are often centered around single episodes of attendance at one of the larger gatherings for women (e.g. Metcalf 1996, Metcalf 1998). My dissertation fills this gap, offering ethnographic research on Tablighi women conducted over a four year period from 2007 to 2010. I examine what participation in the

movement means to Tablighi women, and the dialectical engagement through which they shape and are altered by the movement.

### **The Al-Huda Welfare Trust:**

The Al-Huda Welfare Trust, founded in 1992 by Dr Farhat Hashmi, is both more recent and less studied than the Tablighi Jama'at. Dr. Hashmi has a Ph.D in Hadith Sciences from the University of Glasgow, and founded the movement with the goal of reforming Muslim society through authentic Islamic education (Esposito 2010). Her approach to social reform emphasizes the importance of women understanding the Qur'an and Hadith for themselves (Esposito 2010). Al-Huda provides classes for women in a number of settings. These classes teach women Arabic and provide them with unmediated access to the Qur'an and Hadith. Al-Huda's use of cassette tapes and its focus on middle - and upper-class women has moved it into transnational contexts, with a main campus in Toronto and over 200 branches globally (Okoye 2010). Al-Huda does not have the volume of members that the Tablighi Jama'at does, but is nonetheless very well-known and influential within Pakistan and in Pakistani expatriate circles. In less than twenty years the movement has grown from a building in Islamabad to an international organization that penetrates deeply into many elite neighborhoods and nearly every women's college in Pakistan. It offers classes in its official campus in Islamabad, week and month long seminars in elite hotels, and classes in the private homes of members. Any woman who completes the offered diploma courses can, with the approval of the institute, open a center in a private house. Al-Huda is responsible for supplying test papers, checking those papers, and supplying diplomas to the women who complete that course.

The movement's impact and rapid expansion can be tied directly to the demographic it targets, and the ways in which it accommodates them. Wealthy Pakistani women, prior to Al-Huda, had been a secondary audience for religious preachers and movements. Movements of reform in the Indian subcontinent have historically focused on male audiences, and been male directed. Men have provided intellectual frameworks and theological guidance, while women have participated as followers. Female leaders within these movements have functioned in coordination with and under the direction of male leadership. Al-Huda's exclusive focus on women results in a movement tailored to upper and middle-class women's unique timing and mobility constraints. Classes are held at official buildings belonging to the institute for those women with access to cars and drivers, while others are held in informal settings. The institute's deep reach into the urban Pakistani upper- and middle-class is a result of its semi-formal classes: not everyone has time or motivation to attend classes in the institute itself, but most women are able to go to houses in their own neighborhoods where they can learn the Qur'an or Hadith.

Unlike the Tablighi Jama'at, Al-Huda is considered controversial within Pakistan. Al-Huda's exclusive focus on women means that women are often drawn into revivalism without their families. Its claim that women can interpret sacred texts without the guidance of religious scholars is also uncommon. The urban Pakistani middle- and upper-classes disapprove of Al-Huda, as demonstrated through the many articles in English language newspapers detailing the movement's flaws. The most common accusation is that Al-Huda is radicalizing women and causing disruptions in their domestic life. Urban Pakistanis maintain that Al-Huda causes conflict within nuclear and extended families. Multiple ulama have also spoken publically against Al-Huda, arguing that its claim that women can learn to interpret sacred texts on their own is misguided and leads women astray (Usmani 2010). These critiques argue that the

movement gives women access to Islamic sacred texts in an irresponsible manner, encouraging them to interpret these texts to favor themselves in domestic and social negotiations.

The literature on Al-Huda is limited and focuses primarily on women's participation in official Al-Huda classes held on purpose built campuses constructed by the movement, and in elite hotels (S. Ahmad 2009, Mushtaq 2007). This literature focuses on Al-Huda's theological differences from other movements, and Al-Huda women's "exclusionary politics (which) negate all other forms of truth" (S. Ahmad 2009: 191). Some of these accounts construct revivalist women, and Al-Huda women in particular, as creating intolerance in an otherwise tolerant Pakistan. This dissertation complicates those claims, describing the subtle interactions through which urban Pakistani groups attempt to create hegemonic representations of Islamic "truth" by negating other points of view, as well as illustrating the patriarchal assumptions which underlie urban Pakistani upper and middle-class critiques of Al-Huda.

## Fieldwork/ Methods

Founded in 1961, Islamabad is the purpose-built capital city of Pakistan and has an area of 220.15 square kilometers (Bloom and Blair 2008). When it was first constructed, Islamabad consisted primarily of government offices, foreign diplomatic missions and government built housing that was assigned to government servants (Ellicott 2002). The city is laid out in a grid pattern, and is divided into sectors. The numbering and lettering of residential sectors reflects their prestigiousness as places of residence. Islamabad is a small city, and the elite nature of neighborhoods is tied to the cost of land in those sectors. Residents of the city can identify more and less desirable locations instantly by sector location. The Capital Development Authority

(CDA) has left portions of each sector undeveloped, and these undeveloped areas have become host to “*kachi abadis*” (raw dwellings), slum neighborhoods where the poor who work as servants and laborers in the city live. A survey conducted in 2012 by the Children Complaint Office revealed that there were 34 kachi abadis scattered through various sectors, and that their residents were 85,981 in number. This made them 7.73 percent of Islamabad’s total population (The Nation 2012).

My research was conducted primarily in Islamabad. Among the reasons for this was my desire to control for social class and educational background. While Al-Huda participants are generally elite, and the Tablighi Jama’at has members from all over the economic spectrum, Islamabad itself is a fairly elite city. The Tablighi and Al-Huda groups where I conducted the bulk of my participant-observation research had similar educational and economic backgrounds. All of my research subjects were middle- or upper-middle class, and most of the women had college educations. They were all from families which could afford to dispense with their economic labor, and lived in similar sectors of the city. My project frames urban middle and upper class women as an area of study for two reasons: (1) these women are called upon to sacrifice more in the name of the Islamic revival than any other social group, and therefore a study of their reasons for joining revivalist movements may help us understand the more general appeal of revivalist movements; (2) the elite of Pakistan determine the country’s political and social direction, and have historically used women to demonstrate ideological and social positions; thus, the activities of middle and upper class women serves as an indicator of emergent political tensions and social changes in Pakistan.

The term “middle class” is confusing on a local level; Pakistanis use it to identify any stratum of society that is elite and non-feudal (Talbot 1998; 46). All of my informants fit neatly

into this local category, and also self-identify as middle or upper-middle class. The urban upper and middle class includes members of the civil service and military, the media, legal community, judiciary, NGO workers and professional Pakistanis who work in medicine, education and business (Siddiqi 2011). Nasr describes this middle class as “devoutly Islamic yet highly modern” and argues that this class draws increasingly on tradition and religion in order to navigate their changing society (Nasr 2010: 184). Contestations over religion, and revivalist claims that tradition is “anti-religion” unsettle Pakistani understandings that tradition and religion are compatible and that traditional behavior is religiously virtuous.

## Introduction to the Field and Pre-Dissertation Research:

I conducted pre-dissertation research on Al-Huda, the Tablighi Jama’at, the Jama’at Islami, and a local Sufi group during the summers of 2007 and 2008. The ties I developed during this process were essential in allowing me to conduct my dissertation fieldwork. 2007 and 2008 were tumultuous years in Pakistan’s history. In March 2007, General Musharraf suspended the Chief Justice of Pakistan, and pressed corruption charges against him. In August 2007, he carried out a siege of the Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*) in Islamabad, which resulted in a number of civilian casualties, including children. These incidents resulted in the mobilization of two groups which generally displayed opposing political inclinations; lawyers and other pro-democracy forces, and religious political parties and other religious reformers. I observed these mobilizations and unlikely alliances during my pre-dissertation fieldwork, and their after-effects lingered throughout my doctoral research.

During the summer of 2007 and 2008, Islamabad was gripped with a growing sense that Pakistan was caught in a conflict between the United States and the Taliban. Foreign researchers were seen locally as inherently suspicious, or as spies. A number of individuals I met through my research were convinced that there was an ongoing battle between “Islam” and “the West.” In this atmosphere, my positionality as a “halfie” anthropologist (Abu-Lughod 1991a) was critical in allowing me to conduct my research. My status as a US graduate student caused some concern among my research subjects. A number of them refused to give me their phone numbers, saying that they did not want to explain to their families who I was. Saba, the teacher of the Al-Huda class I conducted research on, told me that she was concerned that my writing would make people think “oh, look at those ignorant housewives learning about Islam.” Similarly, my informant Kamila, who introduced me into Tablighi settings, told me that she was afraid my work would “harm the Muslims.” My extended pre-dissertation research proved essential in allowing me to develop relationships with my informants that allowed them to treat me, to a large extent, like any other Pakistani woman at the dars. Other movements, including the Jama’at Islami and a small Sufi group run by a spiritual leader referred to as Shah Sahib, permitted me to attend on the condition that I would keep an open mind, and consider their message. This focus on “converting” me into revivalist belief and practice was a feature of my pre-dissertation engagements with revivalist movements, but faded away gradually as I started dissertation research.

My fieldwork was conducted from August 2009 to August 2011. This was another politically tumultuous time in Pakistan. General Musharraf had resigned in August 2008, but the after-effects of his antagonistic relationship with both religious and secularly-oriented urban Pakistani reformers lingered. The Fulbright commission had awarded me 100 out of 105 points

on my doctoral research proposal, but deemed Islamabad too high risk to fund research there. Some of the groups I researched during pre-dissertation research also seemed to have decided that my research was dangerous; when I contacted one of the senior Jama'at Islami female leaders to ask about attending a weekly dars, she informed me that they were no longer offering weekly classes for women. The Sufi group had also gone on hiatus while their leader, Shah Sahib, went on an international trip. My research among the Jama'at Islami and the Sufi group form part of the backdrop to this dissertation, but I do not engage with those movements in depth during my fieldwork.

## Participant-Observation Research:

I drew on a combination of methods for this research. These included in-depth participant observation research, formal and informal interviews, and a general values survey. I conducted participant-observation research primarily in the weekly class held by Al-Huda and the weekly Tablighi gathering known as *Taleem* (lit. education)<sup>5</sup>, observing 70 Tablighi Taleems, and 110 Al-Huda classes. This attendance took the form of my taking extensive notes on the sermon, and the behavior of the participants in dars settings. I also took notes on the conversations and socialization before and after dars, as well as interacting with participants before and after the gathering. Some of these interactions developed into informal interviews.

The weekly Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at groups I had conducted pre-dissertation research on were ongoing, and both movements' members were happy to have me attend. My little notebook seemed out of place in Tablighi settings, but Al-Huda students all carried books and notebooks and were not surprised to see me scribbling notes as their class progressed. I

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<sup>5</sup> Taleem is a gathering in which committed Tablighi women listen to sermons, are informed about visiting tour groups incorporating women, and are recruited to join specific tours.



steadily attended the weekly Al-Huda and Tablighi dars, while also collecting semi-formal and informal interviews from women who participated in other dars across the city. I also made trips to Lahore and Karachi, and cultivated a number of informants in those cities. I avoided the officialdom of both movements; my focus is on the experiences of ordinary dars participants, and having gained permission from the groups themselves to engage in participant-observation research, I did not want the leadership of either group to decide my work was controversial or dangerous. My participation was designed to be unobtrusive; although contradictions between movements' official statements and their actual practice were of interest to me, I generally refrained from pointing these out to the group. In a few instances, where I decided that clarification would be worth the possibility of antagonizing my informants, I asked key informants for their interpretations away from the main group.

I refrained from participating in movement-specific activities that identify an individual as a committed member of the movement, seeing these as part of the barrier between conducting participant-observation research and becoming a participant. My involvement in these activities would have signaled a personal interest in revivalism, and this was an ethical line I was unwilling to cross. In Al-Huda, I did not participate in the activities involved in the class, which included reading from the Qur'an and interpreting these passages. In Tabligh, I maintained a firm refusal to "write my name" on the list of women who vowed to one day participate in Tablighi tours. Women's participation in tours is contingent on the participation of male relatives, and is also one of the identifying marks of extremely devout Tablighi women. I did not participate in Tablighi tours. My interviews with women regarding their experiences of tour will have to suffice to flesh out this aspect of the movement. As a side-note, roughly 75% of the women I

encountered during weekly Tablighi dars had not participated in tours despite considering themselves committed Tablighis.

Participant-observation extended to non-dars movement settings. In addition to Taleem and active participation in jama'ats, the Tablighi Jama'at has one other important component, namely visiting women's traveling jama'ats when they are nearby.<sup>6</sup> I participated in these visits regularly, joining my informants when they were hosting traveling jama'ats in their homes. Non-class Al-Huda activities include the movement's Daura-e-Quran event<sup>7</sup>, which I attended during Ramadan. I also cultivated social relationships with my informants and was invited to a number of social gatherings and visits for tea or dinner.

## Interviews

I conducted both structured and informal interviews as part of this project, neither of which were audio recorded. My subjects firmly maintained that "purdah of the voice" was part of their veiling, and that they did not want to be recorded lest recordings of their voices fall into the hands of male researchers. Instead of using recordings, I took extensive notes. Informal interviews were held before and after revivalist classes. These interviews were focused on topics that were relevant to the dars of the day. I asked for details about topics that had come up in and around the dars setting. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with revivalist women from other movements, and women unaffiliated with revivalism. I chose non-revivalist subjects based on social proximity and ease of access, as well as spontaneously interviewing individuals who

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<sup>6</sup> This form of visiting is known as "*nusrat*", and is an established part of Tablighi life. Tablighi tours base themselves in a particular house while in a city, and Tablighis in that city go to visit them and participate in their activities.

<sup>7</sup> The Daura-e-Qur'an translates to "tour of the Qur'an." It consists of a quick summary of the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an's chapters. During this event, the speaker touches briefly on the meanings of each Qur'anic chapter and pulls out essential themes. The comparative

seemed to hold strong beliefs about revivalism. I administered 15 structured interviews to women from Al-Huda, and another 15 to women from the Tablighi Jama'at. These interviews fleshed out women's perception of day to day life within the movement, as well as their feelings about their own participation in the movement. I also conducted life history interviews; three with women from Al-Huda, and three with women from the Tablighi Jama'at. The subjects of these interviews were women with whom I had developed considerable rapport over the course of my fieldwork, and they permitted me to record the interviews on the condition that I would delete the files immediately after transcribing my notes.

## General Values Survey

The general values survey was a late addition to my research instruments. One year into my research, I realized that very little work had been done on Pakistani ethics and religious values generally. The general values survey reflects my attempt to correct that shortcoming. The survey consists of 42 questions about religious authority, religious beliefs, gender, and social organization, and was administered to approximately 50 urban middle and upper class Pakistanis. Surveys were answered anonymously. I distributed 20 surveys at one of Islamabad's elite hospitals, 20 at a local university and 10 to people I encountered during social interactions. I discuss survey results in chapter two, which examines the positioning of revivalists in the urban Pakistani landscape. I also compare my results, which were collected from middle-class urban Pakistanis, with those of a 2014 University of Michigan Population Studies Center Survey, in which respondents were intended to reflect overall Pakistani demographics.

# Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation examines the construction of revivalist identities in urban Pakistan in order to demonstrate women's contributions to revivalist rhetoric, theology, discourses, and identity. Two main analytic themes run through this dissertation: (1) the first concerns contestations over Islam and women's Islamically mandated religious and social practices and the ways in which these contestations delineate urban Pakistani identities; and (2) the second focus of investigation is the creation of meaning within revivalist movements, and the ways in which female revivalists contribute to movement-wide meaning creation. Together, these themes illustrate the ways in which revivalism functions in urban Pakistan, the ways in which revivalists influence and are influenced by specific movements, and revivalist interactions with non-revivalist Pakistanis. The comparative approach I take examines the differences between a male-directed revivalist movement (the Tablighi Jama'at) and a female-led movement (Al-Huda), and allows for an examination of the degree to which differently-gendered leadership shape overall revivalist structures of meaning.

Chapter One "From Symbols to Activists: The History of Women's Mobilization in Pakistan," lays out this dissertation's first analytic theme, an examination of Islam and gender as vehicles of identity construction in Pakistan. The history of Pakistan, from its existence as part of a united British India to the creation of Pakistan as an independent state in 1947, reveals that Islam and gender have been used by multiple constituencies in order to create legitimacy and authority. From colonial times onward, women were symbols of the identity of the nation, "the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated" (Mani 1998: 9; Critelli 2010; Zia, 2009). Women's involvement in this process was initially passive, and women followed the direction of

male leaders as they promoted particular reforms through their sartorial and educational choices. Recently, increasing numbers of middle- and upper-class Pakistani women have been veiling and demonstrating growing religious sentiment (Afzal-Khan 2007; Siddiqi 2010). In this chapter, I argue that the increase in women's participation in Islamic revivalist movements can be tied to the past decade-long history of female activism and promotion of revivalist values and dress. Women's increasing activism is tied to their growing involvement in meaning-making within revivalist movements.

Chapter Two "Contesting Islam: The Politics of Revivalist Identity in Pakistan" draws on the semiotic theory of Laclau and Mouffe (2005) to examine how revivalist claims to a "pure" Islam unsettled hegemonic Pakistani understandings regarding religion, gender and virtue. This chapter continues the focus on Islam and gendered virtue as a means of identity-construction in contemporary urban Pakistan. Urban Pakistanis share broad-based understandings of Islamic authority as rooted in ideas of an Islamic past and the historical continuity of practices. In contrast, revivalists argue that the Qur'an and Hadith as the only legitimate sources of Islamic authority, and use these texts to challenge semi-hegemonic Pakistani conceptions of Islam and virtue. Contestations over gender and Islam are reflected in multiple antagonistic encounters in which revivalists other and are othered by urban Pakistani groups, contributing to the formation of an overarching revivalist identity-position, as well as movement-specific identities. This examination of identity-formation reveals the inherently political nature of revivalist identities in urban Pakistan.

Chapter Three "Is The Material Immaterial? Objects and Space in Islamic Revivalism" examines the construction of meaning within revivalist movements, and the ways in which female members contribute to overall movement-specific meaning-making. I draw on the spatial

theory of Henri Lefebvre (1991) to analyze Al-Huda and Tablighi Jama'at space in the three moments of its creation: representations of space, spatial practice, and representational spaces. Drawing on these moments I trace the multiple agents involved in the construction of space, and the symbolic meanings various agents imbue it with. This analysis reveals female revivalists' active engagement in the construction of revivalist spaces, and differences in the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda's conceptualizations of gender, hierarchy and social organization. This chapter analyses movement ideology and symbols as theorized by movement leaders and lived by rank-and-file revivalists.

Chapter Four "Transforming Discourses: The Qur'an and Hadith in Islamic Revivalist Movements" continues the focus on meaning-creation within revivalist movements by examining the interpretation of sacred text within revivalist dars. Islamic revivalist movements in Pakistan recruit and train female members through dars which feature stories illustrating virtuous religious and social behavior for attendees. These stories are derived from Islamic texts, and form an essential component of a discourse that positions revivalist movements as returning to a "pure" Islam untainted by local (Hindu) culture. Occasionally, different revivalist movements will draw on the same story to promote vastly divergent views about women's religious and social responsibilities. This phenomenon illustrates the active interpretation occurring within dars, and the ways in which revivalists draw on seemingly neutral sacred texts to construct movement-specific understandings related to religion and gender. Stories based on sacred texts are put into circulation by movement leadership and are repeated by members. As a story is told and retold, the intended message is molded into the message members think should be promoted. Female members of revivalist movements also create and tell stories patterned on those circulated by their movements. The mutation of stories within revivalist movements points to the dialogical

relationship between revivalist movements and their members, in which members play a significant role in shaping revivalist interpretations of sacred texts, particularly as they pertain to women's roles in society.

Chapter Five "Dominating Narratives: Women's Lives Through Movement-Colored Lenses" unites this dissertation's analytical themes, examining the ways in which conceptualizations of gendered Islamic virtue and meaning-making within revivalist movements impact women's subjectivities, interactions with their families, and imaginings of their lives. In this chapter, I draw on two life history interviews in order to isolate movement-specific interpretive frameworks. I argue that women's participation in revivalism, construction of revivalist identities, and contribution to movement-specific meaning inducts them into specific beliefs regarding Islamic virtue. These beliefs color both women's interactions and their interpretations of their own lives and those of others.

The conclusion of this dissertation meditates on the role revivalism plays in urban Pakistan, drawing together this dissertation's themes to offer an overarching view of the ways in which revivalism impacts changing landscapes of urban Pakistan and influences both revivalist and non-revivalist Pakistani lives.

# **CHAPTER ONE. FROM SYMBOLS TO ACTIVISTS: THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S MOBILIZATION IN PAKISTAN**

## **Introduction**

Islamic ideology is growing among upper and middle-class urban Pakistani women, resulting in changes to their dress and behavior. Research also reveals that students at elite universities are demonstrating growing religious sentiment and affiliation with ideas of Pakistan as an Islamic state (Siddiqi 2010). These changes are correlated through time, and historically, changes in elite women's dress have telegraphed reformulations of national and local identities and relationships with Islam. How and why are women's patterns of dress and behavior changing, and what do they tell us about social change more generally? This chapter examines the links between prevailing attitudes towards religion in Pakistan and upper and middle-class women's self-presentation. Women's sartorial and educational choices have historically been under male direction and control. This chapter explores the use of women as symbols and legitimating forces at key transitional moments in the history of Pakistan. This exploration will demonstrate that changes in elite women's self-representation have telegraphed moments of transition in national identities.

I argue that patriarchal entitlement to women's representation is part of the unwritten cultural codes of Pakistan, and translates across social class and provincial boundaries. This entitlement reflects a long history of men demonstrating political and social positions through the women affiliated with them. Women's transgression of these boundaries provokes reactions



among the majority of the Pakistani elite, who see women's self-directed activism as a threat to social order. State institutions and law enforcement agencies reinforce an entrenched feudal patriarchy that ties the actions of women to the honor of men (Bhanbhro et. al. 2013). The intellectual and social apparatuses that allow for state tolerated honor killings (Bhanbhro et. al. 2013) operate at lesser levels to see women as responsible for maintaining family representations. Contemporary legal challenges to women's ability to marry against parental opposition are sustained by ideas of women as "willful daughters" (Jamal 2006) who ought to submit to patriarchal control.

Pakistani subjects constitute themselves within discourses of the nation, Islam and progress, and draw on codes of dress and behavior to demonstrate the subject-positions they assume. By appraising the historical circumstances of Pakistan's formation and continued existence it is possible to understand the range of politicized identities available to the urban upper and middle-class, the ways in which these identities interact with gender and ideas of Islam – and thereby understand urban conceptions of Pakistan's relationship with Islam today. Questions of elite identities are tied up in those of the nation-state: What is Pakistan? How do Pakistanis understand the role of Islam in the public and private realms of their lives?

The importance of women as symbols of social reform in the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to British colonialism, when "colonial feminists" drew on the supposed degradation of Indian women in order to justify the colonization of India (L. Ahmed 1992). The British saw themselves on a civilizing mission which involved rescuing Indian women from an entire body of religious beliefs and ritual practices (Chatterjee 1989). Christian missionaries argued that women's seclusion, dress practices, and education reflected their oppression. Competing religious nationalist movements responded to foreign attempts to co-opt Indian women by constructing

“new” women to stand for their idealized nations. A significant aspect to this construction was an intense focus on women’s clothing and education.

Women’s dress has been one of the mechanisms through which communities and families have historically signaled identity-positions with regard to social class, and ideas of nationhood and Islam (Critelli 2010; Zia, 2009). The history of women in India and modern Pakistan demonstrates a transition in which women gradually acquire control over their activism and self-presentation. Movements as diverse as Pakistani feminism and Islamic revivalism become transgressive as they emancipate themselves from male agendas and become women-directed. Early reform movements targeting women relied on rhetoric that positioned women as equal partners in reform through their roles as wives and mothers (Ansari 2009). Women have only recently come into their own and directed the scope and parameters of their activism. Women’s concerns are often different from men’s, and these concerns are reflected in religious women’s activism, preaching and rhetoric. Instead of demonstrating a preoccupation with the imposition of *Shari’a* law, women demonstrate a concern for the proper running of domestic space and the imposition of an “Islamic” order in social life. Once free of explicit male control over their activities, women constitute themselves as symbols, coding themselves to convey their visions of the ideal society. Women’s dress is a significant concern of female activists and movements, and can be a source of tension among Pakistani families.

## Women as Symbols: the Pakistan Movement

Pakistan was born of a popular movement to end British colonial authority in India in the early 1900s. The All-India Muslim League, which claimed to represent Muslim interests,

demanding a homeland for Muslims separate from Indian Hindus, based on their faith background (Critelli 2010: 237). While the Muslim League drew on the trope of faith (*din*) to promote the Muslim cause, what they meant by *din* was not entirely clear (Ali 2011: 502). Jinnah, the leader of the Pakistan movement, drew on Islam as a rallying point although his commitment to the idea of an Islamic state has been seen as ambiguous by contemporary analysts. Some analysts have argued that Jinnah's demand for an Islamic state was merely a political maneuver to gain Indian Muslims better terms in the formation of a federated India (Bose and Jalal 2004). Strategically, the Muslim League's reliance on Islam as a unifying factor was the result of a realization that religion was the only force strong enough to overcome ethnic and linguistic nationalisms and make a country out of diverse groups of people representing unique interests (Talbot 1998).

The mobilizing power of Islam varied across social classes and regions even prior to the creation of Pakistan. The Muslim professional classes of India were committed to the ideals of Muslim nationalism, but were not necessarily "good" Muslims from a traditionalist or fundamentalist view point (Nasr 2007; Talbot 1998). Feudal landlords in the areas that would become Pakistan were primarily motivated by economic interests (Talbot 1998), while the Muslim masses were mobilized through ideas of Islamic nationhood (Gilmartin 1988). In some cases, Jinnah made enormous concessions to local elites in order to spread the league's message directly to the people of different regions (Gilmartin 1988). Once mobilized, the people of these areas' enthusiasm for the cause of Pakistan forced local power elites to support the formation of Pakistan (Gilmartin 1988).

Islamic revivalism in the Indian subcontinent emerged around the Partition of India with the establishment of the Tablighi Jama'at (society for spreading faith) in 1926 and the Jama'at Islami (Islamic party) in 1941. These movements started as a direct response to Christian

missionary groups (Mani 1998) and were concerned with issues of Muslim identity and community. Both movements promoted visions of a new Islam, cleansed of tradition. Deeb (2006) has referred to this as an “authenticated Islam,” which she defines as an Islam that has a modern interpretation based on ideas of knowledge and understanding of sacred texts. Tablighis eschewed politics, focusing on renewing Islam by calling individual Muslims to correct Islamic practice. In contrast, the Jama’at Islami laid emphasis on the establishment of an Islamic State, arguing that the Muslim League’s conceptualization of Pakistan was secular and un-Islamic (I. Ahmad 2009: 70). A key element to this new Islam was an opposition to the role of the ulama, traditional Islamic scholars (Iqtidar 2011). It is significant to note that both movements focused on cultivating the reform and activism of men; women were secondary to movement activities and were enlisted primarily for their symbolic value. Islamic revivalist movements were interested in continuing the segregation of women, and in resisting the expansion of their social and political presence. The Jama’at Islami in particular saw women’s role as domestic, and confined to the house (Cheema 2013). In contrast, nearly all other Indian reformers laid a great deal of emphasis on the construction of “new” women to represent their idealized nation.

Social, political, and religious reformers affiliated with the Muslim League attempted to create Muslim women who were visually and culturally distinct from Hindu and British women. Muslim reformers turned the reform of women’s dress and education into one of the defining symbols of Muslim nationalism (Thaper 1993). “Uneducated” women, subject to “foreign” Hindu traditions and forms of dress, were framed as a threat to Indian Muslim civilization, and properly educated women were seen as the source of its preservation. Muslim focus on education and dress was the result of internalized British critiques of the situation of women in India. The British had presented the colonization of India as having the sole benevolent purpose of saving

“brown women from brown men” (Spivak 1994: 93) and the oppressions of their culture. Influenced by the Victorian ideology that women were the moral center of homes, British missionaries made efforts to “educate” Indian women. Missionary schools focused educational efforts on middle and upper-class households, since a trickle-down effect was seen as more effective than one focused on the poor (Savage 1997). “Colonial feminism” (L. Ahmed 1992) resulted in British intervention in matters of religious law and custom, and Indian leaders often responded by doubling down on the practices the British opposed. Power struggles between colonial authorities and local authorities often harmed the women both sides claimed to be protecting. For example, the British ban on *sutti* (widow burning) turned what had been a local practice into a national one betokening resistance (Loomba 2003). Another example can be found in the late nineteenth century, when the *ulama* responded to British attempts to codify Islamic law by refusing to allow British judges to grant women divorces. This maneuver, intended as a pressure tactic designed to make the colonial authorities permit Muslim judges to administer Islamic law, had the result of denying women any legitimate means of obtaining a divorce (Zaman 2002: 26).

The protection and education of women became one of the defining symbols of Muslim nationalism (Thaper 1993). While Muslim reformers disagreed about the exact social role they envisioned for women, they shared visions of women’s importance in the preservation of cultural purity and reform. Reformers across the intellectual spectrum saw “uneducated” women as a threat to the community. Concerns related to women’s education can be seen as an extension of concerns over what a Muslim nation might look like. Mani has proposed that interventions aimed at women were actually efforts to construct tradition. In her own words, “women in fact became the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated. What was at stake was not women, but

tradition” (Mani 1998: 79).” Differences between the ways in which tradition was constructed through women’s education is illustrative of ways in which different Pakistani social groups approach the issues of women’s gendered roles and responsibilities even today.

While women had always been in charge of the household, Indian reform movements imagined the “new” woman as running a household based on skills acquired through education. Women’s education, previously a matter of family norms, became a means of nation-building. A public discourse arose regarding the purposes of, and best methods for, providing women with education. Muslim reformers approached the issue of women’s education from multiple intellectual angles but had overlapping concerns. All of the reformers addressing women wanted women to be good wives and mothers. They were in agreement that women needed to discard “backward” customs in order to be more suitable companions to their husbands.

Attempts to reform women involved intervention in the space of the *zenana* (women’s quarters), where women had previously been autonomous (Minault 1998: 6), as well as intervention into the *purdah* system which had been nearly monolithic among the upper and middle classes. The basic components of *purdah* are the differentiated use of space, and differentiated dress, in which women adopt some degree of veiling. This veiling can encompass the face, hair and entire body through the use of the *niqab*, *hijab* and *burqa* respectively. In Pakistan, the word *hijab* is used to refer specifically to the head-scarf, as opposed to other forms of head-coverings such as the *dupatta* (a loose shawl that can be worn on the head or across the body based on the wearer’s preference). The *niqab* is a veil for the face that leaves the eyes exposed, and the *burqa* covers both the eyes and the face. The *niqab* and *burqa* are generally worn with an *abaya*, a long loose ankle-length coat that conceals women’s bodies. *Purdah* is observed by those who embrace the separation of gender roles for religious or other reasons, and

by those who can afford to limit the earning power of the women of the family. Purdah has served as a marker of social class as well as a marker of piety. In addition, purdah came to symbolize the Islamic nature of domestic space for Muslim families (Jalal 1991). Men saw themselves as required to make accommodations to the outside (British-dominated) world, and thought that women's adherence to religiously mandated dress and behavior was necessary for the preservation of the institution of the Muslim family (Jamal 2005; Metcalf 1992). In the time immediately preceding partition, purdah came to be challenged; the British had cast gender segregation as one of the features of oppressed Indian womanhood, and some Indian reformers were receptive to this critique.

I identify two strains of reformist activity aimed at women in pre-partition India. The first originated from nationalist reformers concerned with the creation of a new Islamic polity to inhabit the imagined utopia of Pakistan. Most of these reformers were educated in the British tradition. Nationalist reformers include men like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, and Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the famous poet. While these men were concerned with Islamic reform, they were not considered legitimate arbiters of religion by the ulama, or the majority of the Indian Muslim public (Zaman 2002). These reformers were concerned with religion to varying degrees and the provision of religious education was not their primary or only concern. Instead, these men sought to educate women to enable them to fit into their visions of the new Indian Muslim society. A great deal of intellectual effort was spent to produce women who were both educated and non-westernized. Magazines and novels with uplifting moral messages were produced and aimed directly at women. These contained a mix of practical domestic advice and morally improving short stories. They were also a platform from which reformers could advocate for women's education. All of these

magazines, and indeed all attempts at educational reform, stressed that the purpose of education was to enable women to be good wives, mothers, and housekeepers.

Several societies (Anjuman) were established to promote women's education and open girl's schools and colleges (Minault 1998: 135). Women's education was something families invested in as a matter of image; it was a marker of social status to have educated wives and daughters, and could increase it as well (Minault 1998). In practice, educated women seldom worked outside their homes or had greater financial or social independence than other women. Early reformers, such as Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817 -1898), were often opposed to women learning English. This was despite their enthusiastic support of western education for boys. Reformers agreed that English was by its very nature corrupting, and would expose women to the wrong sorts of ideas. Writers and intellectuals parodied images of the westernized Indian woman as frivolous, wasteful, and immoral and saw the potential westernization of Indian women as a threat to society (Chatterjee 1993).

Unlike Nationalist reformers, Ulama reformers were educated in madrassas, and had intensive training in religious texts and Islamic jurisprudence. These reformers, who operated at the same time as nationalist reformers, were less concerned with the emergent nation of Pakistan and more with the preservation of Islam itself. A number of ulama actively opposed the formation of Pakistan. This antagonism has been traced in part to their distrust of the British educated reformers leading the Pakistan movement (Faruqi 1963). The ulama, like secular reformers, began their efforts by writing instructional books aimed at women. Religious reformers never envisioned a formal educational environment for women. This made the written works of these reformers even more important; they saw the books they produced as the only appropriate method for women to receive religious education. The *Bihishti Zewar* and *Huqu-ul-*



*Niswan* are two prominent examples of this genre. The *Bihishti Zewar* (1905) covers a lot of ground, providing women with advice on religious matters, and also on recipes for cooking and strategies for maintaining harmonious marriages. *Huquq-ul-Niswan* (1989) calls for dramatic change for upper-class women, including advocating that women should abandon seclusion to go into the world clad in burqas (Minault 1998). Both books emphasize that women should live harmoniously with their husbands and in-laws, and that education is intended to better enable women to fulfill their responsibilities.

Women were not involved in this reform movement except as subjects of reform. A number of magazines produced reformist articles written by men under female pseudonyms (Minault 1998), but there were very few female writers. When they did write reformist articles, women wrote using pennames identifying them “daughter of” or “wife of,” extending their purdah to their names as well as their person. The male-led nature of reform resulted in a focus on the relationship between women’s education and their domestic roles. Male reformers believed that women’s education had to be balanced with the need to keep women in seclusion. All reformers were wary of the possibility of their women becoming more like British women, and male writers addressed the need to balance women’s education with the need to keep women un-westernized. In contrast, when women wrote about reform, their concerns were related to the need to be good Muslims and the ritual aspects of life such as prayer and fasting (Robb 2013).

Urban upper and middle-class Muslim women’s dress at the time varied, and was tied to the identity-positions a family wished to convey. Women following the highest degree of purdah rarely left their houses, and were carried in palaquins when they did so they could not be seen. Less strict forms of purdah allowed women to go out wearing face veils. Families wishing to demonstrate their “educated” and “modern” status encouraged the women of the family to

discard purdah, and prominent family of this time often decided that it was time for “their” women to discard purdah (Minault 1998). That the women of a family all came out of purdah together demonstrates that decisions about purdah were communal rather than reflecting individual agency. Purdah became less popular in the times immediately prior to the partition of India. Leading female figures such as Fatima Jinnah – active professionally and involved in the nationalist movement – were not engaged in purdah, and contributed to the visibility of Muslim women.

Women became active in the Pakistan Movement in order to gain political capital for male activists. The All India Muslim Ladies Conference (Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam) was established in 1914 in order to preempt other women’s groups that claimed to speak for all Muslim women (Laird 2007). In the 1920s and 1930s, women’s activism was limited to five distinct spheres. These included the areas of education, health care, literacy, social reform, and political work (Ali 2000). These semi-domestic concerns were seen by male reformers as acceptable arenas for female activism. The All India Muslim Women’s League was founded in 1938, and had the primary purpose of rallying the women’s vote. Most of the leaders of the All India Muslim Women’s League were connected to powerful male politicians, as daughters, wives, sisters, and mothers (Jalal 1991). Their participation was necessary in order to mobilize the female vote, but female leaders were quite clearly promoting an agenda that was set by the male leadership of the Muslim League.

# Modern Pakistan

At the time of its founding, Pakistan consisted of East Pakistan (modern Bangladesh), and West Pakistan. Only 7% of the population of the new country spoke Urdu, the national language (Talbot 1998, 12). The Pakistani state has drawn on Muslim nationalism in order to justify its creation and create a common identity for its linguistically and ethnically diverse population. Claims of a nationhood built on a common Islamic identity were seriously damaged in 1971, when East Pakistan (now modern Bangladesh) claimed independence from the Pakistani state and fought a civil war in order to found a state based on linguistic and ethnic bonds. Pakistanis subscribed to one of two interpretations of religion's role in the Pakistani state in Pakistan's early years. In the first, Pakistan was imagined as a country for Muslims which did not need to implement Islamic law. In the second, Pakistan was a nation of Muslims moving towards fulfilling their destiny as an Islamic state (Talbot 1998, 1).

The position of women in Pakistan was precarious; the legitimacy of the new state rested on the government not expanding women's rights beyond those guaranteed to them by the existing social order (Jalal 1995). Women continued to symbolize social order, security, and the moral underpinnings of society. The State's ability to keep women within these roles became a sign of the moral authority of the State itself (Fleschenburg 2010). Appropriate roles for women encompassed the domestic roles they already inhabited. Both Islamic and other reforms that expanded women's rights were the focus of local resistance. An example can be seen in the widespread resistance to revising laws of inheritance on Islamic lines in order to give women larger shares in their parents property (Jalal 1991), while at the same time successive Pakistani

governments paid lip-service to the idea that Islam laid out the blueprints for a perfect social order which provided women with justice.

A number of women's organizations were formed to collaborate with the government on "women's" issues. These organizations focused on welfare issues that were non-threatening to the State. The All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), founded in 1947, was the most prominent of these. APWA was headed by middle and upper-class women, and its demands were limited to "non-political" welfare activities (Jalal 1991). Meanwhile, the Halq-e-Khawateen, a women's wing of the Jama'at Islami, was founded 1948 in order to promote the gender ideology of the movement (Siddiqui 2010). Pakistani feminists argued that these "fundamentalist" women were clearly operating under male direction and control, and had been called into existence to oppose upper-class women's reform agendas (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987). The activism and goals of these organizations demonstrates that they both played a supportive role in relationship to their male sponsors. As Jalal has pointed out, deference to the established social order benefits middle and upper-class women, and offers them rewards in the form of expanded privileges (1991). At the same time, their class positions serve as an assurance to the government that the demands of the movement will not become radical (Jalal 1991). APWA toed the government line on most issues, limiting their engagement with the government to demanding more representation for women in parliament<sup>8</sup>. Another important function APWA and its sister organizations served was providing the government with cover against Islamization demands made by the ulama and religious political parties. APWA lobbying during this period was effective in creating barriers to polygamy and raised the age of consent from 14 to 16 (Jalal 1991).

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<sup>8</sup> In practical terms, Parliament was only really accessible to the upper-class at this time, and so this activism was aimed at increasing APWA members' own representation in the government,

The 1970s continued to see more and more middle and upper-class women participating in public life. In the years following partition, upper and middle-class individuals saw purdah as marking lower-class status, despite the Halq-e-Khawateen's efforts to promote the veil. A number of the older women I interviewed, both those who veiled and those who did not, said that post-1947 purdah was rare among the urban upper and middle-class. My informant Mishal remembered this as a time of confusion with regard to gender norms. Mishal was the wife of a government functionary in Islamabad post-partition. During her interview, she wore a crisp cotton sari and her thinning henna-dyed hair was in a bun<sup>9</sup>. This is her habitual dress inside her house. When she leaves her house, she wears a black abaya and a dupatta over her head. Mishal told me that she had performed purdah when she and her family lived in Amritsar in India, and only left her house wearing a face veil and abaya. When they moved to Rawalpindi after partition, veiling was becoming less common. She said "A lot of the other women who came to Islamabad did not do niqab, and it wasn't common in the cities. My friends wore everything they liked in Islamabad, but wore chadors over their hair when they went home to their villages." Mishal says that although she believed in purdah, she did not ask her daughters to veil their faces or hair because it was not popular and none of the other girls did it.

The link between women, Islam, and community identity became prominent during the 1977–1988 military dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq. General Zia allied himself with Islamic nationalism early in his dictatorship as part of a move to create mass appeal (M. Ahmad 1996). Zia's Islamization was two pronged, focusing on the sponsoring of madrassa education and on legal reform. Zia's time in power corresponded with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan funded the Afghan freedom fighters (*mujahideen*) through US money which was spent on the

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<sup>9</sup> A number of women of Mishal's generation wear saris, but they are an unpopular choice of everyday wear among younger Pakistani women.

establishment of madrassas in Pakistan and on buying arms, ammunition, and equipment to fund Pakistan-trained *mujahideen* (Bergen 2001). The US money changed the religious landscape of Pakistan; between 1971 and 1988 the numbers of madrassas in Pakistan multiplied from 900 to 8,000 official madrassas, and another 25,000 unregistered ones (Ridell 2011). The engagement with Afghanistan was covert, and did not impact urban middle and upper-class Pakistanis as much as the legal aspects of Zia's Islamization.

Zia's legal reforms were written on the bodies of women, and focused on controlling female behavior. He mandated an "Islamic" dress code for female government employees and students in public schools, made Friday a holiday, and established "Shari'a" courts implementing Islamic law. Historians and legal commentators have understood these moves to be part of an effort to create popular support (Jalal 1991). Zia's Islamization was supported by a number of constituents who had been pushing for Islam to play a role in the state; these actors included prominent religious scholars as well as religious political parties. Supporters of Zia's Islamization saw it as an essential first step toward transforming Pakistan into an Islamic State. Maulana Maududi, the founder of the *Jama'at Islami* which had pushing for Islamic law to be incorporated into the Pakistani state since 1947, appeared on radio talk shows to endorse Zia's Islamization (Nasr 1993).

The Hudood ordinances, passed in 1979, were highly contested laws ostensibly based on Islamic sacred texts, the Qur'an and Hadith. One of the ordinances, the Offense of *Zina* Ordinance, laid out punishments for adultery (zina) which was defined as consensual sex between two unmarried adults (Imran 2005). The ordinance demanded that the prosecution of rape (an act framed as an offense committed against women by men) be conditional on the act being witnessed by four adult men (Imran 2005). The drafting of the law resulted in rape victims

being imprisoned for zina if they were unable to produce four witnesses to testify that they were raped (Imran 2005). Bolstered by the Law of Evidence, which rendered the testimony of two women equivalent to that of one man (Imran 2005), the laws effectively made it impossible for rape cases to be successfully prosecuted.

While male actors, including those associated with the Jama'at Islami, were visible in the Hudood debate it was quite clearly a "woman's issue" and framed women's activism in Pakistan. Feminism in Pakistan is a class-based upper and middle-class project, and exists in a relationship of antagonism with ideas of Islam and Islamization (Jamal 2005). Middle and upper-class women reinvigorated the women's movement because they saw themselves as the primary targets of Zia's Islamization of the state (Fleschenburg 2010). As the effects of the "Islamic" laws began to be felt, middle and upper-class women founded the Women's Action Forum in 1981 (Jamal 1991). This was the first instance in which women mobilized to act independently of male leadership and interests and took on the Pakistani state on a large ideological scale. Middle and upper-class female activists were cast as enemies of the State; feminist rallies, such as those against Zia's Law of Evidence in 1982, were often the subject of police action (Fleschenburg 2010). The Pakistani public imagination sees these independent female activists as threatening the social order, to the extent that the government of Pakistan has made efforts to limit women's independent political activism (Ansari 2009).

Ideas of Islam were deployed to present these female activists as deviant. Both religious figures such as the ulama and secular nationalists attempted to discredit feminist activists as promoting values that ran contrary to "Islamic" ideology (Jamal 2005). Tactically, leaders of the women's movement decided that opposing the idea of "Islamization" by the government was a losing strategy. Instead, female activists fought for individual subjects of the Hudood laws on a

case by case basis. The struggle of middle and upper-class women against Zia's Islamization was decidedly class based; at the same time, this was the first time where an independent feminist consciousness can be seen in middle and upper-class women's activism. Prior to these mobilizations, women's activism had taken place under the umbrella of male leadership. A lingering suspicion that women who opposed the Hudood ordinance were immoral circulated among the Pakistani public, many of whom were largely indifferent to the feminist cause.

Meanwhile, the women's wing of the Jama'at Islami mobilized under male guidance to denounce the concern with women's issues as western-influenced (Fleschenburg 2010: 179). A number of justifications were presented in favor of the Hudood ordinances. Among these were that the law was being misapplied, and that the women who had mobilized to oppose them supported immorality. The Hudood ordinances had become symbols of the long-awaited move towards an Islamic Pakistan, and defense of them became associated with the protection and promotion of Islamic ideology. The struggle to repeal the Hudood ordinance centered around two types of female activism: (1) secular feminists denounced the Hudood laws, and Islamization more generally (Bari 2002); and (2) women associated with Islamizing projects mobilized under the direction of male leadership to defend the laws as appropriate expressions of a "true" Islam (Imran 2007). This engagement framed the hostile relationship that has existed between Pakistani feminism and "Islamic" activists in Pakistan.

Zia's abrupt death in 1988 restored democracy to Pakistan, and left the Hudood laws as a permanent feature of the country's legal landscape. The post-Zia period of civilian rule was marked by transitions between Benazir Bhutto (1988-90 and 1993-96) and Nawaz Sharif (1990-93 and 1997-99). Benazir Bhutto, who came into power immediately after General Zia, did not pursue Islamization policies. At the same time Bhutto did not reverse or undo Islamization and



was careful to cultivate a public image that was not opposed to Islam. Prior to 1988, Bhutto was often pictured without a dupatta. Upon assuming office, she was never in public without a dupatta on her hair, and sometimes also a chador around her shoulders (Laird 2007: 194). This use of the dupatta coded Benazir as a traditionally religious woman. The use of dupattas and chadors to cover the hair also mark a woman as middle-class, and this widened Benazir's appeal across different social classes (Laird 2007, 195). As part of her political actions, Benazir supported large government initiatives to send people on hajj pilgrimages, which also served as a marker of her personal religious orientation, and to popularize her with middle and lower middle class Pakistanis (Bianchi 2004, 79).

Nawaz Sharif, Benazir's main political rival during this period, fashioned his own political party, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), as a modern democratic party that was simultaneously committed to Islamization and to the development of Pakistan (Nasr 2007, 36). Sharif's efforts at Islamization echoed Zia - he introduced an amended version of the *Shari'a* bill, which Zia had enacted by ordinance in 1988, after it had been rejected by the provincial and national assemblies. Sharif's *Shari'a* bill specified that the federal government was responsible for taking steps to enforce the *Shari'a* (M. Ahmad 1996: 589). This bill was passed by the national assembly of Pakistan, but was rejected in the Senate by a small margin (Abbas 2005: 164). Nevertheless, Sharif's support of the bill marked him both as a successor to Zia in promoting Islamization and promoting Islam in the public and political realms in Pakistan. Sharif's Islamizing leanings influenced liberals to support his successor, General Musharraf, as a guarantor of the State's secularity (Zia 2009).

The decade of civilian rule marked by transitions between Bhutto and Sharif ended with General Musharraf's military coup in 1999. This decade was marked by the legacy of Zia's

Islamization; both Bhutto and Sharif signaled their allegiance to traditional ideas of Islamic virtue and authority. At the same time, dress that is more strongly affiliated with Islamic revivalism had not yet become popular in urban Pakistan; dupattas rather than headscarves were a popular method of veiling. When he came to power, Musharraf outlined a program of reform along the lines of the secularizing General Kemal Ataturk of Turkey, who he claimed as a personal inspiration. His vision involved allying the military with the middle and upper classes to promote development and to sweep religion into the private sphere (Nasr 2007: 37). The General's first speech assured the Pakistani people that he was not pursuing a religious agenda; the reference was a clear way of distancing himself from the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul Haq (Zia 2009). At the same time, Musharraf attempted to co-opt religious authority by creating the doctrine of Enlightened Moderation.

President Musharraf argued that there were two approaches Muslim countries could take with regard to interaction with "the West". One was "militancy, extremism and intolerance" and the other was "enlightened Islam." Enlightened Moderation called for Western powers to resolve key military conflicts in "the Muslim world" while asking "the Muslim world" to focus on economic progress (Musharraf 2004). Enlightened Moderation divided Pakistani society into an "us" and a "them." Prominent political commentators defined the "them" as regressive fundamentalists whose disapproval of Musharraf and Enlightened Moderation came from a backward religiosity (Aziz 2011: 610). Musharraf drew on Enlightened Moderation to justify his continuation in power, rather than holding elections and reverting to a civilian government (Zia 2009). Musharraf's rhetorical gestures towards a moderate Islam also justified his actions during the US invasion of Afghanistan. Musharraf's permitting the US to use Pakistani airbases to stage operations in Afghanistan was unpopular among both Pakistani civilians and military (Yousaf

2013). Initially, the General kept the information that he was assisting the US on a need-to-know basis for fear of backlash (Yousaf 2013). Islamic political parties, including the Jama'at Islami positioned Musharraf's actions against the Taliban as a betrayal of a larger Muslim community (*ummah*) (Malhotra 2008).

President Musharraf's influence over the media turned the issue of "Islams" into a prominent one (Zia 2009). A background sense that there were many ways of being Muslim gave way to an active understanding that Islamic practice was contested, and that things being promoted by various groups as Islamic might or might not be. TV Talk shows and newspaper articles began asking the question "Kis ka Islam?" (whose Islam?). This discursive formulation of the "problem" of Islams created the specter of a Pakistan divided between different kinds of Muslims, those who were "extreme" and foreign-influenced and those who were practicing a "moderate" and well understood Islam. Through TV dramas and talk shows, the media created visions of three kinds of Pakistani women: those who were overly religious, those who were modern (signified by their cruelty to their in-laws and their refusal to follow tradition), and those who were "good" and self-sacrificing. These images of women were disseminated on the variety of TV channels which had opened as a consequence of General Musharraf's liberalization of the media through the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Ordinance 2002 (Aziz 2011). Shows representing a liberalized urban Pakistan became popular and shared airwaves with a number of religious TV channels.

One of the most visible consequences of Musharraf's anti-Islamization policies was a social and political backlash. Islamic political parties, represented by the Muttahida Majlis-E-Amal (MMA) came in to power in both the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and in the province of Baluchistan in 2002. The MMA also came to dominate the opposition in the

National Assembly (Weiss 2007: 145). The othering of Pakistanis committed to the Islamization of state and society shifted as Musharraf realized that his political power was not absolute, and that he needed the support of the masses (Aziz 2011: 607). The majority of Pakistanis were opposed to US policies and objected to martial rule even in the name of development and religious moderation. In addition, General Musharraf's sacking of the Chief Justice of Pakistan in March 2007 led to an increasing confrontation with lawyers and pro-democracy forces, while the Red Mosque crisis in July 2008 alienated religious political parties. In the face of opposition from multiple factions of the elite, Musharraf's government began to reduce the scope of its confrontation with Islam, backing down on proposed reforms of madrassas and toning down its anti-Islamist rhetoric (Nasr 2007: 38).

General Musharraf's contribution to the drone war in Pakistan de-stabilized the country and contributed to the overwhelming threat of suicide bombings in urban locations. Dr. Usmani, a Fulbright scholar, has collected data that demonstrates that suicide bombings were at a record high after the Red Mosque incident and continued to be higher than usual in 2009 and 2010 (Usmani 2013). A number of these attacks were carried out in Islamabad, which had been the site of the 2007 Marriott bombing. Security-measures in the city continued to be high through 2009-2011 when I conducted my research. There were road-blocks on major roads into and out of the city, on the main roads and those going to sensitive locations. Rumors swirled that Blackwater operatives wandered Islamabad; one of my informants, a doctor, said that a foreign man pulled out a gun when his car was at a traffic stop, after a minor encounter in traffic. Other informants spoke in hushed tones of foreign men wandering the F-7 market area after midnight toting guns.

During this politically tumultuous period, increasing numbers of women started demonstrating religious affiliation and sentiment (Zia 2009; Afzal-Khan 2007). Piety movements

gained large followings and set up faith-based institutions, schools, and private classes (Zia 2009). Young elite students began demonstrating growing religious sentiment and affiliation with ideas of Pakistan as an Islamic state (Siddiqi 2010). Revivalist-approved dress, including the burqa and headscarf, became more common among the urban upper and middle classes (Zia 2009). Women wearing burqas became prominent in the public consciousness during the Red Mosque crisis in 2007 when news programs broadcast images of young women in burqas enforcing “true” Islamic values. These burqa-clad students of the *Jamia Hafsa* madrassa launched a drive against the sale of music and videos and kidnapped a woman suspected of running a prostitution business (White 2008). The independent activism of these women was so startling to the public consciousness that newspaper commentators suggested that their burqas concealed men.

Feminist commentators agree that women’s activism and bodies are used by various agents to promote an Islamist agenda (Afzal Khan 2007; Zia 2009). This view is consistent with historical trends in which women’s dress and education demonstrated their families’ identity positions rather than reflecting their own agency. Pakistani academics and commentators have also seen women’s activism within revivalist movements as the result of a submission to male leadership (Jamal 2005). However, recent literature on revivalism argues that women don veils as an agentive action (Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2004). My research supports this consensus; my interviews revealed many urban women who began veiling despite their family’s wishes, but none who were pressured to do so against their will. The political and social vision represented through these women is their own, regardless of its support of patriarchal Islamist visions of the nation.

Women who veil often come to this distinctive form of dress through their participation in movements to Islamize society. These women-directed piety movements include female religious leaders and home-based preachers, who have successfully drawn together networks and mobilized communities in order to spread their interpretations of Islamic theology. As women become involved in projects of Islamization, changes in clothing reflect changes in their fundamental ideologies regarding Islam, the place of women in society, and gender roles.

Women who adopt headscarves and face-veils rather than traditional dupattas and chadors which serve similar functional purposes can be seen as promoting ideas of a reformed Islamic ethos in Pakistan through their comportment, bodies, and dress. Women's clothing in Pakistan generally conveys a number of identity-positions. A woman's class-status and orientation towards ideas of religion/tradition can be coded into a woman's clothing through designer labels, cuts and fabrics. Some of my 2011 subjects were able to identify on sight the designer line from which a woman had purchased a garment. Women's decisions to wear sleeveless, short-sleeved, or long-sleeved clothing were also invested with moral significance, as was their decision of how to drape their dupattas (the long flowing shawls worn on the shoulders).

The messages a woman's clothing conveys are altered by their adoption of what they call Islamic dress. These forms of dress include headscarves, burqas with face veils, and numerous garments between these two. Fawzia Ahmad has observed that veiling has become "the focus of energy that could be better used elsewhere" because women who veil project a "sense that they are wearing a moral badge" (2008: 99). Veiling mutes other messages conveyed by women's clothing, modifying them so that they convey a women's commitment to Islamizing society as her primary identity-position. This form of dress negates or mutes the class-position of a woman's garment, as veiling in Pakistan has historically been seen as a marker of lower-middle

class status. These factors render an increase in women's veiling significant, particularly as many of my research subjects describe families that are indifferent or hostile to their adoption of the veil.

Analysts are divided as to the cause of the increasing Islamic sentiment among elite women. Some scholars have argued that the increase in the number of urban women veiling was a reaction to 9/11 (Jamal 2005). Others trace the increase in public piety to a backlash against Musharraf's anti-Islamic policies (Zia 2009: 226). Neither explanation is entirely convincing. General Musharraf's anti-Islamic stances were class-based, framing "mullahs" and "jihadis" as extremists, and targeted madrassas and religious political parties (Khan 2013). Even the construct of "Enlightened Moderation" presented visions of a peaceful, privatized Islam practiced by "educated" Muslims. Similarly, while the events of September 11, 2001 influenced Muslim women living in the United States of America to adopt the veil as a solidarity symbol (L. Ahmed 2011a; Haddad 2007), the stigmatization of Islam in Pakistani did not resemble US formulations of an Islamic terrorist enemy. Muslims as a body did not experience similar levels of stigmatization, and the veil was not tied to terrorism in the public imagination.

I argue that local factors are at least as significant to the increase in women's veiling as the larger socio-political context, and that the increase in women's veiling and participation in Islamic revivalist movements can be tied to the past decade-long history of female activism and promotion of revivalist values and dress. The growth in the number of women participating in revivalist movements has two concrete causes: (1) revivalist movements' growth in membership is correlated with the access to sacred texts they offer women; and (2) the perception, promoted by revivalist movements and accepted uncritically by multiple audiences, that the exegesis of texts within movements represents the top-down transmission of theology from revivalist leaders

to obedient followers conceals a dialectical engagement in which women shape overall movement-wide interpretation and policy. This dialectical creation of meaning gives female members the ability to modify revivalist messages to be more persuasive to other women, and gives them a stake in the representations and messages promoted by revivalist movements.

I trace parallels between the process through which the Pakistani feminist movement came into its own by opposing the Hudood ordinance and that which revitalized women's Islamic movements in Pakistan. Both women's movements grew in membership and the national imagination once they had emancipated themselves from visible male influence and patronage. The absence of male control and guidance renders these movements threatening to the public imagination. Both "mod" (modern) women, and "fundooos" (fundamentalists) are outliers – elite women who have escaped the historically grounded control and guidance of men and male agendas. Men participate in these movements as supporters rather than as guides. While these women might challenge or re-inscribe patriarchy, patriarchy is not the focus of their activities. Instead, these women focus on what an ideal society might look like.

Preaching directed at women has traditionally come from male authority figures, who have limited women's engagement with sacred texts. Traditionally, women (and men) who were not religious scholars were expected to rely on secondary texts written by the ulama in order to understand their religious obligations. The ulama argued that those individuals who had not attended *madrassas* should acquire only basic religious knowledge, and should rely on the ulama for guidance. Islamic revivalist movements continued these trends, tying followers to the interpretations of texts authorized by movement leaders. Female members of revivalist movements have been even more restricted in their access to sacred texts than male members; while some privileged men were able to formulate guidelines for their movements, women were



not given access to primary texts. Historically, religious classes (*dars*) for women were run primarily by men. These classes taught movement-authorized secondary texts, instead of directly introducing women to Qur'an and Hadith.

The popularity of women recruiting other women into revivalist forms of self-presentation can be tied to the emergence of the Al-Huda Institute, founded in 1994, a women-centered organization which teaches women Qur'an and Hadith. Al-Huda's innovation is an approach in which women educate female students by giving them access to the tools required to interpret Islamic sacred texts. Al-Huda offers classes in a variety of settings in order to attract urban women of all ages; there are regular "classes" in official buildings, in residential neighborhoods with different timings suited to working women and home-makers, and on college grounds. These various offerings have gained popularity, drawing in a demographic that had not been a serious concern for Islamizing movements. They have also normalized the idea of non-madrassa educated women reading the Qur'an and Hadith in order to determine their religious obligations for themselves. Al-Huda's success has demonstrated that offering women access to Islamic sacred texts is an approach that garners more followers than simply instructing women in their religious duties.

Following the growing popularity of Al-Huda, even those movements which had previously relied on secondary texts, such as the Jama'at Islami, began classes which covered Islamic sacred texts directly. During the summers I was conducting pre-dissertation and dissertation research (2008 -2011), several different movements offered Qur'an classes for girls and young women. The ages of these women ranged from ten to twenty. Those movements, like Tabligh, which did not officially offer courses in sacred texts demonstrated a transition in which female members began to draw on sacred texts in everyday conversation. Following the

demonstrated popularity of Al-Huda's women-teaching-women initiatives, other movements promoting Islamization intensified their outreach to women. Now a variety of movements including the Jama'at Islami (a political movement), Al-Noor International (an educational movement), and the Tablighi Jama'at (a missionary movement) offer women-specific educational initiatives taught and run by women. A number of these offer women access to Qur'an and Hadith, although few movements tell women that it is their prerogative to draw on sacred texts to determine religious obligations.

My informants' narratives reveal that the key factor in their growing commitment to veiling and Islamic reform is the activism and preaching of other women. During the course of my research, I interacted with women who participated in the Islamizing activities of the Jama'at Islami, the Tablighi Jama'at, and Al-Huda. Nearly all of the women who had participated in the women's wings of these groups veiled; most veiled their faces, and some only their hair. None had veiled prior to their participation in the movement, and a number of them had started veiling against the protests of their family. Consistently, all of them cited an inspiring friend or female teacher who brought them to purdah, and to the movement more generally. During her interview, my informant Komal mentioned that a neighbor she admired had given her her first burqa. Other informants had similar stories of teachers and friends they admired presenting them with their first veils or encouraging them to veil.

Performing purdah and wearing culturally distinct clothing cements these women's identity-positions as individuals committed to the Islamization of society. Women who have come to veil after attending the "classes" held by different Islamic movements also feel that the veil marks them as a different kind of woman. The distinctions they draw between women who veil and those who do not are often very different from those promoted by many popular male

preachers, having to do with identity as “Muslim women” as well as with the male gaze. While I was conducting participant-observation research, I listened to a post-Qur’an class discussion of the differences between women who were “Jeans-wali” (with jeans) and “Hijab-wali” (with the veil). My informant Rabia, who held a position of authority as a Qur’an teacher, told me that it was not that jeans were bad in and of themselves. “The problem,” she said, “is one of acceptance. If you are wearing jeans, you have not accepted who you are or what you should look like. You can wear any number of local alternatives to jeans, and you will look like you know who you are.”

Meanwhile, Pakistanis who do not veil or support veiling often re-contextualize purdah as an act devoid of social and political meaning. Early in my fieldwork, an older male professor I was interviewing told me: “What these women are doing isn’t purdah, it is fashion. It has become fashionable for girls to wear the headscarf, it is just an accessory.” As my research progressed, multiple informants repeated this idea, that women’s veiling represents a dress aesthetic rather than a statement about identity. Others imagine veiling to result from practical concerns. One of the women I interviewed, a principle in a high-school, said she was confused about why young women would wear headscarves and had asked one of her students who wore a headscarf whether she had lost her hair. Women who veil often introduce other, less visible reforms to family life. Many women began veiling simultaneously with refusing to attend what they called “mixed” parties, in which men and women are not segregated. Many women who veil also refuse to attend religious functions they consider religious innovations, as well as social events they see as inspired by “outside cultures”. These include several wedding related festivities (dholkis, mehndis, rukhsatis), some religious gatherings (milad, chalesswan), and other common celebrations (e.g. birthdays). The designation of events as un-Islamic rises from a

variety of factors, including: (1) if it wastes money, or sets precedent for improper spending; (2) If it is centered around music or dancing; (3) If it can be considered Indian-inspired or foreign in nature.

The ceremonies and festivals revivalists disapprove of are widespread and have been uncontroversial until recently. Non-revivalist Pakistanis link disapproval of cultural festivals and traditional religious practices to a “lunatic fringe” (Rashid 2012). This “lunatic fringe” consists primarily of revivalists, whose dress identifies them as promoting Islamic reform. Women’s refusal to attend such gatherings is a form of “consciousness-raising” in which they protest what they see as widespread irreligiousness in society. Their refusal to participate in these events creates tensions and conflicts around social and religious gatherings that were considered unexceptionable a decade ago. These social maneuvers also lead to veiling becoming a representation of a vision for society rather than an individual act of piety. The “difference” of the religious practices of women who veil contributes to a growing debate about what authentic Islamic practice should look like in Pakistan. Tensions lead to a growing awareness that the role of Islam in Pakistan is contested, even among the elite, who have traditionally supported secularization in Pakistan.

# **CHAPTER TWO. CONTESTING ISLAM: THE POLITICS OF REVIVALIST IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTAN**

## **Introduction**

Fawzia Afzal Khan describes an encounter with “the face of the new Pakistan” at a Christmas party in Lahore - “On the one hand: women in hijab; on the other, alcohol-imbibing, cokesniffing, navel-baring model-thin girls out to have a good time” (2007; 25). At the same time, Afzal Khan argues that the “hedonists” and the “Islamists” (Afzal-Khan 2007) together represent less than 2% of the Pakistani populations, and hail from the elite upper classes. The literature on revivalists in Pakistan often places them in opposition to secular feminists, and examines the opposition between feminists and religious political parties. This conflict has been understood as the class-based struggle of lower middle-class men to impose an Islamic order on elite women in order to limit the cultural options available to middle and upper-class women (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987). At the same time, the overwhelmingly patriarchal nature of Pakistani society has gone unexamined, and its claims to Islam have been accepted uncritically both by academics and by the Pakistani public. Islamic revivalism complicates previously understood claims regarding Islamically mandated gender roles. Meanwhile, upper and middle-class women’s participation in these movements allows them to claim religious authority, which previously resided in the hands of men. These disruptions in the Pakistani discursive field affect identity, impacting the ways in which Pakistanis articulate their identity-positions and claims to Islam.

Jalal speaks of an encounter with a research subject who asks her to tread carefully when writing about Muslim women, and says that “we” (i.e. women who veil) “might be targeted first...but you will not be spared either (Jalal 2010, 203). Both of these encounters echo interactions I experienced during fieldwork, in which women identified an “us” and a “them” based primarily on affiliations with ideas of a pure Islam. The opposition between these two types of women seems, to my Pakistani informants, to speak of a natural opposition between “types” of individuals. My informants who veiled indicated that they felt theirs was a threatened identity, and that they were constantly under attack from outside forces. Meanwhile, those of my informants who did not veil felt that the act of veiling itself was a threat, implying moral judgment, and that the veil spoke to a claim to moral superiority over all other forms of identity. My informant Nabila, a student at a local college whom I met through friends in Islamabad, told me indignantly about a mutual acquaintance Batool: “That woman is such a hypocrite. She wears the hijab, but she has a boyfriend. And when he visits from Lahore, she takes off her hijab and goes around with him.” I mildly pointed out that Batool had made no claims to particular virtue, and that Nabila herself had a boyfriend. “I know,” said Nabila, “But I can’t stand the hypocrisy.” The above interactions speak to upper and middle-class urban Pakistani identities, and ways in which they situate themselves and others against ideas of Islamic virtue.

I draw on Butler (1993) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in order to understand Pakistani relationships and claims to Islam within the social. Foucault (1994) understood the social as the disciplinary system in which the subject lived. The discursive practices of the system helped create the docile and disciplined subject. Power, in Foucault’s schema, comes from outside the subject, the product of totalizing forces beyond the subject’s grasp. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) diverge from Foucault in their ontological conceptualization of the social as a discursive space.

Laclau and Mouffe see subjecthood as discursively constituted, and performance as part of the discursive. Identity, in this view, is always in process, producing itself in response to and being produced by contingent antagonisms and alliances that constitute the social (Torfing 1999). Within this schema, identities are created as a combination of multiple discursive subject-positions. Social agents identify with a number of given positions, and the demands of each identification are negotiated according to context and power relations (Laclau 1990). Each of these ideological formulations is constituted against an antagonism or “other,” and can be understood as an attempt to cover over a set of contingent relations (Butler 1993, 192).

Identity politics is the process through which subjects create themselves discursively against the antagonistic “other.” Contesting groups with opposing interests vie for hegemony, and an identifiable “we” fight against a “they” in order to create and maintain collective identities (Mouffe 2005). Hegemony can never be achieved, a consequence of the contested nature of the social. Nonetheless, competing social groups attempt to create hegemony by increasing their discursive configuration’s block of control. One of the strategies through which groups attempt to increase their control is through the logic of equivalence, in which agents emphasize commonalities between competing discourses (Bevir and Rhodes 2010). In this chapter, I argue that revivalist Pakistanis draw on the logic of equivalence to minimize differences and create “revivalist” as a unitary identity position. This umbrella term contains within itself a large number of antagonistic groups and movements, which are minimized through the logic of equivalence.

Islamic revivalists do not function as a unit. The term, “Muslim fundamentalist,” used uncritically by numerous commentators is problematic both for its use to describe extremist Christian groups that insist on the literal meaning of scripture, and because it conveys the

impression that only some extreme Muslims base their actions on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (El Fadl 2005). Neither is the term political Islam without complications, implying that private Islam is acceptable, but Islam in the public sphere is dangerous (El Fadl 2005, 17). When I speak of revivalists, I am referring to a broad category of religious movements that advocate for the change of Islamic society. These movements have diverse intellectual lineages – the Tablighi Jama'at has its roots in the Deoband movement (Metcalf 1993), Al-Huda in the Salafi movement of reform which demands the right to individual interpretation of the Qur'an (as described in Roy 2006). Islamic movements propose distinct operational goals, but all see Islam as an endogenous ideology with redemptive power which can bring about a radical transformation of existing social systems (Rahnama 1994). However, members of the movements I study seem to affiliate with broader ideas of a “pure” Islamic identity. In this chapter, I argue that members of different revivalist movements create themselves and are created as holding common identity-positions due to their reliance on shared sources of authority, creation of joint Others against whom they define themselves, and the Othering maneuvers of urban Pakistanis unaffiliated with revivalism.

The groups which form the backdrop to revivalism are diverse and varied and draw on a number of identity-positions, some of which function in opposition to each other. These groups have distinct takes on Islam and its role in public and private life. There are two poles of authority to which individuals have turned in order to legitimize or promote social agendas in Pakistan: (1) tradition, or how things have always been done. “Tradition” has undergone enormous shifts in South Asia over the past century, drawing less and less from Persian-inspired cultural forms, and more and more from customary Islamic practices (Robinson 2013); and (2) modernity, understood as how things are thought to be done in the West. Modernity as a source



of identity in South Asia can be traced back to British colonial rule, when South Asian individuals would affiliate themselves with British “modern” values in order to generate authority and respect (Robinson 2013).

Subjects constantly engage in practices of re-articulation that sustain their subject-positions, and subtle adjustments to dress and behavior help individuals transition between displaying modern or traditional identity-positions. Modern and traditional identity-positions exist on a continuum, and individuals are able to fluctuate between them. Iqtidar (2011) has argued that “modern” and “traditional” individuals and groups exist in a relationship of accommodation and creation. Individuals’ ability to translate themselves across these identities is the result of their long standing co-existence and their reliance on shared base values rooted in a broad-based Islam. Pakistani individuals and leaders along this spectrum of identity have all claimed Islam, relating their political and social positions to an Islamic authority based in ideas of historical continuity. The Muslim League drew on Islam as a unifying force to overcome ethnic and linguistic boundaries in the creation of Pakistan. Indian religious reformers spoke of rejecting Hindu traditions to create a cleansed Islam (Metcalf 1992). The Pakistani government has deployed Islam to create a national identity (Jalal 2005). Pakistani groups ranging from social democrats to the Pakistani Taliban have found in Islam a basis for their political and social positions (Embree 2011). At the same time, the Pakistani public has imagined Islam as part of a cultural identity (Boquerat and Hussain 2011).

# Broad-Based Islamic Values: Domesticity and the Virtuous Woman

Islam has been characterized as a “discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur’an and the Hadith” (Asad 1986: 14). Bowen has expanded this to encompass other sources of Islamic knowledge (1993). Pakistanis have drawn on the Qur’an, Hadith, and common-sense beliefs about Islamic values to establish social consensus on a variety of issues, most of which are related to the domestic sphere. Pakistani society is based on a collective orientation that prioritizes family (Critelli 2010), and sees this rejection of individualism as a matter of religious virtue. In practice, this collectivist orientation privileges the interests of men and puts pressure on women to maintain family harmony (Abraham 2000; Bari 2000).

Understandings of gendered virtue are broad-based, and are shared among groups as disparate as Muslim League reformers, the Pakistani government, and even the Taliban. More notably, even those individuals who are affected negatively by these beliefs subscribe to them; during fieldwork, I found very few Pakistani women who challenged the idea that their primary purpose was making domestic life easier for their families, or that “good” women are sexually pure. While urban Pakistanis, represented by the above groups and numerous others have widely varied positions on the role of Islam in everyday life, the importance of sacred texts as a guiding authority, and the extent to which Pakistan ought to be an “Islamic” country, they share beliefs about religious virtue in the domestic realm. In a survey I conducted of 47 Pakistanis affiliated with urban colleges and hospitals, 95% said that interactions between men and women should remain “modest,” and all argued for the observation of respectful behavior with elders. This

sample was clearly elite, as represented by the fact that only 23% advocated that women veil their faces and wear abayas. In contrast, a survey conducted by the Pew Foundation of a sample representing all rural and urban Pakistanis across class status contained a 63% majority advocating for either the face veil or a head scarf and abaya (MEVS 2014).

My qualitative research also indicates that Pakistanis across class-boundaries share beliefs about sexual purity, family hierarchy, and women's responsibility to provide domestic and caretaking services. These beliefs are linked to a common understanding of Islam. While in Pakistan, I encountered numerous career women who spoke of their work as something that violated their families' exclusive claim on their time. Maheen, a doctor at one of Islamabad's priciest hospitals, told me that her daughters and in-laws made her feel guilty that she was not there to serve her daughters lunch, even though she had a cook. She said, seeming harried, "sometimes, I think I should just stop working." Mishal is one of my US-educated informants and her short hair, western clothing, US education, and fast-paced job at a telecommunication company all signal her "modern" status. During an interview, she told me that her opposition to Al-Huda and other revivalist movements was rooted in their flawed interpretations of Islam "Can you believe, Meryem, that some of them say that Islamically, women don't have to look after their in-laws? How can that be possible?" I met Saadia while attending a conference on women at the Marriott. She worked for a local NGO, and was vocal about the social injustices women in Pakistan faced. Talking to a group of foreign visitors, she said that one of these injustices was "when a guy and a girl get married, it is ok if he says he has ex-girlfriends, but a woman is not supposed to have been in a relationship." In a later conversation, she was telling me about an acquaintance of hers who had "run wild" because "her father was a kind and gentle man, and she

just took shameless advantage of that.” Like Saadia, most Pakistani individuals tie women’s sexual purity to the honor of families.

These encounters illustrate that even highly educated upper-class women share broadly-based Pakistani understandings of religious virtue that are seen as flowing from a shared Islamic past. Multiple groups’ use of women to demonstrate authenticity coupled with state-sponsored ideals of Islamic femininity have led to the emergence of a hegemonic discourse about the ideal Pakistani-Muslim woman (S. Ahmad 2012). Pakistanis across class-location and identity-position internalize this discourse, because it has been part of their background ideology growing up (S. Ahmad 2012). Pakistanis see these beliefs about women’s virtue as flowing from history; Pakistani women are imagined as always having lived subject to particular responsibilities and burdens of representation.

On a functional level, women’s domestic and caretaking services are necessary to the maintenance of the widespread “joint-family” system. The Pakistani family relies heavily on the unpaid and under-acknowledged labor of women in order to sustain “traditional” responsibilities to its elders and children. Young women performing the bulk of the labor are theoretically subordinate to their hierarchically senior female in-laws (including older sister-in-laws, mother-in-laws, etc). While there are minor variations in family dynamics, daughter-in-laws are expected to run households according to the wishes of their elders and hierarchical superiors, including their husbands. Women are supposed to maintain marriages by being docile and strategically managing relationships. Several informants, most of them older women, told me, in the exact same words, that divorce levels were rising because “girls these days have no patience” (*larkiyon main aaj kaal bardasht khatam ho gaya hai*). The divorces they described, in which “girls” had

no “patience,” included those in which young women refused to live with their in-laws, cook for extended families, and in one case put up with physical abuse.

All of these behaviors, including deference to in-laws, performing household labor, and caretaking for older relatives, are understood to be Islamically mandated. In this semi-hegemonic conception of Islam that translates across Pakistani ideological formations, piety is not about a woman’s obedience to God as reflected in ritual practice but rather about her appropriate subordination to her family. These imaginings of women are reflected in the preponderance of TV advertisements aimed at women, in which impossibly fit and youthful mothers put food on a table for their pre-teen offspring, husband, and in-laws while modestly deferring credit for the meal to the cooking oil they have used. In settings where domestic servants are available, women are considered responsible for managing these servants, and organizing domestic space. These images of virtuous women are widespread, and survive even in second-generation diaspora settings (Afshar 2010).

Hegemonic understandings of female piety were unsettled by the emergence of Islamic Revivalism in Pakistan. Revivalists claim to be the bearers of a pure Islam and co-opt women into their projects of reform. This does not necessarily involve a loosening of gender ideologies related to the home or to women’s sexuality. However, any time a woman gives a revivalist movement is time she is “taking away” from her family. Stories about revivalist women’s impiety focus on their absorption into the non-domestic work of revivalist movements, and their unsettling of their households in contravention of their expected role as peacemakers. On a larger level, revivalist reformulations of women’s religious responsibilities renders them vulnerable to Othering by urban Pakistanis whose conceptions of “Islamic” behavior for women is unsettled by the revivalist use of Qur’an and Hadith to support their visions of gendered piety.

Islamic revivalists, in Pakistan as well as elsewhere, draw on Qur'an and Hadith in order to promote reform. Among these reforms is revivalist use of women to create social change, and the associated alteration of women's domestic roles. The Tablighi Jama'at asks women to leave their households to go on tour, while Al-Huda encourages women to reform their households even against the wishes of their husbands. Al-Huda women are famous across urban Pakistan for defying their husbands and in-laws, and for using ideas of Islam to resist limitations on their mobility and claims to their domestic service. Both movements anchor gender-related reforms in Islamic sacred texts, which are considered authoritative by the vast majority of Pakistanis (see Marsden 2005). Revivalists use these texts to promote reforms other urban Pakistanis see as actively irreligious, and to unsettle broad-based ideas of women's piety as linked to the domestic sphere.

## Veiled Impiety: Representations of Revivalist Pakistanis in Urban Pakistan

Urban Pakistanis accuse revivalists of polarizing society, dividing the Pakistani elite into an "us" and a "them" and supporting "extremism." Siddiqi (2010) has argued that the "latent radicalism" represented by a support for madrassa education, ideas of Pakistan as an Islamic state, and images of the West as a threat to Pakistan, is in part the product of "Islamic social movements ...like Al-Huda and the Tableeghi Jamaat" (para 32). Pakistan's most popular elite English newspaper "The Dawn" hosts numerous articles which accuse Al-Huda of forcing women to veil while judging those who do not (Paracha, 2013), demonstrating indifference to the political situation (Abbas 2009), and promoting radicalization, extremism, and intolerance (Rana, 2010). Most of these draw a distinction between promoting radicalization and actual terrorism,

but argue that revivalists actively create an intellectual climate which supports and promotes terrorism. These discursive castings of revivalists frame them dangerous Others who have drastically misunderstood Islamic values and practice.

Urban Pakistanis challenge revivalist claims to Islam by presenting revivalists as using Islam to achieve extra-religious ends, and as being deficient in their moral conduct. Pakistanis across multiple subject-positions function as a unit in order to constitute revivalists as antagonistic Others who demonstrate a false piety. I encountered Azeema, an elderly woman in a black headscarf at a wedding at Cafe 1961, a popular wedding venue. It was a bright star-lit night, and the scent of the flowers that had been used to decorate the bridal stage lingered in the air. I was introduced to Azeema by one of my sister's friends, who mentioned that I was in the process of conducting fieldwork. Azeema herself lived in the US, and was interested in hearing about my research. When I mentioned Al-Huda, she began to literally quiver with rage, and said "Farhat Hashmi<sup>10</sup> – that woman puts on a guise of religion in order to accumulate power. She is a very evil woman." However, most often, the invalidation of revivalist claims to piety are done indirectly through rote discursive formulations, stories, and jokes that circulate about revivalists. The advantage of these mediums as a source of Othering is that they are easily transportable, and move rapidly from individual to individual. These speech-acts can be seen as part of a group maneuver by urban Pakistanis affiliating with varying identity-positions to define revivalists as impious Others.

Many Pakistani conversational maneuvers are rote – that is to say that one hears certain sentences in multiple settings from many different people. It is easier to understand this phenomenon in light of Laclau and Mouffe's formulation of identity as discursive (1985).

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<sup>10</sup> The leader of Al-Huda

Repeating these formulations demonstrates an individual's affiliation with social groups. In the case of Pakistan, Siddiqa (2010) argues that certain rote formulations become popular as a means of defining one's own identity. Mentioning that I was conducting research on women's revivalism elicited comments and stories about revivalist women from nearly all non-revivalist Pakistanis. These stories and phrases drew on similar themes. The most prominent theme of these stories was that revivalists drew on religious symbols to code themselves as pious while demonstrating impious behavior that was against culturally-recognized understandings of Islam.

A number of stories told about revivalist women indicate that they are bad wives and mothers, women who do not understand that "real" Islam requires a prioritization of the family. In these stories, revivalist women are willing to risk the breakup of their marriages instead of giving up their gallivanting around the town attending or teaching dars. Sometimes these stories conclude with a dysfunctional and damaged family unit. In extreme cases, they culminate in a divorce and a broken home for the children of the marriage, who are irretrievably damaged. These stories are generally told by individuals who claim to either know these women or know their male relatives. In these stories, men suffer from the upending of the understood division of labor within their marriage. As the maintenance of the family unit is thought to be a woman's primary Islamic goal, these stories attempt to present revivalist women as neglecting their real religious responsibilities for ones that are artificial. Mazhar, an engineer I met through mutual acquaintances, had been affiliated with the Jama'at Islami prior to getting married and starting a family. I asked him what he thought about Al-Huda and he told me a story:

Oh, Al-Huda... they're an interesting movement, but a little extreme. I had a friend whose mother was a part of the movement, one of the early members. She was always out and about teaching dars and things. She was often gone when he came home from school, sometimes she traveled to another city and he and his father had to fend for themselves overnight. He had to make himself sandwiches



for lunch. He's married now, and he has children. His father died and his mother wishes he would visit her more often, but he never does. He says "she neglected me when I was little, so now it is ok for me to neglect her." Its a very sad story, but quite common for Al-Huda, I think.

These discursive castings of revivalist women as demonstrating an artificial piety frame them as deviant Muslims who have misunderstood "real" Islam. Women who "neglect" their families to conduct revivalist activities are seen as engaging in religious behavior for self-aggrandizement.

Husbands in these stories are presented as victims of an impossible choice. Their wives have changed the situation they married into, and want to make drastic changes to their households. These changes include getting rid of TVs, putting children in Islamic schools, encouraging their daughters to veil, and refusing to host family gatherings. During a tea-party at my informant Beenish's house, I found myself seated next to her husband Raza, who was a university professor. Beenish and Raza had lived in the US before returning to Pakistan for retirement. Beenish had started to attend Al-Huda classes<sup>11</sup> after their return, and had recently adopted the headscarf and cut back on her TV watching. "Al-Huda should be known as al-Juda (the separation)" Raza said bitterly in an undertone, "because they create divisions between women and their families." Accounts of Al-Huda women's increasing piety often use "al-Juda" as a descriptor of the movement. This phrase signals women's false piety and their abandonment of real religious values for artificial ones.

The phrase "what they're doing isn't hijab, its fashion" continues the theme of women engaging in religious behavior for extra-religious ends. I heard this phrase during multiple interactions with individuals across a spectrum of subject-positions, equating "doing hijab" (ie wearing a head-scarf) with "doing fashion." During another social engagement, Raza told me

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<sup>11</sup> Beenish was not a student in Rabia's class, and I encountered her through my social networks rather than being introduced to her through my informants.

“these days a lot of the girls are wearing hijab to do fashion. They wear it in all these colors and styles. They don’t really mean anything by it.” For him, the wearing of stylish hijab was contrary to the meaning of hijab. Another informant, a young homemaker, told me “I think that women shouldn’t do hijab for fashion. These days, so many girls are, and I don’t understand why they are looking for attention by wearing headscarves.”

This phrase challenges the virtue of women who are “doing fashion” while pretending to “do hijab.” Understanding the discursive positioning in this phrase requires some grounding in what hijab and fashion mean to urban Pakistanis. Generally, being “in fashion” is a suspicious thing. Saying a woman is “very fashionable” signals that woman’s elite status and her frivolity; It can nonetheless be meant approvingly, as when said to young women, for whom frivolity is not considered a bad character trait. “Fashion karna” (doing fashion) is considered bad by a number of Pakistanis, and is connoted with potentially immodest dress, wasteful spending, and lack of social consciousness. In contrast, the hijab implies modesty and financial restraint. A woman who wears the hijab is understood to be making a claim of sexual probity. To say that a woman doing is “doing fashion” through “doing hijab” is to accuse her of manipulating symbols in order to present herself as modest and pious while displaying herself to advantage.

Revivalist men do not escape urban Pakistani implications that they are manipulating religious symbols while being actively impious. One of my male informants, a college-student, told me a popular joke: “A group of Tablighis is traveling in a barren area. Their leader tells them “if you see any woman, say *asataghfirullah* (I seek refuge in Allah)<sup>12</sup>.” They keep walking and walking, and one of them stumbles and says “*astaghfirullah*.” His companions immediately start craning their necks “where is she? where is she?” Stories like this one paint revivalist men

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<sup>12</sup> *Astaghfar* is the act of seeking forgiveness from God. A devout Muslim will employ this phrase when avoiding a sinful action or when seeking refuge from adverse circumstances (eg. stumbling over a rock).

as lechers who do not behave with proper restraint towards women. They also subtly critique revivalists' habits of invoking God in ordinary conversation. Although Pakistanis unaffiliated with revivalism draw on these phrases, revivalists use them with what is considered ostentatious frequency. Other stories highlight the non-religious reasons an individual might have to join a revivalist movement. When I returned to the US after conducting fieldwork, a Pakistani graduate student told me "In the place where I completed my undergraduate degree, all of the young men become religious in their senior year. The dean of the university is a Tablighi, and they all grow big beards, wear shalwar kameeze and go to the mosque in hopes of getting better grades." This story casts doubt on the young men's commitment to revivalism, and implies that the revivalist authority figure misuses his power in order to favor other revivalists.

Non revivalist Pakistanis draw on historically authorized Islam in order to "prove" that revivalists are promoting un-Islamic practices under the guise of religion. Revivalists in these accounts code themselves as religious subjects while not adopting religiously virtuous behavior. Significantly, stories told about revivalists do not challenge the physical markers of piety they adopt: accounts of revivalists behaving irreligiously do not present their dress as inherently suspect. Instead, these accounts present revivalists as falsely adopting the symbols denoting piety. This conflict demonstrates the tension inherent in using history to delegitimize revivalist reform; many revivalist practices, including sartorial markers of piety, have been considered elements of pious behavior historically. For example, prior to the partition of India, most middle and upper-class women performed some form of seclusion, and veiled before leaving their houses. Many contemporary Pakistanis adopt some of these markers as they age, regardless of their affiliation with revivalism.

# Revivalists and Their Others: Deliniating Revivalist Identities in Urban Pakistan

Religious movements in Pakistan have diverse approaches to social reform. Religious political parties like the Jama'at Islam distance themselves from both apolitical piety movements like Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at and from militant movements like the Lashkar-i-Tayyabia. In addition, different schools of thought (*mazahib*, plural) underlie each group's ideology, creating further divisions among them (Iqtidar 2005). I take seriously Iqtidar's (2005) caution against placing different religious movements into the same analytical basket, but maintain that religious groups utilize similar strategies to differentiate them from irreligious Others. Revivalists share overlapping understandings of Others and see Pakistani society as religiously flawed.

Pakistani revivalists share a common ideological framework which attributes Muslim decline in worldly power to the presence of enormous forces arrayed against believers. These "enemies of Islam" include "the West" and large, shadowy institutional forces whose existence is known through conspiracy theories. Revivalists in the Indian subcontinent see colonization, in which the British replaced the (Muslim) Mughal dynasty, as divine punishment for Indian-Muslim failure to practice the True Islam. Classical stories like "Shatrangh Kay Khilari" (the Chess Players), published in the mid-1920s by Satyajit Ray, illustrate this theme by describing a nobility so sunk in addiction to alcohol and games that they were unable to resist colonization (Ganguly 1995). The "*Mussadas e-Madd o-Jazr e-Islam*" (An Elegiac Poem on the Ebb and Tide of Islam), published in 1897 by Altaf Hussain Hali, also elaborates on this theme by describing the Muslims of India as sleeping passengers on a doomed ship. Pakistani schoolchildren are

introduced to this literature in their childhood, as part of their introduction to the Muslim nationalism framework that justifies Pakistan's creation (Raja 2010). Revivalists develop this theme, reminding their members that the fall of the transnational Muslim ummah represents widespread spiritual failings. When "Muslims" return to their faith, the world will change. These ideologies underlie several kinds of Islamic movements (El Fadl 2005).

Revivalist identity-politics in Pakistan are beset by two opposing tensions. Revivalist identities are constituted against the same Others; these include "The West," members of foreign religions, "irreligious" Pakistanis, and traditional religious scholars (ulama). At the same time, revivalist movements compete for members; this requires them to differentiate themselves in terms of identity-creation and maintenance. I argue that they resolve this tension by creating two categories of Others, large institutional antagonists hostile to "Muslims," and those Others who illustrate negative qualities against which revivalists can form themselves. Identities are constituted through an ever increasing field of antagonisms (Mouffe 2005), and are constituted against both antagonistic Others and a variety of non-selves, contending identities which illustrate what the subject is or is not (Connolly 2002). Revivalists construct shared depictions of institutional antagonists whose aim is to destroy revivalists. These imaginings of large, hostile antagonists creates revivalists across different types of movements, including piety movements, political groups, and jihadi movements, as sharing an identity which is constantly threatened by "irreligious" outside forces. At the same time, revivalist movements and revivalists draw on less hostile contending Pakistani groups to illustrate the boundaries of movement-specific identities.

## (1) Institutional Others

Pragmatically, shared representations that are accepted by all members help create group identities (Coupland 2010), in this case contributing to a joint revivalist identity in Pakistan. In revivalist contexts “antagonistic others” are large forces hostile to True Muslims. Their existence contributes to revivalist identity-formation across different movements by creating a sense of outside threat. These Others’ qualities are constructed through mutual imaginings and agreements about them. A number of historical currents contribute to revivalist formulations of themselves as fighting vast outside conspiracies. In the 1980s, to prime madrassas to prepare mujahidin for war against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, the CIA gave the University of Nebraska a 51 million dollar grant to produce pictorial textbooks glorifying jihad (Is. Ahmed 2013). Part of the education that took place in the madrassas sponsored by General Zia and the CIA encouraged students to see Islam as the target of a longstanding Jewish, Hindu, and Christian (Yahud-Hanud-Nasara) campaign against Islam (Is. Ahmed 2013). The phrase Yahud-Hanud-Nasara had not existed before<sup>13</sup>, but because of its’ Arabic sounding nature, was readily accepted by madrassa students. These outsiders gradually came to be aligned with the Pakistani government, which was seen as serving their interests (Is. Ahmed 2013). Both of these forces are portrayed by revivalists as working together to harm “Muslims.”

Al-Huda women first encountered the idea of the “Yahud” and “Nasara” as categories opposed to Islam through revivalist classes. Many had not encountered the terms before, and were not familiar with ideas of a conspiracy against Islam. One of the newer students in Rabia’s class interrupted a dars to ask, shyly, “What are the Yahud?” However, as they become involved

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<sup>13</sup> The categories “Yahud” and “Nasara” do exist in the Qur’an, although many non-revivalist Pakistanis are not familiar with them.

with the movement, women begin to speak of certain traditions and events as being inspired by Hindus, the “Nasara”, or the “Yahud.” Conversations among Al-Huda women discuss the hostility of these Others to Islam. The following interaction illustrates the ways in which Al-Huda women see themselves as the target of symbolic violence from members of these groups, and from the West:

Nargis picks up her phone after class, and checks her text messages. She sighs heavily, and her fellow classmates turn to look at her.

Nargis: “They are building a bar (sharab-khana) in France in the shape of the Kaaba.”

Rabia, resignedly: “They have already built it.”

Komal: “and I hear that in that bar they have a football with the name of Muhammad on it.”

Rabia: “we are emulating them, and they are our enemies (*dushman*)

Tablighis also portray foreign outsiders as being enemies who do symbolic violence to Islam, although they do not specifically reference the Yahud and Nasara, speaking instead in vague terms: “Allah has all power, and He can end the evil people (*batil walay*) who are our enemies (*dushman*). He will do this if we come back to our religion. If we work on our prayer. If we make faith (*iman*) our effort (*mehnat*), Allah will help us.” Tablighi accounts portray the hostile outside world as being converted into symbolically Muslim space through Tablighi efforts. During dars, statements like the following are common: “Thanks to the work of Tabligh, there is a mosque in the heart of Rome. *Gasht* and *bayan*<sup>14</sup> happen there, and jama’ats do their work over there. Through the work of Tablighis, the lives of thousands have changed.”

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<sup>14</sup> Gasht and bayan are both Tabligh specific revivalist activities. Gasht is a male-only activity, in which Tablighi men set out from the mosque to go visit the houses of Muslim men in order to invite them to correct their religious practice and attend the bayan. The bayan is the Tablighi sermon, delivered at the mosque.

Revivalists position themselves against an outside world full of conspiracies against “the Muslims” which creates illusions that “Muslims” are behaving badly. Once, after an Al-Huda class, Rabia, Nazish, and a few other women started discussing an incident where the police had shot and killed a young man who had ridden up to one of the security-barriers littering the city crying “Allahu Akbar.” According to Rabia, the media had presented this as a foiled suicide bombing, when in actuality, one of her husband’s friends who worked for the police had told her it was just a boy playing a prank. “But,” she said “this is not something the media will report on, after their initial reports that the boy was a terrorist.”

Sermons and conversations in Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama’at reveal a shared imagining of their placement in urban Pakistan, often referring to revivalists who are thought to be terrorists or are otherwise targeted by the Pakistani government. Performing an invocation (du’a) after the Al-Huda class, Nazish said “Oh Allah, remove from Muslims the stain that they are accused of being terrorists (dehshatgard).” Stories about women who were stopped and searched at checkpoints because they were seen as high-risk due to their burqas are common among both Al-Huda and Tablighi women. Once, when I was traveling with my informant Kamila and her husband Imran to visit a traveling missionary group, her car was pulled aside at one of the numerous road-blocks in Islamabad. Kamila was wearing a black burqa and black gloves covered her hands. Her husband Imran wore a *shalwar kameeze*, and sported a long beard. An apologetic police officer asked Imran for his license and National Identity Card. As he handed them over, Imran mildly asked “have they told you to stop men with beards and make sure they are not terrorists?” The security guard sheepishly denied having such instructions, but the rest of the car ride was spent discussing the number of bearded men he knew who had been stopped at the security barriers scattered throughout the city.



After describing institutionalized discrimination against themselves, women often say “our deeds (amal) are such, we deserve this kind of treatment.” This statement defines relationships to men and God that are central to revivalist identities. First, it identifies an “us” who have failed to correctly implement Islam, and thus “deserve” to be treated with suspicion by other Pakistanis. Second, this framing promotes the idea that once revivalists as a group purify their religious practice, divine help will be forthcoming. During a Tablighi sermon, the speaker enunciated this common sentiment “Allah has all power, and can help change the world. He will do this if we come back to religion. If we work on our prayer. If we make faith (iman) our effort (mehnat), Allah will help us.” This kind of thinking is used to explain the dominance of the West, with the success of western powers being attributed to their supposedly excellent manners (ikhlaq), honesty (imandari), and hard work (mehnat). The corollary is that once revivalists purify Pakistani society, Pakistan’s status in the world will improve.

Mouffe has proposed that competing social groups draw on the logic of equivalence to increase their discursive position’s persuasiveness (2005). Revivalists create shared understandings of Islam in attempts to make these beliefs authoritative and hegemonic. This construction of revivalists across movements as sharing enemies and an identity-position can be seen as revivalists engaging in the logic of equivalence; revivalists attempt to create consensus regarding Islam, “Muslims” and the “enemies of Islam.” These joint constructions create a shared identity for members of revivalist movements; they are battling common foes and engaged in similar missions of reform.

## (2)Contending Others

Contending Others are similar to enough to revivalists that they can be used to position revivalists with regard to specific beliefs, behaviors, and ideologies. Unlike large constructs like “the West” or “the Government,” these non-self Others allow revivalists to demarcate the boundaries of acceptable behavior and to create movement-specific identities which are differentiated from those adopted by other revivalist movements. Avishai (2008) has argued that pious agents actively construct themselves against secular Others. I extend that observation to argue that Pakistani revivalists construct themselves against both pious and non-pious Others in order to present specific movements as “unified, and defined by very particular regimes of representation” (Moallem 2005, 221). Different revivalist movements isolate different features of these Others against which to form themselves. Two groups of people against whom Pakistani revivalists create movement-specific identities are “irreligious women,” who illustrate what a revivalist woman ought to look like, and the ulama (religious scholars), who demonstrate how members of particular movements ought to engage with religion.

### (A) Irreligious Women

Revivalist women use images of irreligious women as a collaborative self-authoring project. Through their descriptions of urban Pakistani women’s transgressive behavior, revivalist women draw limits around their communities, illustrating the behavior of Others. Both the Tablighi Jama’at and Al-Huda stress the need for tolerance in sermons; both movements demonstrate awareness that revivalists are accused of being intolerant, and both exhort their members to deal tolerantly with those who are different. However, women from both movements engage in extensive commentary and critique of “immodestly” dressed Others’ morals during

casual conversations during and after dars. Some critiques of non-revivalist women overlap, demonstrating the shared aspects of revivalist identity, while other critiques are movement-specific.

In Al-Huda classes, Othering maneuvers typically concern a woman who is dressed in a manner described as “naked,” involve condemnation of the way she was dressed, and illustrate the negative social and moral consequences this woman creates, as in the following example:

Rabia: Once, I was on a plane, and there was a girl wearing capris and a tank top. A boy was sitting next to her, and the girl got very upset, said he had harassed her ...first, everyone on the plane was very upset with the young man. Then an elder (buzurg) who was sitting there said, look at how she is dressed. This girl has made herself lawful (halal) to anyone who wants her. If I was not an elder, I would have bothered her myself.

So tell me – who was worse, the man who bothered her or the woman who was naked?

Similar stories, in which women position themselves against those who do not veil, are common. However, these stories do not involve women they know, and when they talk about their female relatives, the tenor of the conversation is entirely different. Later that week, Komal mentioned that her (non-Al-Huda affiliated, non-veiling) sister had experienced street harassment, and all of the women at the Al-Huda class were indignant, discussing the immorality of men in general. Those women who have started attending the movement’s religious classes but do not veil are also treated with gentle persuasion. Stories told in Al-Huda classes define Al-Huda women against a backdrop of immoral Others, who are dressed in clothing that is seen as immodest by the vast majority of Pakistanis. These conversational maneuvers do not involve women they know, or women who they see as possible targets for conversion. In fact, when they encountered non-veiling women who are curious about the movement, my Al-Huda informants would encourage them to attend meetings, and insist that veiling was not a prerequisite for attending.

Tablighi Othering maneuvers also target women who are seen as immodestly dressed, but Tablighi women's accounts of Other women target all non-veiling women rather than just those whom most Pakistanis see as immodest. One woman, after a discussion on the importance of veiling said passionately "it is forbidden for us to even associate with the women who wander bare faced in the marketplace." Most urban Pakistani women do not veil their faces, and statements like this position most Pakistani women as outside movement-prescribed standards of virtue. Tablighi stories emphasize the movement's very narrow boundaries for acceptable female behavior. At a dars in 2009, a speaker told the story of two women – one with iman (faith), and one without. The speaker said:

If women have low faith (*iman*), their children will get spoiled and not be religious (*deendar*). There is a woman, and she has a child in her lap (a baby), and one who is aware (*hoshyar*). Her husband is away on jama'at and the baby is sick. The woman without faith will say to her older son, run and get my purse. She will pull out her money and count it. After that, she will take the child in the lap to the doctor. Her older son will go with her, since her husband is away. She will say "Thank God! We have money and we can afford a doctor." But a woman with faith will be different. She will say to her aware child, "oh your little brother is sick." Then she will make wudu, and do two rakat of salaah e hajat<sup>15</sup>. After that, she can look in her purse and take the sick child to the hospital. How much the older son will learn from the woman with faith! Such values she will teach him! This is why women are essential to the Work. We can go out, but they have to work on their children, and make them good.

This story, and other Tablighi stories, illustrate that the Tablighi Jama'at enforces a very movement-specific ideal of piety for women. The Other woman, described as having "low iman," is waiting patiently at home for her husband to return while tending to their small children. By non-Tablighi Pakistani standards she is a "good" woman. However, for the Tablighi speaker, this is not enough. For her to be a woman of faith, a Tablighi woman, she has to

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<sup>15</sup> A voluntary prayer performed when a person is in distress

demonstrate movement-specific piety by asking for divine aid prior to seeking medical attention for her son.

Contrasts between Tablighi and Al-Huda depictions of Others demonstrate that the Tablighi Jama'at enforces a very specific ideal of Tablighi femininity. Women who wander “bare-faced” and women who do not pray before trying to solve problems are Othered. In contrast, Al-Huda accepts women demonstrating a range of behavior, only rejecting those who are outside ordinary Pakistani standards of modesty and morality.

## **(B) The Ulama**

The ulama's role as Others to Islamic Revivalism has gone unmentioned in much of the literature on Islamic movements. This is a startling omission, as the very existence of revivalist movements is an implicit critique of the ulama. Each revivalist movement has to take some stance on the ulama in order to justify its own existence. From the birth of Islamic Revivalist ideology with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839 – 1897) and Mohammad Abdu (1849 -1905), revivalists have blamed the ulama for the state of Muslim society, and sought to challenge their role as the sole interpreters of Qur'an and Hadith (Hasan 2011). Meanwhile, the ulama have attempted to restrict the translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into other languages; even now, they maintain that translations of the Qur'an are interpretations rather than Qur'an itself (Aslan 2011). When revivalist movements draw on Islamic sacred texts, they are challenging the ulama's role as the sole interpreters of those texts, and are competing with them for a popular audience (Zaman 2002).

Pakistani revivalist movements position themselves in relation to the ulama along a spectrum, from hostile opposition to accommodation. Some movements, like the Jama'at Islami,

demonstrate both approaches. The Jama'at Islami, founded by Abul Ala Maududi, started out by denouncing the ulama and arguing that they had failed to properly interpret sacred texts (Ir. Ahmed 2010). Later, the Jama'at Islami reduced the scope of its confrontation with the ulama, and made common cause with them on a number of political issues (Esposito 1998). The Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda develop divergent representations of the ulama; these representations illustrate the role the movements envision for themselves vis-a-vis their Islamic Others.

The Tablighi Jama'at presents itself as working in concert with the ulama. Religious scholars were involved in setting up the movement (Zaman 2002). The movement's primary text, the *Fazail-e-Amal* (The merits of [virtuous] practices), was written by one of the reformist Deobandi ulama in the 1920s (Zaman 2002). Members of the Tablighi Jama'at make verbal gestures of deference to "the respected ulama" in multiple sermons. During an interview, my informant Kamila told me that if she had a theological issue she needed to consult someone about, she had her husband ask a religious scholar. Participants in Tabligh see themselves as laypeople who are not attempting to replace the ulama as a source of religious knowledge. Their verbal deference to the ulama is meant to convey that their primary engagement with religion is to invite other Muslims to correct their religious practice. At the same time, part of the movement's "simple noncontroversial and nonsectarian message" (M. Ahmad 62, 2008) is that the ulama are not necessary for the propagation of Islam, and that lay-preachers can reach ordinary Muslims more effectively (Metcalf 1992).

In contrast to Tabligh, Al-Huda's methodology and ideology are a direct challenge to the ulama. Dr Farhat Hashmi, the leader of the movement, emphasizes her doctoral research in Hadith Sciences as the basis of her knowledge, and positions herself and her movement as

opposed to the traditional ulama (Bayat 2013). This ideological framework plays into general elite suspicions of “maulvis,” and allows Al-Huda members to construct themselves as more qualified to interpret religion than religious scholars. I observed a new student contradicting exegesis within the class based on something a religious scholar on TV had said. Nazish and the other students began explaining to her that listening to the interpretation of the ulama over hadith was wrong. Nazish said “Haven’t the ulama said, that if what we say is contradicted by a hadith throw our words away?” This formulation of the issue of *taqlid*<sup>16</sup> is one I heard multiple times during Al-Huda classes. Al-Huda women also speak of the difficulty of taking advice from religious scholars, who do not give hadith and Qur’an based evidence (*dalil*) for their rulings. Rabia once told me “The religious scholar thinks too much of himself and does not explain things. In contrast, we here explain things over and over and we always explain how we reach our conclusions.”

Mufti Taqi Usmani is one of Pakistan’s leading theologians. His relationship with Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama’at demonstrates that revivalist strategies of identity-creation impact the relationship revivalists have with the ulama, the traditional arbiters of Islamic authority. Mufti Taqi Usmani has approved of the Tablighi Jama’at’s work with the caveat that some of its members makes “overstatements” regarding the necessity of conducting Tabligh (Al-Balagh 2013). In contrast, he released a long statement condemning Al-Huda in strong language, saying that the movement is “the holder of misleading, misguided, and strife-causing views” (Usmani 2010, 97 my translation). He goes on to say that Dr Hashmi’s degree in Islamic Studies from the University of Glasgow does not qualify her to teach religion, and that “These non-Muslims, who

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<sup>16</sup> In Islamic legal terminology, Taqlid means following a religious scholar or school of thought in religious laws and commandments, rather than examining the scriptural reasoning of that decision.

do not even have iman, have created many of these kinds of institutions in order to create individuals who will cause discord” (Usmani 2010, 97 my translation).

These interactions between revivalists and the ulama are notable for operating within a shared understanding of Islamic authority as based in sacred texts. Members of both groups attempt to challenge the other’s claim to being a legitimate interpreter. Even in the case of the Tablighi Jama’at, which verbally defers to the ulama, there are tensions regarding the “overstatements” members of the movement make through sacred texts.

## Contesting Islam

Revivalism is a newly emerging identity-position in Urban Pakistan, as demonstrated by the growing discourse surrounding revivalist activities in Pakistani newspapers, talk-shows and academic articles. Although revivalism has been a force in Pakistani society since the formation of the country, revivalists are becoming more and more visible in the social landscape as increasing numbers of middle and upper class individuals affiliate with ideas of purified Islamic practice. As they become more prominent, revivalists signal their exclusive claim to Islam through sartorial and behavioral markers. Urban Pakistanis uniformly construct images of revivalists as outsiders who are radicalizing Pakistani society. Meanwhile, revivalists identify as an embattled minority of Muslims, victimized by large conspiracies, who are promoting a Pure Islam in an attempt to reform society. Revivalists position themselves against large institutional forces and specific groups of urban Pakistanis in order to demarcate the boundaries of appropriate revivalist identities.



The common underlying facet of all identity-politics surrounding revivalism is the contested nature of Islamic authority in Pakistan. What makes a particular practice, ideology, or mode of social organization Islamic? A practice is considered Islamic when it is “authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam, and is so taught to Muslims – whether by an ‘alim (religious scholar), a khatib (person who delivers the Friday sermon), a Sufi shaykh (mystic), or an untutored parent” (Asad 1986: 21). Prior to revivalism’s emergence on the social field, there was consensus that practices imagined as historically authorized and taught by parents and elders were Islamic and had authoritative status. Pakistanis have historically drawn religious authority from ideas of the past, the way things have always been and are understood to be. This governs the forms of hierarchy within families, contributing to “Islamic” structures of deference and respect.

Revivalists reject tradition in favor of an Islam based on sacred text, and stop engaging in practices that are seen as un-Islamic, including drinking alcohol, gambling, and dancing. These practices are widely understood to violate religious norms, and most urban Pakistanis see them as contrary to Islamic teaching and practice regardless of their own participation or lack thereof in these activities. Revivalist rejection of these practices is generally seen as part of individual growth towards greater spirituality. In some cases, the family and friends of a newly revivalist individual celebrate these changes; Sadaf Ahmad (2009) has documented instances in which families approve of young women’s initial involvement in Al-Huda, because it induces them to give up behavior commonly understood as being against Islamic values. Some parents think that sending their impressionable teenaged daughters to revivalist classes will inoculate them against dating, drugs, and drinking, behaviors that upper and middle-class teenagers sometimes engage in that are commonly held to be un-Islamic.

Revivalist rejections of practices widely believed to be un-Islamic (such as drinking alcohol or dating) are uncontroversial. However, urban Pakistanis are dismayed at revivalists' rejection of authorized practices and ceremonies understood to be Islamic by delegitimizing them through the medium of sacred texts. Revivalist rejection of customary domestic norms, clothing practices, family organization, and cultural events are met with opposition, and are correlated with urban Pakistanis presenting revivalist behavior as "extreme." Revivalist failure to understand and practice culturally authorized Islamic values is featured in common anecdotes about revivalism, as are accounts of revivalists using religion for extra-religious ends. Meanwhile, revivalists present urban Pakistanis as contributing to a hostile outside world that embraces un-Islamic values and threatens social reform.

Underlying these identity-formation maneuvers is a contestation over whether Islamic authority is solely in sacred texts as interpreted by revivalist exegetes, or whether Islamic authority can be based partly in historically authorized practices. Neither party to this discursive formulation (revivalist vs. urban Pakistani) contests the others' source of authority. Revivalists concede that common Pakistani understandings of religion are historically authorized. Similarly, urban Pakistanis concede that some revivalist reforms are based in sacred texts, and agree that sacred texts are authoritative sources of religion. The vast majority of my informants did not dispute with revivalists' use of the Qur'an and Hadith. None of them, for example, argued that veiling is not Qur'anically mandated. This is in sharp contrast to reactions to revivalism elsewhere in the world. Islamic feminists in the West draw on alternative readings of Qur'an and Hadith to argue that revivalist interpretations of sacred text (for example, related to women's veiling) are flawed (Wadud 1999, Barlas 2002, El-Fadl 2001). These arguments attack revivalist identities based on their own source of authority, drawing on sacred texts to counter arguments

and identities based in sacred texts. In contrast, urban Pakistanis cede mastery of sacred texts to revivalists, instead attacking their claims based on historically authorized Islamic beliefs. The implicit argument is that the reforms revivalists are proposing are so clearly wrong that they cannot be Islamic.

I argue that revivalist utilization of sacred texts as a source of authority unites the disparate identity-positions represented through different movements, stressing their equivalence in terms of a shared antagonism to common Pakistani understanding of Islamic authority. Revivalists across Islamic movements are united in their use of Islamic sacred texts to create a society which practices a Pure Islam cleansed of culture. Proponents of revivalist epistemology function as a unit in attempting to create hegemony regarding the authority of their source of Islam. These interactions are complicated because most Pakistanis defer to revivalist sources of authority, namely Islamic sacred text, and cannot attack them directly. Instead of arguing that Qur'an and Hadith are outdated, or not valid sources of authority, urban Pakistanis attempt to demonstrate that revivalist interpretations of these texts go against Islam as they understand it. Meanwhile, revivalists attack culture directly, arguing that most Pakistanis are committed to a flawed culture that promotes un-Islamic values.

Laclau (2007) has argued that all antagonism is inherently political. An insertion into a discourse that disrupts its logic in terms that are alien to it, as when revivalists interrupt common understandings of virtue through sacred texts, creates heterogeneity within a discursive field (Laclau 2007). Any insertion into a discourse that breaks with the logic of a situation is a political one. This insight resolves questions regarding the political nature of Islamic reform. Analysis of women in religious movements has wavered between seeing women's cultivation of symbols of piety as either a political action betokening resistance against the West, or as a move

towards personal spiritual growth (Mahmood 2004). Urban Pakistanis see individual sartorial markings of revivalist identity as political, while revivalists see these markers as denoting piety and not at all related to politics. Drawing on Laclau (2007), I argue that women's appropriation of religious identities in the heterogeneous discursive field of urban Pakistan cannot help but be political. At the same time, women's adoption of revivalist identities is part of a deeply personal reformulation of their identity-positions, requiring them to reject their previous epistemologies and identity-positions. The distinction between the personal and the political becomes relegated to the level of consciousness and the individual will. Revivalists in Pakistan are seen to be making intensely political claims through their sartorial and domestic practices. At the same time, my revivalist subjects see their behaviors as flowing from their desire to become True Muslims through their adherence to sacred texts.

# **CHAPTER THREE. IS THE MATERIAL IMMATERIAL? OBJECTS AND SPACE IN ISLAMIC REVIVALISM**

## **Introduction**

Imagine two spaces – The first is a carpeted drawing room, furnished with sofas, chairs and side-tables. The second consists of three uncarpeted rooms with floors covered in white cloth, free of decoration. These are the spaces of the dars (religious classes) of Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at respectively. The women who attend these dars appear identical; nearly all of them wear black burqas, pray five times a day, and invite others to correct their religious practices. Pakistanis who do not participate in these movements find them almost undistinguishable from each other, but if you spoke to their members, they would tell you that the movements they belong to are entirely different from each other, and that their movement is superior in its approach to religion and society. A close examination of these movements' dars reveals the way these spaces create and express these differences and position themselves with regard to contemporary Pakistani society.

This chapter considers the space of dars and the objects within that space in order to trace the meanings embedded in dars, and the ways in which the interactions of participants and the placement of objects alter those meanings. In addition to being a literal space dars is also a metaphoric one where ordinary rules of interaction in urban Pakistani society are suspended. The physical setting of dars reflects and creates an ideological space where the realities of the purely

Islamic society can emerge. Revivalists reject many existing Pakistani social arrangements as “un-Islamic,” and spaces conform to and confirm this ideology through the careful placement of objects and arrangement of spatial layouts. New hierarchies emerge in spaces of *dars*; these are modeled on each movement’s conception of the ideal society, which revivalists trace back to the “Time of the Prophet.” Revivalist movements draw on sacred texts in order to create a blueprint for this society, and for the spatial organization that brings it into being. This society is both expressed by the physical layout and shaped by it. My examination of space seeks to answer the following questions - Who produces space? How? Why and for whom? How are the meanings embedded in spatial practice modified as the space is lived in?

A movement that aims to change life itself must create a new space in which that life can be lived (Lefebvre 1991). This space functions as a laboratory where members and leaders work out the shape of their ideal world. Space is not inert. The sociopolitical processes that go into the construction of space mean that space is not natural, but is made, imagined, constructed and contested (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Its creation is part of an ongoing, time-consuming process of self-presentation and self-representation (Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre’s triad (1991) provides a productive framework for thinking through the agents and processes involved in the creation of space. Lefebvre has divided the production of space into three moments, consisting of representations of space, spatial practice, and representational spaces. Revivalist productions of these moments reveal the ideal world different agents within each revivalist movement are attempting to bring into being. These moments allow us to trace space from the moment it is imagined, to its translation into a physical space which encodes meaning, into a place that is lived in. This analysis gives us a window into areas where specific agents modify the meaning embedded within the space, impacting the uses it is put to and the messages it conveys.

Revivalist meetings where sacred texts are read and discussed are known as *dars* to those who are not members of that movement. The word *dars* literally translates to “teaching.” Within revivalist movements, *dars* are known by different names; the Al-Huda Welfare Foundation holds what members refer to as “classes,” and the Tablighi Jama’at calls its gatherings “Taleem” (lit. education). Al-Huda classes are held on scheduled times through the week, and serve the ostensible purpose of introducing members to Islamic sacred texts. Tablighi Taleem is a weekly event held on Fridays for the purposes of recruitment, training and coordination. Female members who attend Taleem are introduced to sacred texts supporting the movement, and are told about various Tablighi missionary women’s groups visiting Islamabad, as well as being asked to participate in specific tours that are being organized. I use the term *dars* to describe the weekly meetings I participated in across movements for the sake of clarity, and because Pakistanis unaffiliated with revivalism call them by this name.

## Women In Private Space

The creation of space as a representation can only be understood in the backdrop of the places that space is building on. Houston (2001) has argued that Islamic spaces consciously represent the empirical presentation of an imagined social order even as they constitute that social order. In the light of this observation, it is significant to note that women’s religious gatherings in Pakistan are overwhelmingly centered in private space. Women’s participation in Islamic revivalist movements in locations as disparate as Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Iran take place in mosques (Mahmood 2004, Rosaldo 2013, Mir-Hosseni 2000). In stark contrast, Pakistani revivalist women’s gatherings are based in houses, schools, colleges, hotels, and

municipal buildings. Haeri (2002) has traced the reluctance of Pakistani women to attend mosques to widespread social disapproval. Women's absence from the mosque is not the result of a lack of space; many mosques have large sections for women, which remain generally uninhabited. Even the Faisal Mosque, a popular tourist destination with a large women's section, remains mostly unattended by women<sup>17</sup>. In contrast, male attendance at the mosque is high, particularly on Fridays. Mosque infrastructure supports women's presence, and illustrates that revivalist uses of domestic space for women's activities are not an accident or an oversight. Male activities are often held in mosques, and the Tablighi Jama'at in particular coordinates all of the activities of the male wing of the movement from different mosques.

Revivalist women's use of mosques in other countries represents a move to alter the historically male-centered nature of Islamic theology and to lay claim religious authority (Mahmood 2004). I argue that Pakistani revivalists use private space for dars to negate the impression that they are radically empowering women. Revivalist dars provide women with access to the Qur'an and Hadith and teach women to draw on these sources in order to promote movement-specific social interventions. These educational sessions enable a radical redrawing of Islamic authority; instead of relying on male-mediated exegesis, women are able to interpret sacred texts on their own in order to promote goals they see as important. Revivalists use private space to hold dars in order to convey that they are educating women in order to promote domestic reform rather than widespread social change. Revivalist women from diverse movements echo these spatial implications and claim that women's revivalism is important because of their role as guardians of a domestic moral order. Huma, a woman in her early thirties

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<sup>17</sup> Over the past five years, I have observed a shift in women's mosque attendance; as I conducted pre-dissertation and dissertation fieldwork from 2007 to 2011, more and more of my informants attended the taraweeh prayer which are a feature of the month of Ramadan.



who had joined Al-Huda after college, told me as she pacified her baby daughter after class that Al-Huda's work was important because of its impact on families. In her own words "we are not 30 women learning here, we are 30 households." Tablighi women also emphasize the domestic nature of women's religious education. Rafea, an unmarried Tablighi informant who had just finished a madrassa course, told me that it was important to draw the wives of Tablighi men to the weekly dars because "if women do not learn, how will their children learn? Islam stops at the door of the house if only a man is involved in Tabligh." At the same time, women's education in revivalist movements is part of a social transformation which is not confined to the domestic spheres revivalists claim are their sole concern.

The literature on religious women and space has focused on the variety of strategies women employ to make public space their own (Brekus 1998, Ginsberg 1990, Eason 2003). Works on Muslim women and space have discussed the role of purdah, "the ... curtain separating the everyday worlds of women and men" (Weiss 1998, 125), in providing women with access to public space (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). In some contexts, purdah allows women to move comfortably in public spaces, and gain access to higher education (Osanloo 2009). In others, veiling challenges the separation between a public secularism and a privatized religiosity (Gole 2003). This chapter moves away from the focus on pious Muslim women's engagements with public space through the mediating use of the veil to examine the domestic spaces in which women's religious movements in Pakistan operate. The public/private dichotomy through which Muslim women's experiences have been filtered has uncritically assigned the use, maintenance, organization and creation of private space to women (Abisaab 2005). More recently, notions of public and private have been shown to overlap and operate differently for Muslim women based

on context (Göle 1997, Joseph 1997, Secor, 2002). This chapter elaborates on these strains in the literature, and draws out the contingent, contested nature of seemingly “private” space.

Private space, a space that belongs to women and is divorced from outside influences, is itself an illusion. Multiple interests are heavily implicated in the organization of homes. This chapter examines Muslim domestic space through a lens which demonstrates the multiple competing interests that reach into and reshape the women’s segregated spaces. This analysis argues for a more careful examination of Muslim space more generally, and calls for greater attention to the following questions: How is domestic space the product of competing interests?; How is it created as a space of dars?; What kinds of interactions does this space, the negotiated product of competing arrangements, allow its inhabitants?; How does it constitute subjects, and how is it constituted by them?

## Upper and Middle-Class Domestic Space in Islamabad

The organization of space, and the ways in which space is used, expresses the hierarchy of social relationships and ideologies encoded in it (Ardener in Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 9). Particular places and types of space are imbued with culturally inscribed meanings and power-relations, and are not merely neutral backdrops to action (Morin and Guelke 2007). Itself the product of past actions, social space is what permits fresh action to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. (Lefebvre 1991). Interchanges and interactions in a place are situational – not just in a place, but of a place. These space-specific interactions define and create the frame being imposed on a place (Richardson 2003). Understanding the frame that is being imposed on a dars requires a familiarity with Pakistani upper-class space, which is modified to create an appropriate setting for dars.

Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at leadership draw on the houses of wealthy members in order to hold dars. These houses are in economically privileged locations, and the layouts of these houses and the neighborhoods they are in demonstrate extreme economic privilege through a number of spatial cues. The avenues are dotted with green trees, there are only a few cars on the residential streets, and the houses are of varied architectural style and building materials. Houses with red brick facades sit next to houses covered in brown tiles, sloping roofs next to flat ones, a medley of colors and styles. Nearly all of the houses claim a servant quarter somewhere in the back of the house and a well-tended lawn within their walls. All of the houses are separated by walls of brick or concrete topped with spikes or with glass shards. Walls facing the street are generally six to seven feet high, and the entrance into the house is protected by a solid metal gate. In more elite neighborhoods, this gate is often guarded by a man in a uniform with a gun, whose job it is to open the gate, receive visitors, and protect the lives and property of the occupants of the house.

Low and Laerence-Zunga (2003: 45) have argued that the presence of gates and guards produces a landscape that encodes class relations and segregation through the built environment. According to Leisch, walls are often not high enough to be a deterrent to theft, and their function is symbolic as well as protective (2002: 343). In the case of Islamabad neighborhoods, the gates are highly symbolic. Passage between the gates of a house marks a transition from the public space of the street to the private one of the home. Not everyone is welcome within the gates of a house; friends, family, and servants belonging to the house are welcome but the gates keep out beggars and those considered strangers. Gates also enact differentiation between members of different social classes; passage is restricted to members of ones' class and servants, who enter the space in order to perform domestic labor.

I attended numerous dars during the course of my research and quickly grew familiar with the subtle signs outside a house that one was being held. Cars would be thickly parked on the street outside the house and the gates would be wide open, symbolizing the laying aside of the convention that only friends and family pass the gates of the house. The open gate can be seen as a reflection of the metaphorical space of dars; dars provides an opening for women into the kinds of knowledge that have been traditionally reserved for men. Depending on the size of the gathering, I would either follow other women going in, or I would make my way from the gate to the door of the house on my own. There was often a cluster of women's jumbled, brightly colored shoes outside one of the doors leading into the dars. The quality of the shoes shifted based on the demographics of the attendees. Some of the more "posh" dars featured Clarks and Naturalizer shoes brought during vacations abroad. Once inside, the features of the dars varied considerably, based on the movement sponsoring it. One consistent element was that the dars was always held in the drawing-room of a house, and that the space of this room was altered to conform to movement-specific guidelines regarding the dars.

## The Pakistani Drawing Room



*Figure 1. Photograph: This figure is a creative commons photograph of an elite Pakistani Drawing Room.*

Pakistani drawing-rooms are situated near the entrance of the house, and many have separate doors that allow guests to enter without going into the house itself. They are designed to allow the business of the house to continue unseen while important guests (often male friends/business associates) are entertained. Drawing-rooms are an in-between space; they are not outside the house, but they are also not central to it. They are designed this way in order to

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<sup>18</sup> This is a creative commons picture of a representative drawing-room. None of my subjects were comfortable having their homes photographed, so I will use creative commons images to provide pictures of analogous spaces.

create flexible segregated space. Male visitors can be entertained in the drawing-room while the inner, private space of the house remains segregated. In addition, those individuals living in a “joint-family,” a multi-generational patrilocal household, can use the drawing room to entertain their guests while keeping them out of the way of the entire extended family household. The family-lounge/drawing-room arrangement also creates segregated spaces for male and female visitors when large parties occur.

Drawing-rooms are temperature controlled, furnished with heaters, air-conditioners and fans. Couches made of wood, leather, or fabric dominate the room – the material and style of the furniture reflects the wealth and taste of the family. The room contains tables on which knick-knacks are displayed, and some drawing-rooms feature china cabinets and display cases. Most drawing-rooms feature paintings on the walls, statuettes, vases, and other forms of decoration. Drawing-rooms are an elite space – they are only possessed by those who have the resources to allocate an entire room of the house primarily to the occasional guest. Their furnishings and arrangements are also elite. One purpose of the drawing-room is to reflect the family’s prestige; the isolated nature of the room makes it possible for it to be the only room in the house guests see, and so the furniture and objects within this room are more prestigious than those in the family-lounge, the room where family and close friends are entertained.

In contrast to the elite space of upper-class drawing-rooms, less well-off Pakistani families have a room which serves as a joint family-lounge/drawing room. This room is furnished with a combination of couches, chairs, and old sofas based on the economic circumstances of the family. The houses of lower-income Pakistanis are furnished almost exclusively with *charpais*, low beds of woven plastic around a metal frame. These are used both to sit and socialize on, and to sleep on. These houses do not have a space devoted to

socialization, which occurs in the central room of the house. Lower-income Pakistani homes also lack dining tables, and food is consumed around a communal tablecloth on the floor, called a *dastarkhan*.

My research demonstrates that the use of the drawing-room for revivalist purposes is the product of negotiation within families. The structuring of this space to create revivalist dars takes into consideration the degree to which women in a movement have supportive husbands and families, and thus overall family approval. Drawing-rooms in particular are multi-use, and of service to multiple members of a household. The use of the drawing room for dars requires sacrifice on the part of a woman's (not necessarily revivalist) family. At the same time, dars is a very specific form of observance, and the space undergoes transitions in order to signal that it is now a space of dars. These transitions encode the specific meanings dars has to the leadership of a movement, as well as modifications women make to that meaning. Modifications to existing domestic space create movement-specific sites which demonstrate revivalist relationships to contemporary Pakistan, and to other revivalist movements.

## LeFebvre and Space: A Theoretical Framework

I draw on the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre (1991) to trace the meanings and associations represented, enabled, and constrained by dars within the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda. This analysis will focus on a comparative examination of dars physical settings, social setups, and use of physical markers to establish and maintain movement-specific ideologies regarding gender and religion. Counterposing the ways in which revivalists organize the space of dars reveals the world as revivalists wish to create it. Spaces are narratives which represent a

polyphony of voices – they are politicized, culturally relative, and historically specific (Rodman 2003). Marcus (1989) has argued that places should be seen as socially constructed products of multiple agents. Ethnography of places must reflect this multiplicity, specifying both the intended and unintended consequences of the construction of space. My examination of the space of dars traces multiple agents in various locations who impact the organization of space.

Lefebvre has divided the production of space into three dialectically connected processes or moments. These moments exist in interaction, conflict, or alliance with each other. They do not result in a synthesis as in the traditional Hegelian dialectic but are co-equal, and negate and affirm each other (Schmid 2008). LeFebvre's triad consists of (1) representations of space (space as conceptualized; the ideology that underlies space), (2) spatial practice (space as organized), and (3) representational spaces (space as lived). This triad allows us to trace the agents and interests involved in space as conceived, physically organized, and lived. Such an analysis demonstrates the multiple meanings embedded in and conveyed through space, as well as moments where the intended purpose of space is negated. Drawing on Lefebvre, I trace the way that space in multi-use settings is constructed and maintained as movement-specific. Here, I note that I do not conceptualize these spaces as divided along a sacred/profane binary in the Durkheimian (1995) sense. Instead, I employ Lefebvre to trace the moments of translation that convert an ordinary Pakistani drawing-room into the site of revivalist-affiliated dars.

Representations of space are associated with relationships of power, and features that are emphasized in these representations serve as signifiers of prominent ideologies (Lefebvre 1991, Schmid 2008). Revivalist leadership create specific representations of space and convey them to members through sermons. These representations comprise verbalized guidelines that link ideology and the concrete organization of space. These representations are encoded onto spatial



practice by the members of revivalist movements. The spatial practice of a movement is consistent from site to site within that movement, demonstrating that the ideological blueprint that guides the organization of the space is consistent across the movement. Spaces of representation are the third element of Lefebvre's triad. This dimension of space concerns the symbolic dimension of space and the ways in which the space is lived. Both representations of space and spatial practice create the representational spaces in which women live and modify the meanings encoded in dars.

## **(1) Material/Spaces/Agents in the Tablighi Taleem**

### **Spatial Practice (Physical Set-Up)**

I first attended Tablighi Taleem in the summer of 2008 with my informant Kamila. Cars lined the curb and parking was scarce. Kamila and I were dropped off at the Taleem by her driver. When we walked in through the gate, a fabric wall attached to one of the boundary walls of the house confronted us. The fabric barrier cordoned off one of the two doors to the house. One end of this wall was slit, and we slipped through it into the women's area. The shoes littering the entrance were comprised of a variety of brands, including Stylo, Bata, and Service. Foreign-branded shoes were not in evidence. The portion of the house given over to women for the Taleem consisted of a large drawing-room leading into two inner rooms. These rooms demonstrate several elements that are common to Tablighi space. Other Tabligh-specific spaces include those that house individuals engaged in the primary activity of Tabligh – going on a tour of an assigned area to invite the Muslims living there to correct their religious practice. These tours travel both locally and internationally depending on their mission. Men on these tours live

and sleep in neighborhood mosques, while women who are on tour are accommodated as a group in the houses of local Tablighis.

It was the middle of summer and it was incredibly hot, a heat that increased as we entered the building. There was no air-conditioning, and ceiling-fans provided only a slight, localized cooling effect. There were nearly one hundred women in each room. Women with small children were seated in an inner room. In the other two rooms, women had broken off into smaller groups of thirty or so. Each sub-group sat on the floor, surrounding a woman in the center who was reciting from a book rhythmically, while swaying. The floors of these rooms were draped with white cloth. The rooms were completely unfurnished in comparison with other Pakistani drawing-rooms. The room near the door was furnished with a few plastic chairs on which white haired old women sat. The inner room where the women with children were seated contained two charpais (cots woven of jute). The third room featured a large bookshelf running across the wall, filled with books of hadith and Tabligh-specific religious books. A loudspeaker dominated the central room, and when the sermon began, all of the women turned to face it.

There is a movement-wide understanding that the creation of Tablighi space requires permanent absences from the landscape of the drawing room, including furniture, decoration, carpeting and climate control. In more elite houses, such as the one in which Taleem is held, this results in very expensive houses in elite neighborhoods with minimal to no physical markers of status. However, Tablighis with money possess several other markers of status; these include domestic servants, expensive items of technology, and of course large houses. Rooms dedicated to Tabligh across the movement hold one prominent piece of furniture; a large bookshelf filled with religious books, including Tablighi hadith collections such as the *Fazail-e-Amal* (The Rewards of Deeds), and the *Hayat-us-Sahaba* (The Lives of the Companions). Both of these

books are considered foundational reading material; they are so central to the movement that many members know the hadith contained in these collections by heart (Metcalf 2003). When a member of the household has been to madrasa, the bookshelves also contain large hadith collections, including the *Sahih Bukhari*.

The spatial practice of the Tablighi is consistent, and is spread across the multiple countries in which they operate (Horstman 2007). The arrangement of space in Tabligh creates familiar places across countries for its traveling missionaries. Women who go to other countries to do missionary work find that the houses they stay in are organized similarly to the ones with which they are familiar. At the same time, the “radical rupture with the past” (Horstman 2007) renders Tablighi space threatening to non-Tablighis, hinting at the movement’s ideologically driven opposition to contemporary forms of social organization. The Tablighi Jama’at’s spatial practice is created through the representations of space that guide the movement’s members in their creation of these spaces.

### **Representation of Space (Ideology)**

The material sites where Tablighi sermons are held are intended as a representation of the movement’s religious and social goals. Women’s Tablighi gatherings are held in homes, while male activities are held in mosques. However, Tablighi women’s sites echo those of the mosques where men’s gatherings are held. The bare floor, covered in cloth, the minimalist decoration, and the way that women’s activities parallel those of their male counterparts who perform them in mosque settings, are designed to connect women’s dars to the frame of mosque-space. The sparseness of Tablighi space serves multiple purposes; it demonstrates the movement’s commitment to radical social change, the attempt to eradicate class hierarchy, and the desire to

recreate the “Time of the Prophet.” Another spatial feature that reflects the attempt to return to Prophetic times is the emphasis on gender segregation. The segregation of genders in Tabligh, reflected through the curtaining off of the exterior space of the house, is more absolute than that of other revivalist movements. Other revivalist movements with male leadership, such as the Jama’at Islami, allow senior male leaders to interact with veiled female participants.

The rejection of customary material and spatial practices is emblematic of the Tablighi Jama’at’s attempt to (re)create the “Time of the Prophet.” The Tablighi Jama’at invokes the “Time of the Prophet” through physical and behavioral markers that signal what they see as the radical difference of that time from this one. These markers impact the space of dars, and inform the creation of Tablighi space. The space is organized in a manner imagined as “sunnah” (the Way of the Prophet). The “work” of Tabligh involves inviting people to recreate the sunnah and “true” Islamic practice through their affect, dress and behavior. Metcalf (1993) has spoken of Tabligh’s interactions with texts as part of an attempt to “live Hadith.” I extend this interpretation to Tablighi space, which the movement creates as the space of prophetic times. Through space, the Tablighi Jama’at attempts to project itself backward to the mythic past, when Islam was pure.

The absence of furniture and material objects codes the movement and its members as aspiring to the status of the Prophet’s companions, who are imagined to have lived in similar spaces. During interviews, a number of women told me that furniture was a “Western” innovation that did not belong in Muslim households. Dining tables in particular are singled out as being “Western” and “un-Islamic”; Tablighis say that eating on a tablecloth (*dastarkhan*) on the floor, and using hands to eat instead of cutlery, is the “way of the Prophet,” and a virtuous

action. Men and women “on jama’at” eat on the floor, regardless of what they are accustomed to at home.

All of these elements of Tablighi space create an emphasis on simplicity (*saadgi*). *Saadgi* is encoded on to the highly elite space, in its expensive neighborhood, through the simplicity of women’s clothing, the use of white cloth to cover the floor, the lack of decoration and women’s simple dress practices. *Saadgi* and the Time of the Prophet are complementary spatial codes; non-Tablighis who encounter Tablighi-space cannot read the Time of the Prophet into the space, but do recognize its simple nature and rejection of social class. This rejection of social class is not absolute; Tablighi families live like the families in their neighborhoods, and have domestic servants, send their children to private schools and possess expensive electronics, cars and clothing. However, these elements of material wealth are not visible in Tablighi-space, while the practices creating simplicity as a theme are startlingly present.

Tablighi sermons indicate that once space is created, the appropriate subjectivity will follow. One of the sermons in the Taleem addressed the issue of the mind and body thus: “every person has a body and a heart. If we cultivate the love of the Prophet in our bodies and our surroundings, Allah will change our hearts.” The speaker continued:

His Companions loved the Prophet so much, there are strange hadith about them bending their heads while walking on a particular path because there used to be a tree there, and the Prophet had bent his head in order to pass it. Once the tree had fallen, the Companions would still bend their heads in that spot, because He had done it. We also need to love the Prophet this much. This is why it is important to follow the *sunnah*. The women and houses of the *sahaba* had no time for food or furniture, but only for *iman* (faith)”

This sermon described the link between spatial practices and moral correctness. The organization of space along Tablighi lines symbolizes a deep love of the Prophet. The unspoken corollary is that those individuals who do not organize space in this fashion are not demonstrating an

appropriate love of the Prophet. This ideology regarding space has consequence for Tablighi families, marking those of them who do not organize their houses along movement guidelines as not appropriately devout. The representational practice that underlies the construction of Tablighi space indicates that those members who do not organize space in a Tablighi manner do not love the Prophet sufficiently, and are not full participants in the “work.”

The extent to which a Tablighi house conforms to movement-guidelines demonstrates the complex negotiations that underlie the domestic politics of the household. The ideal promoted by movement-leadership is that there should be no artificial division between the Tabligh and daily life. Tablighi space is expected to reflect this unity, and the houses of Tablighis are supposed to be plain (*saada*), and without ostentation. Despite these official guidelines, very few Tablighi families maintain the entire space of their houses as furniture-free. Those households where a male member of the family is involved with the movement and women are only peripherally members generally have a furniture-free drawing room to host male (Tablighi) guests, as well as spaces with furniture for family members and close friends. Those families with non-Tablighi business associates and visitors often have drawing-rooms with furniture and inner spaces that are less furnished. Kamila, whose husband is a business-man and often has to entertain non-Tablighi guests, has a well decorated and furnished drawing room and an unfurnished family lounge, in which she often hosts women’s missionary jama’ats. Other Tablighi families come to compromises that reflect the interests of different family members; sometimes bedrooms and inner lounges are furnished and drawing rooms are maintained as Tablighi space. One interesting side-note is that those families who furnish their homes will often use less ostentatious furniture than their neighbors, symbolizing a commitment to simple space.

## Representational Space (Lived)

The weekly Taleem, one of the central sites of my participant observation research, is held consistently on Friday, between the Dhur (noon) and Asr (midday) prayers at a specific house in Islamabad. The sermon is delivered by a rotating selection of Tablighi men<sup>19</sup>. Taleem for women is imagined as a ‘neighborhood’ event, drawing committed Tablighi women from the Islamabad area. Taleem is primarily for women; men attend when they have brought their mothers, wives and daughters. Most of the women attending Taleem wear *abayas* (long black coats), and headscarves although they discard their face veils. Nearly half of the little girls who attend, ranging in age from three to seven, wear headscarves. The veiling of young girls in this setting is specific to the Tablighi Jama’at; the Islamic theology (*fiqh*) propagated by revivalist movements does not require women to veil prior to puberty.

There are three formal elements to the weekly Taleem: (1) *Muzakara* (discussion), (2) readings from the movements primary hadith collection, the *Fazil-e-Amaal* (the benefit of deeds) and (3) the sermon (called Bayan, lit. testimony). Of these, only the sermon, delivered through the loudspeaker by a man, is intended to be creative. The muzakra and readings from the *Fazail-e-Amal* are assigned to some of the women present, under the sponsorship of the official hostess for the week, who is selected at the men’s weekly meeting at the Zakariya mosque. Women are expected to read from the *Fazil-e-Amal* and perform a *Muzakra* (a discussion of the “six points” of Tabligh) without elaborating or drawing on their own experiences. Women can be heard exhorting each other not to “turn the muzakra into a sermon.” At the same time, nearly every reading from the *Fazil-e-Amal* and muzakra draws on the speaker’s experiences, and goes beyond the role Tabligh envisions for women. These speech events are mini-sermons, and focus

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<sup>19</sup> Women are not permitted to deliver this sermon as a matter of movement-wide policy.

on a wide range of topics. Most of these mini-sermons center on the importance of women's piety and their performance of specific religious duties and obligations. They are different in tone from the sermons men deliver, which imagine women as serving the Tablighi Jama'at and their families in a supportive capacity. Instead, women's sermons speak of the need for developing a close relationship with God, and of the emotional and spiritual aspects of faith. Women's alteration of messages in male sermons are couched in the manner of an amplification. For example, after a dars about women's domestic responsibilities, one of the women might speak of the need for women to set aside household chores to participate in the more important work of participating in Tablighi tours.

The curtains surrounding the women's section express the Tablighi commitment to gender segregation and purdah (veiling). This commitment extends to women's names; women are known publically as daughters and wives. Announcements of women whose husbands are waiting for them are made through the loudspeaker: When Kamila, whose husband's name is Imran Azeem, came to pick her up, a man announced over the loudspeaker, "Ahleya Imran Azeem" (The wife of Imran Azeem). An announcement for her daughter would have asked for "Doghta Imran Azeem" (The daughter of Imran Azeem). When Tablighi men speak of the women, they call them "Masturat" (the hidden ones), which is not a standard Urdu word for women. The loudspeaker, an unobtrusive part of the physical set-up, enables complete gender segregation, which is imagined as a feature of the Prophetic past. This strict separation of genders signals the unique nature of Tabligh – most revivalist movements allow senior male leaders to interact with veiled women in order to pass on religious knowledge and movement-specific guidance.



The hidden nature of women's activities through the use of the curtain and loudspeakers has unintended consequences, ceding women much greater control over the dars than movement leadership is happy with. Male intrusion into the dars stops at the loudspeaker. Inside the house, women use the space in a manner quite different from that intended by the movement. The practice of segregation and the over-identification of women with their husbands collaborate to give female Tablighis authority based on their male relatives' standing within the movement. Movement leadership assigns an official hostess every week as part of a move towards egalitarianism. As a result of gender segregation, this information is conveyed to her through the intermediary of her male relatives in Tabligh, and she herself must inform the other women. In practice, women whose husbands and fathers are prominent Tablighis take charge of the gathering.

The curtain wall also impacts women's dars, restricting certain women's access to the weekly dars. Women with children are often unable to monitor their children because the children play outside the area curtained off to ensure seclusion. This often results in injuries to the children. After one of the early dars I attended, at the end of the dars, the speaker for that day announced "we are going to ask that women with small children stop bringing them to Taleem. Leave them with someone, a neighbor or a friend. If there is no one, the women living in the same house should take turns staying home and watching the children. The presence of the children is disruptive – they play and run into the streets. We will post guards and they will turn away any women who bring small children next time." There wasn't any real reaction in the dars, but later conversations with Tablighi women revealed that they considered it a bad move. "Most women can't find other people to watch their small children" said Faiza, a harried mother who was constantly trying to manage her three rambunctious boys, "and if they can't come, they

can't learn. It is essential that mothers should be able to come to dars." Faiza herself stopped coming to the Taleem after children were banned.

The segregation and lack of furniture are intended by movement leadership to create an atmosphere of interiority – sitting on the floor is something that people generally only do in their own houses, in family-only situations. Similarly, the absence of men and the segregated space encourages women to relax their veiling in other settings in Pakistan. Tablighi space is engineered to encourage women to take off their face-veils, head-scarves and burqas, as they would in their own houses, contributing to the movement encouraged sense of friendly neighborhood space. However, women in Tablighi space unveil to the minimal extent possible, even in the extreme heat, signaling their lack of comfort within the space. This lack of comfort with Tabligh-specific space could be a result of the foreign nature of the environment – most of the devout Tablighi middle and upper-class families which maintain furniture-free space for movement activities have spaces with furniture in which they actually live.

In the interviews I conducted with Tablighi leadership, they said that they were aware that the women's movement was different from the men's movement, and that the "flaws" were a result of the lack of direct oversight from experienced men. Afzel Sahib, who is a *muqem*<sup>20</sup> (resident) at Raiwind, explained in an interview "You see, the men have experienced older men listening to them. When they make mistakes, more experienced Tablighis can point them out. With the women we don't have that kind of oversight, which means we can't let them give dars" Tablighi men also feel like the woman's movement functions differently from the men's movement in terms of hierarchy. Afzel Sahib said "We try to make sure all of the men participate equally, and that none of the newer men feel subordinate to the ones who have been around for

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<sup>20</sup> A number of male Tablighi leaders live in Raiwind, the central site of the movement, in order to coordinate movement ideology and organize jama'ats.

longer. We also try to make sure that the ones with formal madrassa training do not dominate the bayans. With the women, I have heard that the more senior Tablighi ladies and the madrassa graduates end up running this. It's a really tricky issue."

### **Spatial Practice, Representations of Space, and Representational Space: Three Moments Interacting in Tabligh**

Female Tablighis' actively subscribe to the recreation of Prophetic times through space, and women's conversations before, during and after dars reveal their commitment to simple spaces and gender segregation. Women inscribe movement ideology onto their homes and sites in their houses where Tabligh occurs. However, both the simple spaces and gender segregation promoted by the movement have unintended consequences and result in contradictions between the intentions of movement leadership and the lived praxis of Tablighi women.

I argue that gender-segregated spaces in the Tablighi Jama'at create interactions unintended by movement leadership, not because women are conscious or subconsciously appropriating male tools of power, but as a consequence of the structuring of space itself. My analysis demonstrates that Tablighi women are not intentionally subverting movement representations of space. Rather, women in segregated space have less interaction with the (male) movement leadership, and cannot be guided along movement goals as are men. This results in a number of consequences: women related to senior Tablighi leaders take charge of the Taleem; they elaborate on the texts they are reading and give mini-sermons instead of sticking to authorized points; madrassa graduates dominate the mini-sermons; women remain veiled despite being in secluded space. Female Tablighis do not do these things in order to oppose movement leaders, or to contradict movement ideology. Often, the same women who exhort others not to

“give sermons” and only read from the Fazail-e-Amal will themselves stop reading in order to elaborate, draw on their lived experience, or promote what they see as virtuous practices. The contradictions of lived Tablighi space reflect women’s passion for the movement’s cause. Women, unsupervised by male Tablighis, draw on hadith and their personal experience in order to provide testimony as to how the movement is necessary.

## **(2) Material/Spaces/Agents in Al Huda Classes**

### **Spatial Practice (Physical Set-Up)**

One of the main sites of my research on Al-Huda was at Nazish’s house, which is on the same street as the house which hosts the Tablighi dars. Nazish and her family lived in a lower “portion” of a two story house. The family included Nazish’s married son and daughter-in-law, and their two sons. Space in the house was limited and consisted of two bedrooms, one family lounge, a kitchen, a dining-room, and a drawing-room where dars was held. There were approximately 30 women in the class that was concluding the first time I attended. The drawing-room was rectangular, with couches that could seat eight. The room contained an archway leading to the dining room which was furnished with a dining table and chairs. Chairs from the dining room furnished the drawing-room, and a number of women were seated on the floor. All of the women in the class except for Rabia, the teacher, had discarded their burqas and were sitting unveiled. There were two paintings on the wall containing ornately painted calligraphic Qur’anic verses. A few small hand-knotted silk rugs were strategically placed on the carpeted floor, and a small indoor palm tree sat under a window. An air-conditioner ran in the background, and fans were working at full speed.

Rabia, the teacher of the class, sat alone on a couch to one side of the room. The other chairs and sofas were oriented to face her. A table with a cassette player and a number of books rested in front of her. When the dars was on Qur'anic interpretation, students held a workbook consisting of the chapter of the Qur'an they were translating. This workbook allowed students to translate the Qur'an word-by-word into Urdu. Later, when the class had progressed to Hadith, students read from the Bukhari hadith collection<sup>21</sup>, and translated it from the original Arabic. A bookshelf in the corner of the room contained several religious books, the *Bukhari* hadith collection, a few Qur'ans, some commentaries on the Qur'an (*tafsir*), and a shelf full of cassette tapes. After the class was over Nazish returned the audio-cassette the class had been listening to its place in the sequence on the bookshelf.

The spatial practice of Al-Huda classes for housewives represent the collaboration between the movement leadership, the teacher, and the dars "hostess" – the woman who volunteers her house for movement-related activities. Costs to the movement leadership are low, and involve checking test papers and providing the institutional guidelines under which classes are held. Teachers must commit their time while the dars hostess commits time and the use of her family's drawing-room. The class-status of the woman hosting dars varies based on location, but is generally middle to upper-middle class. Neighborhood classes draw from a hostess's friends and women who live in the neighborhood, and timings are based on the convenience of the hostess and the teacher.

Home-based classes are held in private drawing rooms which are multi-use and not devoted only to Al-Huda activities. The lack of specialized space reflects Al-Huda's status as a woman-led movement. Many Al-Huda women participate against the wishes of their families,

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<sup>21</sup> The Sahih al-Bukhari is one of the six canonical hadith collections considered authentic by the majority of Sunni Muslims.

and even those who have supportive families do not modify a portion of the house exclusively to hold dars. Nazish, as the senior woman in her household, with a supportive family, was able to devote her drawing room exclusively to dars. This regularly scheduled use of the room was the subject of some conflict with her young daughter-in-law, Fatima, who wanted to use the space to host her guests. Fatima never objected to the dars within earshot, but frequently refused to host the gathering when Nazish was traveling, and sometimes would pull Nazish away from the gathering or try to end the dars early. Rabia occasionally attempted to recruit Fatima into attending the class, and slowly won her over during the course of my fieldwork. By the end of my fourth year interacting with the group, Fatima had started attending the Qur'an classes.

The Al-Huda classes made increasing demands on Nazish's drawing-room as her family grew accustomed to sacrificing its space. In 2008, during my pre-dissertation work, the Qur'an class was held in the morning from 9:30 to 12:00 daily. Fatima had just moved into the house as a new bride, and was occasionally visible at dars. Later, in 2009, the class at Nazish's house shifted its focus; the first round of students completed the Qur'an course, and began a tri-weekly afternoon Hadith class from 2:00pm to 4:00pm. At the same time, Rabia passed the Qur'an class on to her students Nazish and Komal, who continued teaching the newer students the Qur'an during the morning timings. In 2010, Nazish began offering a children's Qur'an class from 12:00pm to 2:00pm daily. Fatima was often drafted to teach this class. By 2011, Nazish's drawing-room was busy from 9:30am to 4:00 pm, and Nazish or Fatima were involved in nearly all of the activities.

The character of the drawing-room also shifted, and it became community space. Women would come to Nazish with their marital problems after class, and some of the younger women were sent to Nazish for pre-marital counseling on how to lead an Islamic married life. Children

would barge into the drawing-room early and sit and converse in corners while the women's Qur'an class wound down. Nazish's husband, who was visibly pious<sup>22</sup>, had been involved with the Jama'at Islami in his youth, and never complained about being confined to the family lounge during the day. At the same time, the use of the drawing-room clearly constrained Nazish's family; during the class, sounds of them using the family lounge, watching TV, and spending time together were clearly audible. Classroom activities were also audible to them, and intruded on their space on a daily basis.

### **Representation of Space (Ideology)**

The leadership of Al-Huda presents the movement and its at-home dars as a place where the "truth" about Islam is conveyed to women in a rational, scientific manner (Mushtaq 2010). Any woman who completes the diploma courses can, with the approval of the institute, start teaching in private houses. The teacher is permitted to charge her students a nominal fee, but can choose not to. The Al-Huda institute is responsible for supplying test papers, checking those papers, and supplying diplomas to the women who complete their exams. The institute's deep reach into the urban Pakistani upper and middle class is a result of its semi-formal classes: not everyone has the time, motivation, or mobility to attend classes in the institute itself, but most women are able to go to week- and month-long sessions in hotels, and to houses in their own neighborhoods.

In order to create exclusive Al-Huda space, the movement creates movement-specific space through minor physical modifications to the drawing-room. Students come to the dars with

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<sup>22</sup> He cultivated a beard and went to the mosque five times a day, both of which are markers of male piety in urban Pakistan.

books, notebooks and pens. A box of pens rests on the table in front of the teacher, and those who have forgotten to bring a pen can take one from the box. The seating arrangement invokes the classroom setting, with the dars-preacher filling in the role of the teacher, at the center of attention. The cassette expresses that the ultimate teacher of the Al-Huda dars is Farhat Hashmi, and the dars-preacher is intended by the movement as a stand-in. The use of the cassette tape as a teaching tool means that Farhat Hashmi has virtually replicated herself, and is the direct source of the doctrine women absorb in dars. The cassette sermons, which in other contexts have proved useful for their invisibility to authority (Hirschkind 2009), are sold openly at shops in the city and at the Al-Huda campus.

Like Tabligh, Al-Huda frames its women's classes as existing in parallel with a public space, but where Tabligh imposes the frame of the mosque on women's dars, Al-Huda draws on the frame of a classroom. Al-Huda's dars are called "classes" and their physical set-up is meant to recall elements of the schoolroom. This framing is not a concession to material constraints – Al-Huda's purpose-built space resembles other college campuses, and contains multiple classrooms. The idea of the classroom demonstrates the movement's focus on cultivating an aura of modernity and accommodation to contemporary norms and spaces. Al-Huda women present themselves as having gained mastery over the "subject" of religion through their participation in the movement. Al-Huda classes, held in what seem to be ordinary drawing-rooms, are encoded to convey to outsiders that Al-Huda does not demand radical changes to Pakistani life. The rhetoric that surrounds the movement also promotes this impression.

During interviews, Komal, Nazish, Shaheena and Somia all told me, in roughly the same words, that their religious practices had not changed after joining the movement, but that they were now more mindful about virtue and sin. This frame, that Al-Huda is not changing women's



religious behavior or social practices, is one that is movement-promoted and accepted by Al-Huda members. However the appearance of accommodation is misleading and, I argue, exists solely on the level of rhetoric. Al-Huda members and leaders use space in a complex discursive process in which they simultaneously alter Pakistani gender norms while arguing that they support them. One example can be seen in Al-Huda sermons which express disapproval of Pakistani women's prioritization of their homes and families over their religious obligations. In one lecture, Rabia told her students "we have wasted our lives over our cooking pots (*handis*) and our stoves. When prayer time comes, pray, and if your family eats later than usual, that is ok." At the same time, Al-Huda women are very sensitive to accusations that they might be neglecting their families. Shaheena, who lived next door to Nazish, had school-aged children and was always rushing home after class to make sure they were given lunch on time. During her interview, she told me emphatically "This time (9:30-12:30) used to be my free time, and I would spend it watching TV or calling family. Now I just call family if something is wrong, and I only watch TV to listen to religious talk. My family isn't neglected. Write that down, Meryem, that my house doesn't suffer."

The practices surrounding material objects, specifically the Qur'an, also provide a window into Al-Huda's quiet challenge to Pakistani religious practices. According to convention across multiple Muslim countries and the doctrine taught by a number of ulama, women who are menstruating are considered ritually impure, and are not permitted to handle the Qur'an (Mushtaq 2010). Al-Huda women do away with this convention, simply donning gloves when menstruating in order to not interrupt their lessons. This education-oriented action is shocking to many *ulama* and non Al-Huda affiliated Pakistanis, and Al-Huda women learn to defend it early in their engagement with the movement. Part of this defense is the expression of disdain for

women educated in the classical Islamic tradition in madrassas. Kulsoom, one of Rabia's older students, argued that only "uneducated" madrasa girls would think there was something wrong with handling the Qur'an with gloves. Rabia was quick to correct her, saying that "those who have learned the Qur'an and Hadith can never be called uneducated." Despite her attempts to prevent it, Rabia's students often expressed disapproval of "disorganized" madrasa students, contrasting them to the "disciplined" women of Al-Huda.

The use of the classroom frame is meant to empower women and construct them as confident, articulate scholars. Nazish proudly told me more than once that learning the Qur'an had taught her how to read fluently, and that she had "forgotten" how to read before joining the movement. Rabia made links between learning in class and gaining self-confidence. She said to her students:

There are various kinds of discipline (tarbiyat) you are put through in these classes. Learning to speak without feeling hesitant is one of them. You need to be confident and speak bravely, wherever you are. You need to speak the truth, and not worry about consequences.

The Al-Huda movement claims to reject only those aspects of Pakistani culture that have been tainted by "the West" and foreign innovations and draw upon a "pure" Islamic ethos. "Un-Islamic" parts of Pakistani culture are discarded. These include wedding-related festivities, and events involving alcohol, the mixing of genders, music and dance. Many of these are identical to the practices members of the Tablighi Jama'at discard. At the same time, by not creating a dramatically different space of dars, Al-Huda and its members attempt to present themselves as making minor modifications to existing structures in order to bring them into conformity with a "true" Islam. Along those lines, absences from the Al-Huda drawing-room are more subtle than those in Tabligh. Most Pakistani upper and middle class drawing-rooms and living spaces

contain pictures of family members, and statues and paintings are also common decorations. Al-Huda drawing-rooms do not contain pictures of people, statues or paintings with human faces on them. These modifications to Al-Huda living spaces are in response to Islamic prohibitions against depicting faces. Acceptable forms of decoration include paintings and calligraphy featuring Qur'anic verses or the Names of Allah.

### **Representational Spaces (Lived)**

The “class” contains organizational elements that recall the schoolroom format. These include roll call and the assignment of homework. Roll call was conducted at the start of classes, and a non-western ethos was intentionally created; students in the classes responded *labaik* (Arabic word for present) to the roll call, rather than *hazir* (the Urdu word for present) or “present” (The word used by “English medium” school children). The use of Arabic in this context creates, to women’s minds, the feeling of a transnational Muslim classroom space, and the status of Arabic as the holy language and the intended lingua franca of the transnational Muslim ummah is one women refer to in class. After attendance, Rabia would ask about the women’s homework, generally a task related to personal spiritual improvement. After the ‘homework’, the class would begin in earnest with an audio recording of Dr. Farhat Hashmi’s lecture on the text the students were studying that day. When they were studying the Quran, “Dr. Farhat’s”<sup>23</sup> voice would guide the students through the intricacies of the Qur’an, and the way it related to larger theological and social issues. During Hadith classes, “Dr. Farhat” took students

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<sup>23</sup> Students in the Al-Huda class uniformly refer to Dr Farhat Hashmi as “Dr Farhat,” instead of utilizing traditional Pakistani forms of address for senior women leaders. The alternative “Farhat Baji” (older sister) is one no Al-Huda woman has used in earshot of me. The significance of the title lies in its claim to the authority of the Western academy, and to the eagerness with which Al-Huda women claim the educational accomplishments of their founder.

through the subtleties of Hadith, and the ways in which specific hadith create theological rulings, or fatwas.

The use of audio-cassettes for teaching has consequences that run contrary to the intentions of the Al-Huda leadership. Rabia, the teacher, would guide her students through the audio cassette and elaborate on points that seemed relevant to her. However, the cassette recorder creates a gap between the role the Al-Huda institute imagines for the dars-preacher, and that which she actually occupies. In the dars at Nuzhat's house, Rabia, the dars-preacher, frequently paused Dr. Hashmi's taped sermons to elaborate on them and modify the message the cassette tape was conveying. A sermon on honesty from the cassette can turn, in Rabia's hands, into one on being good to one's in-laws. The tape recorder, with its "pause" button, transforms the Al-Huda classes into a collaborative effort; rather than Farhat Hashmi's view of issues, Rabia's view dominates.

The cassette interpretation recited by Dr. Farhat Hashmi, the movement's founder, is frequently interrupted by women interjecting their own experiences into the discussion, modifying the direction of the dars. The class I attended discarded the schoolroom frame consistently when it came to the actual practices of pedagogy. Students in the Al-Huda dars frequently interjected through Rabia's lectures, and spoke over Farhat Hashmi's recorded lectures. Usually, these interruptions were to clarify a point made in the dars, or to place a dars teaching into the context of their own lives. Class members would also relate the material to their own lives, presenting themselves as "good" women to the other class participants, or describing how their participation in the classes had changed them. Nazish once told me "I feel like my life before this class was wasted. Now that I am '*parhi likhi*' (lit. reading and writing), I know how to live my life."

Rabia and Nazish signal that the Al-Huda class is a non-social space through their agreement not to serve refreshments or tea to the women attending. Nazish mentioned, early in my fieldwork, that she found it difficult not to provide tea and snacks for her friends, but that this was a class, and it would not be appropriate. This position seems in line with the majority of Al-Huda classes, which limit refreshments. However, women's behavior within the "classroom" reinforces its social nature. Students in the home-based classes are generally from the same neighborhood – women know each other prior to joining, and being students in the same class cements friendships. The women at Rabia's dars visit each other outside of Al-Huda settings, and socialize with each other's children and extended families. Veiling practices in the class demonstrate its nature as social space. Participants dress in clothes they would wear to visit their neighbors, and discard their face veils and burqas, signifying a comfort and sense of interiority. Further modifications to the space render the Al-Huda "classroom" child-friendly. There is a space in the center of the room where toddlers and children can sit and quietly play. Nazish has coloring books and pencils laid out in a corner for women who cannot find childcare and bring their children. Women who did not have childcare would bring infants and toddlers to the classes, and the entire class took in stride the frequent interruptions created by having small children running around and making noise. When Nazish's young grandchildren came to visit, they would run around in the living room in the middle of the dars, and the women they were near would disengage with the class and talk softly to them, trying to entertain them. Somia and other women with babies occasionally breastfed their children while taking notes.

## **Spatial Practice, Representations of Space, and Representational Space: Three Moments Interacting in Al-Huda**

Al-Huda members' use of movement spaces alters them, building on the meanings encoded into the spatial practices and representational spaces created by movement leadership. These modifications are not explicitly authorized by movement leadership, but can be seen as logical continuations of movement ideology. Al-Huda's encoding of space as a classroom constructs women as students who are acquiring religious knowledge and authority. The pedagogy within the "classroom" teaches women a methodology for interacting with sacred texts. "Students" do not just learn texts; they learn to interpret them and to transmit these interpretations to listeners. They also learn to defend these interpretations against opponents, and construct their sometimes controversial religious practices as "true" Islam (Mushtaq 2010). Women are taught to discard inconvenient social practices in the name of Islam and piety, while maintaining that their transgressions against social codes are religiously mandated. All of these elements of Al-Huda space contribute to the modifications women make to the ideology and spatial practices of the movement.

Most of the modifications, such as women interjecting during cassette sermons, the creation of dar-space as social through veiling practices, the presence of children, and Rabia's modifications to the messages in the cassette dars, have to do with the movement's women-centered nature. Some of them, such as the pauses in the cassette sermon so that women can insert their own views and (re)contextualize Farhat Hashmi's message, weaken the control Al-Huda leadership has over the dars. Other modifications, such as member's spontaneous defense of the movement against religious authorities, strengthen women's identities as members of Al-

Huda, and it is by defending movement leadership's positions that women construct themselves as members of the movement.

## Building(s) in Private Space: The Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda

Drawing on Lefebvre's triad allows us to trace Al-Huda and Tablighi spaces as they are constructed on ideological, physical and interactional levels. The three "moments" Lefebvre describes demonstrate interactions between the multiple agents who create movement-spaces. The agents influencing revivalist-space include the leadership of revivalist movements, their members, members' families and non-revivalist Pakistanis. Both movement leadership and members code spatial elements to speak to some of these audiences; movement leaders are concerned with representations of space as they speak to members and to a perceived outside world. Members, on the other hand, use space to speak to each other, to movement leadership, to their families, and to the outside world. Space is part of a process of self-presentation and self-representation, and Lefebvre's moments related to the production of space reveal the complicated interests that produce movement-specific space.

On the level of representational space, both movements' leaderships create the representations of movements as having particular natures. These representations are addressed to both Pakistani "outsiders" as well as to members of the movement. Al-Huda represents itself as part of a "modern" educational system which does not call for drastic social change, while Tabligh promotes images of itself as a movement oriented towards radical social change and the institution of a new form of simplicity. Al-Huda presents its space as disciplined and rational, while Tabligh promotes images of itself as a friendly neighborhood community. These

representations are part of a movement's self-representation, and are intended to draw non-revivalist Pakistanis to the movement, as well conveying movement-values to members.

These representations of revivalist movements are encoded on to the space of dars by movement members, who organize spaces and objects in order to convey these representations. As part of this process, women negotiate various family dynamics to secure the space, use it, and alter it into conformity with movement guidelines. While explicit guidelines for spatial practice do not exist, women who create revivalist space draw on common understandings to encode space, resulting in movement-wide conformity and use of the same objects to represent a movement's ideologies. The similarity of physically dispersed movement-specific sites demonstrates that members understand movement guidelines for physical layouts, and of the meanings encoded within these layouts.

It is at the level of representational space that contingency creeps into the carefully planned space, disrupting the spatial practice and representational space that movement leadership and members seem to agree on. I argue that of Lefebvre's triad, breakdowns in the moral order represented through space are visible through representational spaces. Women's lived praxis within these spaces reveals their active engagement with movement ideology; their use of space demonstrates the contradictions inherent in their relationship with official movement doctrine. To be clear, I am not arguing that women consciously reject movement ideology. Indeed, on the level of superstructure, they identify with and promote a movement's stated goals regarding gender, space and society. However, their behavior within representational spaces demonstrates disjunctures between movements' explicit ideology and women's understandings of them.



Representational spaces allow women to interact with spaces and material objects in order to live out their interpretations of movement ideology. These interactions allow the representational spaces in which revivalist women live to fully emerge. One possible reason for the contingency of representational space can be found in Latour's (2005) conceptualization of the agency of objects. Latour has argued that the ability of objects to cause, allow, deny and constrain action needs to be considered when examining a network of actors. Keane traces the power of material objects to their potential for introducing contingency into social order (2003). This, coupled with revivalist women's use of the unintended consequences of spaces and objects, transforms the space of dars such that the interactions and ideologies it facilitates are not the ones intended by revivalist movement leadership. Two potent examples of subject-object-space interactions that allow women greater control over revivalist dars than that intended by leadership can be seen in the loudspeaker and cassette-player in Tablighi and Al-Huda contexts respectively. Both objects demonstrate movement leadership's desire to maintain control of the pedagogy and practices of dars. However, these objects contain features that weaken the control movement-leadership wish to assert through their use. The loudspeaker, intended to prevent women from giving sermons, is a feature of a segregated landscape where women remain unmonitored, and can give sermons on their own. The cassette-player, intended to control the sermons women receive, can be paused and restarted, and its messages can be altered. Women's ability to modify dars is enhanced through the objects meant to limit their control of the pedagogy within movement-space.

Mahmood has observed that anthropological writing on secluded women tends to see them as creating "their own discourse" (2004:12) in secluded space. Works in this strain focus on women's appropriation of private spaces in order to appropriate historically male sources of

authority and negotiate greater access to resources (eg Boddy 1989; Bartkowski and Read 2003; Goyal 2008). Abu-Lughod has described this as a tendency to look for resistance in women's practices, misattributing to them a feminist consciousness (Abu-Lughod 1990). More recent turns in the anthropological literature focus on Muslim women's religious practice in segregated spaces as a means of ethical self-formation (Mahmood 2004). Approaches which build on this turn couple religious women's attempts to cultivate piety to larger political projects involving converting outsiders (eg. Huq 2008).

My analysis complicates these positions. I argue that women who change the nature of space within revivalist movements are not engaging in stratagems to gain them power vis-a-vis men, larger social structures, or even to cultivate individual power. Acts which interrupt the meanings encoded in space do not demonstrate resistance. If we accept that women in religious movements participate in them for the sake of piety, which is how they explain their actions, it is necessary to consider why they might modify dars beyond the simplistic analysis that they do so in order to expand their personal authority. Note, I do not argue that these moves do not expand their authority, but rather that this expansion is not their sole motive.

Women's lived praxis within movement-space promotes subtly different interactions from those intended by revivalist leadership for reasons connected to women's cultivation of pious selves, and their understandings of the purposes of movement-specific space. Lefebvre's dialectical moments allow us to trace female members' contradictory engagements with revivalist space. (1) Women attempt to use their knowledge of religion (gained either through the movement, or prior to joining the movement) in order to contribute to the movement's spaces of representation. For example, Tablighi madrassa graduates and the wives of senior movement leaders structure the dars to reflect their knowledge of religion; similarly Rabia when she

modifies Dr. Hashmi's tape is not consciously altering the message she receives, but is just altering the message in order to contextualize it and make it persuasive to her students. These alterations of revivalist space circumvent movement-leadership's intentions. While altering space from the ideology expressed by revivalist leadership, women simultaneously affirm revivalist leadership's intentions and representations regarding the space. (2) Women's interactions with spatial practice and representations of space are modeled on their learning within lived spaces. Al-Huda women interpret texts in the manner they are taught by their teachers. Similarly, Tablighi women "give sermons" in the manner modeled for them by the male speaker in the Taleem. Women appropriate the methods and material objects used in movement-spaces in order to promote their interpretation of movement goals<sup>24</sup>. This modifies the meanings revivalist leadership have encoded into space, subtly altering the spatial experience from that intended by the movement. Women's lives inside these spaces also reflect their own interpretations of them; Tablighi women treat the space of Taleem as foreign through their veiling practices because they interpret it in this manner, while Al-Huda women treat Nazish's house as community space because that is how they perceive it.

These contradictions in women's engagements with space can be resolved through an understanding of women as actively cultivating piety. Women's modification of revivalist space in each of these instances is intended to promote their movement's impact. The absence of monitoring, and women's relative freedom within representational space, does not result in radical departures from movement ideology, or the creation of a woman-privileging discourse. Instead, women's control of movement-space is used to make the messages they receive within movements comprehensible in terms of their daily lives. These contextualizations of sermons

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<sup>24</sup> Women's becoming active agents in the promotion of movement doctrine is part of the objective of both Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at.

make their impact stronger, and render them more persuasive to outsiders and other members. This is the case in both the male-run movement (The Tablighi Jama'at), and the one run by women which demonstrates a feminist consciousness (Al-Huda). In both the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda, it can be argued that women are drawing on their knowledge of religion in order to create appropriate movement-space as part of an effort towards piety. Women's piety is demonstrated, not through their attempts to cultivate various forms of discipline within themselves, but through their efforts to govern space.

The theoretically pure space of dars changes as it is lived in because spaces of representation are vulnerable to seepage. Larger Pakistani society does not stop existing simply because women enter segregated movement-specific space. "Invisible" agents impact the space of dars. In Tabligh relationships to men and outside systems of power such as madrassas confer authority on some women and not others. In Al-Huda, the space of dars is carefully situated to appear non-threatening to outsiders, while simultaneously reacting against outside authorities like the *ulama*. Other disjunctures between representational space and lived spaces reflect differences between the nature of the movement and how it has presented itself to outsiders. In the specific case of Al-Huda, the movement *is* based on neighborhood-community bonds. Similarly, the creation of Tablighi space as alienating through veiling practices is a result of the fact that the women in the space are not members of the same community, and often do not know each other. These insights have a number of implications for the study of religious movements and space more generally. Processes of subtle negotiation and modification occur among members and leaders of a revivalist movement, and between the movement and Pakistani society at large. These processes impact the creation of space and other aspects of meaning-making within revivalist movements.

Of Lefebvre's moments, space comes into being when it is actually lived in, when the potential that has been carefully embedded into it can be realized. The transformation of space in this moment by subjects at one remove from the planners and organizers within revivalist movements has larger implications for the study of space more generally. These transformations point to the emancipatory nature of space removed from the direct oversight of movement leadership, but also demonstrate the limits of freedom within this space. Women's lives in these spaces are contrary to the intentions of movement leadership. At the same time, women's freedom in these spaces does not result in the emergence of a woman-privileging discourse, or an alteration of space that defies movement-leader's goals. Instead, this space transforms to fit into female revivalist's visions of effective revivalist practice. These observations lead to a new way of conceptualizing segregated space – not as a place of resistance, but as a place where women live out their imagined ideal societies, and are subjects to those forces they wish to be subject to, in the manner that they see as appropriate. The remove of these spaces from movement-authority create moments of translation which allow women to make it more persuasive to outsiders and other revivalist women.

# **CHAPTER FOUR. TRANSFORMING DISCOURSE: THE QUR'AN AND HADITH IN ISLAMIC REVIVALIST MOVEMENTS**

## **Introduction**

Women are recruited into revivalist movements through these movements' dars (religious classes), which introduce women to movement-specific ideologies through the medium of the Qur'an and Hadith. Interpretations of sacred texts within these classes delineate movement-approved boundaries for members' lives within and outside these movements. Having decided that those historical practices considered virtuous are not automatically Islamic, revivalists rely on sacred texts to create Islam itself. Sacred texts are central to revivalist movements; a movement's approach to these texts creates and maintains images of religious virtue, and impacts member's lives both within and outside the movement. Qur'an and Hadith classes introducing women to sacred text are relatively recent phenomena. Pakistani children are taught to read the Qur'an phonetically at a young age, and learn some Hadith in Islamic Studies classes in school. Detailed analysis of these texts is not customary; most Pakistanis leave the exegesis and interpretation of sacred texts to the ulama, and follow their interpretations. At the same time, sacred texts form part of an unquestioned backdrop of Pakistani religious life, and are familiar to Pakistanis as legitimate sources of religious authority.

The Qur'an and Hadith are considered the primary texts of Islam (El Fadl 2001: 100). The Qur'an is understood to be the literal Word of God. The Hadith is the literature compiled

from thousands of brief narratives describing the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, each of which is also referred to individually as a hadith (Burton 1994). The Qur'an and Hadith are foundational texts, and serve as sources of authority in Islamic discourse (Asad 1986). A term used synonymously with hadith is *sunnah* – while hadith refers to the document, *sunnah* is the tradition it describes. Individual hadith consist of two main elements: the actual narrative (*matn*) and the chain of transmission (*isnad*) (Burton 1994). The *isnad* of a hadith describes the chain of narrators through whom the hadith is attributable to the Prophet Muhammad. Individual hadith have different degrees of authority, based on the perception of their authenticity. Hadith were compiled in written form nearly 200 years after the death of the Prophet in 632 CE. At this point, each hadith's *isnad* was assessed, and hadith were ranked in terms of their probable accuracy (Burton 1994). Several hadith collections are considered authoritative; these include the Sahih Bukhari and the Sahih Muslim, two collections of “sound” hadith covering a variety of topics. These books are considered second only to the Qur'an in terms of authority, and help form the basis for shari'a law. Other hadith collections exist, but are considered less authoritative than the Bukhari and Muslim collections (Burton 1994).

The Qur'an and Hadith have been the basis for Islamic law through Muslim history. There is no official church in Islam, and there has been a diversity of acceptable positions within Islamic theology (El Fadl 2005). Islamic law has been systematized by a group of individuals who attend religious schools (*madrasas*), where they study Islamic law, sacred texts, and commentaries developed by the scholars who have gone before them. These individuals are given various names, including *alim* (pl. *ulama*), *faqih* (pl. *fuqaha*), *mulla*, *shaykh*, or *imam* (El Fadl 2005). Sunni *ulama* generally affiliate with one of four large schools of thought: Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi, or Hanbali. These schools have co-existed and considered each other to be

legitimate; there was a tradition of divergence and disputation among these schools, but the ulama collectively determined orthodoxy within Islam (El Fadl 2005). The authority of these ulama was reflected in their possession of an ijaza (written permission to teach a book) granted by their madrassas (Robinson 2012). Hadith was particularly central to South Asian madrassas; many South Asian madrassas taught all six canonical hadith collections to students, a practice that continues in present-day Pakistan (Robinson 2013).

The advent of colonialism led to the fracturing of authority throughout the Muslim world (El Fadl 2005). In South Asia, the rupture of Islamic authority took specific forms. The refusal of the British colonial government to hire madrassa graduates cut off madrassa enrollment, making attendance financially unattractive. The closure of trusts which had supported madrassas led to competition among the ulama for adherents and financial support (Metcalf 2005). One of the ways in which the ulama attempted to build mass support was by translating the Qur'an and Hadith into vernacular languages, including Urdu, in the late nineteenth century (Metcalf 2005). These translations circulated widely, and allowed non-ulama access to the textual corpus that underlay the Islamic tradition. The life of the Prophet became a model for South Asian renewal (Robinson 2013). A number of social movements, including those led by modernists and non-ulama religious reformers rejected classical commentaries on sacred texts to focus on the Qur'an and Hadith. The emergence of the *Salafi* creed in various parts of the Islamic world bolstered the fragmentation of the ulama's authority.

Salafism is a school of thought that has been traced to a number of Muslim reformers, including Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), both of whom are considered pioneers of the Islamic Revival (Haddad 1994; Keddie 1994; El Fadl 2005). Salafi is an Arabic word that can be translated to mean predecessors, and in the Islamic context



refers to the period of the Prophet, his companions and their successors. The term Salafi (one who follows the predecessors) refers to the belief that Muslims ought to follow the precedents set by the Prophet and his companions. The founders of Salafism maintained that in all issues, Muslims should turn to the precedent of the Prophet and his companions by discarding exegesis mediated by classical commentators and refer directly to the Qur'an and Hadith (El Fadl 2005). This approach undervalued tradition as a source of authority, and encouraged individuals to create authority through sacred texts. In South Asia, classically Salafi teachings were taken up in the mid-nineteenth century by a group calling themselves the Ahl-e-Hadith (The people of Hadith) (Kenney and Moosa 2013).

The ulama's reactions to colonialism and to these emerging Islamic movements shifted the nature of intellectual engagement with the Islamic tradition among reformers of all stripes. In the absence of state support the authority of individual ulama became tied to that of their "brand" – their affiliation with specific schools or movements (Robinson 2013). The nature of public debate on Islam shifted to support brand maintenance; instead of reflecting attempts to understand other points of view, debates cultivated support by building up the authority of the leading contenders (Robinson 2013). This approach to intellectual dissent contributed to ongoing contests over authorized use of the symbolic language of Islam and led to the build-up of sectarian divisions in India and Pakistan (Robinson 2013). Examples of extreme forms of brand-maintenance can be found in ulama-issued fatwas opposing extremely popular reformers, declaring them or their activities to be against Islam. These fatwas were issued against prominent religious and social reformers including Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Iqbal and Maulana Maududi (Nasr 1995; Zakaria 2002).

Revivalists responded by turning to sacred texts and engaging in a “discourse of authenticity” (Jacobsen 2004: 9). The key feature of this discourse was one of return: to Islamic sacred text, to a pure Islam, to “the time of the Prophet”. This discourse is prevalent across contemporary Islamic revivalist movements, and can be traced back to the Salafi creed (El Fadl 2005). Groups reformulate contemporary Islamic practices by reinterpreting sacred texts; this allows them to call upon the authority of an agreed-upon, immutable source in order to promote their own disparate agendas (El-Fadl 2001; Barlas 2002). Ironically, these groups include political parties, revivalist movements, militants, and the Islamic feminism movement. (Re)turning to sacred texts allows movements to create Islam anew, and locates areas of disagreement not with the texts, but with the exegetes. These engagements with texts divorce them from their contexts, ignoring the rich inter-textual history of Qur’an and Hadith interpretation. Madrassa trained religious scholars are aware of and compete with multiple historically authorized interpretations of Qur’an and Hadith (Zaman 2007). Removing hadith from the setting of the intellectual tradition in which it was remembered creates it as a blank text, waiting to be imbued with meaning.

Qur’an and Hadith are believed to be static and unchanging by both revivalist and non-revivalist Pakistanis. Revivalists treat the meanings of sacred texts as self-evident and obvious from the text. Revivalist exegetes imply that those interpreting the text contrary to movement-specific interpretations are acting maliciously. However, stories told within dars settings demonstrate that the same sacred text can be modified to convey different messages. During participant observation research, I often observed the same Qur’anic verses and Hadith being used to make incredibly divergent points. Stories and their messages shift within movements as well as between movements. The ways in which stories mutate are instructive and illustrate

knowledge-production within revivalist movements. This chapter examines the transmission of hadith from multiple angles to make the following arguments: (1) movement leaders attempt to control member's interpretive acts through ideologies delineated through sacred texts; and (2) despite attempts to limit members' interpretations, movement-specific exegesis which seems monoglossic conceals a dialectical engagement in which revivalist movements' members and leaders collaboratively create meaning within the movement; and (3) interpretation within dars provides insights into the reasons why women participate in revivalist movements.

## Leaders, Members, and the Interpretive Capacity of Women

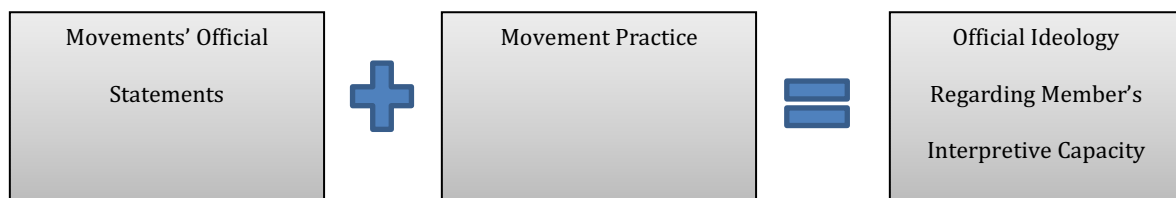
A movement's dars is intended to promote that movement's brand, to convey identifiable, movement-specific exegesis. The authority of these interpretations is tied to their basis in sacred text as interpreted by movement leadership. Unlike Qur'an meetings in Iran, which are led by religious scholars trained in unaffiliated madrassas and institutions (Osanloo 2009), Islamic revivalist movements in Pakistan draw on movement-created authorities to interpret sacred texts. Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at both rely on movement trained exegetes to interpret sacred texts. These movements also symbolically demonstrate that movement leadership controls the messages within dars; Al-Huda through the use of the cassette tape, and the Tablighi Jama'at through the use of the loudspeaker. This impression of central authorization is a necessary substitute for the authority of the ulama. Both revivalist and non-revivalist Pakistanis see the exegesis which occurs in revivalist dars as flowing directly from movement leaders. At the same time, close observation of the transmission of hadith through a movement reveals significant

variations in the stories told by revivalist leaders and members. As members tell stories based on sacred texts, they absorb individual members' beliefs about religious values.

I understand this transition through Bakhtin's observation that there are two kinds of discourse: one is authoritative and suppresses other discourses (monoglossia), and the other consists of a variety of discourses in conversation (heteroglossia). Official speech reflects hierarchy through its clear delineation of concepts as formulated by those in charge. In contrast, unofficial speech is part of a process of "becoming"; through unofficial speech, ambivalences can be expressed (Bakhtin 1984: 420). Official ideology maintains itself through unofficial ideology, and the relationship between the two is dialectical. Monoglossia and heteroglossia are linguistic and cultural in nature (Bruhn and Lundquist 2001). Monoglossia refers to a situation in which a conventional, homogenous language dominates a particular situation, while heteroglossia consists of a plurality of speech genres. Monoglossia suppresses heteroglossia, confining it to the outskirts of acceptable language (Bruhn and Lundquist 2001). Monoglossia emerges from institutional apparatuses, draws on official language, and remains sharply demarcated from other forms of speech (Bakhtin 1982: 343). Official language supports monoglossia, and reflects hierarchy through its clear delineation of concepts as formulated by those with authority. Monoglossic language deals "only with the subject" of the language, in "language that is perceived as the sole and fully adequate tool for realizing the word's direct, objectivized meaning" (Bakhtin 1982: 61). Heteroglossia, on the other hand, is internally persuasive, interwoven with the speakers own words.

I argue that the hadith interpreted by revivalist leaders form part of an official monoglossic movement ideology. As the hadith traverse through a revivalist movement, the messages they convey become blurred. In the context of Islamic revivalist movements, the

unofficial is represented by the members of these movements, who do not set policy or decide what will be taught within the dars. As members retell a hadith, it shifts to accommodate their interpretations. The message that results, which most listeners see as monoglossic and ascribe to the revivalist movement, is collaborative and fuses official and unofficial discourses. I locate heteroglossia in the everyday non-revivalist views on social organization subscribed to by the members of revivalist movements. This discourse is subsumed by monoglossia promoted by revivalist authorities, but subverts it by mimicking it, fitting itself into the official stories circulated by revivalist leadership without leaving differentiating markers. Locating these insertions requires an examination of a revivalist movement's hierarchy, and its' official guidelines regarding member's interpretive capacities.



*Figure 2: Equation: This figure displays the ways in which official movement ideologies are formed.*

## (1) The Tablighi Jama'at

The Tablighi Jama'at, a missionary movement focused on inviting Muslims to correct their religious practices, is governed through the consultation (*mashwara*) of the elders (*buzurg*) who live in Rawind, the movement-center near Lahore. Tablighi leadership consists of a core group of people who have the ability to institute policy changes only while working in concert. In fact, as senior member Afzel Sahib explained in his interview with me, the Tablighi Jama'at works to keep individual members from gaining prominence: "We try to ensure that all members are interchangeable parts." At one point member Maulana Tariq Jameel became a particularly

popular speaker, and crowds would accumulate in anticipation of his speaking. The movement responded indirectly but decisively: “Once, when a crowd got together because Tariq Jameel was speaking, we shifted the speakers,” Afzel Sahib said. The elders of Tabligh argue that the movement does not claim interpretive authority over sacred texts and defers to the authority of the ulama. However, the movement draws on hadith to promote virtuous actions, and movement ideology holds that it is acceptable to draw on hadith with weak *isnads* in order to promote virtuous actions. Movement-leadership as a whole authorizes members to draw on hadith, even those of dubious authenticity, in order to promote movement goals.

The Tablighi Jama’at’s official position on women is ambiguous because of the oral nature of Tabligh and the shortage of contemporary movement leaders’ statements on women (Metcalf 2002). The verbal statements regarding women that circulate through the movement indicate that Tablighis see women’s mental capacity and obligation to perform revivalist work as equal to that of men (Metcalf 2000: 50). Tabligh has a number of commonly used official positions which are frequently repeated in dars and can be assumed to represent the movement’s official stance. One of these is, “this is the work, and it is the work of every Muslim man, woman and child. All are responsible for conveying this message, and all will be asked about it on the Day of Judgment.” I heard variations on this statement in multiple dars, from both male and female members of the movement. The idea that the work (*kaam*) is a joint responsibility is one that is frequently repeated to women, who often try to excuse themselves from going on tours by claiming their obligations to their children and household will not allow them to go. Ostensibly, the Tablighi Jama’at’s leadership supports the radical idea that women, even married women with children, should abandon their domestic responsibilities in order to go on tours of varying lengths, from a *sheroza* (three days) to a *chilla* (forty days). During interviews, Afzel

Sahib confirmed that Tablighi leaders considered the movement to be egalitarian. “Women and men are both equal partners in the work,” he said, “and they both have to be willing to discard those things that make the work difficult for them.”

Although men and women are theoretically intellectually equal, interpretive practices within the movement demonstrate a lack of trust in women’s interpretive abilities. Women are discouraged from delivering sermons based on sacred texts, and are unable to go on tour without being accompanied by their husbands. While on tour, the segregation embraced by the movement gives women relatively more freedom with regard to preaching to non-Tablighi women; I witnessed multiple occasions in which women used sacred texts to preach despite official policies. All of these elements of Tabligh demonstrate a reluctance to allow women to engage directly with sacred texts. Key stories the Jama’at preachers return to also illustrate the importance of women submitting to male understandings of religion.

“Every important kaam in deen has been done by women and by men. Hazrat Ibraheem (Abraham) took his son to sacrifice him, and the devil (*Shaitan*) assumed the form of a woman and visited Mother (Amma) Hajra (Hagar). He said, “do you know where your son is?” and she said, “my husband has taken him to visit some friends.” Shaitan told her that no, he had gone to sacrifice her son, on God’s command...she didn’t worry, or wonder what her husband had done. Instead, Amma Hajra said, “1000 Ismails (Ishmails) sacrificed for God, and you go, you are Shaitan.”

Variations on this story occurred frequently during Tablighi dars. “Amma” Hajra, Ismail and Ibraheem were frequent figures in the dars, examples of a family committed to enduring separation and hardship for the sake of Allah, the model for the suffering and sacrifice expected of Tablighi families. “Amma Hajra’s” willingness to trust her husband and allow the sacrifice of her son, even without being consulted, reflects Tablighi expectations that women will allow men in the movement to make decisions and will support those decisions.

## (2) Al-Huda

Al-Huda, a woman-centered institution that offers courses in Qur'an and Hadith, is in the somewhat unique position of having a living founder, and has a clearly delineated leadership. Dr. Farhat Hashmi is the leader of the movement, and her policies and interpretations of sacred text guide the rest of the movement. Al-Huda draws on Ahl-Hadith theology, and promotes Dr. Farhat Hashmi's exegesis of sacred text as being of equal validity to that of the ulama, and of classical interpreters of Islam, including the founders of the four *mazahib*. Dr. Hashmi's interpretations of Qur'an and Hadith guide Al-Huda students through exegesis of the materials, and her interpretations are seen as overriding all others. When Dr. Hashmi revises her opinion on theological issues, her students follow suit. *Dars* teacher Rabia once concluded a discussion on the permissibility of making up a missed prayer by saying, "Dr. Farhat has revised her earlier (contrary) opinion on this topic." This was the final word; none of the students challenged Dr. Hashmi's interpretation, although they had been arguing about the issue prior to Rabia's pronouncement.

Al-Huda promotes a specific vision of the virtuous woman which members see as directly opposing Pakistani ideals. The ideal woman, according to Al-Huda, is one who acquires religious knowledge and spreads it to her family and through society at large. A pious woman, in Al-Huda classes, is one who learns the source texts of Qur'an and Hadith, uses these to reform her religious practice, and acquaints other women with these texts. Rabia took an active part in finding her students opportunities to teach, and framed these as their religious responsibility. "If you don't teach, what is the point of learning?" she once said exasperatedly as she offered her students the opportunity to teach a class of young women in a somewhat distant neighborhood. The eight students who continued from the Qur'an class to the one on Hadith each started



teaching classes of their own, some at home, and others in other people's houses. Al-Huda's emphasis on teaching takes time away from women's households, which urban Pakistanis see as their primary religious responsibility. Al-Huda classes frequently argue that women prioritize their household duties at the expense of their religious duties. Rabia, in the middle of a lecture on prayer, paused Dr. Hashmi's cassette sermon to elaborate:

*We have wasted too much of our lives over our families. In our society, women neglect learning because they want to make breakfast for their children and be home to make lunch.*

Here, Rabia was making pointed reference to a student who had said that she was going to stop coming to class because the timing (11 am to 2 pm) interfered with her supervising her servants and putting lunch on the table when her children came home from school. Other members had developed various strategies to put lunch on the table when they got home; most of them said they prepared lunch in the morning, prior to coming to class.

Al-Huda places itself in opposition to what it sees as misguided cultural beliefs, and to religious scholars who have failed to understand the "true" meaning of sacred texts. Nazish, one of Rabia's best students, once said to me fiercely, "haven't the religious scholars (imams) themselves said, 'if our words should clash with those of the Prophet, throw our words to the wall.'" Farhat Hashmi's interpretations of Qur'an and Hadith are controversial, and often in opposition to the received wisdom of mainstream Pakistani religious scholars. Students in Al-Huda classes learn to defend her interpretations against people who question them, and are taught that once they have taken the Qur'an and Hadith classes, they too can challenge conventional (Hanafi)<sup>25</sup> interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith.

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<sup>25</sup> The Hanafi school of Islamic thought dominates in Pakistan.

Al-Huda women think of their role in the conveying of religious knowledge as an active one. The figures of Hajra, Ismail and Ibraheem are well known to the women in Al-Huda through their readings of the Qur'an. In *Sura* (chapter) 37, verses 102-106 is the account of Ibraheem being commanded to sacrifice his son Ismail. In this version of the story, Ibraheem is told to sacrifice his son by God, and when he consults his son, Ismail agrees that God's will should be done. Although Ismail's mother is not mentioned in this account, the women in the class discussed how she must have felt and behaved when they read these verses. After class one day, Rabia was complaining that her in-laws did not like her spending so much time teaching dars. "My son understands, though" she said, "he knows what things are truly important. It is so important to raise children with a good religious understanding." Huma chimed in:

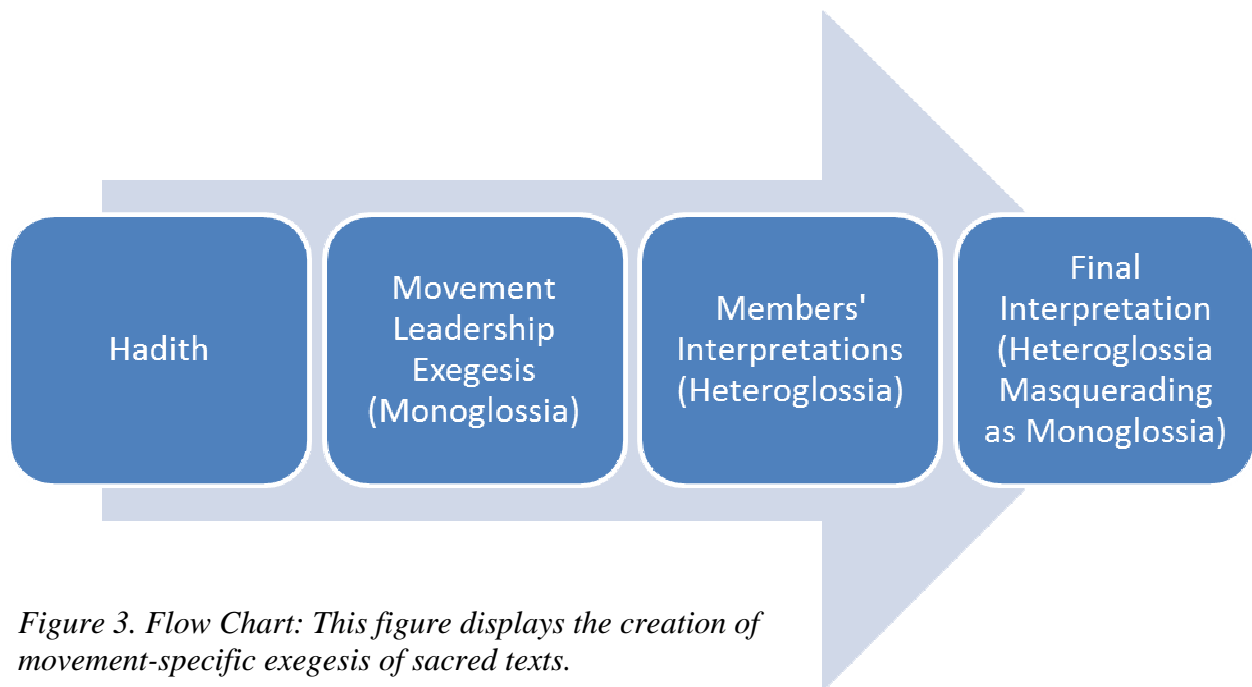
*I was telling my nephew the story of Hazrat Ibraheem and his son. My nephew said, "if I had to sacrifice my son and he did not go along with it, what would I do?" I said, "look who raised his son-Pick a good wife."*

In this rendition of the story, Hajra was given credit for the actions of her son, and Ibraheem was presented as a by-stander. The implication was that their son would not have agreed to the sacrifice if his mother had not raised him well.

## Interpreting the Same Text Differently

The corpus of hadith is extensive; there are six large collections of Hadith considered authentic by the majority of Sunni Islamic scholars, and each contains numerous hadith. I was able to observe the same hadith based stories being analyzed in both a *Tablighi* as well as *Al-Huda* dars. The meaning of the hadith shifted in both movements, diverging both from the interpretation of the other movement, and from their initial use within the movement. These

parallel interpretations display the ways in which members modify hadith as they travel through a movement, and allow me to trace revivalist movements' approach to hadith, and members conformity to movement-guidelines regarding exegesis. These hadith promoted different messages within each movement. The hadiths' message also changed as it traversed each movement. Changes in the story told through the sacred text illustrate the ways in which members of these movements reshape the "official" message circulated by movement authorities and modify it. The shifting of the hadith as they traverse a movement allows us to examine the extent to which members are governed by leadership-promoted textual practice. The monoglossia promoted by the movement, which sees the sacred text as having a fixed movement-authority defined meaning gives way to a heteroglossia, as the story constructed around the sacred text absorbs members' interjections into the text.



*Figure 3. Flow Chart: This figure displays the creation of movement-specific exegesis of sacred texts.*

The following hadith, which I will refer to as the hadith on Prayer throughout this chapter, are narrated by Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, and one of the most prolific narrators of Hadith. They occur in the Sahih Bukhari, one of the six canonical Sunni hadith collections, and follow each other, illustrating different aspects of the same event in the life of the Prophet.

*Narrated Aisha: The things which annul the prayers were mentioned before me. They said, "Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey and a woman (if they pass in front of the praying people)." I said, "You have made us (i.e. women) dogs. I saw the Prophet praying while I used to lie in my bed between him and the Qibla. Whenever I was in need of something, I would slip away from under my quilt for I disliked to face him."*

*(Sahih al-Bukhari 511.  
English translation 1:9:490)*

*The wife of the Prophet: "I used to sleep in front of Allah's Apostle with my legs opposite his Qibla (facing him); and whenever he prostrated, he pushed my feet and I withdrew them and whenever he stood, I stretched them." Aisha added, "In those days there were no lamps in the houses."*

*(Sahih al-Bukhari 513.  
English translation 1:9:492)*

## (1) The Hadith on Prayer in the Al-Huda Class

Al-Huda classes are based on movement-leadership prescribed pre-set course syllabi. The same class on Bukhari is held at multiple venues with the same lesson plan, textbook and pacing. The teachers teaching these courses all hold certificates from the Al-Huda institute certifying that they have themselves taken this class and are authorized to teach. Students in the class know which passage from the Qur'an or Hadith is going to be covered, and have read and researched the assigned text. The hadith is introduced from a specific book, with its chain of transmission (isnad), and its meanings are carefully considered, as are the variant version of the hadith. The interpretation of text is guided by Farhat Hashmi's cassette dars. Theoretically, the classes

represent a monoglossia, students all across Pakistan receiving an identical, movement-authorized message. Al-Huda dars are meant to recall the learning done in madrassas in their examination of detail, and the precision with which text is introduced.

Both of the above hadith were introduced through Farhat Hashmi's cassette tape in the Al-Huda class, as part of a larger examination of the hadith in the Bukhari collection. Dr. Hashmi's voice over the tape said that these hadith were a refutation of the idea that the passage of women in front of a man engaged in ritual prayer nullified his prayer. The cassette tape sermon continued: "Some people, who are enemies of Islam, say that if a woman passes in front of a man, it nullifies his prayer and they ignore this refutation." Dr. Hashmi's interpretation positions her against "some people" who disagree with her; it is left to the imagination of her listeners whether these people are outsiders who are "enemies of Islam" or misogynistic Muslim men. By using the mechanism of "some people" she implies that both the ulama and others are involved in making (false) accusations against Islam. Unofficial conversations after the dars extend this analysis, taking the implication and making it explicit.

The students in the class, who by now understood Arabic, wrote the translation in the margins of their large volume of Bukhari, translating the hadith as it was read out in Arabic. Al-Huda students interact with the text by interpreting it further, decoding it along the lines that have been modeled for them by Farhat Hashmi. Through these interpretations, they challenge Pakistani social norms and the ulama. Significantly, parts of both the theological and social decoding of the hadith contradict established Pakistani religious and cultural norms. Students add to the message conveyed through the cassette tape lecture to develop the themes of Dr. Hashmi's exegesis, developing them. Interpretation of sacred texts by Al-Huda members demonstrates awareness that their movement's interpretations are contested by numerous outsiders. Members

of the movement modify official interpretations by adding to them, and collaboratively deconstructing them.

*Rabia: “ever since the ulama lost integrity, there has been a great deal of harm done.”*

*Rabia:- What else does this hadith do?*

*Nazish: it shows that a barrier is required to preserve prayer. The quilt served as a barrier*

*Komal: this also shows that movement in non-obligatory prayer is permissible. We know this from the hadith about the Prophet moving Hazrat Aisha’s feet while praying. This is our evidence (dalil) that reading from the Quran during nafl namaz is permissible (jaaiz).*

*Rabia: This hadith also shows how we should react when people offend us... See...when hazrat Aisha heard women being compared to dogs and donkeys, she got angry and she argued. These days, we think good manners means being quiet even when we see or hear bad things being said. When women who wear the hijab hear bad things about hijab-wale (those who wear the hijab) they laugh, when men with beards hear bad things about darhi-walay (men with beards) they laugh.*

Rabia, the teacher of the class, led the analysis, positioning herself and her students vis-a-vis the ulama and Pakistani society, making it clear that she thought “some people” who misinterpreted the hadith were the ulama. Rabia also argued that her students had been badly socialized to perform femininity and deference by not engaging with people who offend them in social interactions, and was encouraging her students to violate this norm by providing them with religious justification for assertively challenging people who were rude. Rabia also positioned non-Al-Huda women as not having the necessary knowledge to be good Muslims; during the class she mentioned several anecdotes where women she had encountered had not known that barriers preserve prayer. Other members of the class chimed in with their own stories of women they knew who had no knowledge of how to pray properly.

Komal and Nazish collaboratively extended the theological implications of the hadith to cover issues they had already covered in class, namely that (1) that a barrier is required if there will be people moving in front of a person who is praying and (2) that the movement of a person engaged in a *nafl*<sup>26</sup> prayer is permitted, since the prophet had moved his wife's feet while praying. These conclusions, about the movement in non-obligatory prayer and about a barrier being needed to preserve prayer, had both been the topics of earlier classes, and had been supported through numerous hadith that had been covered prior to this one. The second point, which Komal introduced, had been discussed in a class a few weeks earlier, and relates to the issue of *Taraweeh*, a non-obligatory prayer offered during Ramadan. In a mosque, this prayer features the recitation of a chapter from the Qur'an with each daily *taraweeh* prayer. By the end of Ramadan, mosque-goers have participated in reciting the entire Qur'an, an act considered highly virtuous. Pakistani women generally do not go to the mosque, and many do not participate in communal *taraweeh*. Many Al-Huda students have developed a way around this problem; they simply read from the Qur'an while offering this prayer at home. However, reading from the Qur'an while engaged in prayer is controversial, specific to Ahl-Hadith and Salafi theology, and the students in Rabia's class had been reviewing hadith and learning defenses for this practice earlier in the year. Komal demonstrated her awareness that she was promoting an un-standard interpretation through her statement that the hadith was "our" (i.e. Al-Huda's) evidence that the practice is permitted.

The monoglossia promoted by Al-Huda is circulated through Farhat Hashmi's cassette tape sermon. Students in the classes embed their own understandings of the text into their contextualization of the sermon, and their discussion of how the sacred texts are applicable in

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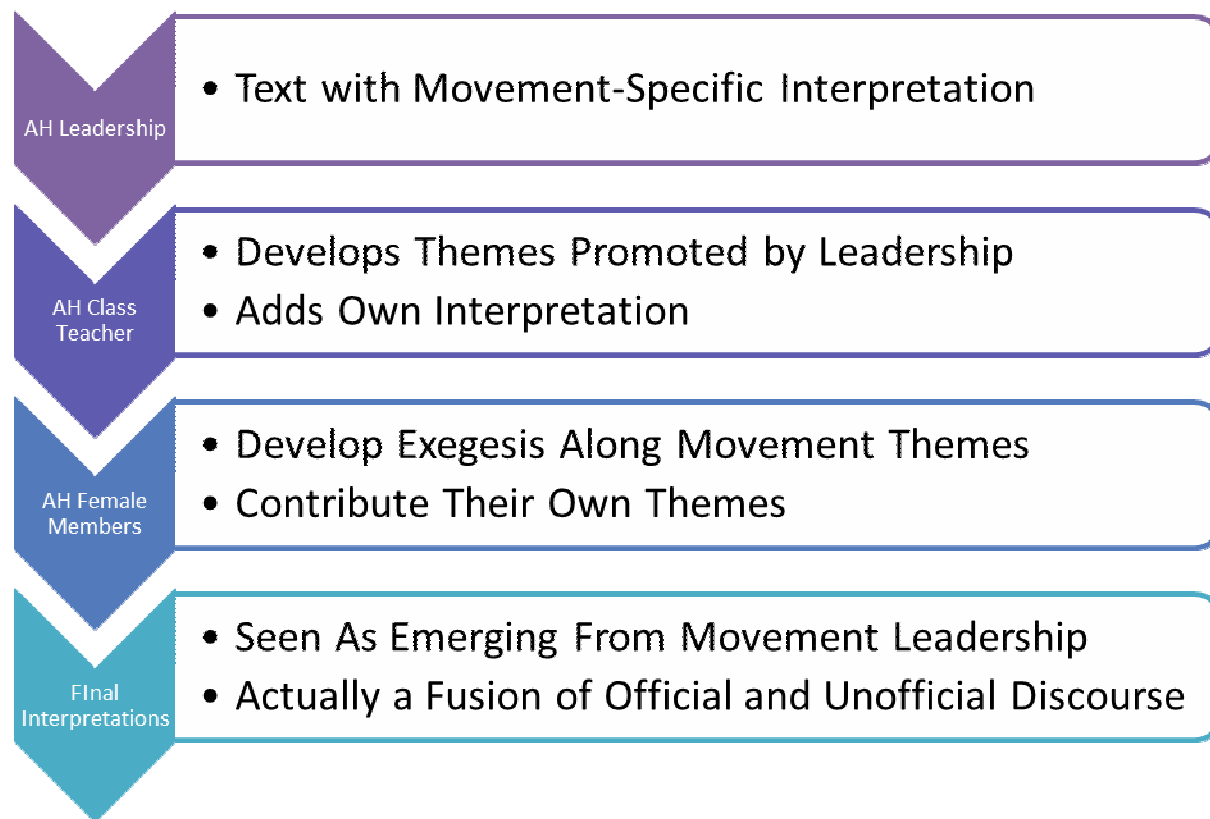
<sup>26</sup> non-obligatory prayer – these are prayers offered on a voluntary basis, and are not required as the five obligatory prayers are. Offering these at late hours of the night is considered particularly virtuous.

their own lives. The messages that emerge from the conversations around Hashmi's exegesis form a member led-interpretation of the texts. In the case of the hadith on prayer, Rabia's framing of the hadith extended its relevance from prayer to women's general comportment. Rabia's students Komal and Nazish demonstrated their understanding of how to make a hadith applicable to different situations. Rabia's students engagement with sacred texts was modeled on hers, and like her, they affirmed Hashmi's exegesis while altering her message by discussing texts meant in the context of their own lives. In the case of these specific hadith, and multiple others, women's interjections into the exegesis developed movement-specific themes, in this case related to positioning Al-Huda women relative to the ulama, and promoting themselves as qualified exegetes. The framing of Al-Huda women as demonstrating exceptional religiosity is self-aggrandizing, but also supports movement goals. It is the interpretation of hadith outside of movement classes where women demonstrate their interpretive skills in a manner relevant to their daily lives.

The women of Al-Huda draw on their newly learned mastery of Hadith in order to reject social norms they do not wish to follow. Women's interpretations of hadith do not demonstrate a feminist consciousness; they speak of a need to defer to husbands, look after in-laws, and run households. Instead, women examine hadith to determine minute details about the appropriate conduct of their religious practices and social habits. In individual instances, they demonstrate a mastery of hadith that allows them to justify a number of generally socially unacceptable behaviors in the name of religion. These include refusing to attend extended family gatherings that are unsegregated, and not offering refreshments to male guests. These heteroglossic interpretations draw authority from the impression that they originate from movement-wide leadership. The methods they practice during class are used for the interpretation of texts in their



daily lives. Once, when Nazish was complaining about having to entertain her husband's family who were visiting for a week, Huma said, "You should tell them that the hadith says that no one has a right to be someone's guest for more than three days, and that they should fend for themselves." The hadith she mentioned, which had been discussed in class, had stressed that *all* Muslims have a right to be ones' guests for three days, and had not discussed three days as an upper limit for family. In addition, the idea that a person can refuse hospitality to their family is a radical one in a normal Pakistani social context.



*Figure 4: Flow Chart: This figure describes the agents that influence the exegesis of text in the Al-Huda Movement.*

## (2) The Hadith on Prayer in Tablighi Taleem

Tablighi Friday sermons are delivered by male speakers who address women over a loudspeaker from another part of the house. These speakers cite Qur'an and hadith spontaneously as part of larger sermons about the virtues of going on Tablighi tours. The hadith are introduced in a conversational fashion, without mention of their chain of transmission or source. The speaker will often mention that he does not know specific details about the hadith, such as who narrated it, or what the exact details were. When Qur'an is cited in dars the meaning of the text becomes fluid, and is related to the mission of Tabligh in ways that does not occur when the same texts are interpreted outside the movement. The Tablighi Jama'at presents itself as a movement that does not engage in the exegesis of sacred text. The official movement position is that all theological issues are to be referred to the "the respected ulama" (*Ulama-e-Karam*). According to this view of Tabligh's relationship to religion, sacred texts within the movements are intended to motivate Tablighis. Tabligh's primary text, the *Fazil-e-Amal*, was compiled specifically for the movement and is full of hadith promoting participation in the movement. All of these details reinforce Tablighi claims that their interpretation of sacred texts is meant as a motivational tool rather than as a claim to ulama-like mastery and interpretation of text. At the same time, the movement draws on sacred texts to make ulama-like claims about the absolute obligation on all Muslims to conduct Tabligh in the manner approved of by the movement.

Sermons within Tabligh promote specific guidelines coming from Raiwind. The only official guidance the speaker for the day has is his knowledge of what things Raiwind, the Tablighi center in Lahore, is focusing on that month. Tablighi women receive a sermon that is one layer removed from movement authority, and already incorporates heteroglossia through its absorption of the male speaker's beliefs. The concept of the good "Tablighi Gharana" (lit.

Tablighi Household) is one that informs most of the male delivered dars aimed at women in Taleem. Men and women are often exhorted to construct Tablighi households, in which the ‘work’ of Tabligh flourishes and is transmitted to the children in the house. This focus on women’s responsibility to inculcate Tablighi values in their children is movement-leadership approved, but male Tablighis place more emphasis on this aspect of their participation than on other leadership-promoted activities.

The voice over the speaker began the dars:

*In our households, there should be a structure to the day. There should be a time and routine for everything in a house, from breakfast to prayer. There is even a hadith that the prophet was praying, and he moved Hazrat Aisha’s feet as he prayed, because she was sleeping in front of him...He wouldn’t have prayed with someone sleeping in front of him without any reason. This hadith proves that every house should have a room, or the corner of a room devoted to prayer. In the time of the Prophet, even when there wasn’t room to have a mosque in the house, one corner of the house was devoted to prayer. We have such big houses these days, and if we don’t have a room for prayer, we should at least devote a corner of our house to it. People should go to this corner or this room to pray. Women should all stop what they are doing when prayer time comes and go to this place. Afterwards, they can have Taleem (educational sessions in which the Fazail-i-Aamal is read) and make breakfast.*

The hadith highlighted the importance of devoting a corner of the house to prayer, and of women praying in this corner in a fixed time. This interpretation of the hadith is unique – none of the women attending the dars had heard it before. Like the interpretations of the Al-Huda students, it is non-standard and movement-specific. None of the other interpretations of this hadith that I encountered made mention of a mosque in the household, and the Al-Huda class mentioned that the Prophet was praying with his wife sleeping in front of him because there was no room in their house. This dars also calls for a major change in women’s ritual prayer. While men pray at the mosque at scheduled times, even the most religiously devout women pray at home at the time that most suits their convenience. For example, during the time of this dars (in mid-summer), the

time for the noon prayer at the mosque was around 1 pm. However, the prayer could be performed at any time between 1 and 4 pm, and women generally performed this prayer whenever they were free in this time period.

I asked Afzel Sahib, one of Raiwind's *muqeeem*<sup>27</sup>, about the unique interpretation of the hadith I had heard. He said, "That's an interesting story. Bhai Sadiq Hafeeze heard that a very established Tablighi family was having trouble holding daily *Taleem*<sup>28</sup>. This was a devoted family – all of the women had gone on *chillas* (lit. forty days) and *char mahinas* (lit. four months), and the men in the family mentioned that the women said they didn't really have a time in the day when they were all together and could do *Taleem* with the children. The brothers lived together, but each nuclear family had its own schedule. So we decided in consultation (*mashwara*) that the best thing to do would be to encourage the women to all pray together, so that they could hold *Taleem* afterwards. I guess that is why the man you mentioned interpreted the hadith that way."

Over the course of the next few Tablighi gatherings I went to, I noticed the repeated reemphasizing of the importance of women praying in a 'mosque' within their homes during dars. After dars, women would also discuss the reasons why women should pray communally. However, the importance of holding daily *Taleem*, which according to Bhai Afzel was the movement-leadership's reason for asking women to pray in one location at the same time, was not linked to women's communal prayer. Women who had attended madrassas, and had encountered this hadith before, like Saleha, a young Tablighi woman I interviewed, did not object to its interpretation within the movement: "Even if it's not exactly what the hadith has

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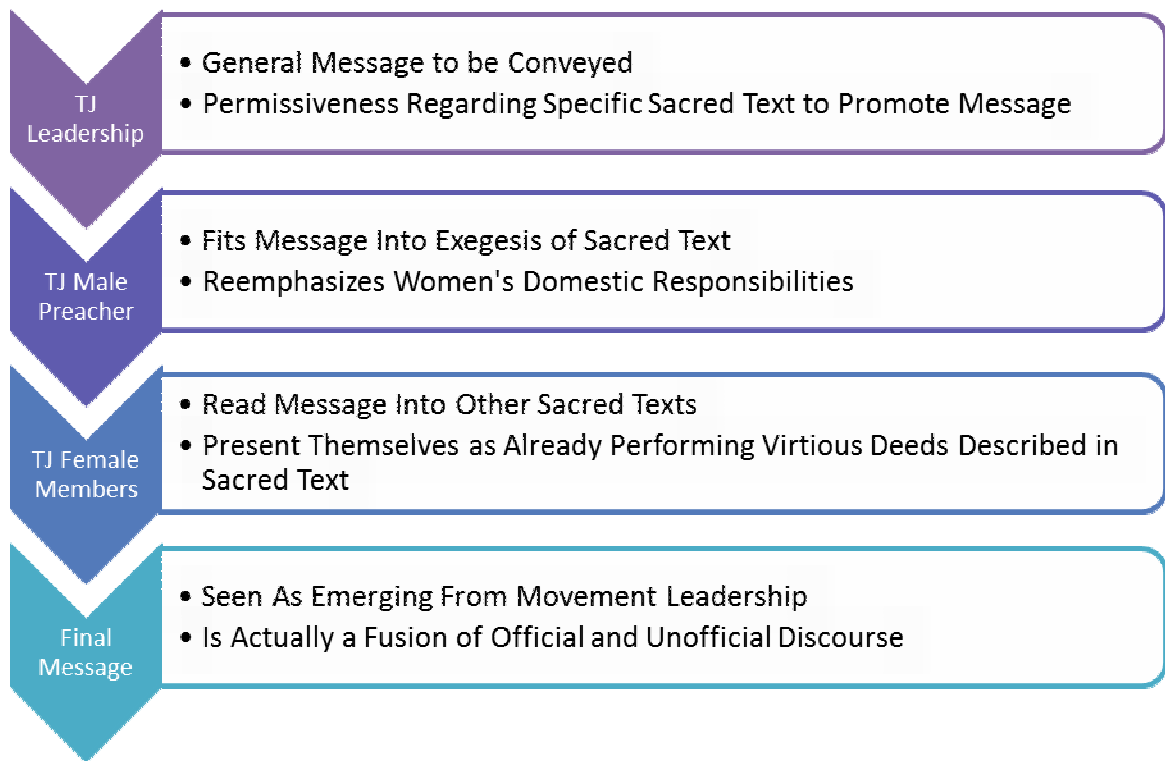
<sup>27</sup> Muqeeem (Trans resident) is one of the men who lives at Raiwind, Pakistan's Tablighi headquarters. These men run the jamaat, in as much as any individual runs such a decentralized movement. They form jama'ats and decide where they are going.

<sup>28</sup> It is recommended that Tablighi families hold *Taleem* every day.

meant, its encouraging people to do a good thing, so it is ok” Saleha told me. I visited a traveling jama’at later that month, and heard multiple other hadith interpreted to support the canonical nature of “mosques” within pious homes.

Other messages sent out through stories from Raiwind undergo similar shifts. Sometimes, when the divergence of the story becomes extreme, the elders at Raiwind attempt to rein in the stories and re-shape them. Saleha told me a story had become popular that when the Prophet delivered his last sermon, which contained the message “Those of you who are here should spread the message to those of you who are not”, his companions instantly jumped on their horses and set out right that minute. “They couldn’t have done that, they were in the middle of performing Hajj,” Saleha said with a laugh. “I heard from my father that the elders were telling people to at least make sure the story left room for their completing the Hajj before departing.”

Women’s interpretations of Hadith within the movement are similar to men’s; female members of the Jama’at draw on vague ideas of hadith to promote movement-goals and attract members. During one conversation, a woman said “A day will come when only a few old people will remember the Kalima (declaration of faith), and it will save them from hellfire. When they are asked why they said it, they will say “our ancestors used to do this.” When I went on jama’at to Thailand, this was the situation of the women there, sisters. We must go on jama’at and help these people.” Tablighi women’s interpretations are self-congratulatory, and describe how they themselves have lived up to the values illustrated in the sacred texts they cite.



*Figure 5. Flow Chart: This figure describes the agents that influence the exegesis of text in the Tablighi Jama'at.*

### (3) Interpretations Interacting: Al-Huda and Tablighi Women Engage with Other Ways of Reading

The transmission of hadith in both the Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda is interrupted by the mediating agency of the teachers of the local dars who convey the hadith to members. Members then build on the interpretations that reach them, and the exegesis of text that results differs within the movement as well as between movements. In the Al-Huda class, the Hadith on Prayer shifts from a narrative about the nullification of ritual prayer to an elaborate social and theological commentary in which women justify their religious and social practices, and develop themes of movement exceptionalism. In Tabligh, the Hadith on Prayer is adopted to elaborate on movement-leadership guidelines regarding the necessity of daily *Taleem*. By the time it has circulated through the movement, passing from the dars-preacher to Tablighi women, the

primary message of the hadith is the importance of a specialized space for prayer in devout households. Women react to the hadith by supporting it through multiple others and describing their own virtuous practice in having “mosques” in their homes.

While Al-Huda and Tablighi womens’ interactions with sacred texts are quite different, both groups of women demonstrate a clear adoption of the techniques movement-leaders model for them. Women bypass official movement ideologies regarding their interpretive role, as explicated through movement leaders’ statements and practices, instead drawing on the same techniques that movement leaders themselves employ. Al-Huda women extend the meaning of hadith beyond Dr. Hashmi’s interpretation, while Tablighi women engage in exegesis despite movement discouragement. Instead, Al-Huda women use hadith to draw social and theological messages in the manner of Dr. Hashmi, and Tablighi women employ hadith to promote actions they see as virtuous.

Women’s reading of sacred texts echos that of movement-leaders and fits itself into movement-promoted monoglossia without leaving distinguishing marks primarily because womens’ ways of reading are influenced by the exegesis they witness in dars. The manner of interpretation they see in movement-dars becomes naturalized for women, and they come to see all other methods of engaging with sacred text as wrong. This inoculates members from casually moving from one movement to another, and ensures that they disapprove of other revivalist movements. Women who are members of one movement become inducted into a particular way of reading such that all other ways of engaging with sacred text seem improper.

In the ordinary course of events, women who are members of one revivalist movement are not exposed to the difference in interpretive styles and messages between their movement

and other movements<sup>29</sup>. When they do interact with interpretations or *dars* in a movement that is not their own, both Al-Huda and Tablighi women show significant disapproval of how women in the other movement interact with sacred texts. All of the women I interviewed were aware that I was conducting participant observation research in various movements. Generally, I made it a point not to discuss events in the other movements I was researching. However, the drastic difference in the hadith discussed above aroused my curiosity, and I made it a point to bring up the alternative interpretation I had heard with women from both movements. Women in both movements reacted in a strongly negative fashion to the other movement's understanding of the hadith on prayer.

I mentioned the Tablighi reading of the hadith on prayer one day when I was having lunch with Rabia and Nazish after class. They listened intently, and then started discussing how the Tablighis could have so drastically (from their point-of-view) misinterpreted the hadith. Nazish had attended Tablighi Jama'at Taleem before she started attending Al-Huda dars. "Their problem is that they don't let women speak," she said, "I tried to teach the other women things, and some women came and stopped me. They told me that we were not supposed to preach, but just read from the book." I described the Tablighi interpretation of the Hadith to Nazish and Rabia. "See, this is their problem," said Nazish, "they let everyone, even those without knowledge (ilm) speak, and they misinterpret things. And if a woman has knowledge and tries to correct them, they get upset."

While commenting on the Tablighi Jama'at's interpretation of the Hadith on prayer, Rabia said:

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<sup>29</sup> The choice to start attending dars seems to be driven to a large extent by social and physical proximity. Nearly all of the women who attend Rabia's dars decided to attend because it was in their own neighborhood. Most of the women at Friday's Tablighi Taleem started attending after one of their male family members joined the movement.



*“There are three degrees of action: obligatory (fard), required (wajib) and recommended (mustahib). They should teach these when explaining Hadith. The Tablighi Jama’at should require certification to teach. Also, it is cruel (zulm) not to let students ask for clarification.*

I mentioned the Al-Huda interpretations of the Hadith on Prayer to Saleha, the young Tablighi madrasa graduate I interviewed. While she was aware that the interpretation of the hadith she had heard in the dars was not common, and even said that she thought it would be better if lay-preachers would refrain from “straining” the hadith, she disagreed that Tablighis needed to learn more precise methods for interpretation. Saleha told me that Al-Huda’s methodology for engaging with sacred texts was flawed, because Al-Huda attempted to usurp the role of the *ulama*. “I know a lot of women who used to go to Al-Huda, then came to us and realized how wrong Al-Huda was,” said Saleha. “Those women present themselves as *ulama*, but they are not, and their interpretations are loose and mixed up. Anyone who wants to interpret Hadith in that way should go to a madrasa.”

## Methodologies of Interpretation

For Bakhtin, the monoglossic utterance opposes the social event of verbal interaction (Kent 1993). Monologue “assumes a metaphysical stability, an originary presence and center, a world of uniformity and conformity, where the other may be illuminated through the True Word” (Kent 1993: 155). In contrast, a heteroglossia creates hybridity from a variety of utterances in which multiple stakeholders co-create cultural reality. Revivalist movements present themselves as promoting monoglossia emerging from movement leaders, when the interpretations ascribed

to these movements are actually hybrid discourses and incorporate member's interests and beliefs. Women's heteroglossic interjections into sacred text are modeled on interpretation within the movement, and are indistinguishable from monoglossic messages promoted by the movement. Tablighi women, for example, do not use Qur'an and hadith to justify personal interactions in the manner of Al-Huda women, because of the Tablighi Jama'at's belief that sacred texts are meant for the promotion of movement goals. In contrast, Al-Huda women do not use sacred texts to argue that belonging to their movement is an essential part of being a Muslim.

Women in both movements interpret texts in the manner modeled for them by movement leaders. Al-Huda women interpret Hadith in a manner they imagine echos that of the ulama, while Tablighi women draw on Hadith to promote movement objectives and recruit members. Female members of revivalist movements utilize sacred texts in their interactions with each other and with non-movement members for the purposes of recruitment, and to justify their own religious practices. The interpretations women promote are thought to be flowing from the movement they belong to, but these seemingly monoglossic messages draw on the authority of the revivalist movement women belong to, as well as that of sacred text, while promoting a collaborative interpretation that is the product of complex interactions within the movement. It is important to note that women's interactions with sacred texts do not conform to official movement-ideology regarding gendered textual practice; in Tabligh in particular, women assume significantly greater authority to interpret texts than the movement authorizes.

Leila Ahmed (2011b) has posited a tension between a men's Islam, an Islam of texts, and a women's Islam which is based in an oral and aural heritage. Women's Islam is based on commonsense knowledge of Islam, and on personal reactions to specific verses of the Qur'an (Ahmed 2011b). Outward signs of piety, knowledge of sacred texts, and the performance of

ritual acts of worship are not important to this Islam. In contrast, Islam based on sacred texts is a men's Islam, the Islam of religious scholars (Ahmed 2011b). Osanloo has argued that Qur'an meetings in Iran function as a space of production, in which women "wrest control of the resources of socio-religious production from the state and its patriarchal band of social producers." (2009:81). In contrast, Al-Huda and Tablighi women's education in historically male forms of Islamic knowledge does not alter or attempt to challenge the overwhelmingly patriarchal messages promoted by revivalist movements; both Al-Huda women and Tablighi women are indifferent to ideas of women's empowerment and do not subscribe to ideas of patriarchal religious gatekeepers who can be overcome through religious education. Instead, their focus is on defining the pious and impious in everyday life.

The dilemma of why women join conservative religious has been a central facet of examinations of women's participation in patriarchal religions. Why do women with economic and social privilege reject many of the advantages that come with their positionality in order to join religious movements that restrict their activities and add to their work? Scholars offer three responses to this question (Avishai 2008). The first is that while women are restricted by conservative religions, their religious affiliation empowers them by allowing them to negotiate patriarchal family structures (Bernal 1994; Brasher 1998; Griffith 1997; Bartkowski and Read 2003). The second approach imagines women as subverting religious precepts while seeming to conform to them (Goyal 2007). The third posits that women draw on religion to pursue extra-religious ends (Boddy 1989; Haniffa 2008). Each of these approaches is transactional, and examines what women get out of participation in patriarchal religions. A presupposition of this literature has been that women must be compensated in some way for their participation. More

recent work has examined women's engagement with religion as part of their cultivation of religious subjectivities (Mahmood 2004).

My work steps outside these debates by examining the social consequences of women's formation as religious subjects. I examine women's gains from participating in Islamic revivalist movements as a side-effect of their incorporation in these movements. Women's turn to piety is not a self-authoring project; it is undertaken in collaboration with the revivalist movements in which they are educated. The process of education transforms both women and the movement itself, altering women's capacities and subjectivities, and shifting movement-wide meaning. Women's education in revivalist movements is necessary in order for them to be effective members of these movements. Female members' conscious and willing transformation of themselves into pious subjects changes their nature as social subjects, providing them with new capabilities.

Women's participation in movements' dars allows them to absorb movement ways of reading and speaking. Thus, their interruptions of movement sponsored messages are cloaked in monoglossia. Their adoption of historically male interpretive relationships with sacred texts allows them to contribute to meaning-making within revivalist movements, and to represent themselves as speaking from the authority of the movements to which they belong. Even without a feminist consciousness, women's education in sacred texts alters certain balances. The text of Qur'an and hadith are, at least, consistent; they can be resorted to in order to cut through cultural knots and barriers. Ahmed has argued that women might have been better served by men's Islam of the texts than by vague cultural understandings of Islam because men's Islam has clearly delineated rules (2011). This observation provides hints as to how women's education in sacred texts might be empowering even in the absence of feminist activism. Texts provide limits, and

women who know texts can borrow movement-modeled methods to interpret them. This allows women to draw on the authority of texts and the authority of their revivalist movement. Women can draw on these for personal and movement-specific goals, not out of cynical manipulation, but because using sacred texts in this way has become natural. Women's training in dars gives them access to a new form of discourse, which they practice in revivalist dars and then employ as they move through the world.

# **CHAPTER FIVE. DOMINATING NARRATIVES: WOMEN’S LIVES THROUGH MOVEMENT-COLORED LENSES**

## **Introduction**

This dissertation has explored women’s lives within movement-space as they absorb new ways of understanding piety, religious obligation, and virtuous practice. How do these new conceptions of Islam, movement-specific virtue, and mastery over sacred text translate outside of movement-space and influence women’s interactions with their family and friends? In order to answer these questions, I cultivated long-term engagements with my research subjects, spanning the course of four years (two years of pre-dissertation fieldwork, and two years of dissertation fieldwork). As I asked women about their lives, families, and social interactions, I noticed the prevalence of certain themes in women’s narratives within each movement. Each woman’s life story was unique to her, but also reflected movement-wide schemas of interpretation which disregarded the details of her specific life story. In certain cases, the facts of women’s lives conflicted with the interpretations they placed on those facts.

Al-Huda women routinely assured me that there were no situations in which revivalist participation damaged a woman’s relationship with her family, while almost simultaneously recounting stories of family arguments and disagreements about their own participation. Similarly, while women in the Tablighi Jama’at came from families involved with the movement, and supportive of their participation, their narratives emphasized their struggles to

participate in Tabligh. These contradictions left me with a theoretical dilemma; how was I to reconcile the details of women's lives with their shared movement-wide understanding of these experiences? I resolve this dilemma by understanding these disjunctures as the result of movement-specific interpretive frameworks which color women's narratives and influence their interactions outside of revivalist space. Ochs and Capp (1996) have pointed to the ways in which the existence of dominant narratives can lead to discrepancies between the stories a narrator tells, and her encounters in the world. The stories of revivalist women reveal the existence of dominant narratives which impact their subjectivities.

Mahmood (2004) and Hirschkind (2009) have described the ways in which believing subjects participate in processes which alter their subjectivities through bodily practice. These agentive acts are addressed both to an outside, a world observing the subject's acts, as well as to an inside, a subjectivity that is shaped through bodily practice. Thus for Mahmood (2004), it is women's donning of the veil that creates the feeling of *al-haya* (shyness, modesty), and it is on cultivation of appropriate exteriority that men listening to cassette sermons experience pious affect (Hirschkind 2009). The ethical self-fashioning approach sees subjects as cultivating bodily subjugation in order to achieve self-transformation. I argue that the transformation of selves within revivalist movements has implications for members' experiences outside these movements. Participation in a revivalist movement where they are exposed to shared discourses and techniques of discipline inducts revivalist women into interpretive frameworks that color their cognition, impacting the ways in which they remember their lives, as well as the ways in which they live it.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have argued that social struggles are at their core contests over the interpretive frameworks used to understand and explain social events and phenomena.

Women's identity-positions as members of specific movements impact the ways in which they frame their experiences; as a result of their engagement with these movements they develop shared interpretive frameworks for experiencing and viewing the world. These frameworks affect women's understandings about Islam, the role of religion in everyday life, and appropriate ways to deal with non-revivalist family and friends. Women across a revivalist movement share interpretive frameworks that are subtly different from those of women from other movements. My approach to revivalism, which draws on a comparative perspective, illustrates movement-specific religious subjectivities that operate within everyday revivalist lives and are visible in revivalist narratives.

My focus on narrative is a result of my commitment to writing an "ethnography of the particular" (Abu-Lughod 1991 b), an account of how revivalism impacts the lives of specific research subjects. Narrative is an "active and constructive mode of cognitive engagement, with implicit interpretive frameworks, or schemas, orchestrating both the production and interpretation of narrative" (Garro 2005: 62). Worlds become meaningful in light of cultural frameworks that enable and constrain interpretive possibilities (Garro 2005). Knowledge and memory are linked, and remembering is influenced by what is known about the world. Language shapes the social world, and narratives create differentiation (Briggs 1996). Narratives are the result of fragments of memory, and the partial selection of ideas and events (Ochs and Capp 2001). Through narrative, individuals try to understand how their actions have come to pass, and have shaped their histories (Garro 2005). Personal narratives, as in the case of life-history interviews, are a way of employing language to create logical order and coherence out of life events, and to thematically link past, present and future (Ochs and Capp 2001). While narratives focus on the past, they link the past and present to the future and demonstrate the narrator's



attempts to identify life problems, determine how they emerged, and imagine how they might impact the future (Ochs and Capp 1996). Narrative activity is a tool through which women organize specific situations and their place in the general scheme of life through a collaborative framework created through revivalist activities.

Creating meaning in everyday life is a cultural-cognitive-social process. Meaning-making is linked to social involvement within specific settings. Human cognition and understanding are linked to social and cultural contexts. Living in particular contexts impacts the interpretive frameworks that create narrative. Transitions in these contexts alter cognition and perception, impacting the way individuals remember, speak of, and live their lives (Garro 2005). Becoming an active participant in a specialized setting changes an individual's interpretation of everyday experience (Garro 2005; Good 1994; Lurhmann 1989). "Interpretive drift" occurs as individuals become involved in particular activities and socialize with specific groups of people (Luhmann 1989). Individuals' inductions into specialized systems of knowledge lead them to inhabit new worlds, constituted by new ways of seeing and speaking (Good 1994). In the specific case of Islamic revivalism, women's presence in movement-specific spaces and participation in practices of collective identity formation inducts them into new interpretive frameworks. Each movements' method of interpreting sacred texts, definition of self against Others, and spatial practice provide the basis for a framework through which revivalist women perceive and live their lives, coloring their recollections and creating an "interpretive shift" (Garro 2005: 66) which results in their perceiving events in their lives through movement-colored lenses. Women form themselves into revivalist subjects by cultivating movement-specific understandings of Islamic behavior and forms of interaction in both revivalist and non-revivalist space.

Works on religious movements have categorized revivalist movements based on broad differences between the movements (Roy 2006), and have pointed to differences between revivalists' and non-revivalists' behaviors (Iqtidar 2011; S. Ahmad 2009). What remains unexplored is revivalist experience of the world, and ways in which interpretive frameworks influence revivalist cognition and interaction. A comparative analysis of Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at, both of which share a number of qualities, is particularly instructive. Both of these movements are devoted to creating Islamic renewal through educational strategies, and claim to eschew politics. Despite these similarities, narratives of female members reveal significant differences in their understanding of their pasts, and their interactions with non-revivalists in various settings.

This chapter is divided into three sections, two of which are devoted to Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at respectively. These sections each feature a life history interview conducted at the culmination of my dissertation research, which I will use as a window into movement-specific interpretive frameworks through which members understand their own lives and those of others. The third section consists of a cross-movement comparison examining how interpretive frameworks impact women's interactions with family and friends. Life-histories will minimize my interjections into the conversation, which served as prompts to continue narrative flow. These interviews were conducted over the course of a five hour session per subject, in response to the question "Tell me about your life, starting from your childhood. Tell me about your relationship with religion as you were growing up, and how you came to join the movement you participate in." I have culled parts of the interviews that concerned women's pre-revivalist lives, as well as editing for brevity and repetition. I have drawn on Haeri's (2002) technique for

minimizing intrusions into the narratives by drawing on footnotes to clarify ambiguities in the text.

## Al-Huda

When I began pre-dissertation fieldwork at Nazish's house in the summer of 2007, I noticed that Komal, who was in her mid-twenties, was younger than all of the other participants, and in a position of greater responsibility. She served as Rabia's assistant, guiding interpretations and directing the other "students." She had attended the then one year old class for six months<sup>30</sup>, and was on distant terms with most of the other members, who did not challenge her authority, but also did not speak to her outside of the classroom. At the time, she told me that her parents had moved to Rawalpindi, and that she had stayed back in order to finish the Qur'an class: "when we are done with the Qur'an, I will go." She reiterated her eagerness to move to be with her parents when I saw her during pre-dissertation research in 2008, and I was surprised to find her still attending the classes when I returned for dissertation research in 2009.

At the time, she offered a casual explanation of how she had been unable to let the class go. "I tried moving on with another class in the neighborhood we are in, but I couldn't. Its only three times a week now, so I can come here from my parent's house." In the interval, her parents had moved back to Islamabad from Rawalpindi, and lived on the outskirts of the city. Komal had become friendly with the other women who attended the classes, and she spent time laughing and joking with them before and after classes. Nazish, the hostess, had become particularly close to

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<sup>30</sup> Komal was studying intensively, taking all of the tests she had missed, and learning twice the material. She would borrow the lesson-tapes from Nazish, and routinely worked before and after class to understand the material.

Komal, including her in family meal times and making her tea after classes<sup>31</sup>. Komal and I were close in age, and she was also in the social category of “student.” These factors, coupled with her knowledge of Al-Huda’s at home classes, turned her into one of my key informants early during dissertation research.

I traveled to Komal’s house to conduct the interview. The house was clean and uncarpeted, and a few armchairs were placed in the corner of the main room, which had a dining table wedged into a corner. A TV occupied pride of place at the center of the living area, and a rug was placed in front of it for optimal viewing. Three bedrooms emerged into this living room, as well as a small kitchen and bathroom. Bedrooms were furnished with large beds and closets. Walls in the living room were decorated with family pictures, but Komal’s room was free of wall decorations, possibly as a concession to Al-Huda beliefs that representations of people are un-Islamic. I had arrived a little before noon, and Komal had a few hours before her niece and nephews came home from school. She made us tea in the kitchen, and then we went to her room and began the interview.

## (1) Komal’s Story

I was born in Haripur. My parents migrated here to Islamabad when I was a teenager. We were very conservative over there, the daughters would take chadors<sup>32</sup>, but we did it out of fear of our parents. I was little, I only took a dupatta<sup>33</sup>, but there was some strictness there. Then we came here, we went to the colleges, and the atmosphere was very different. The girls here were very different, what should I say, being open, and friendships between boys and girls.

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<sup>31</sup> Rabia discouraged Nazish from serving tea to dars attendees, saying that it reduced the pure space of dars to a social space. Although Nazish generally followed this principle, she insisted on making exceptions for Rabia (who always protested), Komal, and myself.

<sup>32</sup> Chadors are large shawls in solid colors that are generally used to cover hair.

<sup>33</sup> A dupatta is a gauzy shawl that is coordinated with a shalwar kameeze. Less veiling than a chador, a dupatta can be worn to cover the hair, or over the shoulders, based on an individual’s needs in any given social context.

It was not like that in Haripur. After a while, I made some friends. Sara was Pathan<sup>34</sup>, she was very nice, she did purdah<sup>35</sup>, and Shumaila was also very nice. I miss them a lot. In those days, I didn't pray, but they would both pray, and tell me to pray. Three of my sisters were married, there were four left, two of them had jobs and Amina and I were in school.

I was at home after college, and I was going to go to medical school, but then my father's (abbu's) job finished, and his business partner took some money and ran away. I don't know how abbu trusted him. It turned out that man had not even put abbu's name in his company's papers. There was no basis for a claim; abbu had no proof. We didn't get anything. The situation at home was very bad, because my two sisters who were earning were not making that much, and there was the rent for the house, and Amina was in school. We didn't have anything. I didn't say anything, my dream of going into medical school flowed away. My mother (ammi) said, you should do a BIT or some other bachelors<sup>36</sup>. There is Al-Khair University in the Blue Area<sup>37</sup>. I passed the exams, cleared everything, and when I said my father was retired, they cut my fees in half. We paid my fees and everything. After a while, there was a call from the university that you have to pay in full. After a lot of argument, we talked to people, the fees were non-refundable, and all of it was gone, and they didn't even return my fees. Now I was surprised, that everything was happening strangely, in a way it wouldn't usually happen<sup>38</sup>...(relates on a tangent) did you know, my name used to be Mishal? My name in the papers (official documents) is also Mishal. I changed my name after learning the Qur'an<sup>39</sup>.

In these days, the situation in our house was very bad. Some people lived nearby. They would make trouble between abbu and ammi. I used to get very worried...why are abbu and ammi fighting? There was a lot of tension... At this time, Saira aapi<sup>40</sup> (older sister) lived upstairs<sup>41</sup>. I used to visit her. She knew everything about our situation, and she would wake me for fajr (the dawn prayer) and take me for a walk. She was taking the Al-Huda class at Nazish aapi's house, and she would tell me her entire lesson while we walked. This created an interest in me. One day, the teacher (Rabia) was asking for more students. And Saira aapi

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<sup>34</sup> Pathans are the Pushto speaking people of eastern Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan. Komal, who was telling this story, was Punjabi.

<sup>35</sup> In this context, "doing purdah" implies that Sara veiled her face as well as wearing a black abaya

<sup>36</sup> Bachelor's degrees require less investment of time and money than the five year M.B.B.S. medical degree.

<sup>37</sup> The Blue Area is Islamabad's main commercial and business hub. It is called the Blue Area because it was represented in blue in the master plan of the city.

<sup>38</sup> Here, Komal is alluding to the possibility of divine interference. All of these (in her mind) unusual circumstances were necessary in order for her to join the Al-Huda class.

<sup>39</sup> Name changes occur for multiple reasons, to signify a break between the person one was and the person one is becoming. Komal changed her name because she felt like she had become a different person after attending Qur'an classes. Sometimes, names are also changed because they are considered inauspicious. During the course of my fieldwork, I encountered a woman who had changed her name because she was not receiving marriage proposals. In

<sup>40</sup> Aapi means older sister, and is a term of respect given to older women.

<sup>41</sup> At this time, Komal and her family lived in a lower "portion" of a two story house. Houses are often divided in this manner in Islamabad's residential neighborhoods.

brought me the forms, she said, “Komal, you are not doing anything right now,” because I had not been doing anything for a year. In this tension no one thought about my education. Ammi was tense, I was tense, Saira aapi saw I was tense. Saira aapi said to my mother that I was too tense because I was at home all the time. Saira aapi brought me this form, and told me to join the class, and I joined the class.

I really enjoyed it. All my tensions melted away. I became absorbed in the Qur’an, in learning it (*seekhna*) and knowing it (*janna*). I would go to Qur’an class in the morning. After a while, ammi and abbu shifted to ‘Pindi’<sup>42</sup>, and I moved in with my older sister. In the meantime, my sister Seema came home to my parents with her three children. Her husband left her, and her son was one month old. This increased our household by four people. Where before we had been three, now we were seven. This was a big burden on ammi and abbu. I was still living with my older sister, she took a lot of care of me, and didn’t let me have any tension, and Shahzad bhai (older brother) took care of me, he never sat in the room I was in. From the start, I was careful around men, even with my brothers-in-law...I wouldn’t go into the rooms Shahzad bhai was in. He wasn’t at home much anyway, and he came home at 11 in the night. In the morning, I dropped the children at school on my way to class, and after class I would come home, take care of cleaning and cooking and the kids. Then my sister would come, and I lived like this for a year and a half...it was a lot of work, but I loved the Qur’an so much, it became easy. No one tried to stop me, my sister didn’t try to prevent me from going. After this ammi and abbu moved here, where we are now. And they said, “now come home.” It was Ramadan, and I moved back home. My sister Seema had children and worked, and I looked after her children. I had to look after the house, my parents, and I didn’t have time to study, and I said, when will I have time to study? Ever since I started learning the Qur’an I have done all of my parents’ nighttime work, warming them milk or green tea, giving them massages, reading to them, cleaning up after dinner, all of it. Now, my parents don’t trust anyone else. They say, “if you want to do it, do it, if not you than no one.” They complain, if I sleep without doing this, even though they insist that I not do it. It gets to be midnight before I can sleep.

This is my life, as I have laid it in front of you. Now my parents say “get married, get married” and I tell them, “be quiet.” But now my parents say, “you need to get married.” Ever since Amina got married last year...ever since I studied religion (deen)...first my parents were very happy, she is studying deen. Then they thought that maybe she has gone mad. After that I went to my sister’s house and didn’t live with them. At that time, I didn’t do purdah and I didn’t wear the abaya<sup>43</sup>. Then one day Saira aapi brought me an abaya and I put it on, that

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Pindi is a colloquialism for Rawalpindi. Most Islamabadis refer to the neighboring city of Rawalpindi as ‘Pindi

<sup>43</sup> The abaya is a loose overcoat that covers the entire body. Women wear it with either a head scarf, or a headscarf and face-veil. At this point, Komal had been covering her hair using a dupatta, and after it she shifted to wearing an abaya and head-scarf.

“theek hai” ok, I like it, it is the right thing<sup>44</sup> to do. She said she had made it for herself, but it was tight, and she asked me to take it<sup>45</sup>. That was when I first started taking the abaya. When I started the abaya, I thought, why do these men (on the street) look at me? What is there in me that they are looking at? As I continued reading the Qur’an, I slowly learned that the fault was not theirs, it was mine, that I should cover my face also. Because they looked at my face a lot. One day, God gave me the strength (taufiq) and understanding (samajh), and I did it. When we reached the (hukum) order in the Qur’an, all my friends in the class did it, except for one or two. Now, when I come in taxis and wagons<sup>46</sup>, I get respect. They make me a “baji” (older sister) on their own. When I come with my sisters boys peer in at them from the windows, but they call me “baji.”

My parents didn’t know I had started purdah. When I came back here, my sisters saw that I was wearing the abaya, that I had given up singing and music...in our house, all of that was there. Then my parents said that no, you have gone too much towards deen. You have become an extremist. My sisters started saying to me that what is this you are doing? Wherever we go, you are wearing this abaya, you should take it off. Then my mother and father said ...when I came home, then the pressure started. My parents said, “she is studying the Qur’an, if she gives that up, she will be fine again”... then they started saying, “no, you have become too much.” When I was living in my sister’s house, she didn’t mind. But when I came home, the pressure started, that when you go to weddings take this off, what is this you are wearing? I tried to explain to them, that there is a hukum (command) in the Qur’an, I cannot take this off, I have to wear it. Of course, when everyone was getting ready to go and getting prepared I was in the middle. Last year, when my sister got married, I was very pressurized. That “this is enough, now you have to stop this, you aren’t doing the dances that girls are doing.” I also gave in a little, but I said, “I will not leave this.”

One day my parents said, “Okay, now you give all of this up. This has gone far enough. You will not go anywhere, it is over. We will enroll you in a university, you will go there, and you will come back home and that is it.” But I said, “Tell me my fault (kusur), what have I done? Is studying the Qur’an, a good thing, my fault?” My father said, “No, you have gone too much to this side which we do not want you to go to.” They thought that I was not fitting in our family. They said, “leave it all.” I cried a lot that day. They said, “You will not go anywhere, not learn the Qur’an and not teach it, that is all. It is over.” Then I spoke to them “Tell me what I have done wrong? I cannot leave this, I cannot. You are not understanding me.” Then, there were three days where I just cried. Then my father, he was very...well, he is a father. He feels things a lot. Then I was crying in my room. He came into the room and said, “Okay you can go to

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<sup>44</sup> Here, Komal refers to her growing belief that veiling more of her body was the Islamically correct action to engage in.

<sup>45</sup> When I knew them, Saira was a good seamstress, and the difference in their clothing was such that this might easily have been an excuse for Saira to give Komal an abaya.

<sup>46</sup> “Wagons” are mini-vans that link multiple locations in Islamabad. They are form of public transport, but are considered somewhat unsafe, and middle and upper class women almost never use them.

your outside, but no going outside to teach, I do not give you permission for this.<sup>47</sup>” For me, even permission to go to the class was a lot, I said, “Okay, I will give up all other outside activities, and the class I am teaching.” And then I stopped. I met the teacher (Rabia). I don’t tell everyone my problems, but I shared with her. My eyes had swelled and I had been sick, so my voice sounded strange. The teacher insisted on knowing what was wrong, she said, “You never sound like this.” So I told her, this is what is happening with me, this is the situation. Then she said, “Move back (pee-chay haat jaao). Don’t do childish insistence (zid) on having your own way. Do whatever they are telling you. If you are obedient about the things you can obey them about<sup>48</sup>, it will get better.” At that point, I needed someone who would guide me, I was not sharing my things with my mother or sisters. I never do, Amina is a bit like that (a confidant), but she finds out on her own, I do not tell her things. Amina and I were very attached. But when I studied the Quran, she became very against me. I started going to class again quietly after a few weeks and no one stopped me. Now, I even have a class in my own house. Ammi comes, and my sisters, and some of the women from this neighborhood.

The thing is, that people haven’t received deen in a correct way. It is a good thing to do purdah, but people feel it is strange. Slowly they realize that it is alright, as long as you behave well. Also, God is testing you, how much you are bent on this. There was a time when everyone was very distant (dur) from me. I told you, when I came back home (after living with my sister) everyone rejected me. But now, those same people, ammi, abbu, my sisters...all ask me for advice on all things. They trust me so much, if they don’t talk to anyone they talk to me. Before, they had become very distant from me, that, “What is this you are doing?” But now, we are much closer. Now a lot of my things they praise. They say that we trust her, and these are the things she does for us.

## (2) Analysis

### (A) Early Life and Recruitment

All of my Al-Huda informants described their early religious practices as resulting from parental direction and from the norms of their geographic location. Those who were raised in more rural areas, like Nazish, were more likely to have observed purdah as young girls, while those raised in urban settings like Rabia and Shazi were less likely to have veiled. Married

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<sup>47</sup> At the time, Komal had started a teaching women’s Qur’an class in her own neighborhood, in addition to attending the one at Nazish’s house.

<sup>48</sup> Here, Rabia was probably referring to the much repeated dictum in her class that a woman owes her parents and husband obedience in all things not explicitly required or forbidden by God.



women presented this as a transition point in their religious practices; emancipated from parental control, Nazish and other women who had veiled stopped veiling. Al-Huda women remembering their non-revivalist pasts will routinely mention old friends, neighbors and people they encountered in their pasts who veiled, prayed regularly, and performed other religious observances they came to practice after participating in Al-Huda. Their affinity for these individuals is meant to signal an internal attraction to the Islamic practices they now engage in.

Komal's life reveals demonstrates some movement-wide trends in the way Al-Huda women narrate their pasts. Women's narratives stress the compatibility of Al-Huda classes with their lives, both in terms of the logistics of attendance, and the religious learning they receive in the movement. Komal's story emphasizes that her responsibilities to her family did not suffer as a result of her attendance in class. She was careful to describe how participating in Al-Huda activities did not keep her from making lunch, or from looking after her nieces and nephews. Women in the classes often described ways in which they managed their participation in order to complement their families' resources. Rabia, for example, described how she would walk to class, or take a taxi, because she did not want to deprive her husband of the family car. Komal would travel alone, taking a "wagon" to class, a behavior most middle-class young women find frightening. This sturdy self-sufficiency demonstrates women's commitment to attendance, and also their desire not to disrupt their families' lives. The women who attend the class in Nazish's house all live within walking distance, including Rabia. When Komal's family moved away from the neighborhood in which the classes were held, the other members of the class assumed that

she would stop attending. Women in the other classes I conducted research on also lived within walking distance of their classes<sup>49</sup>.

Women's recruitment narratives emphasize the social bonds they have with the women who recruited them. Komal went because Saira asked her to, and others were also drawn in by their friends. The women in Nazish's class credited Nazish with having initially recruited them, although a few said that they came because they had heard that there was a dars in the neighborhood, and thought it might be a "good" use of their time. Various internal causes are described as making them more receptive to the movement's message. For Komal, the tense atmosphere at home made classes an attractive proposition, while Nazish and Rabia both joined the movement in search of a social network after moving to Islamabad. Once they had attended a few dars, women present themselves as having become inspired by their reading of the Qur'an in class, and the learning they achieved.

### **(B) Becoming "Attached to the Qur'an"**

Al-Huda members describe their engagement with the Qur'an as starting from the moment of recruitment; most Al-Huda members speak of the idea of learning the Qur'an as one of their primary reasons for joining the movement. Komal said that she had become attached to the Qur'an (Qur'an say laag gaii) after joining the movement. This was a phrase many other women used to describe their learning in Al-Huda. The process of becoming "attached to the Qur'an" involves learning to pronounce its words, translate it into Urdu, and derive from it general principles applicable to everyday life. The Al-Huda movement is rendered synonymous

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<sup>49</sup> The one exception I found to this was a class targeted at working women, which was held after five PM. Most of these women had cars, and they attended the class based on their social connections with the hostess. The women who attend Rabia's class have access to cars, but none of them drive, and none have cars at their disposal during the day. Women in other housewives groups face similar issues.

with learning the Qur'an, and women do not reference the movement in their conversations, speaking instead of the time before and after they were "attached to the Qur'an."

Women across Al-Huda describe their participation in the movement as a process of learning how to apply the Qur'an to their daily lives.

Al-Huda members conceptualize Qur'anic rules as tapping into deep truths about human nature, which make lives run more smoothly. Komal's narrative reveals this framework in action. She said that once she began to veil her face in accordance with Qur'anic teachings, young men stopped harassing her. Women's accounts demonstrate other occasions where they see the Qur'an as reflecting natural law; they describe instances where following Qur'anic rules brought them inner peace and social approval. Women tie their obedience to the Qur'an to their increasing care for in-laws, performance of ritual religious practices, and avoidance of frivolities like watching TV or talking excessively on the phone. For Komal, learning to implement Qur'anic teachings in her life brought her inner peace, and helped her cheerfully perform household tasks.

Women see "becoming attached to the Qur'an" as enhancing their ability to operate in the world at large, not just within revivalist space. This understanding is reflected in and bolstered by Al-Huda classrooms' use of "modern" methods of communication in order to teach the Qur'an (Mushtaq 2007, S. Ahmad 2012). The words Komal used to describe her self-transformation through Al-Huda classes are "learning", "understanding", "knowledge", and "skill." These qualities and skills are imagined to translate from revivalist contexts to non-revivalist ones. Women's narratives emphasize that classes increase their worldly competence and skills as well as improving their religious knowledge. Nazish, for example, credits the learning in the class with teaching her to read. In multiple interviews, Nazish and Rabia both told

me that when Nazish joined the class, her ability to read was weak from disuse, and that joining the class “taught” her to read and write again. When they speak of their lives prior to joining Al-Huda, women describe themselves as lacking knowledge (*ilm*) and skill (*shuoor*). Members of Al-Huda whom I interviewed would often describe their pre-revivalist selves as people who “did not know.” In interviews, women from Rabia’s class often spoke of the time “before (they) had knowledge.” During pre-dissertation interviews, several of them told me that the primary difference between their pre-revivalist and post-revivalist lives was that they had acquired learning.

Al-Huda members draw on ideas of learning to frame their religious practice after joining the movement, contrasting this to blind obedience to religious scholars. Nazish, who had engaged casually with other revivalist movements, found Al-Huda unique in its encouragement of women speaking, thinking and debating religion. She also thought the classes were valuable because they taught her to take specific passages in the Qur’an and apply them to everyday life. She said that Al-Huda helped her understand that “deen is about listening, learning, and understanding. We learn pronunciation (*tajwid*) and read the broad translations. We go into the verses, and look at them in the light of hadith.” For Rabia, too, the primary attraction of Al-Huda is its methodical focus on understanding the Qur’an and Hadith and applying them to daily life. Formulating shari’a principles out of Qur’an and Hadith make Al-Huda more attractive to Rabia than other movements. She said in her interview “I have never had a follower’s (*taqlidi*) mind...I always decided what to do on my own. I was a pioneer. Even now it is the same, in this life. I find out new things, new limits, and I tell people.”

These ways of imagining their engagement with the movement are linked to Al-Huda’s presentation of itself as teaching women rational thinking, and giving them access to a

systematized education in Qur'anic interpretation. The consequences of this approach are that women in the movement discover what is required of them through their reading of the Qur'an, rather than being told what to do. Then, women experience the ways in which this learning enhances their lives. As a result, women are deeply committed to transitions in religious practices, including veiling, and maintain them against pushback from their families. In the specific case of veiling, Rabia strongly maintained that she had never encouraged the women in her class to veil. "None of them used to veil before they joined this class, and I never told them to do it. They themselves decided they would, as we started reading the Qur'an and learning about the Qur'anic requirement that women do purdah."<sup>50</sup>

By engaging in a close reading of the Qur'an, women are able to differentiate between the Islamic and the un-Islamic. Drawing on the Qur'an allows them to discard those practices they see as unauthorized by the Islamic tradition, and to derive general principles from sacred texts in order to implement Islamic reform in their own lives. Interpreting the Qur'an also allows women to apply authorized religious practices in their daily lives, making them "Islamic," while retaining those elements they do not see as explicitly "against" Islam. Komal's narrative demonstrates this parsing of the Qur'an in order to determine her religious responsibilities; in negotiations with her parents, she refused to discard her face veil, because she saw it as a Qur'anic command, but was willing to give up attendance in Al-Huda classes. The "becoming attached to the Qur'an" narrative framework structures women's lives, coloring their interpretations of their pasts, as well as their actions in the world.

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<sup>50</sup> The degree to which the Qur'an requires veiling is a matter of some debate among Islamic scholars (Barlas 2002, El-Fadl 2001). However, Farhat Hashmi's interpretation of the Qur'an presents the veiling of the face and body as required directly by the Qur'an (Hashmi 2013)

# The Tablighi Jama'at

The Tablighi Taleem<sup>51</sup>, the main site of my research on the women of the Tablighi Jama'at, was very crowded. During pre-dissertation research in 2007, I cultivated a few key informants, who I met in multiple Tablighi settings. I continued my relationships with these informants during fieldwork. Asma was one of the Tablighi women informally in charge of the dars; she could often be seen directing the other women and organizing seating. She would often engage me in conversation in order to convince me to go “on jama'at,” arguing that participating in Tablighi tours was an essential part of being a good Muslim woman. I interacted with Asma on a regular basis, both at Taleem, and at smaller venues when a women's jama'at was in town.

Asma's house was only a little removed from the site of the Tablighi Taleem, and I drove her back after Taleem in order to conduct the interview. The house was spartanly furnished, despite being in a reasonably upper-class area of town. The drawing-room she conducted me to for the interview was arranged with gender segregation in mind; a curtain concealed the door to the drawing-room. The room was furnished with low foam couches which were comfortable, but not expensive. She offered me tea, which her maid brought as we talked. Unlike Komal's life experiences, which conform to those of multiple Al-Huda women, Asma's life is slightly non-typical for Tablighi women. She joined the movement without her husband, and is one of the few women I met whose involvement in the movement was a source of conflict in her nuclear family. However, the way in which she understood her husband and family's behavior reflects larger

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<sup>51</sup> Taleem is the name given to both the weekly Tablighi dars for women, and to the daily educational session involving the fazail-e-amal in Tablighi houses. I differentiate the two by referring to the weekly dars as Talee , and the daily household dars as Taleem.

trends in the ways in which Tablighis understand their religious practice and interactions with non-revivalists.

## (1) Asma's Story

My parents were immigrants (*muhajir*), they moved from India to Gujranwala when Partition happened. I was born after that. We are Syeds<sup>52</sup>. I grew up there, and went to school till class eight. After that the school was far, and my father was strict, so I didn't go. My father was very strict about our wearing dupatta, and we didn't go outside much other than going to school. As far as prayer, we did it from childhood, my mother prayed and she taught us, and after I got married, there were years when I did not pray, for many years. There was no regularity in my prayers. Sometimes I would. Sometimes I wouldn't. In my youth I did.

I got married very young, when I was 16, in 1960. Its been almost 50 years since I was married...this year will be my golden jubilee<sup>53</sup>. I moved to 'Pindi and then Islamabad after I got married, and I have lived here all my life. My husband is a business man, and he lives separate from his family – they live in the village. I visit them on Eid, and sometimes they come, but we have lived separate all our lives. I have three sons. They are all grown now, all married<sup>54</sup>. When the older two were studying, one was in medical college, and the other was doing engineering. They both got involved in Tabligh from there. They guided me into this direction. They said, “ammi, come with us, do this.” I always had desire, from my childhood, that there should be something, that I should work for deen, but I did not know about this (Tabligh). I started going on jama'ats with them. My husband did not like it – we had to hear him complaining. It was quite difficult. It comes to mind, that the Prophet's companions (Sahaba) also had to face many big difficulties. When you compare yourself to them, there is no problem. There will be some obstacles. It is hard for men to come and go when women do not approve, and it is impossible for women to go when men do not approve. One of the first rules is that a woman has to have a male relative (mehrum) with her<sup>55</sup>. I went with my sons.

This is my own story... I had a lot of difficulty. When there is only one person in the house who is not involved, then it is very hard. For me, it was a

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<sup>52</sup> Syeds are people who claim to be descended from the Prophet Muhammad. Saying that one is Syed denotes one's status as respectable and educated.

<sup>53</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary

<sup>54</sup> Two of the sons have moved away and live in Lahore, while the youngest continues to live with Asma and her husband, and helps with the family business.

<sup>55</sup> According to Afzel Sahib, one of my male Tablighi informants, the rule is that women should go with their husbands. He expressed surprise that Asma was able to go with her sons, and told me it was against official policy for women to go on tour without their husbands.

husband. When jama'ats were going, I wanted to go. On the other hand, he was telling me not to go. It was a command of God that I should go. And then there was a husband's command. Then what I did was, I would write my name<sup>56</sup> and make plans, and I would ask God for help. I made a lot of noise in the house, that I want to go, I want to go, because I had to leave my husband alone and go. And my little son would stay; I had to leave him too. This is a big sacrifice, that there should be no one at home [no woman at home], and you leave. Then I would ask from God. I would make dua, and my older son would make dua, and then all by itself ...my husband would come and say, "ok, go." When I went for three days (serozah), it happened like this. When I went out to the countries<sup>57</sup>, it was very difficult. There were a lot of barriers (*rukawat*). And then there were relatives. The ones who were near would say, why are you going? And I had to listen to them. More than mine were his. My brothers were also not here, but they would also try to stop me from going.

When I was going...was it to Nepal? My brother said, "you are leaving the child and going, I will not give you permission at all." I said "I am not going myself, if God takes me, then I will go." Then he said, "I will see how you can go. I will have the people at the airport take your passport." I said, "Ok, if God takes me I will go, otherwise I will come back." Then...he didn't do anything. Our journey, when it started, started from Karachi. My brother called when I went to Karachi. My sister's husband lives there, and he called at her house. I spoke to him, he said "Don't worry about the child, we will look after him." Then I was very happy, that God has changed his heart. When you ask Him, things change. Some kind of domestic trouble often happens, it does not have to be the opposition of some person. Someone's child can get sick, or something else. You have to ask God, and he makes these difficulties easy.

I went in a jama'at to Nepal. It had been fifteen or twenty days – we were in Lahore<sup>58</sup>. My brother died. My family informed Raiwind. When they informed Raiwind, the funeral prayer was that night. Well, we didn't receive the information until later anyway. Then I faced great difficulty. There was this thing, naturally in my heart, I had been worried<sup>59</sup>. The women in the jama'at had been worried, that why was I upset? They had thought, poor things (*beychari*) that maybe someone had said something to me. I said, "no, no one has done anything, but for some reason I just feel like crying." Then they, I mean, we, came to Lahore with the jama'at. They [the elders] had it said to me through my son, that tell your mother, if she wants to go home, she can go. I...my going there wasn't going to make a difference, was it? I said, "no, I am going on the jama'at." This

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<sup>56</sup> "Writing your name" is an event that occurs after dars, in which people are asked to write their name on a piece of paper in order to express a commitment to traveling on a Tablighi tour.

<sup>57</sup> The Tablighi Jama'at assigns groups to go to foreign countries only when they pledge to go for forty days or more.

<sup>58</sup> The four month-long tours which visit other countries return to Raiwind in between being sent out to destinations to do missionary work. This return to Raiwind was after the trip to Nepal, but the jama'at was anticipating a departure to an as yet undetermined location.

<sup>59</sup> At this point Asma did not have any information about her brother or cause to be alarmed. She is claiming that she had a premonition.



happens with many. This is a sacrifice. With this sacrifice, God's help comes. The more sacrifice the jama'at makes, the more they are helped. This is how it works for life outside the jama'at too.

Before I went on jama'at, we used to follow all the customs and traditions (*rasm-o-riwaj*). In our parent's houses and after we got married. After I started this (ie Tabligh), we understood many things and we stopped them. We used to follow the customs and traditions involved with weddings, and we used to do milad<sup>60</sup>, and we did many things, like making puris<sup>61</sup>, and we abandoned all of those things that weren't right. The relatives talk. They say, "they are Wahabi, Wahabi." I had all three of my sons married, and people complained, "what kind of wedding is this?" When my younger son got married – there was no ceremony, they went and brought the bride home<sup>62</sup>, and for the waleema, we only invited men. All of the women in our family said, "we had been waiting for his wedding, we were going to come, we were going to come"...they became very angry. When you do the customs and traditions of the world (dunya), you make God and the Prophet angry. And the world (dunya) is also not happy. It will be happy for a while, but then it too will grow angry. If we make the Prophet and God happy by following their desires, than people will also gradually be happy with us...it has come in a hadith, you know if someone takes a step that makes people angry to make God happy, God will himself make the people happy, and if someone tries to make people happy by making God angry, than God will be angry and people will be angry – and this is exactly what happens. When you fall into customs and traditions, people get angry and make up grievances.

This is the problem in our society, that women are in some ways spiritually ill. When we are in Tabligh, even our attention is not towards them. We don't bring them to this direction. Because God has given them, every soul, deen, so that if they hear a little bit about deen they become soft/receptive (*narm*). It is our flaw, that we who are involved with deen, we do not invite them. They are spiritually ill, in a sense. We need to do dua for them, and make efforts for them. That is something we don't do. This is a lack in us of this thing. This is why we need to do da'wa<sup>63</sup> with the people around us. In our house, there was a lot of opposition to deen. My husband used to watch TV a lot. He used to watch it all night many nights. We didn't watch it. We said "it would be better if the TV left

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<sup>60</sup> Milad refers to two distinct forms of religious gathering. Eid Milad-i-Nabi is the gathering some Pakistanis hold to celebrate the birth of the Prophet. Milad is a derivative ceremony in which women (or men) sing songs celebrating the Prophet (naats). Holding milads is considered virtuous, and can be tied to auspicious occasions such as weddings. The majority of revivalist Pakistanis reject both forms of milad as innovative religious ceremonies derived from Hindu religious practices.

<sup>61</sup> A puri is a form of bread. They are sometimes distributed after women hold certain Islamic gatherings considered irreligious by revivalists.

<sup>62</sup> A customary Pakistani wedding has multiple celebrations leading up to two main events. The Rukhsati is hosted by the bride's parents, and involves the bride leaving her home to go live with her husband. The Waleema is held a day or two afterwards, and celebrates the consummation of the marriage. Tablighis insist that the ostentatious spending that surrounds these events is unislamic, and that the events themselves are bad, because they are not authorized by the sunna. Instead, devout tablighis hold a quiet Waleema for men, which they claim is the only wedding event authorized by the hadith.

<sup>63</sup> Dawah is the act of inviting others to correct forms of Islamic practice.

the house entirely.” My children did a lot of effort for this, that it should not be. But he (her husband) would say, “no, it should be.” The children bothered him more than I did. Slowly, slowly, until one day my husband sold it himself. When we came back home one day we saw that he had sold the TV himself. Now, he is very good. He still doesn’t go on jama’at, but he doesn’t stop us, and he is soft and easy to deal with.

I think it has been 27 years since I joined the Jama’at. I used to go wherever there were weddings and so on, just to have a good time. But now, thank God, I have been on many jama’ats, I have even been on jama’at to other countries (mulkoon ki jamaat). I went to Belgium and Holland, and before that to Nepal. When I went, I realized, how much need there is for this deen. After going abroad, you experience/feel (*mehsoos*) it more. The Muslims there don’t know anything. Then we go and do hard work (*mehnat*) there, this is how jama’ats start going there.

When we go on jama’ats, there is a desire to learn and follow the sunnah ways. Then a person finds desire in their hearts, that we have learned this, now let us learn more. Then we meet people in jama’ats and elsewhere, and we keep learning. Teaching and learning (*seekhna sikhana*) is the work of jama’ats.

## (2) Analysis

### (A) Early Life and Recruitment

Tablighi women’s narratives describing their early religious practices differ based on the age at which they encountered the movement. Those women who became involved with the movement after adulthood describe their childhood religious practices in the same manner as Al-Huda women, as resulting from parental control. Unlike Al-Huda, however, the Tablighi Jama’at has a growing number of members who have been part of the movement since early childhood; these women were raised by Tablighi fathers, and consider themselves to have had Tablighi childhoods. Women in this category describe veiling and praying regularly from a young age. In these accounts, Tablighi fathers are portrayed as having gently persuaded all of the women of their households (ie their wives and daughters) into veiling and participating in Tablighi activities. Asma’s daughter-in-law Faiza is one of these women, and she described a careful campaign on her father’s part, which involved slowly drawing his wife into the movement, and

waiting until after she had joined to reform overall household religious practices. After her mother joined the movement, Faiza became active in Tabligh, and graduated from a Tablighi madrassa before marrying a young Tablighi man. Saleha, who was also raised Tablighi, claimed that she voluntarily adopted first the head-scarf and the face veil, and started praying regularly and fasting of her own initiative.

The primary recruitment of the Tablighi Jama'at occurs through the activity of groups of men who go door to door in residential neighborhoods, inviting men to come to the dars at the mosque after prayer time. Nearly all Tablighi dars stress the importance of the Tablighi household as a unit of society, and the blessings God showers on these households. These dars create pressure on Tablighi men to draw their family members into appropriate revivalist patterns of behavior and belief. One Friday, after a dars about the importance of the Tablighi household, I met a new attendee, who had come because she lived in the neighborhood, and had heard there was a dars. She had no prior exposure to Tabligh, and said, "it was interesting, but it sounds like you have to participate with your men." She did not attend the dars again. Despite pressures on men to involve their female relatives in the movement, Tablighi women's narratives regarding recruitment stress that their participation was the result of gentle persuasion rather than coercion. Asma's account of joining Tabligh emphasized both her sons' persuasion, and also her own desire to join the movement. Many women claim to have initially gone reluctantly, but to have "felt" the importance of Tabligh from their first encounters with movement dars. Aysha, a recently married Tablighi woman told me that her husband had convinced her to go: "He said, you should come, and if you don't like it, I won't ask you to do it again."

Women's accounts of joining the movement emphasize the natural ease they felt in Tablighi settings, and their instantaneous awareness that participating in the movement was a

worthwhile use of their time. As Asma attended the dars and participated in Tablighi activities, she became aware of the rightness of the message of Tabligh. Other women describe going on tours to appease their husbands, and then experiencing a spiritual conversation. Kamila once told me that the first time she went on Tabligh, “I thought – what is this, why am I leaving my children, but I went, and I liked it and I saw how important it was.” For Asma, as well as others, the appeal of the Tablighi Jama’at is that the impulse to engage in Tabligh is instinctive. Ideas of the “natural” (*fitri*) nature of Tabligh reflect Tablighi womens’ understanding of movement-activities as an essential part of Islam. Tablighi women see the activities of the movement as being the same as religion itself. Going on Tabligh is the same thing as “spreading the deen,” and is framed as a religious obligation. Tabligh’s status as an essential part of religion means that it appeals to individuals on an instinctive (*fitri*) level. Asma, for example, says that from her first tour, she knew that she had been experiencing a desire to engage in Tabligh her entire life. Other women tell similar stories. Ayesha, who had been on tour with her husband for the first time, told me when she came back that, “it was like understanding deen for the first time.” During her interview, Asma told me that those who are not involved with Tabligh are, “spiritually ill,” and that proof of the natural nature of Tabligh can be seen in people’s receptiveness to the message of Tabligh when they hear it.

### **(B) Becoming Sahaba, Sacrifice, and Everyday Miracles**

Metcalf (1993) has spoken of Tablighi efforts to “live Hadith” in the sense of both following hadith, and attempting to become living exemplars of hadith. I argue that the Tablighi Jama’at’s emphasis on using the Sahaba and Prophet as role models influences their interpretive framework, such that they see the process of becoming good Muslims as one of what I refer to as

“becoming Sahaba.” Tablighis imagine themselves as analogues to the first community of believers, the Prophet’s companions (Sahaba). Women’s narratives establish their links to the Sahaba from the movement of their recruitment onward; stories about the Prophet’s companions speak of the compelling and persuasive nature of the message they encountered, and the entirely voluntary nature of their conversions.

Tablighi women see the “teaching and learning” they engage in in the movement as paralleling that of the Sahaba, in which they learned religion from the Prophet, and from each other, and passed it on in a world where Islam was not known to people. Women on tour acquire knowledge through contact with more experienced Tablighis, learning the “correct” ways to pray, remember God, and engage in six principles (chay number) of Tabligh<sup>64</sup>. Generally, women in the jama’at interact with the women visiting them on a one-on-one basis, attempting to persuade them to engage in Tabligh themselves, presenting it as an essential part of faith. Women who have been on jama’at tell stories about visiting communities where the women did not know how to pray, and link these to situations in which the Prophet’s companions taught non-Muslim women Islamic practice. The Qur’an is read by women on jama’at as part of a personal spiritual observance, but it is not read communally. Tablighi hadith collections are also only referred to at specific times.

Women’s accounts of their lives within the movement tie their activities on tour to the Sahaba’s efforts to propagate Islam through the world. Faiza, when attempting to persuade me to go on tour after a dars, earnestly told me, “this is the work of the Sahaba, and we have been asked to take part. If we do not go, what will happen to the deen?” Zakiya Baji, one of the oldest female Tablighis in Islamabad, says that when she and her husband discovered the movement,

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<sup>64</sup> The “Six Principles” include the declaration of faith (kalima), prayer, remembering God (zikr), honoring other muslims (Ikram-e-Muslim), sincerity of intention, and performing dawah.

she knew why she had not been drawn to any other religious movement. “This is the most important work we could do,” she told me, “until the Muslims, no other ummah had been asked to do the work of Prophets, but we have been, and we should.” Stories of early women’s jama’ats who went to Indonesia and taught the women there how to perform ritual prayer are told in Tablighi settings by the female members who participated in those jama’ats. Tablighi women present the idea of Muslim women who do not know how to pray as a shocking state of affairs which reflects the decline of Islam. Zakiya baji (older sister) and the other women who participated in this tour are given credit for “renewing Islam in Indonesia.”

Stories of how the Sahaba made sacrifices to spread Islam are the key feature of the *Hayatus Sahaaba* (The Life of the Companions), one of the primary texts of Tabligh (Masud 2000). As stand-ins for the Prophets companions, women expect the practice of Tabligh to require struggle, and tell stories of the difficulties and sacrifices that were part of their tour. Like Asma, women who have been on tour speak of it in terms of making a sacrifice “qurbani deyna.” Leaving ones children and houses and going on tours is portrayed as a necessary evil required for the transformation of society. Zakiya Baji told me, “it is always hard to leave your children and your house and go. When I went, I left my children with my mother-in-law. She cried, the children cried, I cried. But the work (kaam) requires sacrifice (qurbani), and that is how it grows.” Stories of going on tour demonstrate the link between sacrifice and divine aid. In these stories, the jama’at remains steadfast in the face of great hardship. In return, they are rewarded by a successful tour. In Asma’s case, the aid was that she was able to put the death of her brother aside, and the reward was the unexpectedly successful nature of the tour.

According to women’s interpretive frameworks of themselves as Sahaba, the more sacrifice an individual makes, and the more difficulty she undergoes, the more she will

experience direct miraculous intervention into her life. According to this framing, those who engage in effort (mehnat) for the sake of the work are blessed and will prosper in this world and the hereafter. Tablighi women tell miracle stories about individuals who are on tour. These stories are told by individual women and then amplified by their audiences, and they promote an interpretive framework that links sacrifice to success. During participant observation research, I visited a jama'at that had come to Islamabad from Malaysia. One of the women in the jama'at had left behind two young children. The Islamabad Tablighi women were marveling over her “perfect” Urdu. Faiza was one of the women there: “See?” she said to me, “she left her children, and Allah has rewarded her by making her Tabligh easy. She has learned perfect Urdu in three days!” I observed the woman communicate in sign-language and a few broken words of Urdu, but I did not observe any miraculous language-learning. As women were discussing the unexpected miracles associated with being on tour, Rafia, Anjum’s daughter, told the story of Zakiya Baji when she had been on her first “mulkon ki” Jama’at (abroad).

*When they went on Jama’at, they went by boat. People didn’t use airplanes so much in those days. They were on a big boat headed for Indonesia. Zakiya Baji leaned too far over the railing, and she fell in. She said she saw all sorts of sea creatures. As she was bobbing in the water, they yelled from the boat that she should take off her niqab. But she said to me later, that she would rather die than be bay-purdah (unveiled). Anyway, she fell into the water, and was sinking, but somehow, she was propelled upward. Meanwhile, her husband, who could swim, had jumped into the water, and they were both rescued. So she lived, and her husband saw how good she was, and that she hadn’t removed her purdah (face-veil and burqa). God helped her, because she behaved properly.*

Stories like this are told to illustrate the close connection the pious Tablighi has with God. The stories Tablighi women tell indicate that part of being a pious Muslim is that one suffers for the sake of Islam, whether by going on a long tour or by facing discrimination and hardship in the practice of *deen*. The stories illustrate that the sacrifice Tablighis make are repaid, and that

sometimes God will aid them in surprising ways. These miracles are prized both for their immediate value, and because they prove the close relationship individual Tablighis develop with God. As a whole, these stories illustrate the connection between the Tablighi Jama'at and God.

## Differences between Tablighi Jama'at and Al-Huda Interpretive Frameworks:

Women's narratives in Al-Huda and the Tablighi Jama'at demonstrate movement-specific variations in revivalist women's interpretation of their pasts, lived experiences, and interactions with non-revivalists. Interpretive frameworks reveal shared understandings of Islam and virtue; these frameworks inform women's lives, affecting their self-perception, cognition and engagement with family and friends. Interpretive frameworks are specific to religious traditions, and see the world in the light of the divine reality on which that tradition focuses (Grenz and Franke 2001). Revivalist interpretive frameworks and revivalist theology are inseparably intertwined. Every articulation of an interpretive framework is the result of a specific theological understanding, one shaped by the way a community understands religion (Grenz and Franke 2001). It follows that Islamic revivalist movements with distinct theological commitments will have different interpretive frameworks. At the heart of these frameworks is the question of Islam: What is the nature of Islam, and what is its relationship to the contemporary world? How ought a believer to live in a world that has moved away from a "true" Islam?

As women become involved with a revivalist movement, they are exposed to the movement's social mission and approach to the renewal of Islam in contemporary Pakistan. Revivalist movements express these both explicitly through the sermons in dars, and semiotically



through the organization of movement space. At the heart of the differences between the movements are diverging ideologies about how to implement Islamic reform. As they participate in a revivalist movement, members undergo “interpretive shift,” which alters their ideology regarding the place and practice of Islam in contemporary Pakistan. This shift is a result of shared exposure to movement settings and dars, but extends outside of these settings, influencing women’s cognition and interaction with their families. This “interpretive shift” is visible in women’s narratives about their lives, and in stories they tell regarding their participation in their respective movements.

Revivalist women’s narratives display implicit interpretive frameworks that prioritize specific aspects of religious behavior; not surprisingly, the elements of religion a woman deems essential are connected to the practices promoted by her movement. Al-Huda’s organization of space and interpretation of texts demonstrates a concern with fitting Islam into members’ existing social and spatial set-ups. The organization of space and interpretation of texts within the movement is meant to alter lives to make them compatible with “Islam.” Al-Huda women see close reading of Qur’an and Hadith as necessary to a virtuous life, and understand these interpretive acts as fitting into their existing lives. Al-Huda members see their education in “classes” as a process of “becoming attached to the Qur’an” and learning how use “religion” to enhance their daily lives. In contrast, the Tablighi Jama’at’s organization of space and interpretation of texts demonstrate the movement’s understanding of Islam as located “in the time of the Prophet.” The movement’s spatial organization and interpretation of texts reflects an effort to go “back” to that time, which is perceived as discontinuous from contemporary Pakistan. For members of the Tablighi Jama’at, Islam requires a rejection of non-revivalist relationships and spaces. Tablighi women see participation in Tablighi tours as an essential

element of Islam, and imagine these tours to lay out a model for everyday life. Tablighi women's interpretive shift involves seeing their activities in the movement as part of a process of "becoming Sahaba," through participating in Tablighi tours.

There is a considerable degree of overlap between both movements' interpretive frameworks, and these frameworks do not function in the form of binary oppositions. Al-Huda women also consider the Sahaba to be role models, while Tablighi women also believe in the importance of the Qur'an and Hadith. Both movements see Islam as drawing on natural and evident truths; Al-Huda members believe that Qur'anic principles are based on deep truths about human nature and social organization, while Tablighis believe that the truth of their movement is reflected in spiritual impact on all who attend, and that those who do not perceive this truth are spiritually ill.

There are several points of similarity between Komal and Asma's life stories. Both women joined revivalist movements after having lived lives they describe as not particularly attuned to religion. They transformed their lives around movement teachings, participating in key movement-activities, teaching and going on tour respectively. Komal and Asma adopted identical forms of veiling, and their increased piety included praying five times a day. Both women also limited their attendance at social events, including weddings. Both women's stories culminate in families who grew reconciled to their activities, and now approve of, and to a limited extent participate in, their revivalism. The similarity of these stories, and the differences in the ways they are told, reveal movement-specific variations in Al-Huda and Tablighi Jama'at women's interpretation of their pasts, interaction with non-revivalists, and visualization of their engagement with society.

## (1) “Becoming Sahaba” in the World

In order to become “like the Sahaba,” female members of the Tablighi Jama’at forsake customary social arrangements, sacrificing “the world” for the sake of religion. Sacrifices, according to this world-view, bind a woman closer to God, and will allow for divine intervention in her life to solve difficulties that arise as she engages in Tabligh. This interpretive framework impacts Tablighi interactions with outsiders; those who oppose the “work” of the Tablighi are seen as being actively impious, and as part of the obstacles a Tablighi confronts on her path to being like the Sahaba. The “becoming Sahaba” framework of Tablighi women naturalizes the opposition they face from their family, as well coloring their reaction to it. As aspiring Sahaba, Tablighi women expect that they will be called on to make sacrifices, including conflict with family and friends. Moreover, obstructive people are understood to be suffering from a spiritual illness in which they cannot “feel” the excellence of participating in the Tablighi Jama’at. Their opposition is one of the factors a woman has to overcome in order to go on tour. The domestic disharmony that results is part of an individual’s sacrifice, and it is possible for God to reward this sacrifice by improving the individual’s relationship with those relatives she has antagonized.

Asma’s story demonstrates this framework in action. Her lip service to the idea of her husband’s command is balanced by her complete disregard of it; she responds to his forbidding her to go by making her plans, “writing her name,” making “a lot of noise,” and insisting that she be allowed to go on tour. She assumes that if circumstances unfold in a way that permits her to go on tour, it follows that she has divine sanction for her actions. Unlike the women of Al-Huda, Asma assumes that God will intervene in her affairs in order to manifest his will to her. Where an Al-Huda member would consult the Qur’an and Hadith to determine whether or not to go on tour, Asma waits for signs from God. Asma also does not attempt to manage her husband and

family, and is very overt about her disobedience to her husband, which she frames as obedience to God. The only change Asma makes to her behavior to win her husband and brothers over is to pray that God will change their hearts.

Most Tablighi women, unlike Asma, come from families where their husbands are also engaged in Tabligh. However, Asma's approach to family disapproval is reflected in women's dealings with extended families, and lack of participation in "rasm-o-riwaj" (customs and traditions). Asma's extended family objects to the manner in which she structures her sons' weddings, and to her refusal to attend family engagements. Many other Tablighis also refuse to attend events they disapprove of, sometimes specifying that they will not attend weddings with music or "mixed" (unsegregated) seating arrangements. Some Tablighi couples opt out of social events altogether, refusing to go to birthday parties, weddings and other celebrations. Faiza remembers that as her father became more involved with the Tablighi Jama'at, she and her mother and sisters stopped attending milad at her grandmother's house. Women discuss the alienation that results as a necessary part of Islamic reform, and part of their path to becoming true believers.

Tablighis believe that in response to their sacrificing of relationships with family and friends, God improves the situation, changing hearts and convincing their relatives that their activities are good. Asma's story has several of these moments of transition, where she sees her steadfastness as being rewarded by people's change of attitude. Asma described the unexpected nature of her husband's capitulation, his transition from forbidding her to go on tour to saying "ok, go." Her narrative does not locate any of the credit for this change of heart to her own behavior, and her insistence that she will go, but rather to the effects of her prayers. Similarly, Asma does not describe herself as having taken any action to reconcile her brother with her

departure on tour, other than praying. Instead, she describes a conflict in which she did not back down or try to conciliate her brother. This interaction ends with her brother inexplicably repenting and promising to look after her son. Another moment in which a non-revivalist demonstrates an unexpected change of heart is when Asma and her sons insist that the TV be thrown out; Asma's husband is described as deeply unwilling until one day he disposes of the TV himself. These moments of abrupt transition in individual attitudes are meant to represent the intervention of God in Asma's everyday life. These small miracles demonstrate the importance of Asma's endeavors with the Tablighi Jama'at.

## (2) Growing "Attached to the Qur'an" in Everyday Life

Members of Al-Huda believe that participating in revivalism enhances their daily lives. Far from calling for sacrifice, "becoming attached to the Qur'an" allows women to restructure their lives to conform to divine truths about human nature and social organization, and so changes them for the better. Komal's account of interactions with her family demonstrate Al-Huda's narrative framework in action; women see their participation in the movement as benefiting the people they interact with as well as themselves. Komal links her learning in the movement to her increased service to her parents, and Shazi and Somia both tied their increased care for their in-laws to their learning of the Qur'an. The idea that "becoming attached to the Qur'an" brings visible and obvious improvements to women's everyday lives leads to a narrative framework in which women downplay conflict with their families, and insist that their families were happy with their changing religious practice after joining the movement.

Komal's experience with her family, where they initially supported her attendance in Al-Huda classes, but came to be deeply opposed to it, mirrors that of many Al-Huda women. Sadaf

Ahmad (2009) has described a trend where multiple young women's parents first pushed them to attend classes, and later tried to make them stop attending. The stories of more than half of the women in Rabia's class involved periods of strong opposition from their own families. Some had been threatened with divorce, while others had engaged in contentious household arguments about their attendance. Al-Huda women's stories about these conflicts are notable for the extent to which women downplay their families' negative reactions to their growing involvement with the movement.

During my pre-dissertation research and early dissertation research, I asked a number of women in Al-Huda whether they knew of women whose participation in the movement had caused conflict within their families. All of the women I asked, including Komal and Rabia, maintained that they had never heard of a situation in which women's turn to revivalism had caused domestic unrest. Rabia has said that any issues that resulted from women's revivalism were entirely due to the women's mismanagement of their families. She said "Women need to be reasonable and smart, and ask for things they want when their husbands are in a good mood. Men are really very reasonable and good." Often, a woman would tell me that her own family had always been supportive, and later mention domestic conflicts regarding her attendance. The persistent downplaying of family opposition is also a feature of Komal's narrative. Unlike Asma, Komal does not think her family's opposition was a necessary sacrifice. Her story touches very lightly on being forbidden to leave the house<sup>65</sup>, and her narrative focus is on the harmony that was an end product of this conflict. There are hints in her narrative that contention with her parents is still a feature of her life, as when she describes their insistence that she marry. Her

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<sup>65</sup> It is extremely uncommon for young middle-class urban women to be confined to their homes.

conflict with her parents is not mentioned as ongoing<sup>66</sup>, and she portrays her problems with her parents as entirely resolved in her favor. This narrative choice is the result of an interpretive framework that sees Qur'anic practice as visibly enhancing women's lives, in a manner that is evident to outsiders as well as members of the movement.

Al-Huda members attempt to introduce change gradually in order to win their families over to their Qur'an derived religious behaviors. Most women's transitions to veiling were staggered, a concession to family sensitivities. Like Komal, other members of Rabia's class started veiling gradually, first wearing their dupattas on their heads, and avoiding being in the same room as unrelated men. This unmarked form of purdah, as when Komal avoided being in the same room as her brother-in-law, went unnoticed. In some cases, families even approved of women's increased "modesty" and "shyness." In contrast, systematic purdah in which women wore abayas, face-veils and head-scarves, was the cause of contention in multiple families. When Shazi started veiling, her husband was upset and asked her to stop, although he did not ask her to stop attending Al-Huda classes. In contrast, Rabia's husband saw her veiling as abandoning her duty as a wife, and her in-laws actively looked for a second wife for her husband for a while<sup>67</sup>. The threat frightened Rabia, and she cut back on her teaching and class attendance, but did not stop veiling.

Al-Huda members' narratives also deemphasize their families' objection to their teaching activities. Until her interview, Komal had never mentioned that her parents had at one point asked her to stop teaching. Non-revivalist Pakistanis also see a distinction between women who

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<sup>66</sup> At a separate occasion, Komal mentioned that her veiling meant that the marriage proposals she received were limited, and that her parents wanted her to decrease her veiling practices.

<sup>67</sup> Predictably, their search did not yield fruit; urban middle class men are generally unable to make "good" marriages while being married. Men who marry a second wife are usually unable to persuade a woman of equal social status and education to marry them.

teach and those who do not. Safia, one of my non-revivalist informants, was looking for a religious wife for her brother, who had recently joined the Tablighi Jama'at. "He wants a girl who wears a head scarf (hijab)" she told me, "but we're looking for someone who isn't extreme, who doesn't teach dars or anything like that. My uncle married a woman who started teaching dars, and she's always busy running from class to class." Other women, including Rabia, also describe restrictions on their ability to teach.

Faced with conflict, Al-Huda women describe paring back their activities and compromising. Women divide their religious practices into two categories; these women can give up, and those that are required by the Qur'an. Mandatory practices include purdah, and rejection of what they see as "un-Islamic" demands. In Rabia's words "The thing I understood, that some things you cannot compromise on. You should not compromise on religion (deen), but can adjust other things to make people happy." Even when she was not attending her class, Komal continued refusing to watch TV, listen to music, dance, sing or wear anything other than her veil in public. Other women in Rabia's class also described periods where they cut back "unessential" activities like participating in the class. Aaliya, when faced with opposition from her mother-in-law, started borrowing the cassette tape dars from Nazish, and listening to it at home. Al-Huda members were also flexible in terms of the activities of non-revivalist family; all of the women in Rabia's class continued to have TVs in their house, despite disapproving of the idea of watching TV, in order to please their less-revivalist families. Women like Aaliya and Komal continued to attend "mixed" weddings and those with dancing, while others like Rabia and Nazish gradually convinced their husbands not to attend gatherings they disapprove of.

Al-Huda women credit their yielding in those things that are permitted with improving their relationship with their families. All narratives which involve family opposition end with



families being won over by women's persistence, sincerity, and service to their families. Komal's narrative is part of a trend in which families notice how obedient, docile, and attentive women have become since joining al-Huda. Other women's narratives also emphasize their increased status within the family after joining Qur'an classes. Rabia once told her class that multiple husbands called her to thank her for the change that had come over their wives. Women who mention that they had trouble with their families always conclude the stories with accounts of how they are now much more trusted than other women in the family. They also say that now, their family and friends ask them for advice on religious matters.

## Narrative Conclusions

Al-Huda and Tablighi stories about dealing with revivalist participation while coming from a non-revivalist family have similar endings; both sets of stories end successfully, with a newly harmonious family unit. Al-Huda women see family harmony as the product of clever management by women, and by growing family awareness that Qur'anic changes are beneficial to them. In contrast, Tablighi women locate this harmony as the product of inexplicable divine intervention in their lives. Family discord ends in renewed and greater harmony in the stories of both Al-Huda and Tablighi women. The roots to this resolution are attributed to different sources in each movement. Women in Al-Huda argue that initial difficulties in adopting revivalist religious practices are the result of mismanagement by the woman in question, and smart and skillful women introduce revivalist activities slowly and maintain family harmony. Tablighi women, on the other hand, say that when a woman becomes Tablighi without her family, it

causes difficulties. They filter these difficulties through the lens of the lives of the Prophet's companions; as the first community of believers suffered ostracism for the sake of their faith, so must they. Changes to the behavior and beliefs of family members are attributed directly to divine intervention; the Tablighi person deals patiently with her family's lack of understanding, persists in participating in the "work of the Sahaba," and is rewarded by her family's change of heart.

Narrative frameworks shape the stories women tell, guiding stories along specific paths and highlighting particular outcomes. Ochs and Capp (1996) have noted that narrative frameworks which create cohesive accounts out of fragmented lives build community. At the same time, dominant frameworks silence lived experience, and socialize individuals into conforming to and telling stories which reinforce the social order (Ochs and Capp 1996). By isolating interpretive frameworks contained in the narratives of women from revivalist movements, I have attempted to demonstrate the way in which women's cognition and actions are shaped by revivalist participation. At the same time, interpretive frameworks limit the possible stories that can be told by revivalist women.

The existence of dominant interpretive frameworks within revivalist movements raises the question – which experiences cannot be represented within these frameworks? Women in Al-Huda did not speak to me of ongoing struggles with their families, holding back these stories until their conflicts had been successfully resolved, and could be placed into a neat narrative in which they triumphed over adversity. There were suggestive moments which hinted at unspoken stories. One of the young women attending the morning Qur'an class stopped coming after she was married, claiming to be busy. Nazish's young daughter-in-law, who had initially been opposed to participation in Al-Huda classes joined the movement, claiming that her earlier

refusal to attend was a result of her being overwhelmed by her move to Islamabad, and needing time to “adjust.” Similarly, Tablighi women’s accounts of interactions with their extended families were those in which they resolved conflicts by persisting in their behavior until their family members changed their minds. A woman who joined the movement because of her husband’s encouragement stopped coming to Taleem, citing her responsibilities to her growing family. Both movements’ interpretive frameworks resolve in domestic victories and position women who are unsuccessful in family negotiations as being at fault, Tablighi women for not being sufficiently pious, and Al-Huda women for mismanaging their families. The consequence of these framings is that women’s stories of unsuccessful revivalist engagements and those in which they fail to win their families over are stifled, visible only through their absence.

# CONCLUSION. REVIVALISTS IN THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF URBAN PAKISTAN

Towards the end of my doctoral research, I participated in the “Muslim Women: Through the Lens of History, Religion, Law and Society” conference at the Center for Bio-Ethics and Culture in Karachi. Talks were nuanced and interesting, and driven by a sincere desire to improve women’s lives and access to opportunities. At various times during this conference, I found myself in the middle of fascinating conversations with Pakistani activists and scholars of various ages. By the end of the day I found myself near a buffet describing my work to a distinguished grey haired man who worked at an NGO which provided women with small business loans. He listened patiently and then asked carefully “but do you think these movements you study are changing Pakistan for the better or the worse?” This was the fourth time I had been asked a variation on that question that evening. I evaded answering as I had in the previous three instances, responding lightly that anthropologists do not make value judgments. Unpacking that question’s binary framing and responding to it with appropriate nuance was not possible in that brief encounter. However, his concern and that of the others who asked me that question was driven by a deep engagement with the gendered realities of Pakistan, and deserves a more considered response. This conclusion is my attempt at an answer.

The interlocutors who asked me that question, the Pakistani elite of NGOs and progressive movements for women, asked me about the positive/negative impacts of the movements I studied as a token, prompting me to deliver the expected response. That “radicalism” is bad for Pakistani society, and by extension for women, is the correct answer to

that question. This expectation is made clear in newspaper articles regarding the religious revival among the Pakistani elite (Siddiqi 2010; Abbas 2009), and in the widespread disapproval of “mullahs” among the urban middle- and upper-class. The religious resurgence, it is widely understood, can only be bad for Pakistani women, re-inscribing patriarchy as religiously mandated and limiting women’s mobility and access to resources. In the context of Pakistani history, this belief is not startling. At the same conference the director of a women’s NGO, dressed in impeccable *shalwar kameeze* with white hair cropped into a chic pixie cut, had described the joint effort of branches of the Pakistan women’s movement to free one of the first women accused of adultery under the Hudood law. The evidence, she said, made it clear that the young woman was innocent<sup>68</sup>. “At first we went to the ulama” she said “and we said, look the law is being misapplied, and we thought they would help us. Then we realized that there would be no help, and we were on our own.” Her voice carried the burden of this realization, thirty years from the time she was speaking of.

Pakistani engagements with the ulama and agents who demonstrate religious values through the symbolic medium of women have demonstrated that these agents are uniformly willing to sacrifice women’s interests to symbolic concerns. The ulama have consistently sided with conservative patriarchy in Pakistan, serving to tie Islamic sacred texts to regressive social and political positions. As a body, they have served to perpetuate patriarchal positions and privilege. The Council of Islamic Ideology, a body manned by religious scholars and jurists, has staunchly defended anti-women positions in the name of Islam. These positions have included excluding DNA as a primary source of evidence in rape cases (Habib 2013), and declaring that

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<sup>68</sup> I have not encountered defenses of women accused of adultery that argue that individual sexuality is not the concern of the state.

laws setting a minimum age of marriage are un-Islamic (Ali 2014). In this context, it is easy to understand why piety movements are seen as necessarily “bad” for women and for Pakistani society at large.

Because the physical markers of piety translate across a number of religious subject-positions in Pakistan, individuals displaying those markers are assumed to support the social agenda promoted by the ulama and to function as a unit. My Pakistani informants often conflated the piety movements I study with the Taliban, advocates of political Islam, and jihadist organizations. This is bolstered by piety movements’ failure to publically distance themselves from other groups which claim Islam as a source of authority. As I describe in Chapter Two, revivalists make common cause with other religious groups in constructing “the West” as an Other against whom they construct a pure Islamic identity. The local Pakistani binary which constructs individuals as “western” and “non-western” means that religious movements with pretensions towards populist appeal cannot disclaim the ulama’s positions – the most significant gesture of disengagement these movements can make is a refusal to engage in “politics” and not discuss controversies rooted in Islam that affect women. The leadership of both the Tablighi Jama’at and Al-Huda explicitly refuse to discuss contemporary “political” issues in which ideas of Islam are deployed to limit women’s freedom, mobility, and opportunities. During fieldwork, I observed several instances of the senior members of these movements stopping “political” conversations within movement space.

The Islamic revival as a global force has quietly rejected the interpretive authority of the ulama; this conflict is downplayed by all parties in Pakistan, but nonetheless is significant in shaping revivalist identities and policy. The Islamic revival promotes a scriptually “pure” Islam unmoored from the traditions of authority and memory that have been an inextricable part of the

historical production of Islamic knowledge. The potentially dangerous consequences of this turn have been well-documented; Islamic knowledge becomes detached from the discourses it functioned in, and the diversity and plurality of the textual tradition of the ulama is elided by exegetes (like my subjects) who consider texts anew (El Fadl 2007), arguing disingenuously that it is possible that even scholars as well-read and well regarded as the founders of the four Islamic madahib did not know the hadith well enough to determine basic theological issues<sup>69</sup>. However, in the case of piety movements in Pakistan, I contend that this freedom from historical sources of Islamic legitimacy creates room for important social change. Revivalist rejection of the authority of the ulama throws open the discursive tradition of Islam and creates room for alternative interpretations of Islamic practice. Unlike liberal Pakistanis, who have never presented a serious challenge to the religious authority of the ulama, revivalists appear to be legitimate religious agents from the point of view of the Pakistani public. This legitimacy is bolstered by their use of sacred texts to support their positions, and revivalist women's education in these texts alters women's historical engagement with Islamic authority.

While revivalist women's rhetoric claims that submission to men is essential, this is coupled with a knowledge of sacred texts that allows them to parse these texts in considerable detail to seek out exemptions, loopholes, and detailed guidelines regarding the parameters of that submission. Leila Ahmed has argued that while authoritarian "official textual Islam" has been the province of men and women's traditional Islam has been "humane and gentle and pacifist," a greater knowledge of men's Islam can benefit women (2011 b:107). Women adhering to a customary Islam are at the mercy of men when their interests collide with those of the family as a

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<sup>69</sup> As when my informant Nazish in chapter four argues that the founders of the Islamic schools of thought maintained that their work should not be privileged over the Prophet's words.

whole. In Pakistan, where women's individuality is understood to be subordinate to nearly all family demands on them, women are called on to sacrifice a great deal in the name of family harmony. The de-stabilizing potential religious knowledge gains in the hands of women manifests in the discomfort many urban Pakistanis show related to women's mastery of sacred texts. My informant Saleha, a madrassa student, told me that it was commonly known that women who had been educated in madrassas often asked for divorces over trivial breaches of their Islamic rights: "People are more hesitant to marry their sons to madrassa girls, because they think that we will ask for divorces if we are asked to serve our in-laws. My madrassa has introduced a course on *hikmat* (wisdom) in which they teach us that there are times we should let our rights slide." This reported tendency<sup>70</sup> of madrassa women points to a wider Pakistani awareness that sacred texts in the hands of women can be a tool in women's negotiation of their "Islamic rights" in familial contexts. Women's understanding of these rights can include a belief that they are not religiously required to cook for their families, live in patrilocal households, or care for aging parents-in-law.

It is relevant here that the stories of revivalist women from non-revivalist families conclude with these families turning to these women as legitimate arbiters of Islamic knowledge. Saba, Komal, Nazish, Asma, and others have become resources their families and friends consult in order to determine religious obligation. Their existence increases the options available to the women who consult them, providing them with friendly female "scholars" they can draw on to determine ritual and social practice. The idea that women can serve as a source of

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<sup>70</sup> I have not conducted research on the frequency of divorce among madrassa educated women, or Al-Huda women, and this discursive formulation is suspect because it falls into the patterns for Othering revivalists that I have discussed in Chapter Two.



Islamic authority is itself a radical one in the context of urban Pakistani society, where religion has been the province of men educated in a madrassa tradition only moderately accessible to women. The introduction of female religious “scholars” into urban Pakistani society shifts the balance of religious authority and increases options for urban Pakistani women across social class. Revivalist women become loci of religious knowledge – the women who consult them are diverse and include members of all social classes; once a woman is known to possess religious knowledge, women in her extended social networks come to ask her for advice and counsel. My informant Nazish would dispense guidance to her friends’ friends, as well as to connections of her maid and driver.

Revivalist movements’ recruitment of women and claim to their time also call into question Pakistani beliefs that the virtuous woman is one who never prioritizes herself over the needs of her family. By positioning women as individual moral agents responsible for their spiritual growth and religious conduct, revivalist movements are creating new images of the virtuous Pakistani women. Where before, this woman had necessarily been subject to her family, the “pure” Muslim woman is reimagined as subject primarily to God. Her domestic responsibilities are re-framed as moral obligations which are part of an individualistic personal relationship with her creator. This formulation positions women as individuals who are religiously required to prioritize self-growth over some domestic commitments, and challenges notions of women’s virtue as linked to submission to patriarchal forces.

At the same time revivalism, like other projects incorporating women, imagines those women who deviate from its norms as flawed, and “un-Islamic.” Chapter three discusses in some detail the maneuvers through which revivalist women construct non-revivalist Pakistani women as Others. These Othering maneuvers are hostile and demonstrate that my female revivalist

subjects do not see themselves as belonging to some larger sisterhood that transcends religious politics. My revivalist subjects are either indifferent or hostile to feminism as a political project, and see it as western-influenced and Other. The damage this position does to women's interests in Pakistan is limited by revivalist refusals to engage in "politics" or utilize force as a means of bringing about the reformed Islamic society. Instead, revivalist women advocate for persuasion, drawing neighbors and friends gradually into their movements. Through their practice, revivalist women increase the spectrum of identity and self-expression available to Pakistani women.

I argue that piety movements' overlap with other agents that claim religion as a source of legitimacy have obscured aspects of these movements' interactions with ideas of gender and Islam in Pakistan. Revivalist movements are having two unexamined impacts on Pakistani society: (1) revivalists present themselves as legitimate sources of religious authority, and their utilization of previously existing sartorial and behavioral codes that denote piety means that these claims are considered authentic by many Pakistanis. This creates revivalists as an alternative source of religious knowledge which diffuses outward into society. One example of this is the way in which Al-Huda's theological positions related to women's handling of the Qur'an while menstruating are becoming more commonly known among Pakistani women; (2) Revivalist movements' use of sacred text to incorporate women into their projects of reforms creates an alternative vision of the pious woman, one who is not required to sacrifice personhood in order to achieve piety. Instead, pious revivalist women are positioned as individuals who must choose which aspects of ritual and social practice to prioritize over others. Both of these developments widen the discursive field, expanding "Islamic" positions from their previous narrow margins, and creating diversity in the options available to women who wish to present themselves as virtuous.

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