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## Ideological Contestation(s): The “Televised” Cultural Politics of Gendered Identity

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*The development of mass communication greatly expands the scope for the operation of ideology in modern [and traditional] societies, for it enables symbolic forms to be transmitted to extended and potentially vast audiences which are dispersed in time and space (Thompson, 1990, p. 266).*

### Abstract

In Pakistan media is used in all forms: printed and electronic. In spite of the fact that the print media has been a part of the infotainment culture in Pakistan before the advent of electronic media yet the internet, cell phones, television, radio, the satellite dish and cable channels are more popular among the people. One of the reasons for the popularity of the electronic media, especially television, can be the lack of education and easy access to the medium. In this paper I demonstrate that television as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971) shapes opinions through employing ideology which tacitly interpellates individuals in a particular way according to culture, space, age, and academic exposure. Thus, television, the conduit of ideology, shapes gendered identities through consent as opposed to coercion. Furthermore, I establish that in traditional societies, like the Pakhtuns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, although culture comes forth as the most dominating ideological state apparatus yet the television has a strong impact in bringing about socio-cultural ideological shifts.

**Keywords:** Television, ideology, interpellation, gendered identities, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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## Introduction

The concept of identity is always multifaceted: what is identity; how it is shaped; who identifies who, and why? One of the ways to understand this complex phenomenon various scholars have demonstrated a close connection between identity, ideology, and culture (Bailey and Gayle, 2003; Bucholtz & Hall, 2006; Cooper & Brubaker, 2005; Hall 2011; Holland et al, 1996; Riley, 2007). Following Althusser (1971) who believes that media is an active part of the ideological state apparatus (ISA), I demonstrate that media, an ISA shapes opinions through employing ideology which tacitly interpellates individuals (read audience/viewers) in a particular way in a given cultural context. In this paper I discuss that television defines a gendered viewer-identity by interpellating subjects according to culture, space, age, and academic exposure. Thus, television, the conduit of ideology, shapes gendered identities through consent as opposed to coercion. Furthermore, I establish that in traditional societies, like the Pakhtuns, culture comes forth as the most dominating ISA, yet the television has a strong role in shaping thoughts and actions. In order to prove my stance I analyze interview excerpts of various research respondents in Peshawar, villages Matti, Karak, and Azmerabad<sup>1</sup>, Charsadda.

In Pakistan media is used in almost all its forms: printed and electronic. A vast number of newspapers and magazines are regularly published in Pakistan. Print media includes the dailies, the popular magazines, and some alternate press like jihadist newspapers as well. Most publications tend to be in the national language Urdu, followed by a few in English, and fewer more in the regional languages. In spite of the fact that the print media has been a part of the infotainment culture in Pakistan before the advent of electronic media yet the internet, cell phones, television, radio, the satellite dish and cable channels are more popular among the people. One of the reasons for the popularity of the electronic media, especially television, can be the lack of education and easy access to the medium. Thompson (1990) rightly states:

But it is important to stress that, compared to other forms of mass communication such as books, newspapers, and magazines, the messages transmitted by electronic media like television are in principle accessible to, and are typically received by, a larger and broader audience.... [Because] the television set is commonly a domestic appliance which occupies a central position in the home, and which is a focal point around which much social interaction takes place. [And] the fact that the skills required to decode the messages received via television are often less sophisticated, and involve less specialized training, than

those required to decode messages transmitted by other media such as printed matter (p. 267).

As such, most of my respondents at all the field sites thought that media in general and television in particular has affected people in one or another way.

### **Field Sites, Respondents, and Methodology**

I conducted fieldwork at three sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. My field sites for this research include Peshawar, the provincial capital, the administrative and urban center. I also conducted research in village Azmerabad, Charsadda, which is one of the major agricultural districts of KP and is about 17 miles northeast of Peshawar. And my third field site is the village, Matti, Karak, which is one of the arid districts of KP, and lies approximately 110 miles southeast of Peshawar.

My respondents at all field sites include both men and women between the ages of 25-70 years. The men at Matti were all educated professional young men. Among the women, Beenish had a law degree; some were either high school graduates; and others like Bilquees were illiterate. In Charsadda, two of the respondents, Gulshan and Khanay were illiterate; Naila had been to high school (though never passed out); and Faryal had an undergraduate law degree. In Peshawar all my respondents were doctors, professors, or lawyers etc.

My research is multi-sited because it is important to show that an ethnic group like the Pakhtuns cannot be studied generally or across the board even within one province. The goal is to demonstrate that living in the same region, even within one broader ethnic group, similarities and differences exist due to the intersectionality of age, gender, class, and spatiality. I particularly focus on these sites as opposed to any other places in KP because Peshawar gave me access to respondents who actually belonged to Karak or Charsadda. The out-of-village residents helped to demonstrate the effect and change of spatiality in appropriating and at times transforming subject-position(s) and their levels of agency. Charsadda served as a good blend of traditional and not-so-traditional location; and Karak had a more traditional setting.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In this research I collected data through a combination of ethnographic methods like participant-observation, casual conversations, and primarily through in-depth formal and informal interviews based on snowballing or network (Bernard, 2006, pp. 192-194) stratified sampling methods. Network sampling served as the best technique suited for this research because it gave me access to people who were

serious, willing, and trustworthy for providing relevant and correct information. Besides, keeping the sensitive geo-political situation of KP in mind, the snowball or network sampling helped in establishing my authenticity as a researcher and as a person especially to those who did not know me.

My method of analysis is based on a combination of theoretical models that examine linguistic cues (Johnstone, 2008; Leap, 2003; Penelope, 1990) which help in shaping and deciphering respondents' answers. In order to do this I primarily use Althusser's (1971) framework of ideology as the foundational theoretical paradigm for my analysis. I demonstrate that the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) "interpellate" or "hail" (Althusser, 1971) individuals to form a subject-position(s). I also employ Pkcheux's (1982) "processes of recognition" (pp. 156-159) to further explicate the formation of various subject-position(s).

According to Althusser (1971, p. 143) the subject-position and agency of a social being, in any society, is continuously shaped and re-shaped by Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which include family, education, law, media, and religion among others. As a result of institutional ideologies, people come to accept change(s) naturally and sometimes by developing a false consciousness (Althusser, 1971, p. 164). However, Althusser (1971) clarifies that "the Ideological State Apparatuses *function 'by ideology'*" (pp. 142-143). Therefore, it is through the ISAs that ideologies, both personal and collective, begin to change or affect ideas because ideology "interpellates" or "hails" individuals (Althusser, 1971, p. 173). In other words, following any ideology makes an individual accept a certain subject-position; it makes an individual "recognize" himself or herself in a particular way. And as for ideology, Althusser (1971) states that, "it imposes... an obviousness... which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out... 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'" (p. 172). As a result of interpellation, the "process of recognition" begins and as recognition is somewhat complete an individual can either accept or reject a subject-position or else he or she can agree to disidentification, that is, "*working* (transformation-displacement) of *the subject form*, and not just its *abolition*" (Pkcheux, 1982, p. 159). In other words, the individual can opt for a middle path and refuse to be in the passive subject-position. Therefore, the various ways in which the social individuals develop, function, and transform is explicated through their interaction with the social, political, and economic structures: the ISAs. As such, it is ideology that works through various ISAs or within and through material and social structures in order to act on or interpellate individuals in a society. And the individuals who respond to the interpellation or hail actually follow the ideology that has hailed them and they unconsciously accept and adopt the subject-position that results as a response to that interpellation.

## Media-Moulded Subject-Positions: Conforming vs. Disidentifying Media Subjects

My research findings demonstrate that television has a strong impact on the people. Those individuals who are positively or negatively affected by media, especially the television, I label them as the “media-moulded” subject(s). It includes both the “universal” or the good subjects and the “subjects of enunciation” or the bad subjects (Pêcheux, 1982). The good media-moulded subjects are those who benefit positively from the media, that is, they uphold the cultural mores. Or those also pass as good subjects who do not really get affected by the media at all and thus maintain the cultural status quo. Whereas, the bad media-moulded subjects are those who have learned from the media and as a result defy the cultural expectations and mores. And then there are those that Pêcheux (1982) calls the “dis-identifying” subjects (p. 156-159) who adopt a middle path and tacitly talk back to the cultural mores without really upsetting the cultural status quo per se.

### Matti, Karak: The Traditional Rural

In Pakistan and particularly in KP where literacy rates are low television and radio are the most popular forms of media. The respondents that I talked to were those who were more of television watchers and thus television affected. Most people in Matti, Karak told me how media affected their lives and in turn I inferred the type of subjectivity that was interpellated by the media. On a positive note Mobeen, a 25-year-old doctor in Matti, told me that media (read television) had played a very important role in their community because initially in their area nobody knew about the importance of female education. There were no educated females there who could serve as role models and inspire other women. Mobeen further explained that the positive effect of television is that it kept one updated about the political happenings. One got to know how people were getting politically exploited; and how our politicians were misusing their political powers and other resources. For him one aspect of television was news coverage. Yet, television was also responsible for changing the culture and he believed that slowly a change was coming about. Among the women Beenish also suggested that women in their village mostly adopted fashion trends from television. “Besides, TV has played a major role in this awareness,” Beenish added.

One of the interesting discussions I had about the influence of television was with a group of women, young and old; most of them were avid television watchers. One of the women told me that in earlier days people used to listen to the radio; and she personally did not watch television. Another woman sitting nearby added that people in the village watched Indian dramas (soaps) which were entertaining and were about family affairs. An interesting discussion started when another relatively

older woman, called Bilquees, told me why women do not or rather should not watch television. She explained,

*Bilquees:* Elder women don't watch TV because they consider it a sin. It is a sin because *pradee saree* (unrelated men) come on TV. ((AK: But you are looking at them; they can't see you!)). No, our religion says it is a sin [for women] to look at unrelated men. One should also observe *purdah* (veiling) from TV. That is the Islamic way because TV has unrelated men on it.

*Anoosh Khan:* But there are unrelated men on the roads as well?

*Bilquees:* We are wearing *burqas* on the roads. We are covered in *burqas* on the road but when people watch TV no one observes *purdah*. So, one should cover one's face when one sees an unrelated man [even on TV].

I found Bilquees' perspective interestingly worrisome; it was difficult for me to register how women, even though uneducated, could have such ideas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: to observe *purdah* from men on television! And at the same time I wondered how many other young women could be influenced by this idea; perhaps not many. Most of the young women in Matti were either middle or high school graduates or were illiterate and the television talk shows gave them a better insight into controversial issues. All the same there was this woman, Bilquees, who occupied a subject-position of an elder woman in her family and would definitely have some sort of influencing power over other youngsters, especially women. Though her ideas may not affect the younger women completely but I thought she could reiterate conservative ideology to some extent. I did not cross-question Bilquees due to the cultural sensitivity about age, and moved to the other women who watched television.

The general sense that I got was that the younger men and women liked watching television; it was a means of entertainment and information for them. In Matti women tended to benefit from the entertainment aspect of television while men got to know about the local, national and international current affairs as well. That means television served as a neutral field; it was not negatively affecting the subject-positions of people in this village per se. However, a contestation of sorts appeared when I asked the young men if they would allow the women from their families to work in television or in showbiz in general. I asked this question because many people in the Pakhtun society like to be entertained by the media but most people think of entertainment or showbiz as an unacceptable profession for both men and women.

*Mobeen:* No, we cannot allow them at this stage because change comes slowly: step by step. Yes, maybe after some years we may allow women to work in TV but my sister just can't suddenly appear on the TV one day; change will come gradually.

*Musa:* If as an individual you want my opinion, I do not consider it unacceptable or inappropriate.

*Anoosh Khan:* But at the same time can you allow your sister to work in TV?

*Musa:* Maybe our generation has no problem with that.

*Qadir:* See if you look at our elder sisters or cousins they are uneducated. Even 15 years ago women in our family were not really educated but now the younger lot is educated. So how can you expect an abrupt change?

In the above conversation Mobeen seems very forthright and straight away rejects the option of letting the female members of their family work in television. However, Musa and Qadir are rather rejecting the notion without really committing to the rejection. This can mean that either genuinely, on a personal level, they have no objection or they have an objection but do not want to commit to the objection as that would make them no different than their elders despite exposure to education.

### **Azmerabad, Charsadda: The Urban-Rural Blend**

In comparison to Matti, Karak, at Azmerabad, Charsadda the respondents, especially the younger women, were avid television watchers and were quite blunt in their critique of television regarding what influenced them positively or negatively. Television had had a positive effect on both Gulshan and Khanay; they are rendered as good subjects because television has enabled them to take from it what makes them acceptably knowledgeable subjects. They are the good subjects because both of them are young and illiterate and believe that television provides them with entertainment but at the same time informs them about social issues, thus making them “knowledgeable” subjects of sorts. Yet, both of them pick up only those things from television which makes Gulshan (positively) “clever” and Khanay can “discuss issues with friends.” For Gulshan and Khanay, at least, television is acting as an ISA that successfully creates the conformingly knowledgeable good subjects. Whereas, Mahjabeen, much senior in age than Gulshan and Khanay, believed, “On TV there is so much liberty given to boys and girls and that affects the audience as well. Some young ones don't realize that what is portrayed on TV is a drama; the actors are getting paid for what they are doing; and if we do all this, our entire family life would become topsy-turvy.”

Naila, however, had a more nuanced critique on what she learned from television and how television shows, over the years, had become more liberal (read westernized). Naila said that they watched Pakistan Television (PTV) or the state owned channel's dramas and not the ones that came through the dish or cable TV. By watching these dramas they learned many things: for instance they had recently watched a play that was about women suffering; women rights; and other social issues. Some dramas gave them insight on issues like foreign marriage proposals. She said, "For example, our people are ready to marry their daughters to men settled abroad; they do it thinking that the man is rich but they never do enough back ground check about the man. Sometimes, unfortunately, women married to such men meet disastrous consequences when they go abroad. When you think about these dramas you realize that this is all reality." But at the same time Naila believed that PTV had become very liberal; there was a lot of modernity (read westernization) shown on it now. She confessed that if her father is home and a drama begins she does not sit in the same room with her father; she watches from another room. Naila thought that now the Pakistani actors dressed up in such a way that it was difficult to watch them with one's father. "I mean every one [of the female actors] is wearing pants and shirts these days; you can see female actors' cleavage. The themes are good like there is one based on *vani*.<sup>2</sup> These dramas are enlightening but there is a lot of indecent glamour in them now," explained Naila.

It is interesting to note that compared to Gulshan and Khanay, Naila admits the benefits of television but at the same criticizes its liberal policies. As such, Naila becomes the disidentifying media subject (Pêcheux, 1982, p. 159), who criticizes some of Pakistan Television's (PTV) policies as they challenge the cultural traditions but at same time benefits from television by learning about traditional malpractices like *vani* and *swara* and is ready to talk-back to centuries old traditions as well. PTV is a state owned institution including a number of other channels specified for special programs: regional, sports, current affairs, and so forth. All of them have PTV as their suffix for example, PTV National, PTV Global, and PTV News. Since PTV is a state owned institution its policies change with the changing governments. Therefore, compared to other satellite channels, PTV works as one of the prime ISAs. I was rather surprised when Naila told me that PTV plays have become very liberal. I remember, with all its channels, PTV used to be quite conservative when compared to other satellite channels. Perhaps, now even PTV realizes the need to compete globally and thus follows prevalent trends. Most of the plays that Naila and others watched are in Urdu, the national language. Naila explained that due to their substandard quality people do not watch Pashto shows as much or at least her family did not. There are other Pashto channels as well some of which are satellite channels that telecast private productions. But Pashto plays and shows are also telecasted by PTV National.



Faryal, an educated young woman, also informed me that the common village women told her that they learned more from television than they did at school. Besides, she also felt that herself when she discussed issues with these village women. Faryal gave me an insight into Pashto TV shows and explained the reason for their unpopularity especially among the educated class. She compared and contrasted Pashto television plays and Pashto movies. Faryal explained that in Pashto movies there is a loose plot; there are not any decent dialogues; and there are grown up men acting foolishly. It is mostly comedy and she wondered if Pakhtuns were only comedians. They made a joke out of themselves! As a result they mis-portrayed the Pakhtun culture. She thought that Pashto dramas and movies had strange and funny titles as well. "Wait...let me think... "*Cha kawal ka maakawal*" (Was someone doing it or was I doing it?); silly comedy titles" (laughs). But Faryal also believed that sometimes a Pashto channel also telecasted some good and somewhat realistic dramas as well which showed the real Pakhtun culture and traditions. But most of the time there are ridiculous comedies. Or there is Pashto news; there is very little shown that portrays the real culture of Pakhtuns. Faryal thought that in Pashto television dramas at least the women were decently and realistically dressed up. But in Pashto movies there were big, fat women, usually one's mother's age, wearing pants and skirts and running around. Faryal said, "Now imagine our mothers' wearing pants (laughs) and running around!" She continued, "Let me tell you of a Pashto movie...I've forgotten the name. Just as the movie started the whole screen was covered with something red. Those of us watching, for quite some time, kept on wondering what that was. As the camera gradually zoomed out it was actually a woman's behind! Besides, the titles of Pashto movies are like: "*Topak Zama Qanoon*" (The Gun is My Law); "*De Spee Lakay*" (The Dog's Tail); "*De Yaway Shapay Naaway*" (A Bride for One Night); and the like! Such strange titles!"

While Faryal and I were discussing the role of the Pashto media, I totally agreed with her regarding the silliness that is portrayed in Pashto comedies, plays, and movies. And most Pakhtuns are not at all that comical all the time. In fact, the scholarly literature on Pakhtuns (Khan, 1990, p. 27; and Lindholm, 1988, p. 231) explicitly mentions the reserved nature of Pakhtun men. But it made me wonder if the comic media portrayal of the Pakhtuns was another audience-driven desire that the producers wanted to show. In other words, the Pakhtuns are generally serious, especially in front of their juniors, so the world of celluloid perhaps gives a vent to those pent up desires by depicting the funny and human side of Pakhtuns. The only problem is that they overdo it and as such make it slapstick as opposed to intelligent humour.

### Peshawar: The Urban Centre

However, some people also believed that television had more far-reaching benefits as well. For instance, Dr Gul Khan thought that there was a lot of difference between the previous and present Pakhtun women due to the awareness because of education and the media. Media had a great role because nowadays many discussions and seminars took place that discussed gender issues. He believed that when such topics are discussed they make women become aware of their rights. Alamgir Khan, a lawyer, also stated, “There are laws being discussed on TV talk shows all the time. There are more and more TV programs especially made for that purpose with legal advice and all that. So, women or rather the entire society has changed.”

The irony is that almost everyone watches television but being a part of the showbiz in the Pakhtun culture is still considered extremely inappropriate for women. Even male performers and actors are barely accepted but females are really looked down upon. As Professor Abdul Haq stated, “If a Pakhtun lady wants to become a poet there shouldn’t be anything that hampers her intention to do so. But if she wants to become an actor or a dancer the Pakhtun society will never encourage her and will rather discourage her from doing so.”

I also got the chance to talk to Dr Gul Khan about this discrepancy that the Pakhtuns like to watch television and movies but are not ready to accept actors and performers as decent individuals of the society. Dr Gul Khan had also been associated with Radio Pakistan, Peshawar, for a long time. He explained to me:

*Dr Gul Khan:* It is not TV’s fault; the fault lies in our minds, our way of thinking. I have worked in the Radio for 35 years—it’s a long time; I left it just recently, this month in fact. The idea that our people have about the radio or TV is that these are corrupt environments. But I don’t agree. I have personal experience. Look corrupt people are found everywhere.... We think that any woman who works in TV is a *dumma* and every man who comes on TV is a *dum*.<sup>3</sup> See even the educated women come on TV for discussions but the Pakhtun mentality hasn’t matured to that level yet.

*Anoosh Khan:* How and when do you think this mentality will change?

*Dr GK:* This mentality will change when people like you come forward; they discuss issues with people and communicate with other people. Secondly, the media should also talk about such issues and should also educate people that media is not only about entertainment; media deals with education; with culture; it teaches religion.

*AK:* What I meant was that we are ready to accept all these things but why don't we accept a woman who is a singer, a dancer or an actor?

*Dr GK:* Because we have not matured enough yet, especially we the Pakhtuns. It depends on our mentality. But it is the responsibility of our media to educate people in this respect as well.

Dr Gul Khan's ideas are correct but the Pakhtun mind-set is not going to change very soon. It makes me wonder how it positions women's subjectivities when: women who watch TV shows want to be like the women they see on television but they cannot be. And the women who perform on television are enjoyed on the screen but in reality are unacceptable subjects of Pakhtun society. Therefore, I believe Pakhtun women continue to negotiate their subject-positions: contesting between how they want to be and how they are expected to be.

## Conclusion

The above ethnographic examples illustrate that various individuals according to their age, gender, and space respond differently to television's interpellation which acts as an ISA. The women in general enjoy watching television and they believe they become aware about many social issues through the medium. The educated men in Karak feel that the television is a great medium for infotainment but it is not possible for them to allow their women to work in TV. Thus, here we see subjects who are more or less the "good" or conforming subjects; they take advantage from the beneficial aspect of the television but they are not ready to disrupt the culture status quo by allowing their women to become television artists. And there are men like Professor Abdul Haq, educated and living in the city, who believe that Pakhtun women can adopt any profession but become actors and entertainers. And then there are people like Dr Gul Khan who have no objection at all to women working in the media.

The question is why do these men who are educated and live in the city or are exposed to city-living have a diverse opinion about female performers and/or actors? It is here that a certain ideology is at work. In a given time many ideologies subtly interpellate an individual; it is a contestation of sorts. On the one hand, for instance, in Matti (which is a conservative rural area) ISAs like education and media, interpellate the men and make them realize the awareness that is spread through the media, mostly through television in their case. But on the other, culture emerges as a stronger ISA and the very men who admit the importance of television are not willing to allow the female family members to work in television. It is the religio-cultural ideology which makes the elder woman Bilquees believe that women should observe purdah from men who appear on television. Similarly in

Azmerabad, Naila also admitted that television spread a lot of awareness but at the same time she criticized the ‘liberal’ policy of the television. She could not watch some of the shows with her father in the room. Thus, showing how cultural ideology works through familial channels. Yet, Naila is the dis-identifying subject because she also appreciates how TV shows challenge cultural traditions and make people question the long followed (mal)practices. And so much so, men like Professor Abdul Haq, who is educated, also thinks that Pakhtun women can choose any profession but acting and dancing. However, on the other hand there are men like Dr. Gul Khan, who share an almost similar socio-economic, cultural and academic background with the other men yet he is willing to accept Pakhtun women as performers and entertainers. Perhaps it is the educational ideology that interpellates him more strongly than the cultural ideology. But why and how come?

I think even being a part of similar socio-cultural and academic background, mobility and exposure to diverse experiences enables one to understand the “Other” and “Other’s” realities. Dr Gul Khan had experienced working for the national radio; he was a part of the media (though not television per se) and had a hands-on experience of the environment; the people; and real issues that are part of the media experiences as opposed to an audience/viewers’ perspective. Perhaps that is the reason he looks at performers and actors differently and is ready to accept them as professionals and decent members of the society; therefore, it is the ideological interpellation which subtly shapes and at times defines identities especially gendered identity(ies) for societies where culture comes forth as the stronger ISA. As such, Barker (2003) aptly suggests:

Television in the era of globalization is vital to the construction of cultural identities because it circulates a bricolage of representations of class, gender, race, age, and sex with which we identify or struggle against. That is, television is a proliferating and globalized resource for construction of cultural identity and a site of contestation over meaning (p. 169).

In traditional societies like that of the Pakhtuns culture is the most powerful ISA. I think this is because even if education and media help people become critical of social issues it is yet extremely difficult to challenge and more so change the patriarchal mind-set of the majority. There is no doubt, that most of the Pakhtuns in Pakistan are still a backward people; many are still lagging behind in education; and the war on terror has taken them “back” a little more. The lack of education and the fortification of religious ideals have added more weight to the inclination towards “believing-without-questioning.” And here I do not mean belief in a faith only; I mean using the blind-faith principle for any social and/or cultural following in the name of religion. This cultural interpellation wrapped in religion in turn is

triggered due to 9/11 and Pakistan's involvement in the war on terror for which the battleground is various parts of KP. As a result the Pakhtun identity is more associated with extremism which is reinforced through local and foreign media. This extremist-identity translates into the apparent agency-less identity of Pakhtun women as well. Thus, most Pakhtuns are ready to admit the importance of television but are not ready to let women work in television or in the showbiz in general. It is a contestation of ideologies and, for the lack of a better option, the only hope for the Pakhtuns to change their thinking, especially about women, is by exposing themselves more to secular education. This can definitely be done through academic institutions but informal education is best delivered through media, especially television, which is a medium physically and economically more accessible for illiterate and segregated societies like that of the Pakhtuns.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Matti and Azmerabad are fictitious names that I use for the villages in Karak and Charsadda, respectively. Furthermore, I use pseudonyms for the anonymity of my respondents.
- <sup>2</sup> *Vani* is the custom of child marriage followed in the Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan. It is mostly done to settle feudal disputes. To some extent *vani* is comparable to the custom of *swara* in KP.
- <sup>3</sup> *Dum* (male) and *Dumma* (female) are derogatory Pashto terms used for actors and performers.

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