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ABSTRACT ONLY – WORK IN PROGRESS

“Interrogating ‘Empowering’ Knowledges: Critical Reflections
on Human Rights Education in Pakistan”

By: Shenila Khoja-Moolji
(Ph.D. Candidate, Columbia University, NY)

In recent decades, programs aimed at women and girls’ empowerment have been a high priority for development organizations. An underlying assumption of such programs is that investment in women and girls can help address issues related to poverty and human rights. This paper complicates this assumption by drawing evidence from one such program – a series of human rights education camps for girls in Pakistan – that the author and a colleague implemented two years ago. It explores the kinds of Muslim girlhoods and the types of gender and sexual citizenship that the program sought to construct and normalize in and through its curricula. It also interrogates the construction of single-gendered spaces as ‘safe spaces’ for girls and views youth and development workers as desiring subjects who bring their own investments and commitments to empowerment projects. Through this critique and reflection, the paper problematizes the notion of ‘empowerment’ by making visible the *situatedness* of ‘empowering’ knowledges and knowers, and highlighting their ideological implications for women and girls.