

**Make the Children Come to Me:
Moral Authority and the Problem of America in Christian and Muslim Schools**

Summary

How do schools bring students to view their knowledge as obviously true? How do schools—especially schools of creationist religious communities—use their organizational structures and different pedagogical techniques to maintain their traditions? And how might these practices of religious schools inform larger conversations about public education, secular morality, and the way knowledge works? Based on approximately 150 interviews and a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork, this book describe how two Sunni Muslim and two Evangelical Christian high schools in the New York City area teach their students to be moral practitioners of their tradition in a country they both love and fear. These schools view America as a challenging “problem” in that they love their nation and want their students to be its leaders, yet they also fear its many sins may infect them. These communities come to understand their traditions and their relationship to the outside world through “technologies of moral authority”—scripture, prayer, gender, and science. These technologies have a certain power independent of their users, yet they also can be manipulated to accommodate new understandings of how to live in America and practice a conservative religion at the same time. Drawing from theoretical and empirical work in sociology, education, religion, philosophy, and science and technology studies, this book provides an innovative comparative angle on two important American subcultures, as well as theoretical innovations for the study of education, religion, and sociology. While the book contains many theoretical arguments that extend across each chapter, I have confined most of the theory references to footnotes and chapter one, making the book both approachable and theoretically ambitious.

Theoretical Overview

The title of this book is an intentional misquoting of Jesus’s famous request to “let the little children come to me” (Mark 10:14). In all my experience of high schools—teaching at one for three years, studying Muslim and Evangelical schools for this book and public schools

for my next one—I’m struck by how often we adults think we’re “letting” students come to wherever it is we want them to arrive: we, the teachers and progenitors of modernity, tend to think if we just let students go, they’ll come right to where we’d like them to be. In his study of religious history from 1500 to today, Charles Taylor (2007) calls this sort of assumption a “subtraction story”, an insistence that if you get rid of all the junk (religious or otherwise) piled up on people’s lives, they’ll *naturally* come to recognize reality.

Yet a careful study of the processes through which we teach our students shows that we don’t “let” our students go anywhere: we *make* (or at least we try to make!) them come to where we are. Teachers who care about critical thinking struggle to get students to think critically. Teachers who value autonomy labor to convince students likewise. Because our values seem so obvious to us, we might not notice the subtle processes of coercion through which we propagate them. These processes are present in any school, and they’re particularly clear in schools of religious minorities, where teachers and administrators often feel they’re swimming upstream from the rest of their culture’s many equally subtle encouragements. This book examines those processes in two Sunni Muslim and two Evangelical Christian high schools in the New York City area, looking at what I’m calling the “technologies of moral authority” through which students are made into certain kinds of people able to live certain kinds of lives in the United States.

What’s most important about how moral authority works in these schools is that it’s not located in any one person or group of people. Moral authority is diffuse, so diffuse, in fact, that it’s not even just within people. Scholars like Bruno Latour (2005), Peter-Paul Verbeek (2005), and Margaret Archer (1995) have done important work to show how things—not just people—are able to act in the world, and I’m using the term “technology of moral authority” throughout this book to describe how students are compelled to approach the world not so much through the explicit machinations of their teachers but through specific technologies—gender, science, prayer, and scripture—that have a certain power all their own.

Technology might seem an odd term for these categories. After all, isn’t scripture a book? Isn’t prayer a series of practices? Aren’t science and gender, well, science and gender? Yet these conventional definitions fail to capture, first, the way these concepts are used *technologically* in the schools I studied, and second, the *autonomy* of these concepts independent of any specific human actors or organizations. I came to realize the importance

of this distinction when I thought about the work science does in the four schools I studied, all of which are creationist. I realized that science was less about gaining knowledge than it was about *using* and *applying* knowledge in morally fraught debates. I also realized that this thing-called-science had a tremendous power independent of any one user or organization. I realized, in other words, that science is a technology of moral authority, and once I figured that out about science, I noticed the same processes in reference to gender, prayer, and scripture.

For the French philosopher Michel Foucault, the word technology was used in the sense of its Greek root, *techné* (knowledge-how), and he used the words interchangeably with the word technique in his later lectures. What Foucault was primarily interested in was *practices*, and he studied those practices that “permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (1988: 17). People use these practices Foucault calls “technologies of the self” to refashion their very selves, becoming the people they want to be. Yet a technology of moral authority is more than just a practice, or even a technique: it is something external to a certain person or community which, over time, becomes a means not only of accomplishing tasks and doing work but of actually moving that person or community towards a certain vision of the good. If regular technology is applied science that does practical work, technology of moral authority is applied knowledge-that (propositions) and knowledge-how (practices) that advances moral goals (see Ryle 1945 and 2010 for this distinction). Most importantly, these collected forms of knowledge are *recognized* as actors: in each of the schools, real work is accomplished by scripture, prayer, science, and the fact of being a man or a woman in and of themselves. It wasn’t just people using these technologies; the technologies acted on their own.

The technologies of moral authority I study here are not chosen randomly. Scripture, prayer, science, and gender were the most important features of these school communities in their understanding of themselves and their relationship to the outside world. Besides their salience within the communities I studied, these four categories provide analytic leverage in a larger theoretical argument about how technologies of moral authority help communities maintain their traditions while also relating to the outside world. This argument builds upon the second half of the book’s subtitle to make a theoretical contribution to social scientific

debates on morality, boundaries, and identity, showing how certain technologies of moral authority help religious schools deal with “the problem of America.” Each of these school communities want to be part of their country even as they want to distinguish themselves from it.

The technologies of moral authority these schools use are divided into two types. The first are *internal*: technologies developed within their traditions that they use to make sense of—and distinguish themselves from—the rest of the world. The second are *external*: technologies either taken from the outside world or simply shared with many outsiders that can be pragmatically adapted to their own traditions. Of course, these distinctions are not absolute: what was once an internal technology can be taken up by the outside world, and what was once external could become internal over time. Yet what is most important about the distinctions between external and internal are how they relate to boundaries: the use of internal technologies of moral authority by their very nature help communities distinguish themselves from the outside world. In contrast, because both insiders and outsiders use external technologies, communities must do more interpretive work to distinguish how their use differs from everyone else’s.

For the schools I studied, scripture and prayer were the most important internal technologies, while science and gender were the most important external ones. While it might seem clear how scripture and prayer are technologies in Foucault’s sense of “technologies of the self,” it appears harder to see gender and science as in any way technological. Yet as I will show in the chapters dedicated to each, both science and gender are more than just empty concepts: in the contexts of these schools, they are external actors adapted to a tradition’s pre-existing commitments (even as they simultaneously have an effect on the traditions). Like prayer and scripture, science and gender are technologies of moral authority that provide a means of understanding and engaging the world, giving their practitioners both clear constraints and creative freedom in their efforts to solve the problem of America. The book’s organization develops these distinctions, providing a general theoretical overview to the concepts of moral authority and the problem of America in chapters one and two and then using the following four chapters to show how the different technologies of moral authority play out in each school, describing the external technologies of gender and science and then the internal technologies of scripture and prayer.

I use the term “problem of America” in the book’s subtitle because these school were proud to be American even as they felt deep ambivalence about a country they saw as dangerously secular: indeed, their fears were precisely why community members created these schools. These schools seek “distinction-with-engagement” (Smith 1998) through developing counterpublics (Warner 2005) that have specific means of making sense not only of their own lives and traditions, but also of the larger American projects of which they are a part. These concerns about the roles of Evangelicals and Muslims in America are shared by their secular antagonists. When I told people at parties that I was spending a year and a half at two Sunni Muslim and two Evangelical Christian high schools in the New York City area, I could tell if I was in a blue state or a red state based on which group people worried about more. My friends were all concerned about the same thing—whether these groups could be a meaningful part of America—yet their worries came from opposite directions: my “red state” friends worried that Muslims were threatening America’s Christian heritage while my “blue state” friends worried that Evangelicals were threatening America’s secular tradition.

I disagree with my friends and the many others who have prominently worried about the theocratic and anti-secular goals of Muslims and Evangelicals in America. In fact, concerns about these groups often parallel each other, with both Muslims and Evangelicals being described as having insidious plans to remake the nation in their own image. Besides the problem that such criticisms inevitably ignore that *many* citizens seek to remake America in their own image (what do certain liberal secularists want if not exactly that?), such concerns miss the degree to which both Evangelicals and Muslims in the United States very much consider themselves *American* and share more of the secularists’ vision of American than either might be comfortable acknowledging.

They also share many assumptions about education. What is interesting about nearly all schools—public or private—is that while some of their students do seek out these specific, separate communities as a means of self-formation (in the spirit of Foucault’s technologies of the self), the majority were born into the communities their schools represent and are more or less willing to be formed into the subjects the school communities seek to create. These students sometimes treat the tradition which they are learning to practice as an imposition from above and sometimes as a choice they have freely made. Indeed, this question of free choice is particularly important in Islam and Evangelical Christianity, both of which stress the importance of freely choosing one’s religion and

committing oneself to it. Similar to the irony undergirding the tradition of secular liberalism (MacIntyre 1989), the freely chosen practice of Islam and Christianity is often the result of years of coercion into certain practices and understandings, just as the ability to choose to act in certain capacities is the result of years of forced habituation (Hauerwas 1991; Foucault 1995 [1975]; Bourdieu 1984, 1990, 1991, 1997; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Berlin 2008).

This book is about that forced habituation: it is about the coerced training of students—through their interactions with teachers, with other students, and with their traditions—so that they become comfortable and proficient with the propositions, practices, and technologies of moral authority available to them. It is through that proficiency that their lives—and their place within America—comes to make sense. A sociologist could study these technologies of moral authority in many locations, yet schools—especially religious schools—are ideal sites to study not only how technologies of moral authority are *used* but how their use and applicability are made to seem obvious, a necessary part of life. By studying how specific religious schools use their various forms of authority to help their students make sense of America through certain technologies of moral authority, this book illuminates two important religious communities and the methods of schooling that help maintain them. They do so through emphasizing certain *technologies of moral authority* that help students both maintain—and render intelligible—their own lives and the communities in which they live. In so doing, these technologies not only help community members to make sense of their own communities; they also help them distinguish their communities from others.

Empirical Base

The book is based on a year and half of ethnographic fieldwork (January 2011-July 2012) in two Sunni Muslim and two Evangelical Christian high schools in the New York City area. I conducted around 50 field visits at the Muslim and urban Al Amal, 70 field visits at the Christian and suburban Good Tree and around 25 visits each to the Muslim and suburban Al Haqq and the Christian and urban Apostles¹. I spent about two days a week at Al Amal and Good Tree during the calendar year of 2011 and then about two days a week each at Al

¹ The names of the schools—and the individuals within them—have been changed.

Haqq and Apostles during the spring semester of 2012, while spending the fifth day of each week conducting interviews with students at Good Tree. I gave a questionnaire to all but three students at Good Tree and conducted interviews with faculty, administrators, and students at each school. Besides many informal interviews, I conducted formal, tape-recorded interviews with four students at Al Amal, 51 students at Good Tree, 27 students at Al Haqq, and 26 students at Apostles. I conducted 33 interviews with faculty and staff at all of the schools combined. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two and a half hours.

A comparison of Evangelical and Muslim education would not make much sense on a global scale, but within the United States the comparison is effective because both are meaningful subcultures (Smith 1998, 2002; Bartwoski and Read 2003) that form “counterpublics” (Warner 2005; see also Casanova 1994) to mainstream secular America. Both groups emphasize the importance of prayer, a literal reading of scripture, conservative interpretations of gender norms, and the compatibility of their traditions with science. There are also important distinctions: the communities I studied engaged each of the “technologies of moral authority” quite differently, and each saw itself in a different relationship to the United States: Evangelicals feared that they had lost America, while Muslims felt they had not yet gained it. By studying one urban and one suburban school from each community—and comparing my fieldwork to other social scientific work on Sunni Islam and Evangelical Christianity in America—I am able to show the diversity and consistency within these communities.

Of course, those who send their children to religious schools are generally more conservative than their co-religionists who send them to public schools, and even within the United States, the Muslim and Evangelical fields are quite diverse and heterogeneous. However, as with all good ethnography, I believe this work can provide an important examination of micro-level processes more representative samples cannot gather, and I also have made sure to check my arguments against journalistic, social-scientific, and web-community accounts. This work provides an important perspective on schools, science, and Islam and Evangelicalism in America.

Proposed Chapter Outline

Preface: How to be a Conservative Religious School in America

On my first day at the second Evangelical school I studied, the principal brought me to a faculty meeting where I introduced myself to many of the school's very welcoming faculty and staff. The Pastor had come to give a talk about thinking of their work as a "ministry." Charming, wise, and passionate, with bright white hair practically glued to his head with hairspray, he cried out to them in a stage whisper: "We *cannot* fail." He looked around, owning the room. "The school is a light in a dark place. We cannot close. There's no one else." This sense of lonely isolation was common at all four schools I studied, and it led to a tragic sense of separation from mainstream America—tragic because these schools thought of themselves as *American* and resented the outside world not always agreeing. I use this preface as a chance to introduce the reader to the four field sites where I worked: The Muslim and urban Al Amal, the Christian and suburban Good Tree, the Muslim and suburban Al Haqq and the urban and Christian Apostles. I also introduce the readers to the arguments that hold the book together: these schools use certain technologies of moral authority to make sense of their own traditions and their sometimes-complicated relationships with the rest of the United States.

Chapter One: Maintaining Tradition through Technologies of Moral Authority

I open the book by introducing the three questions that hold it together and to which I will return in each chapter. First, what are the processes of authority through which Muslim and Evangelical schools come to view their tradition as obviously true? Next, how do these communities use certain "technologies of moral authority" — scripture, prayer, gender, and science — to make sense of their traditions and their relationship to America? And finally, what are the theoretical and empirical implications for the social scientific study of education, religion, and knowledge, as well as for the integration of Muslims and Evangelicals into a rapidly changing American culture?

I introduce each of these questions through examining four key theoretical terms, all of which will be central to the book's argument: tradition, authority, knowledge, and

technology. My analysis of tradition draws from various scholars (Shils 2006, Stout 2009; Weber 1993; Hervieu-Leger 2000; Pieper 2008; Calhoun 2012; MacIntyre 1984; Prickett 2009) who have described the importance of tradition in all of human life, and not only in “traditional” societies. I fuse their focus on tradition with the sociological concept of a cultural repertoire (Swidler 2003), showing how traditions limit what a community can do while simultaneously providing multiple—and sometimes contradictory—solutions to the many problems of social life. More importantly, traditions can be understood as the source material for both communal and individual narratives (MacIntyre 1984, 1989; Ricoeur 1990; Somers 1994; Bruner 1986, 2004), providing images, stories, laws, practices, beliefs, and what I’m calling “technologies of moral authority.” As such, a tradition provides a relatively coherent sense of the past, orientation to the present, and vision of the future.

My discussion of authority builds upon philosophical and sociological discussions of power, authority, and agency (e.g. Lukes 2005; Sennett 1980; Mahmood 2005), though I am particularly interested in how power works in the classroom (Hayward 2000; Ferguson 2001). Perhaps because of the influence of thinkers like Dewey (2012) and Rousseau (1979), scholars of education often emphasize students’ own desire to learn and develop rather than adults’ imposition of beliefs, commitments, and practices upon them. While this book certainly focuses on the importance of students’ commitments and the power of their peer cultures (Pascoe 2007; Wilkins 2008), it makes a theoretical contribution by insisting on the role of coercion (Guin and Klett, submitted manuscript) in establishing moral cultures, including ostensibly “liberal” ones.

My use of the word knowledge draws from Ryle’s (2010) distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how, a distinction which has seen renewed interest among philosophers (e.g. Stanley 2011; Bengson and Moffett 2012). *Knowledge-that* can be understood as a series of propositions (e.g. one rides a bike by pedaling) and *Knowledge-how* can be understood as a series of practices (e.g. the ability to ride a bike). However, such discussions about kinds of knowledge often leave out the object in question: in this case, the bike. This book is about the various forms of knowledge-that and knowledge-how that capture being Muslim or Evangelical in America, and I further these discussions by considering the objects of this knowledge as “moral technologies of authority,” showing how these technology both act and are acted upon. In doing so, I build upon a burgeoning

literature that considers “what things do” (Verbeek 2005), the importance of material culture (Miller 2010), and the agency of objects (Latour 2005).

Chapter Two: Public Schools, The Internet, and The Problem of America

I was talking to some male students in the hallway at Al Amal, and I asked them how their school was different from public schools. One of the boys told me, “At public schools, they don’t care about the students—here they really care about us.” One of his friends standing nearby agreed with him: “Yeah, if they catch us smoking at a public school, they’d just walk past, but here they’d pull you in and beat you, you know, make sure you’re never going to smoke again... it’s good—I don’t like it at the time because I’m going to get beat but it’s good.” The other students nodded in agreement.² People at all four schools regularly made this contrast between their caring community and the decline and decadence in public schools. This difference was a critical—and constitutive—boundary, helping to give the schools a sense of who they were by showing who they were not. Policing this boundary is a theme that will recur in each of the chapters, as all four of the moral technologies the book describes—gender, science, scripture, and prayer—were used to show the essentially *moral* differences between these communities and those outside of them.

Building on the growing boundaries literature in the sociology of culture (e.g. Lamont 2000, 1994; Lichtherman 2005; Gieryn 1999), this chapter describes how these schools identify their traditions in relation to the rest of the United States, seeking “distinction with engagement” (Smith 1998) from the rest of America. Just about everyone in these four schools viewed their relationship with the United States as a problem: they were drawn to America and eager to be part of it, yet they were also fearful of what it could make them. Drawing particularly on interview data as well as secondary literature on both traditions’ educational philosophies and histories in the United States, I use this chapter to provide sociological, religious, and historical contexts to the schools, while also using my field notes and interview data to show how the school communities themselves understand their place in the American landscape.

One of the biggest challenges in policing those boundaries was the internet, a topic I discussed regularly in my interviews. The communities had ambivalent feelings about being

² To be clear: the ‘beating’ is metaphorical. None of these schools practices corporal punishment.

online, considering it a helpful tool as well as a dangerous incursion upon their vulnerable children's moral growth. Because of the internet's near omnipresence in the era of smart phones and wifi, it was increasingly difficult to police what students were reading and seeing, and, as a result, who they were becoming. The schools' had various strategies to deal with this problem, including taking an active role in monitoring the students' internet activities, even when they were outside of school. Finally, because the internet is easily understood as a "technology," the chapter ends by comparing the internet as a technology to the less obvious idea that gender, science, scripture, and prayer are "technologies of moral authority."

Chapter Three: What Being a Woman Can Do

In a wide-ranging conversation with a female teacher at Al Haqq, I noticed how she regularly used women's dress as a metric of religious devotion. "You look at the parents coming in, half are wearing hijab," she said, emphasizing the point with her hand. "If the family background is not having that din [religion], what can we do?" Hijab [the scarf Muslim women wear to cover their hair] as a measure of the religious seriousness of both the individual and her community was not at all uncommon. The same teacher told me, "Even the school, if you look at all the staff, you're not going to find everyone who's at the same level of Islam, whether it's the make-up or the dress, you have some differences." She made clear that prayer was her school's biggest concern, but appropriate gender performance was the second goal: "Salah [prayer] is obviously the most pivotal, all of us know people who pray all the time, they fast all the time, but they don't wear the jibaab [a modest full dress]. Does that mean we're going to knock them down? No, but they need work." While this teacher had a more conservative position than many of her students, her insistence that specific ways of being a woman have a certain power to determine both an individual's and a community's moral worth were not at all uncommon at any of the schools I studied. Yet, in analyzing how male and female performance worked in these schools, I realized that female performance was a technology of moral authority in four very different senses. Because gender is a continually contested and interactive experience (West and Zimmerman 1987), performance of masculinity will certainly be important in this chapter as well, though much of the schools' own concerns were about the performance of femininity, making it the

primary focus of this chapter

In studying conservative religious groups, discussions of women's authority generally consider the word in four different ways. In this chapter, I consolidate and describe those ways of thinking about authority—which range from discussions of women's agency, power, and authority—into a typology of authority that will be used in the rest of the book and will have implications for other theoretical discussions of authority, power, and coercion. I also show how female performance—in reference to the many forms of knowledge-how that are applied to it—becomes a technology of moral authority that does important work for the communities I studied. Finally, I show the understanding and performance of masculinity in each of these communities was directly related to each of these conceptions.

The first, older way of thinking about female authority describes women as lacking agency, formed from childhood into a patriarchal community that limits their power. Authority is placed outside of these women, and they are forced to act according to the dictates of patriarchs or, more diffusely, patriarchy. This form of authority can be further divided into two sub-categories. The first is a more explicitly Weberian form, in which people are compelled to act because of the direct commands of others with legitimate power. The second is rooted in post-structural theory, arguing that people are compelled to act because of the legitimacy of either discourses (Foucault 1995), performances (Butler 2006), or fields (Bourdieu 1990). While there is obviously a substantial difference between these two sub-categories, what holds them together is the coercive ability to get someone to do something, whether at the command of an individual or via the subtle coercions of communal life. I call this type *physical authority*.

A more recent innovation in feminist theory suggests that women in conservative religious groups have a certain internal authority that allows them sufficient agency to *choose* conservative religious life (Mahmood 2005; Nussbaum 2001). As opposed to a Marxian model of false consciousness, this latter group insists that women are (relatively) free to interpret and apply their religious traditions. This *interpretive authority* is different from physical authority in that it is not necessarily the ability to coerce others and does not necessarily have anything to with compelling physical actions. However, those with interpretive authority might be able to compel physical actions in line with interpretations they have made using physical authority. Despite these differences from physical authority, interpretive authority is a form of authority inasmuch as it is a certain *power* and it is afforded *legitimacy* by members

of the community. At the schools where I did fieldwork, Muslim students were given less *physical authority* (they had to wear hijab and dress certain ways) but they were given much more *ideological authority* (they could think whatever they wanted about what they wore, provided they wore it). The reverse was true for Evangelicals, who had much more latitude about what they wore provided that they believed the right things. In both cases, boys were policed accordingly, but *in reference to girls*: how they interacted with girls and the moral worth of those interactions were measured according to these separate conceptions of authority.

These two forms of authority coexist with two other types, which I'm calling *representational authority* and *pragmatic authority*. While physical authority is about the legitimate power of a certain person (or community) to get another person to perform an action and interpretive authority is about the legitimate power of a person to interpret their practices and beliefs in a certain way, representational authority is about the power of certain people to represent their communities. This third type of authority is important not only in interactions with people who are foreign to a community; it is also important for people *within* the community because, in certain social worlds, key members (such as women) are important as both representatives of their community and as indices of their community's moral worth. Various feminist scholars have shown how the female body is used to both advanced patriarchal interests (Riley 1999) and as a gauge of a (patriarchal) community's moral worth (e.g. Yuval-Davis 1998; Gressgard 2006; Duits and van Zoonen 2006).

At the Muslim and Evangelical schools where I did fieldwork, female students were given this representational authority, with female students' performance of certain practices considered a marker of the entire community's moral standing, particularly as an index of their ambivalent relationship to the greater United States. Learning how to be Muslim or Evangelical in America requires certain gender performances, and these performances have implications for the students themselves and for everyone else in their community. This power to represent the community's moral worth should be understood as a form of authority because it is widely understood to be legitimate: it just makes sense to many people in these communities that how women act should be understood as a gauge of their community's moral status, more so than how men act. Boys felt the difficulty of this representational authority in a different way than did girls: while the boys often enforced girls ability to represent their community *to other Muslims*, they themselves felt the pressure to represent Islam to the outside world, in a way that was just as marked for girls who wore

hijab. In this sense, while the girls' *female representation* was more important within their sub-community, the pressure of their *religious representation* was felt equally among both boys and girls. While boys were allowed to be individuals and not function as indices of moral worth to the own communities, they had no such luck with the outside world.

Finally, *pragmatic authority* does not challenge the underlying patriarchal commitments but does strengthen women's capacity to do all but officially run their communities. Pragmatic authority therefore resembles physical authority (Authority I) but is ideologically distinct from it. Gallagher finds that for Evangelicals, the husband's "headship plays a strategically important yet largely symbolic role in the lives of ordinary Evangelicals" (2003: 84), though which she develops the concept of "pragmatic egalitarianism." In a similar way, a woman with pragmatic authority might do all the things a man with physical authority might do, but will generally claim the two are distinct, as will many in the community. I found examples of pragmatic authority in all four schools, especially in reference to thorny questions about scriptural bans on female leadership in light of obviously competent female principals. Men are obviously as involved in these processes as women, and often both in making the pragmatic decisions about women's and men's appropriate places, but also in figuring out and performing what is worth worrying about. In all four of the schools, boys were worse-behaved than girls, and that is at least partially because there was a pragmatic acceptance that despite everything a community might believe about male-headship, they also believed that "boys will be boys" and that female students are therefore responsible for classroom order, among other things. Boys acting up was actually not natural though: it was permitted in a way that was not for girls, forcing a kind of pragmatic authority even as boys and girls were both continually reminded that male leadership is superior.

In each of these cases, expectations of male and female performance act as an entity larger than any one person or interaction: they act as technologies of moral authority.

Chapter Four: Science as a Best Fit Curve (*included as example chapter 1*)

In one of the chemistry classes I observed at Al Amal, Brother Nabeel had his students do a classic lab experiment, where they wrote down the temperature of a solid as it gradually turned to liquid, finding a diagonal line followed by a plateau, and then another diagonal line. Some students drew some graphs on the board, and Nabeel also projected a

Microsoft Excel graph of the compiled results onto a white board at the front of the class. “Does this look more or less like what you had?” he asked.

“Yeah,” everyone said.

“Don’t connect the dots like you did in grade school,” he told them. “We don’t do that in science. We draw something called a best fit curve.” He then drew a best fit curve on the white board between the dots projected from the excel graph.

A best fit curve is of course based on real data, and it’s not entirely arbitrary, but imagine we took the idea of a best fit curve a bit further, and instead of actually doing research, we just knew what the research said we were supposed to find. It’d be easy enough then to draw a best fit curve between the points we already made to show we know what we’re supposed to know. And then also imagine that some of the points that we have to fit are not science at all: they’re state requirements, or religious commitments, or just personal beliefs. The way regular people think about science is a bit like this: it’s a best fit curve between a variety of different points. It’s not that you can just do anything with it. The technology has certain limitations, and it affects us as much as we affect it. Pre-existing facts and ways of thinking about evidence shape the kind of science-curve we can draw, even as we also draw the line between our pre-existing metaphysical commitments.

In the schools I studied, science functioned as a technology of moral authority in a variety of ways. Like the other technologies of moral authority I discuss in this book, science was both an actor and acted upon: it held a certain power to force actors to engage the world “from a scientific perspective” even as it gained or lost its relative salience according the local practices and boundaries of each community. Something called science really mattered at all four of these schools, and especially because they were creationist, they were especially sensitive to any accusations of being anti-science. Of course, science is many things at once, as well as many theories, and one of the most important lessons any study of creationists reveals is that you can agree with most of science without agreeing with all of it. Once you accept this—accept that science, despite the best efforts of the scientific method’s devotees, is not an all-or-nothing game—then it becomes sociologically interesting to determine not *whether* people like science, but *which* parts of science they like, and why.

In this chapter, I’ll explore how science worked in these schools, paying attention first to the processes of authority that solidify the teachers’ interpretation as students’ experience of science, then using that understanding of teachers’ power to show how

students and teachers navigate the perennial question of “what will be on the test,” a query that grows complicated when tests come from outside and their questions counter religious beliefs. This focus on the difficult relationship between outside testing agencies and the schools’ commitments to creationism allows me to move into a deeper analysis of how creationism worked at each school, first describing the strategies students and teachers used to deny a scientific theory while still considering themselves scientific, and then describing a complicated problem: while all four schools denied the theory of evolution, that denial mattered a lot more for Evangelicals than it did for Muslims. This question about the moral salience of evolution gets right to the heart of the chapter’s main question: how do these communities use science as a technology of moral authority to maintain their tradition, both engaging and distinguishing themselves from secular America? And how does the technology of science act in these schools even as it is acted upon?

Chapter Five: How to Do Things with Scripture

In a freshman physical science class at Good Tree, the teacher, Mr. Phillips, who also taught physics and sophomore doctrine, gave a power point presentation to his students with a variety of quotes from the Bible which, he argued, could be misconstrued to mean the Bible is wrong. For example, they discussed Isaiah 40:22—“it is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth”—telling his students that “circle is better translated as sphere, something that’s round, not that I know a lot about this, but from what I know.” He paused. “Some people use this passage to say, oh the Bible says the Earth is flat, but the Bible actually doesn’t say that the Earth is flat or anything, it says that the Earth is round, round like a sphere or a ball before anyone knew that....My point is to show you the Bible had a lot of scientific truths in it before we discovered them.” The rest of the presentation was a combination of showing how the Bible’s science is never wrong and how it was occasionally preternaturally right, foreshadowing discoveries that would come some thousands of years later. Like the other three high schools faculties I studied, Good Tree’s staff sought to reproduce its creationism in its students, and like the other three schools, the stakes were much the same: the scripture must be true, and if you think it isn’t, well then you’re thinking wrong.

Yet scriptures were more than just a source of truth. All four schools cared deeply about their scriptures and encouraged their students to have a meaningful relationship with them. For the Muslim schools, scripture is a necessary door to a larger world. It would be impossible to enter into Islamic life without its basis in the Qur'an and the hadith (the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad). Yet once that door has been entered, much of the lived experience of Islam is outside of and beyond scripture. That is not to deny the importance of the Qur'an: Muslims emphasize the symbolic and miraculous powers of the text, protecting the physical object and venerating its words' protective powers in a way that is much less common for Evangelicals.

This focus on the book's powers as a physical object—rather than as a text that must be continually consulted—shows the difference with Evangelicals. Muslims *do* read the Qur'an, but they do not emphasize such reading—or deem it as necessary—as the Evangelical reading of the Bible. When an Evangelical accepts Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and savior, she confirms her salvation, agreeing to live her life according to the Bible and insisting that it only through the Bible that she will be able to live. In some sense, this is not that different from more conservative interpretations of Islam, which insist that salvation is only available through the Qur'an and hadith. Yet because of the religious traditions' different understandings of the relationship between works and salvation, these similar starting places end up in quite different locations: Muslims might enter into good works through the Qur'an and hadith, yet it is ultimately their works (especially their prayer) that will save them. For Evangelicals, the Bible is not a door to works. It is all there is, the “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth” as some Evangelicals put it. Of course, these “basic instructions” are for certain *works*, yet the emphasis among Evangelicals is always that these actions are the after-effects of the really important stuff: the relationship to God, mediated through his words in the Bible.

People at both Christian schools told me they called themselves “Biblical Christians” as a means of differentiating themselves from others (who were usually more liberal) and I never encountered this kind of distinction at the Muslim schools. If Muslims at the schools I studied worried about distinguishing themselves from other Muslims, it was usually first to show they were not terrorist or anti-American, but after that, it was to emphasize the importance of prayer and good works. It was only *after* talking about the works themselves that Muslims would bring up the scriptural justification for them and whether or not such an

interpretation was valid. In contrast, Evangelicals would use allegiance to the Bible as a metric-in-itself, independent of whether or not works were involved. Islamic studies teachers often told me about the importance of a relationship to prayer; for Evangelicals, the central relationship was a relationship with the Bible. (Of course, for all of them the primary relationship was with God.)

I begin the chapter with an overview of the differences between traditional Evangelical Christian and traditional Sunni Muslim conceptions of scripture. After that, I elaborate on the difference between their uses of scripture as a technology of moral authority by going over three important ways they “do things” with their scriptures: the use of the physical object, memorization, and interpretation. In each of these cases, I draw on my ethnographic fieldwork to show specific moments in which teachers and peers use their moral and positional authority to show why this “technology of moral authority” is obviously effective and important. In each of these cases, I show how a focus on scripture is a key distinction from the outside world in all of these schools, though especially among the Evangelicals. Learning how to leverage scripture as a technology affords these students both tremendous power and a continual awareness of their key differences from the rest of the United States, even as they try to bridge that difference by regularly showing the *scriptural basis* of what they like about America.

Chapter Six: Prayer Changes Things (*included as example chapter 2*)

In watching and talking about prayer at the four schools, I was struck by the way that “prayer changes things” for my respondents. That quote is lifted from the back of a T-shirt some Good Tree students made for themselves, but it could just as well be said for any of the schools. Prayer can change a situation, or a group experience, or even the individuals pray-ers. I was watching Friday afternoon communal prayer at Al Amal one week, and I was struck by the dramatic change in a group of troublemaking juniors I had befriended. “Did it start?” one asked. “Yeah I think it started,” said another, and then it happened: suddenly they’re very serious, all of them bowing at the same time, respectful and silent. And then when they were done, they were quieter, more subdued. They shook hands with those around them, greeting each other with Asalaam alakum [peace be with you] and responding

with *walakum asalaam* [and with you, peace]. As one of the Al Haqq teachers told me about another difficult group of students, “They’re only well behaved at salah.”

Prayer is increasingly a field of study within the social sciences, both via its perceived intercessory power (Baesler 2012, Bender 2008, Cerulo and Barra 2008, Wuthnow 2008a and 2008b), and, more relevant for this project, is relationship to social structures and projects of self-cultivation (Bowen 1989; Mahmood 2005; Sharp 2012). Many of these works stress the importance of ritual prayer in constituting and developing a certain kind of self, a self that is transformed into someone virtuous. While it is less cited today, some years ago work on prayer tended to emphasize its quasi-scientific and pedestrian applications. Indeed, for Weber, this is the very source of religion (1993): prayer is essentially magic, and magic is a kind of rational action through which actors acquire what they need. Durkheim disagreed, seeing prayer (or communal ritual anyways) as necessarily communal and about developing strong, social bonds (1995).

This tension in how to view prayer is not an arcane sociological discussion: Each school acknowledged the challenge of making an infinite deity’s requirement feel spontaneous and relational. More important for this book’s overall argument, each school saw prayer as an important technology through which they could relate to the outside world: prayer helped them strengthen their own commitments, it helped them pray that America would be stronger, and it assured them that if they continued on the righteous path, all would be well. Especially for Muslims, the way to tell if someone has any chance of being righteous is to see if that person prays. For Evangelicals, an American public sphere without prayer requires, well, a lot more of their own private prayer to fix it.

For all of these schools, prayer is about transformation: transforming the self, or a situation, or a group experience, or even the world-at-large. Each of these changes can be produced by prayer, often in the same action. Additionally, actors can set out to achieve these goals through prayer and find their goals unrealized, forcing them to find some explanation for the lack of effectiveness. In my fieldwork, I found that prayer as a technology of moral authority required quite different sorts of knowledge-how, as well as quite a lot of knowledge-that. Community members had to know implicitly how to pray, yet they also had to be able to figure out—both consciously and unconsciously—how prayer works best in a given context and towards a given end. Most importantly, they had to come

to be so familiar with prayer that it simply felt real and obviously effective—and they often came to this familiarity through the gentle authority of those further along in their traditions.

Chapter Seven: Because They Don't Believe It's a Lie

One day, when I was leaving one of the Muslim schools where I did my research, a man in a white V-neck T-shirt and shorts called after me. I was walking down the street, hurrying to an appointment.

“Yo teach,” he said, repeatedly.

I assumed he was talking to someone else.

“Yo teach!”

I turned around.

“You teach at that school right, that Muslim school?”

“Sort of,” I said. I didn't really want to get into the intricacies of how I was at the school to study it for a dissertation about Muslims and Evangelicals, and that I spent time with students and faculty and sometimes I did substitute teach, but I never had a position of authority, and...well, you get the idea. It would have been a big conversation. “Sort of” was the best I could do. I continued walking, and he walked next to me.

“Here's what I want you to tell me,” he said, as he matched my pace. Neither of us actually stopped, and we only occasionally made eye contact. “I want you to tell me why people there teach a lie.”

I looked at him a bit surprised, and he stared at me right in the eye. I tried to think of something that would respect the community I had committed to study and also this person who had engaged me in conversation. I said, “Well, I guess it's because they don't believe it's a lie.” I was trying to keep the conversation civil, a skill I've gotten pretty good at from talking to creationists or people who insist on separating genders or other folks who *really* believe things I really *don't* believe. Yet that skill is a bit harder to master when I'm late for a meeting and trying to get back to Manhattan.

My interlocutor didn't seem to notice my concern. “Here's what I want to see happen-I want to see scholars from Islam and scholars from Christianity, like two of each, really go at it and have a debate. Because people have to know the truth, that your prophet, he had sex with a six year old girl and he was a murderer. And people need to know that.”

In hindsight, I should have corrected some of these misperceptions and defended Islam better right away. But because I didn't want our conversation to take on the form of a debate in which I, the wise scholar, proved the civilian wrong, I wanted to make him feel acknowledged, and so, in typical grad student form, I said "It's complicated," and then as I was planning on explaining more, he saw his bus and boarded it. "No," he said, "it's simple." And then he disappeared.

In many ways, this book is an attempt to better answer that man's questions. I'm not particularly interested in answering the question of why anyone teaches a "lie," which is, of course, a mean-spirited way to start a conversation, but a better starting question might be something like "How is that school able to exist in modern America?" It should be obvious that Muslims and Evangelicals in America have much in common with the rest of their country. First off, they enjoy much of the same popular culture. This is true even for groups much more opposed to what they perceive to be mainstream American values than the schools I studied. On a Muslim website that was much more sympathetic to violent jihad than anyone I encountered at either of the two Muslim schools, an anonymous commentator favorably compared Islamic terrorism to Luke Skywalker taking down the Death Star. At all four schools, I talked with students and adults about secular movies, books, and TV shows, even shows like "Modern Family" with sexual mores their authorities might find questionable. More important than movie and TV references was a larger sense that being part of the American story mattered: people at these schools cared about living out the American dream, participating in civic life, and enjoying American technology and culture. They like it here.

Yet just because they like America doesn't mean they don't want to change it, or, at the very least, avoid parts of it. Yet it bears remembering that most of us actually feel the same way. Evolutionists want everyone to believe in evolution. Feminists want everyone to be feminist, or at least to respect feminism. The test of democratic modernity is not how people who agree can get along. It's how people who disagree—intensely, and about issues of real importance—can continue to live together in peace. The fact that we are not all secularists as was once predicted—the fact that some of us are conservative, that some of us disagree about feminism, or science, or the role of religion in public life—complicates modernity, but it does not challenge it fundamentally. We are, all of us, trying to figure out what it means to be modern and American, and we bring with us certain traditions that

bound and embody what we take to be important and true. We have to encourage ourselves and each other to believe, unlike my interlocutor on the street argued, that the situation is not simple. It's actually quite complicated.

Much of that complication comes from a problem we all share, Muslims and secularists, Christians and critics: while I would not say that any of us are living a “lie”, we are, at the very least, living out beliefs that are not as obviously true as we claim. We find a way to pass on to our children not only our values and commitments, our knowledge-that and our knowledge-how, but also our insistence that what we claim to be true is so obvious that any doubt would be ridiculous. We could just as easily wonder why people believe the teaching of the Prophet as we could ask why they believe the teachings of the United States Constitution: neither is written into our genetic code, and, at least from a secular sociological perspective, neither hangs in the air in some Platonic Form of the True. What keeps this truth afloat then—the reason people believe what they believe, practice what they practice, and do what they do—are what I've been calling technologies of moral authority, localized systems like prayer, scripture, gender, and science that subtly move the lives of their practitioners (even as those practitioners can move the technologies as well). This book is not about why anyone believes a lie, but it is about how people come to know things—both propositions and practices—and how that knowledge comes to make sense through various technologies of moral authority. It might have been posed to me as a question about Muslims, but my answer, I hope, is about all of us.

Methodological Appendices

I will attach brief appendices describing my work as an ethnographer and interviewer, providing detailed discussions of the project's design and all stages of data collection and analysis. I will also provide the interview schedules and Good Tree questionnaire.

Author Information

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Market/Audience/Prose Style

Make the Children Come to Me will be of significant interest to many different audiences, including academics and anyone else interested in education, Islam, Evangelicalism, or the relationship between science and religion. It makes significant theoretical contributions to sociological studies of authority, tradition, practices, science, prayer, scripture, and gender, each of which could be relevant to many subfields in sociology, religious studies, education, and science and technology studies, making it suitable for graduate-level and advanced undergraduate courses in each of these fields. The book’s analysis of how authority helps to produce moral and scientific knowledge will also appeal to scholars of education alongside teachers, principals, concerned parents, and policy analysts who are interested in the processes of moral authority that help students become adults.

The book’s style is in some ways modeled on *Finding Mecca in America* (Bilici 2012) and *Laughing Saints and Righteous Heroes* (Effler 2010) in that it seeks to combine theoretical innovation with extended ethnographic scenes that resemble creative non-fiction. While the book advances many nuanced theoretical arguments, I will often include them in footnotes

and sections that readers can easily skip without losing the book's larger ethnographic story, a strategy modeled on, among other texts, Courtney Bender's *God's Love We Deliver* (2003).

Competition/Related Titles

While certain books have compared Muslim and Evangelical conservative politics (e.g. Marty and Appleby 1991; Bruce 2008; Eisenstadt 1999), there have been none that provide comparative ethnographies, and none that compares Muslim and Evangelical schools. There have been studies of Evangelical schools (Rose 1988; Wagner 1990; Peshkin 1986), though none recently, and while there have also been studies of Muslim schools, only one (Zine 2008) has been a book-length treatment, and it was of Canadian schools.

The book's theoretical and empirical arguments build upon—even if they remain quite distinct from—various works, including studies of moral education, American Islam, American Christianity, and the sociologies of education, knowledge, science, and religion. Regarding studies of moral education, the book is similar to a small but important group of texts that are challenging the relative lack of focus on moral education in American schools. Like *Death of Character* (Hunter 2001), *Judging School Discipline* (Arum 2003), and *Bad Boys* (Ferguson 2001), this book is primarily about how moral life works in schools rather than the more traditional concerns about stratification that generally animate the sociology of education and education scholarship more generally. However, also like these books, there are important implications in this research for explaining social inequality, in this case particularly regarding gender and religious minorities. This book builds upon these previous ones through its comparative angle, its focus on religious minorities, and its theoretical innovations in the study of authority, tradition, and knowledge.

The book is also in conversation with many recent monographs on contemporary American Islam, including studies of Muslim schools (Haddad et al 2009; Hefner and Zaman 2006; Sarroub 2005) and gender (Ahmed 2011; Haddad et al 2006; Karim 2008; Rouse 2004; Hammer 2012). The book also develops more sophisticated theoretical discussions of American Islam (Bilici 2012; Grewal 2013) by showing how processes of power and certain “technologies of moral authority” help Islam make sense. Similarly, the book builds upon various social scientific studies of American Evangelicalism, including studies of gender

(Gallagher 2003; Griffith 2000; Wilcox 2004; Ingersoll 2003; Bartkowski 2001), prayer (Luhmann 2012), scripture (Bielo 2009; Malley 2004) intellectual critique (Hunter 2010; Kyle 2006), and integration into American life (Elisa 2011; Lidsay 2007). The book's comparative approach brings together these separate conversations, and its theoretical contributions to the study of scripture, prayer, science, and gender should make it of broader interest to students of comparative education, comparative religion, and comparative social science.

Finally, the book adds to social scientific and philosophical discussions to make innovative arguments about tradition, knowledge, science, and morality. Tradition as a concept has traditionally been ignored by sociologists, yet it is seeing a comeback among scholars of religious studies (Stout 2009) and anthropology (Asad 2009, 1993). The sociology of knowledge is enjoying something of a comeback as well (e.g. Glaeser 2011), and this book seeks to strengthen that resurgence by bringing it together with the revival of Gilbert Ryle's distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how. Similarly, even if sociologists have actually been studying morality for some time, the subfield of the "sociology of morality" is increasingly important (e.g. Lamont 2002; Hitlin and Vaisey 2010; Abend 2014), and this book adds to the field through its theoretical descriptions of technologies of moral authority and its empirical accounts of how moral life works at four schools.

Lastly, chapters four and five provide an important ethnographic account of lay science in contrast to the more typical sociological and anthropological focus on "laboratory life" (Latour and Woolgar 1986; see, e.g. Cetina 1999). This focus develops longstanding conversations about creationism in the study of science and religion, most of which are either theological (Haight 1995), philosophical (Gould 2011; Barbour 1997), or historical (Brooke 1991; Numbers 2006), rather than the ethnographic portrayal this book provides (for an exception, see Toumey 1994). More importantly, all of these texts avoid Muslim creationism (with the exception of brief reference in Numbers 2006).

Manuscript Status, Length, Delivery, Difference from Dissertation and Articles

The manuscript is based upon a completed dissertation for the Yale University Sociology Department, *The Work of Knowing: Science, Religion, and Tradition in Sunni and Evangelicals Schools*, which was defended in August of 2013 “with distinction.” That dissertation is not accessible for two years and the outline described here is substantially different from the dissertation manuscript. A chapter from the dissertation has been removed, chapters one, two, and seven are essentially new, and the book will incorporate interview and questionnaire data that was not at all used in the dissertation. While chapters three through six bear superficial similarities to dissertation chapters, they have each been substantially revised with their arguments often completely reconfigured.

Sections of chapters four and six are reproduced in papers under review in *The American Sociological Review* and *The Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* respectively, though both articles are substantially different arguments from their respective chapters, with a substantial lack of overlap between the articles’ data and the chapters’. Similarly, the underlying typology and some of the data in chapter three are repeated in a paper soon to be submitted to *Sociological Theory*, though the paper is much more engaged in theoretical debates and presents considerably less empirical data than does the chapter (the paper, for example, does not draw at all from the approximately 150 taped interviews). A small section of chapter four was previously published on the blog, *Mobilizing Ideas*, and a small section of chapter was one was previously published on the blog, *The Immanent Frame*. I have presented some of the arguments in this book at academic conferences.

The book will be approximately 250 pages, exclusive of notes, references, and index, with minimal graphical material, though it could easily be either longer or (somewhat) shorter. I anticipate manuscript delivery in August 2015.

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