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# Veil of Resilience: How the Concept of Honor Affects Female Education in Afghanistan

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**Veil of Resilience: How the Concept of Honor Affects Female Education in Afghanistan**

By

Fereshta Ullah

Accepted in Partial Completion  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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Fereshta Ullah

November 27, 2017

**Veil of Resilience: How the Concept of Honor Affects Female Education in Afghanistan**

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By  
Fereshta Ullah  
November 2017

## Abstract

There are women all over the world who are unable to attend school or enter the work force because of cultural barriers. Women in Afghanistan have difficult obstacles that prevent them from seeking education. In this thesis I look at a specific cultural practice that affects female attendance in school. This thesis explores how the concept of *namus*, or honor, in southeast Afghanistan, encourages female seclusion from schools. Additionally, according to my research, these regions have historically low education attendance rates for women and a more definitive concept of honor. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, in rural Afghanistan, 90% of women are unable to read and write (UNAMA 2009, 8). The southeast province of Kandahar has seen several acid attacks against school girls as well, making this risk a significant variable in defining and analyzing the concept of honor.

I use historical and narrative analyses and I synthesize and evaluate data gathered from researchers to show the multitude of honor based factors that affect female schooling in Afghanistan. I use narrative analysis of newspaper accounts and case studies that focus on how culturally significant the concept of honor is for women. Additionally, I reconstruct the development of this concept and how it has affected female seclusion. Access to education for women in Afghanistan may be facilitated by a more sophisticated appreciation of why women's education is difficult to obtain due to the cultural concept of *namus*. I address methods to help promote a culturally sensitive approach that will effectively improve female education attendance without stigmatizing or harming girls and young women. This thesis utilized community empowerment studies and applied anthropology by proposing means in which governments and NGO's can more effectively hire and train female teachers who can support female-only schools and make home visits to teach literacy. Bringing the concept of *namus* to light and researching its importance in relation to female seclusion will help our society and Afghan locals to develop and implement healthier programs for women in Afghanistan, and possibly other parts of the world.

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## **Introduction**

Afghanistan is a country with a rich history stemming from an ethnically and culturally diverse population. The country has had many dark and challenging obstacles and has successfully repelled several foreign invasions. The establishment of modern-day Afghanistan occurred during the 1700's under the rule of Ahmad Khan Abdali. For centuries, each leadership in Afghanistan tried to implement laws that improved women's status in society. The minimum age of marriage was increased, divorce was given as a right, and female schools started popping up around the nation. However, in the 1980's the maltreatment of women in Afghanistan began to catch the attention of the world, but little has been done to effectively improve the status of women.

Currently in Afghanistan, there are a number of barriers to female education. In part due to some of these barriers, this has led Afghanistan to have a female literacy rate of 17% (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO 2016). The country currently has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world and a gender inequality index that ranks 154<sup>th</sup> out of 159 countries (Rashid 2010, 107; United Nations Development Program, UNDP 2016). The true success of a nation depends on the welfare of its women. Studies have shown that a lack of female education has a directly negative effect on the health and wellbeing of women, and society as a whole (Jackson 2011). According to UNESCO, a mother's education is very important for her health. Educated mothers are less likely to die from childbirth and are more likely to improve their child's survival rate (UNESCO 2013). Educating girls can improve the economy of an entire nation and studies confirm that education can save children's lives.

Afghanistan is a place where women and children are in need of further education in order to combat the staggering infant mortality and maternal mortality rates.

The concept of honor is far reaching and it influences social life in Afghanistan. This thesis aims to understand whether the cultural concept of honor specifically prevents girls from seeking education. Additionally, this thesis highlights major barriers girls face when trying to go to school and how these barriers are influenced by the cultural stigma of losing the honor of the family. In order to understand the depth and power of the concept of honor in Afghanistan, the research includes a look at the history and demographics of the nation.

This thesis utilizes community empowerment studies and applied anthropology by proposing the means in which governments and non-governmental organizations, NGO's, can more effectively hire and train female teachers to run female-only schools and make home visits to teach literacy. A historical and narrative analysis and synthesized and evaluated data is provided to show the multitude of honor based factors that affect female schooling in Afghanistan. The historical analysis will be used to show the policy changes towards women throughout time and how those policies created a cultural shift. The narrative analysis will include a collection of narratives from young girls who are stigmatized for going to school. Additionally, there will be narratives of relatives and their views on honor and education. I will synthesize and evaluate data gathered previously by multiple researchers, NGOs and governmental organizations. It is imperative to understand why locals are not allowing their daughters to go to school because it is proven that educating women can positively transform the current and future generations. Chapter One will provide a historical background on women's rights in Afghanistan and how modernization policies created a cultural shift for women throughout time. Additionally, it will discuss the extensive history of Afghanistan, focusing on

policies towards women. Chapter Two will show a detailed background of Afghanistan's demographics, revealing its diverse tribal composition. Chapter Three will reveal the significant barriers girls have to face in order to go to school. Chapter Four is the heart of the thesis, focusing on the concept of honor and detailing its history and influence over society. Chapter Four will branch out specific elements that are integral to the concept of honor; *pardah* (seclusion) and gender segregation. Chapter Five will show how I used narrative analysis, historical analysis and synthesized and evaluated data to understand the influence of honor in society and how strongly it hinders female education in Afghanistan. Chapter Six will include my findings after analyzing all the gathered data. The final chapter will be a conclusion of the thesis and will include the implications of the work. It will discuss how these findings can improve the situation in Afghanistan and how it can be implemented to increase education attendance among girls.

## Chapter One: History of Afghanistan

### Introduction

Afghanistan is a land that has been invaded unceasingly for many centuries, hence its nickname: “The Graveyard of Empires.” Years of war and unrest have influenced Afghan society significantly. Understanding the history of Afghanistan is imperative to understanding its cultural and socio-economic development towards women today particularly for two reasons: the tribal roles that developed during the country’s foundation which would reinforce Pashtun cultural concepts and the future national policies that would specifically aim to improve women’s status. This section aims to summarize the extensive history of Afghanistan, focusing primarily on the year 2001 to the present.



Figure 1: Current map of Afghanistan (Maps Open Source 2017)

## **The Establishment of Afghanistan**

The foundation of modern day Afghanistan is attributed to Ahmad Khan Abdali who would later become known as Ahmad Shah Durrani. Ahmad Shah Durrani unified the Pashtun tribes, resulting in a greater support for one Pashtun ruled nation under the name of Afghanistan (Barfield 2012). Because tribal Pashtun concepts would later affect women's status in Afghanistan it is crucial to understand how the nation developed a historically Pashtun influence. According to historical accounts from *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi* written by Mahmud-ul-Musanna (1753), Ahmad Khan Abdali (1722-1772) was born in Herat, Afghanistan. Ahmad Khan Abdali was a tribal warrior for the Abdali Pashtuns. He later became a lieutenant for Nadir Shah Afshar (Barfield 2012). Nadir Shah Afshar was the Shah of Iran and founder of the Afsharid empire that ruled from 1736-1747. The Afsharid Empire spanned in its entirety over territories from Russia in the North to China in the east and Armenia in the west (Dupree 1980).

Nadir Shah is termed by historians “the Napoléon of Persia” and “the Second Alexander” (Axworthy 2006). Nadir Shah was responsible for reuniting the Persian territories by removing the neighboring Ottoman and Russian invaders and uniting an increasingly anarchical population (Barfield 2012). One of the many territorial tribes Nadir Shah had conquered were the Abdali Pashtuns who lived in various areas of Southwest Asia including the provinces of Herat, Farah and Kandahar (Dupree 1980). It was in Kandahar that he found Ahmad Khan Abdali, a 16 year old political prisoner, and released him (Ansary 2014; Barfield 2012). Nadir Shah was pleased with the admirable and fierce warriors known as the Abdali Pashtuns and since some of them had eventually submitted to aiding Nadir Shah in his conquests, he had grown a liking to them and utilized them in his army (Barfield 2012). Ahmad Khan Abdali, an Abdali Pashtun would become a treasury official and the commander of a body of Afghan cavalry under Nadir Shah's

rule (Ansary 2014). When Nadir Shah began suspecting a plot against his life, he ordered Ahmad Khan Abdali to arrest officers in the camp at Quchan (Barfield 2012). However, the plotters had heard of the counter-plot beforehand and took action that night, beheading Nadir Shah in 1747.

It wasn't until the death of Nadir Shah that Ahmad Khan Abdali received the opportunity to establish a new nation (Barfield 2012). His assassination created a political vacuum that Abdali Pashtuns would take advantage of. According to legend, when Nadir Shah was killed he left behind a harem along with an abundance of treasures. Since the harem was considered loot, a large crowd of men ran towards the harem of women to take claim over them. Ahmad Khan Abdali was guarding his former leader's harem. When he saw the men approaching he fought every single one of them off, protecting the women from their violence (Ansary 2014). This cultural narrative is one of many examples of the Afghan fantasy and desire that women were honorably protected throughout history. After Nadir Shah's death, Ahmad Khan Abdali and his 4,000 horsemen fled the camp, taking some of Nadir Shah's treasures along with them (Ansary 2014). He led his tribal horsemen to Kandahar where a nine day *jirga* (Tribal Assembly) would take place to decide who should lead the Abdali Pashtuns. Ansary mentions an ancient Pashtun saying that expresses the attitude of the tribal leaders: "It's me against my brothers, it's me and my brothers against our cousins, it's we and our cousins against the invader" (Ansary 2014, 12). The tribal leaders knew they were under the threat of invasion by the Persians and Turks so they sought to temporarily unite under one leader who could protect their autonomy and afterwards they could resume back to their individual sovereignty. The Pashtuns traditionally have been comprised of large families that came from specific lineages (Ansary 2014). These lineages were an important identity for each Pashtun tribe and sub-tribe. Therefore they each believed in family autonomy and individual autonomy. This made it challenging for Ahmad Khan Abdali to keep

them under his power. The Pashtuns also had designated statuses: men superior to women, old superior to young, and the son of a famous Pashtun was superior to the son of an unknown Pashtun (Ansary 2014). This was an additional advantage for Ahmad Khan Abdali, whose father was the chief of the Abdali tribe (Barfield 2012). Two contestants emerged from the jirga's decision, Haji Jamal Khan and the young 25 year old Ahmad Khan, who reputedly hesitated accepting the selection (Dupree 1980). Haji Jamal Khan controlled the most powerful region of the Abdali Pashtuns and therefore, was a more popular contestant (Dupree 1980). However, according to narrative historical accounts, a well-known *darwish* (holy man) named Mohammad Sabir Khan who had predicted earlier that Ahmad Abdali Khan would be the leader of the Afghans, stood up and proclaimed: "Why all this verbose talk? God has created Ahmad Khan a much greater man than any of you; his is the most noble of all the Afghan families. Maintain, therefore, God's work, for His wrath will weigh heavily upon you if you destroy it" (Singh 1959, 25-26; Dupree 1980, 333). Mohammad Sabir Khan proceeded towards him and placed a crown made from wheat or barley over his turban, proclaiming him "*Padshah, Durr-i-Durran*" (King, Pearl of Pearls). As he modestly turned away, the tribal elders realized that he had the quality trait of a worthy king, humility (Ansary 2014). Henceforth, in 1747, Ahmad Khan Abdali changed his name to Ahmad Shah Durrani and his Pashtun clansmen labeled themselves Durrani as well, Abdali Pashtuns became Durrani Pashtuns after 1747 (Barfield 2012; Dupree 1980). Ahmad Shah Durrani was able to grab hold of power for many reasons. He had a large portion of money at his disposal, which was extremely lucrative at the time. He also had a lot of support from the Qizilbash tribe, a Turkish Shiite group that held a large military influence over the area and was not aligned with any specific group. He changed the dynamics of power in Pashtun tribes, which were inherently egalitarian and they would not engage in seeking leadership or



power over their own tribe or others. However, they would constantly engage in fighting with one another (Ansary 2014). Nevertheless, Ahmad Shah Durrani led the Durrani Pashtuns and took control over other Pashtun and non-Pashtun tribes as well (Barfield 2012). In addition to these assets, he also had control over four thousand veteran cavalrymen who loyally followed his lead (Dupree 1980).

After Ahmad Shah Durrani was crowned, he prepared for leaving his new capital, Qandahar, to claim land in the east and west. By 1750, he established authority for the Pashtuns once again in Herat in the west. He moved farther westward, taking over Mashhad and Nishapur, located in today's Iran. Meanwhile, his followers had accomplished taking control over modern day northern Afghanistan and its tribes, which included the Turkmen of Asterabad, the Uzbek of Maimana, Balkh and Kunduz, the Tajik of Khanabad and Badakhshan and the Hazara of Bamiyan. (Dupree 1980). These tribes still inhabit northern Afghanistan today. By the time of Ahmad Shah Durrani's death, the Durrani Empire incorporated the territories of modern day Afghanistan, Balochistan, Iranian Khorasan and the past Mughal territories of Sind, Punjab and Kashmir (Barfield 2012). His empire also put today's major tribes in Afghanistan under one Pashtun power. Soon after Afghanistan became a country, the political arena began to shift towards modernization. The leaders of the country, who were primarily Pashtun, started implementing policies that encouraged women to take part in society as equals.

### **Early Modernization Policies**

Afghanistan had an era of reformation, specifically from the late 1800's to the 1900's. However, history will reveal that there have been many attempts to improve female empowerment throughout time. It is crucial to establish an examination of the nationalistic policies that played a role in shaping the nations cultural views towards female education. In the

1800s there were major political efforts to improve the status of women socially, academically and economically.

Abdur Rahman Khan became the king of Afghanistan in 1880. He began implementing modernization and nation-state building reforms in order to improve the nation's stability and image of equality (Lemmon 2012, 16). During his rule, he established controversial reforms that were targeted towards improving women's status. Abdur Rahman Khan abolished the practice of forcing young girls and women to marry their deceased husband's next of kin. He established rules that gave women the right to inherit property and he created an increased minimum age of marriage. He also gave women the right to divorce and he passionately discouraged and opposed polygamy. Despite his efforts, it was difficult to gain support for the reforms, especially in rural areas of Afghanistan (Lemmon 2012, 16).

Nancy Hatch Dupree, a renowned American historian of Afghanistan, found that King Abdur Rahman Khan may have been strongly influenced by his wife, Queen Bobojan, who was also an activist supporting the improvement of women's status through the use of politics. Queen Bobojan was the first Afghan queen to appear in public and political events wearing European dresses without donning a veil. She was also highly active in the political arena, having discussions and debating with politicians, publically riding horses and giving her own servants military training and exercise techniques (Oosterom 2012). Her efforts helped add Afghanistan on the map of modernizing nations.

After the reign of Abdur Rahman Khan, his son Amir Habibullah Khan took over from 1901 until 1919. Amir Habibullah Khan is believed to be the first Afghan leader to implement the first school for girls. He also established important reform policies that included putting a cap on bride prices, a practice which would often impoverish families. He also improved upon the

policies his father employed. Under the reign of Abdur Rahman and Amir Habibullah Khan, a nationalistic ideology that would make women empowered members of society began to emerge:

The effort to implement female education projects was linked to the "notion of the nation-state based on popular sovereignty" (Olesen 1995, 119). It was "free and independent women .... on an equal basis with men who would build the new Afghanistan" (Olesen 1995, 132). According to this paradigm, a new national identity was being encouraged and women had to be part of the formulation. Female education was an important vehicle in this proposed transformation of society. (Pourzand 1999, 75)

After Habibullah Khan's assassination in 1919, his son Amanullah Khan took reign.

Amanullah Khan is perhaps the most well-known for his women's reformation policies. In particular, Amanullah Khan brought a document he had been working on before he came to power. This document was called "*Nizamnama*" or "the Book of Order." The *Nizamnama* was a legal code that he created with the influence of Turkish, Swiss, French and Italian codes (Ansary 2014). At the time, implementing a self-made document instead of the traditional Sharia codes, was considered blasphemous:

Merely creating such a code was a brash act in Afghanistan, for the clerics believed that men could not make laws. That privilege belonged to God alone, and God had already given humanity the laws men must follow: the Shari'a. No man could substitute his own laws for the Shari'a. (Ansary 2014, 117)

The *Nizamnama* laws applied to everyone including government officials. It banned torture and slavery, forbade forced entry into a person's home and gave people the right to make charges of corruption against any member of government. This book also gave citizens the freedom of religion, which angered a lot of clerics at the time (Ansary 2014). Amanullah Khan continued the trend of following in the footsteps of his predecessors. His wife, Soraya Tarzi, was believed to have changed the perception of Muslim women across the globe by appearing with her husband in all public events without wearing a veil and instead wearing what was considered to be modern and fashionable Western clothing. The royal couple would travel all over the

world, each of Soraya's introductions to the Western world making a mark on history. She was often exoticized and appreciated through narratives and historical texts. The following excerpt takes place in France during the royal couples visit (Ansary 2014). They are personally greeted by the President of France:

The French press went into a swoon. 'Soraya,' they noted, sounded like *sourire*, the French word for 'smile.' The queen came to state dinners clothed in exquisite Parisian couture, and oh how well she carried it off! She eschewed the short skirts then in fashion (this was the flapper era), but the evening gowns she wore to state dinner left her shoulders bare, and the little veil she was wearing now, covering only the lower half of her face, was just a film of transparent gauze. She achieved a look delightful to the French, simultaneously exotic and sophisticated, modern and mysterious. (Ansary 2014, 122)

This passage is a great example of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism because she is exoticized and made mysterious through historical texts (Said 1978). An image of her is painted that is both glorifying and enigmatic. Amanullah Khan was loved by his countrymen and he reciprocated that love back to them, checking up on laborers, shaking the hands of everyone he met while listening to their concerns and encouraging equality and education for all:

Educate your children, he told them. The future lies within their reach. If your children will only learn to read, write, and study, Afghanistan will have airplanes and electric lights and roads. Educate your wives too, he preached. A country can't progress without contributions from its women. And treat your wives well, he lectured: do as the Prophet did. The Prophet said all people are equal, men and women. Take his words to heart. (Ansary 2014, 115)

Soraya was an activist for female education. She would help educate Afghan girls by sending them to international schools for education. She also started a women's magazine that promoted gender-equality (Oosterom 2012). Amanullah Khan, like his predecessors, campaigned against the practice of polygamy and veiling. He proclaimed that no one can force women to wear the veil, including their husbands. He made this the rule of law. Additionally, he raised the minimum age of marriage to be eighteen for women and twenty two for men (Ansary 2014).

Before Amanullah Khan, there was one government high school. When Amanullah came to power, he added three more and he began building more schools for girls, which was unprecedented (Ansary 2014). These policies were extremely controversial to tribal leaders and rural communities. In fact, Amanullah's father was assassinated by tribal leaders who strongly disapproved of his modernization policies. He even declared that men in government had to be clean-shaven and dressed in suits, no longer donning the beard and traditional afghan attire. Outside of the cities, religious clerics were protesting that Amanullah had become an infidel. Throughout the countryside, tribal leaders protested against Amanullah Khan in 1929 and he was forced into exile with his wife (Ansary 2014). King Zahir Shah took power from 1933 to 1973. During his rule, he also supported improving the status of women much like his predecessors. However, there were no further significant changes towards women's rights.

In 1973, Prime Minister Daoud Khan took power with the backing of the Soviets. Daoud Khan sought aid from the USSR for economic and military improvements. He also campaigned against purdah, a practice that secludes women from the public (Ansary 2014). The 1950's through the 1970's is often considered the "Golden Age" for women in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Daoud Khan, Deputy Minister Mohammad Naim, members of the royal family, the cabinet and several high ranking army officials appeared in public with their wives and daughters during an Independence Day celebration in 1959, with their faces completely exposed for the public to see (Dupree 1980). The crowd was shocked to witness this but the way was paved for such dramatic events because of earlier acts of defiance against purdah by Daoud Khan's predecessors. A couple years earlier, Radio Afghanistan had been testing female singers and announcers. This initially caused major protests but the protests eventually died down and women began to work permanently for the radio (Dupree 1980). In 1957, a group of Afghan

women went as representatives to the conference of Asian women in Ceylon. They were the first Afghans to do this. In 1958, the Afghan government sent a woman as a delegate to the United Nations. Before 1959, all women who were at the age of puberty or older would wear the *chadri* (veil) when they were in public. This was especially common in large urban areas like Kabul (Dupree 1980). In village areas it is problematic to maintain the chadri because labor and hard work makes it difficult to be concerned over clothing (Dupree 1980).

Before the 1959 Independence Day celebration, several tests were conducted under Said Mohammad Qassim Rishtya, the President of the Press Department. Several months before, the government sent nearly a dozen women to enter the workforce as receptionists and hostesses for Ariana Afghan Airlines. This required them to dress without the veil and in a modern fashion. The public's reaction to this was accepting and welcoming. Two months later, a group of girls with 6<sup>th</sup> grade education were asked to join work in the Kabul China Factory, a pottery factory. Around forty girls volunteered with consent forms from their parents. They worked with men. This caused minimal protest (Dupree 1980). After the unveiling and the tests that preceded it, religious leaders became more and more upset. They asked for a meeting with Daoud Khan to discuss the events. Mullah's accused him of being un-Islamic, pro-Communist and pro-Western. They felt his actions were a perversion against Islam, particularly his actions against purdah. Daoud Khan responded by encouraging them to find a single justification in the Quran and Islamic law that suggests anything he did was un-Islamic, including the unveiling of his wife and daughter. In fact, he suggested that if they find a single thing, he will make sure his wife and daughter are no longer in the public eye, and practicing purdah appropriately (Dupree 1980). Daoud Khan did prepare for this very possibility by holding meetings and discussions with highly educated religious scholars that would approve of, and support his laws as Islamically

appropriate. However, the mullah did not accept this proposition because they were not highly literate and educated in Islamic studies, some were completely illiterate (Dupree 1980). In 1962, women gained the right to vote and the right to take part in politics. At this time, conservatives felt increasingly marginalized because of Daoud Khan's support of modernization policies and his influence from the USSR:

Conservatives (especially religious leaders and their devout followers) predicted a return "to the principles of Islam," for Daoud Khan had always said, "yes" to the Russians every time they mentioned an anti-Islamic reform. "Take the veil off the women," said the Russians, "Yes," said Daoud Khan. "Send the women to the offices and the factories," said the Russians. "Yes," said Daoud Khan. These religious conservatives probably became the most disappointed of all groups as the new government moved ahead with secular reforms. (Dupree 1980, 560)

Although it may have been difficult for conservatives to accept this growing trend, the progressive-seeking groups, mainly the elite and educated, were looking forward to political and social improvements and advancements:

The literate groups (mainly civil servants, students, and professional elements), however, sensed the speeding-up of social and political reforms, and in a burst of euphoria, talked excitedly about democratic processes and free elections. (Dupree 1980, 560)

The religious clerics and protesters who opposed his policies were imprisoned and charged with treason and heresy, neutralizing any possible revolt (Dupree 1980). In 1978, Daoud Khan was deposed by the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The PDPA continued to improve women's status and create reforms towards women's rights. They also increased the minimum marriage age for girls to 16, and boys to 18. Rural areas were anti-Soviet and strongly anti-reform and they continued to oppose these policies (Lemmon 2012). As time progressed, the nation became more discontent with foreign influence and local rebels started plotting a takeover. The condition of the Soviet-backed leadership started to worsen, creating the perfect opportunity for warlords to prop themselves up as the new leaders.

## **The Civil War/ Mujahideen Wars (1978-2001)**

From 1929 to 1978, Afghanistan had its longest interval of relative peace (Barfield 2012). In 1978 when the Civil War began, it destroyed any condition of unity and stability the nation was desperately trying to keep (Hyman 2002). During this time the country was strongly polarized between different tribes and political groups. Many different factions would fight for political power and for a sense of tribal honor (Hyman 2002). This was a very difficult time for women because they were constantly raped, kidnapped and killed for simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time. As a result of the constant mistreatment of women, an organization was established to protect them. The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan was founded by Meena Keshwar Kamal in 1977. The main goal of RAWA is to fight for the equality of women and encourage their involvement in society (RAWA 2017). RAWA does not support or align itself with any political influence including the Soviets, the Mujahideen or the United States. Meena is considered a revolutionary for women in Afghanistan. Before her assassination in 1987, she helped support and implement schools for girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan. RAWA strongly opposes the Mujahideen and have fallen victim to their violence throughout the Civil War.

The Civil War started when members of the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) murdered Daoud Khan and declared a socialist regime. In less than a year, the regimes ranks fought amongst each other and disagreed on policies. This brought the regime to a near collapse (Barfield 2012). This resulted in the involvement of the Soviet Union, attempting to stabilize the country. In addition, this created unification between the Soviets and the PDPA to fight against the Mujahideen. During this time, Najibullah Ahmadzai took power under the PDPA in 1987. Najibullah had been an agent of the PDPA beforehand and had



experience working with the Soviets. The Mujahideen had a base in Pakistan and were funded by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. As a result of the Soviet war against the Mujahideen, three million refugees were displaced and around one million Afghans were killed. After the Soviets left in 1989, Najibullah Ahmadzai held on to power and led the PDPA, maintaining control of the country until the Soviet Union fell (Barfield 2012). When the Soviet Union fell, the PDPA lost its power by 1992. Some of the PDPA factions joined the competing Mujahideen parties based on their ethnicity or regional affiliation (Barfield 2012). The PDPA was the number one threat to the Mujahideen and it created a common enemy for all the factions. However, when the PDPA fell, the Mujahideen factions began fighting each other for power, no longer united against a single threat. Each faction had a stronghold over a specific region, but none of them were more powerful than the other. This led to constant infighting, resulting in civilian deaths. While Kabul was mostly intact during the PDPA's rule and Soviet invasion, it was destroyed during the Civil War caused by the Mujahideen. The Pashtun areas in the south and east had also fallen to chaos. The chaos led to the rise of the Taliban in 1994 (Barfield 2012). The Taliban were led by religious clerics in Kandahar who promised to bring back Islamic order and peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan also supported the Taliban to stay in power at this time, hoping to get some control in the region. The Taliban's practices were radical on the opposite end of the PDPA. While the PDPA were radical socialists, the Taliban had a vehemently radicalized view of Islam. The nation saw a dramatic change from strongly leftist a-religious policies to virtually no freedom of religious interpretation (Barfield 2012).

### **The Taliban (1994-2001)**

The Taliban is a cross-border movement that developed between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was led by Pashtuns who were trained in Deobandi madrasas in Pakistan. The

ideology of the Taliban has its roots in the Deobandi tradition (Barfield 2012). Deobandism is a fundamentalist Islamic movement that was developed at the Deoband religious seminary in India (Ansary 2014). The Taliban leaders have close ties with Deobandi religious parties in Pakistan. When Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq was the leader of Pakistan, the Taliban madrasas grew at a much faster rate in Pakistan and it attracted many Afghan refugee boys by offering them free room and board. They also offered free education. When the Soviets were in power, the students who graduated these madrasas joined the Mujahideen to fight against the Soviets. However, after the Soviets left, these madrasas were used to create today's Taliban (Barfield 2012). The free education was used to spread their ideology to these new, young students. Their goal was to improve or eliminate some of Afghanistan's religious and cultural practices and rituals by developing a pure Islamic nation that followed Salafi traditions (Barfield 2012). With the support of Pakistani leaders and the weakness of a disenfranchised infrastructure in Afghanistan, the Taliban were able to achieve control of the nation (Barfield 2012). Afghanistan was also uniquely vulnerable because they had a huge population of refugees who went to Pakistan to avoid being a casualty of the Soviet invasion and the Civil War. As refugees living a difficult life, they became the target of powerful leaders and clerics who could manipulate and take advantage of them, telling them to fight for their homeland, the homeland they were forced out of:

The soviet war lasted for so long and the refugee flow into neighboring countries was so great that over time they created a new class of people: refugee Afghans born in Pakistan who had never seen the country or experienced life there. Refugee camps are notorious hotbeds for radical movements of all types because they are generally poor, provide few opportunities for young people, and are under the control of political factions that manipulate their populations. The hope of recovering a lost homeland is a particularly powerful ideal, but as time passes the view of this homeland becomes more and more mythical because refugee children know of it only by hearsay. (Barfield 2012, 256)

As it can be seen in formerly mentioned historical narratives, the past is romanticized by Afghans, creating a desire to bring back the historical glory and power the nation once had:

The past is idealized because the present is so miserable and the future is so uncertain. Groups with extreme messages, whether their ideologies are political, ethnic, or religious, galvanize their followers not only with the visions of reclaiming a lost homeland but also of then transforming it. (Barfield 2012, 256)

As a result, they were able to force the Soviets out and reclaim their land with the support of locals who wanted their autonomy. However, when the Mujahideen turned against each other, Afghan refugees were not able to return back to a safe home. Therefore some of them stayed behind and the ones who returned did not recognize the home they once left. Before the war, the economy was functioning and there was basic security for people and their properties. After the war, all of this changed. The Mujahideen also lost the respect of the locals. Once they were seen as the heroes who kicked out the foreigners from their home, reclaiming it for Afghans. After the war they were seen as violent and self-interested groups that were only concerned about overpowering other opposing factions (Barfield 2012, 256). This created abundant ammunition for the Taliban:

The Taliban drew on the discontent of the population living in areas where chaos prevailed. For them, any ideology or regime that could bring about stability was preferable to the status quo. (Barfield 2012, 256-257)

Local Afghans grew tired of the constant fighting that resulted in the destruction of Kabul's infrastructure and the continuous casualties that were resulting from these warring factions. There are two generally accepted accounts on the origin of the Taliban. The Taliban themselves claim to have united in Kandahar in 1994 as a response to the continuous failure of the Mujahideen to promote and contain security in society (Barfield 2012, 257). Their leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, was a small time cleric who had religious students known as the

“Taliban.” His students had complained to him about the constant power abuse by the warlords that was causing a lot of grief and destruction to society. In response, he sent them to disarm the warlords and he took control of Kandahar. The other account observes that they originated with the help of Pakistan. Pakistan was involved with funding a warlord faction that was run by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Pakistan was disappointed with Hekmatyar’s failure to succeed against Burhanuddin Rabbani, another warlord. Pakistan wanted to make sure Rabbani did not take control during the Civil War so they created the Taliban movement to replace him. There are accounts that the first gathering of Taliban fighters was in Pakistan and that they were given weapons at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border crossing at Spin Boldak. Pakistan had also given large payments in cash to the warlords in order to bribe them to cease control so that the city would be forced to surrender to the Taliban. A battle was not even taken place. It is certain however that the Taliban had no resistance from taking control because the region was so exhausted by the continuous corruption and violence:

The movement was wildly popular in the south because it promised security of life and property to a region that lacked both. Its “law and order” platform initially overshadowed the movements radical Islamist ideology, which the Taliban did not implement in full until they were better established. (Barfield 2012, 257)

Additionally, the Taliban continued to become more powerful because they targeted the weapon depots of their rivals. They successfully took heavy weapons, armored vehicles and aircraft. With these military weapons, they needed people trained to use them and trained to pilot the aircrafts. They were joined by Soviet-trained soldiers, many of whom later joined the Mujahideen and eventually heeded the call of the Taliban. Pakistan also played a major role in supporting the Taliban and helping them grow. They provided direct military aid and also provided advisers who would help with the delivery of supplies and transport. The Taliban could not have survived without the help of Pakistan (Barfield 2012, 257).

Afghanistan under Taliban rule was an entirely different world. This was especially true for women. The Taliban had one goal – enforcing their interpretation of Sharia. This is what would fulfil their promise to the people amid the chaos of the civil war. They promised to enforce an Islamic rule that would bring peace and would punish those who violated Islamic law. Once the Taliban took the capital, Kabul, in 1996, they had complete power of the country. On their first day in Kabul, the Taliban lured the former Communist President Najibullah and his brother, who were staying at the UN compound. They tortured, castrated and mutilated them before they hung up their bodies in Ariana Square. Then they used the bodies as target practice. This was a declaration to the world. They were now in power and they did not care about the sanctity of the UN or international laws or treaties (Ansary 2014, 238).

### **Taliban Policies**

The people of Afghanistan soon realized what the Taliban had in store for them. Afghans were not prepared for what was to come, a form of oppressive rule that was completely alien to Afghan lifestyle, especially in Kabul. The Taliban implemented their rules immediately. Women were forbidden to be seen in public. They were banned from working and from going to school. They were not allowed to leave their homes without wearing the *burka*, a full veil covering the entire body, face and eyes. They could not be outside without a close male relative. Taxis were not allowed to pick up women without their male relative and they were not allowed to pick up women who were not fully veiled. Shopkeepers were not allowed to sell to these women either. In public, women were supposed to be treated invisible, no interactions with them were allowed, unless they showed skin or broke any rules. In these cases women were publically flogged and beaten (Ansary 2014, 239). Thieves were punished by having their hands chopped off and in some cases also their feet. In these cases, doctors would be alerted to stop working on people

they were treating at the hospital and come right away to surgically dismember the hands and feet of the criminals. The rule commonly known as “an eye for an eye” was also implemented by the Taliban. If a murderer was found, the Taliban would arm the relative of the victim and let them take the life of the murderer. The worst law of all was the stoning of women who were charged with adultery. They were punished by being stoned to death in public, usually at the city’s main stadium. These stadiums were once used for soccer and entertainment activities. Under the Taliban, they were used as execution centers (Ansary 2014, 240).

Many forms of entertainment were forbidden by the Taliban. Music was completely banned. Movies were banned as well. All types of photography and artwork depicting people were also banned. Theaters were transformed into mosques and video stores were burnt to the ground.

Television sets still provided some entertainment---not the shows, the sets themselves: those were set up in the streets, and the cadre shot them to pieces with their machine guns. (Ansary 2014, 240)

Anything that can possibly result in gambling or placing wagers was also banned, this included kite flying, soccer and chess. Pets were completely prohibited as well. Afghans particularly enjoyed having pigeons and birds as pets but they were no longer allowed. Holidays that were not considered Islamic were not allowed. This included cultural holidays like *Nowroz* (New Year’s) and *Roz Esteqlal* (Independence Day). The strongest enforcement was on dress code for both men and women. Men were supposed to wear a long shirt, loose fitted pants and turbans on their head. The long pant and shirt were to be the traditional *Shalwar Kamiz*. The men were not allowed to have long hair and they were forced to grow a full beard. Western clothing, which was commonly worn in the capital, was completely prohibited. Women were forced to

wear the burka. There were many restrictions on the female dress code. This included banning makeup and high heels and forcing women to behave a certain way:

Stylish dress and decoration of women in hospitals is forbidden. Women are duty-bound to behave with dignity, to walk calmly and refrain from hitting their shoes on the ground, which makes noises. (Rashid 2010, 104)

Prayers were strictly enforced. Anyone who was found skipping any of the five required prayers was beaten or punished. Punishment for homosexuals included the collapsing of mud walls on top of them, burying them under walls. The religious police would enforce these rules on any local they deemed fit. If a man had a newly trimmed beard, he was punished. The Taliban met the hardest oppositions from major cities like Kabul and Mazar-I-Sharif because the modernist locals refused to listen to a group they considered uneducated and ignorant. However, the smaller villages were more complacent because part of the Taliban ideology was rooted in their cultural beliefs and only a small part of it was rooted in Islam (Ansary 2014, 240).

The Taliban believed they were true Muslims implementing a pure Islamic society but they had very strong tribalist characteristics. The majority of them were Pashtuns and many of their activities involved ethnic and racial discrimination. They specifically targeted the Hazara population, who were not only ethnically different but were also followers of Shia Islam. They would forcefully recruit all the men and boys to be cannon fodder. If they refused they were killed. In 1997, when the Taliban captured Mazar-I-Sharif, they spent two days massacring the Hazara population. They drove up and down the streets shooting indiscriminately at every man, woman, child, dog and donkey. When they were on foot, they destroyed homes and killed any child or elderly who they believed were Hazara. Other ethnic groups were mistakenly killed because they resembled the Hazaras. People were shot three times, once in the head, once in the chest and once in the genitals. Afterwards their throats were slit. Women were raped and

murdered. After the massacre, the Taliban took thousands of Hazara prisoners and locked many of them in containers so they would suffocate. Some containers were taken to the Laili desert for swift massacre. Others were relocated to Sheberghan and opened only to find 3 people left alive out of 300. Those 3 people were taken to prison. Finally, as survivors from the village tried to escape on foot, they were aerially bombarded and killed (Rashid 2010, 74). This ethnic cleansing was justified by radical Islamic scholars as they were considered “non-Muslims.” They proclaimed that anyone who kills a Hazara has a better chance entering heaven. This was a gruesome ethnic cleansing that most of the world did not even notice (Ansary 2014, 244). It is estimated that around 6,000 Hazara men, women and children were massacred (Rashid 2010, 74).

The Taliban were particularly oppressive towards women. By the time the Taliban took over, female education plummeted at every level. When they captured Kabul, they closed down 63 schools which catered to 103,000 girls and 148,000 boys, 7,800 female teachers. They also closed down Kabul University which had 4,000 female students and 6,000 males. By 1998, a UNICEF statistic revealed that 9 out of 10 girls were no longer enrolled in school (Rashid 2010, 108). Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, it ranked first place under the Taliban. The life expectancy for both men and women was 43 to 44 years old. Illiteracy for women was over 90% and 60% for men (Rashid 2010, 107). Although war had a major effect on women’s health and social status, the Taliban have done unimaginable damage that may have reversed the progress of Afghan women by centuries. Additionally, the Taliban further destabilized the nation, creating an environment that was perfect for extremists and outlaws from other nations to migrate and claim their place. One of the groups that would come to settle in Afghanistan would be known as al Qaeda.



## **The Rise of al Qaeda (1980-2001)**

The Muslim world had long been ripe for revolutionary activism, because virtually every Muslim majority country from Pakistan to Morocco had an authoritarian government propped up by police power. Militant anti-western sentiment had been rising since the 1970s as the entrenched elites of Muslim countries kept getting guns and money from western imperialist powers to help them stay entrenched. Development in these countries had widened the gap between haves and have nots and, ominously enough, that gap had come to mirror a cultural gulf between westernized elites and the masses they ruled. (Ansary 2014, 245)

During the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan had received many international Muslim fighters and activists, particularly from Arab nations. Many of these fighters were funded by the U.S. to help overthrow the Soviets. After the Soviets left Afghanistan, warlords and revolutionaries became increasingly attracted to Islamism, defined as a political program derived from Islamic sources. The strong support for Islamism took root in Afghanistan as a consequence of years of ideological wars. Osama bin Laden was one of the many international fighters that took root in Afghanistan with his revolutionary ideals. He was the son of a billionaire Yemeni businessman and one of more than 50 children. Although his family was modernized and lavished, he strongly believed in a radicalized Islamic lifestyle (Ansary 2014, 246). He came to Afghanistan in the 1980s with thousands of other Arab revolutionaries and financially aided the jihad. He fought alongside other jihadists and he made friends with the locals who respected him for fighting against the enemy. Osama bin Laden had a guesthouse in Peshawar that he shared with other Arab radicals and jihadists. It was used as a good base for washing up, eating and staying warm. He nicknamed this guesthouse “al Qaeda” which means “base”. In 1988 as the fighting slowed down and a lot of jihadists returned home, Osama bin Laden founded a new organization and decided to name it after his symbolic guesthouse; al Qaeda. This organization was formed to teach Arab fighters how to overthrow the regimes they considered corrupt in their home countries Afterwards, Osama bin Laden went back to Saudi Arabia and tried to sell his idea of

using jihadists in Afghanistan to fight for Saudi interests in Iraq against Saddam Hussein. The royal family rejected his offer and reached out to the U.S. instead to help protect Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. Saudi Arabia also opened a base for the U.S. to utilize on Saudi soil. This was something Osama bin Laden considered very offensive and he became very displeased with the royal family. As a result, he was kicked out of the country. He moved to Sudan and continued to publically spew hatred against Saudi Arabia (Ansary 2014, 246). Because of this, his Saudi citizenship was finally revoked. In Sudan he continued developing attack methods and ideas his students could use. In 1995, al Qaeda finally used what they learned and attacked a U.S. compound in Saudi Arabia, killing dozens of Americans. After this, the U.S. asked Sudan to dismiss Osama bin Laden and Sudan cooperated. In 1996 he went back to Afghanistan, a place that was growing more and more ideal for him to enforce his goals. The Taliban's radical interpretation of Islam was highly favored by Osama bin Laden. He supported them financially and vocally, and the Taliban leader Mullah Omar supported him in return. The Taliban gave him a lot of territory, particularly the cave irrigation tunnels of Tora Bora. He redeveloped these tunnels into a fairly advanced underground military station for his fighters. Mullah Omar continued to give him space near the southern border of Khost. This is where he formed training camps for his future jihadists. He was also given farmland near Kandahar which he used as his headquarters for his family to live in. Osama bin Laden now had a stronghold throughout Afghanistan to pursue his violent dreams of starting a global jihad against the West. While the U.S. was concerned about his activities, they did not take any action against him at the time. In 1998 Osama bin Laden declared a fatwa to the world:

“The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim to do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.” (Ansary 2014, 247)

A few years later, on September 11, 2001, the world would witness perhaps one of the most terribly shocking and horrific attacks they had ever seen. This was a devastation that no one could even comprehend because the U.S. was seen as one of the safest countries in the world. Almost 3,000 innocent people were killed. As a result, the United States entered a war with Afghanistan to search for the man behind it all, Osama bin Laden.

### **U.S. presence in Afghanistan (2001-Present)**

A few months before the September 11 attacks occurred, the Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud left his country for the first time to discuss the issues in Afghanistan with the European Parliament in France. In this meeting he urged the European Parliament not to underestimate the dangers of al Qaeda. He told them what al Qaeda was doing in his homeland, creating terrorist training camps. He also stressed that the Taliban were puppets of Pakistan and that Pakistan was in fact another invader of the country through their Taliban influence. Finally, he revealed their dangerously anti-Western attitudes. He asked for their support, claiming that he and the Northern Alliance would be the only ones who can fight against them. What he revealed at this meeting would be proven true. However, at the time, no one took interest in his pleas. On September 9, 2001, Ahmad Shah Massoud received a request for an interview from a London-based television agency. Two reporters asked to meet him in his station. Karim Touzani and Kasem Bakkali met with him and started asking him questions when the cameraman suddenly detonated the bomb hidden inside the camera. Ahmad Shah Massoud was killed instantly and his aide was horribly injured. The other journalist managed to run away by jumping out of the window. However, he was caught immediately by Massoud's people and was beaten to death. A few days later the September 11 attacks occurred. The event of Massoud's murder occurring days before 9/11 created all kinds of suspicion and conspiracy theories from the locals. Some

thought the reporters were undercover agents for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) or al Qaeda. However, it was found that the journalists were Moroccans from Belgium recruited by al Qaeda. Ahmad Shah Massoud was strongly against the radicalization of his country and he fought very hard against Islamic radicalism. More specifically, he fought against foreign influence in the country, mainly from Pakistan (Ansary 2014, 260). Al Qaeda assassinated Massoud to get more support and praise from the Taliban and Mullah Omar. This act essentially destroyed the Northern Alliance and gave the Taliban complete power to take over all the Northern Alliance territories and have no one standing in their way. The Taliban and al Qaeda would now have the upper hand before they would initiate their biggest attack in New York. Immediately after 9/11, the U.S. entered Afghanistan in retaliation. President George W. Bush announced that the United States was now at war and was declared to be in a state of emergency. The world supported the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) getting involved, promising to pledge their soldiers. On September 15, 2001, Bush demanded to President Musharraf of Pakistan that he must stop supporting the Taliban. Musharraf claimed to back the U.S. from this point on. The U.S. demanded for the Taliban to release Osama bin Laden, but Mullah Omar refused to do this since Osama bin Laden was a guest in the country. In the Pashtunwali code, one is supposed to protect and defend their guests no matter what (Rashid 2010, 218).

The U.S. plan from here was to get help from the Northern Alliance. The head of the CIA, George Tenet had a plan to bring the CIA, U.S. Special Forces and the Northern Alliance to work together. The Northern Alliance would look for suspicious areas and would implement the ground attacks. October 7 was the beginning of "Operation Enduring Freedom." This was when the U.S. enforced heavy bombing raids over Afghanistan, targeting Taliban stations. The

bombings occurred for four weeks. A month later, on November 7, the Northern Alliance gained control of Mazar-I-Sharif. Within a few days, much of northern, central and western Afghanistan was captured by the Northern Alliance. The Taliban were severely weakened at this point and fled to Kandahar, leaving Kabul behind for the Northern Alliance as well. Mullah Omar retreated from Kandahar on December 5<sup>th</sup> and fled along with many other Taliban and al Qaeda members, many seeking refuge in Pakistan. At this point the Taliban and al Qaeda were dispersed but they were still not completely out of power. They were able to recuperate with aid and support in their safe havens in Pakistan (Rashid 2010, 219).

The next step for the world was to develop a new government for Afghanistan. The UN put together a conference in Bonn. Many Afghan groups with different ideologies were invited to take part in discussing a government change. The biggest group invited was the Northern Alliance. As a result, the Pashtun majority group was underrepresented. By December 5<sup>th</sup>, the members of the conference agreed to place Hamid Karzai as the Interim President of Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai was a well-known Pashtun tribal leader who was born in Kandahar. He supported the former king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah and he was known as a moderate. In the early 1990s, Karzai actually supported the Taliban until they assassinated his father in 1999. Since then, he started risking his life to go to Afghanistan and persuade Pashtuns to abandon the Taliban. In Afghanistan, the CIA aided him with food, weapons and support. On December 6<sup>th</sup> the Bonn agreement was signed. The purpose of the agreement was to pursue ‘a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government’ with an emergency *Loya Jirga* (Grand Assembly) to be set up by June 2002. The Loya Jirga would be responsible for bringing in a new transitional government and organizing elections for the parliament as well as the president. (Rashid 2010, 220). After the U.S. successfully dispersed the Taliban’s autonomy,

President Bush decided to save military resources for his future invasion plans in Iraq. As a result, the focus on Afghanistan withered away and U.S. priorities shifted during Afghanistan's most fragile time. U.S. troops began training for Iraq and Special Forces were taken out of their vital positions when they were closing in on al Qaeda. The U.S. made a deal with the Northern Alliance to take over. The Northern Alliance had a bad reputation with the locals because they had participated very violently and viciously in the Civil War, raping and killing civilians mercilessly (Rashid 2010, 222). The locals were not happy about this deal. Eventually these militia groups ended in corruption, getting involved with drugs and abusing their power over locals. In May of 2002, Senator Joe Biden warned that the U.S. had replaced the Taliban with warlords as a strategy. Donald Rumsfeld believed it was the best strategy to have the warlords share the power with the government. In June 2002, the Loya Jirga held an election that was won by Hamid Karzai, the new Interim president (Rashid 2010, 222). However, this did not improve the hopes of the country, which was desperate for resources and repair. The United States, however, had its eyes on Iraq and resources came up short for Afghanistan. The European nations realized this and insisted that the U.S. government support an international peace-keeping coalition that would be stationed in Afghanistan. The U.S. surrendered to European concerns and they formed the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force). More than 20 countries joined this coalition with around 5,000 soldiers who would be stationed in Kabul (Rashid 2010, 222). The ISAF's goal was to disarm militias and keep peace in the capital, but their efforts were slowed down and discouraged because the U.S. did not support them. Additionally, the ISAF wanted to expand to other troubled cities in Afghanistan at the request of Karzai but the U.S. did not approve. Around this time, the Taliban were recuperating in Pakistan and some were returning to villages in Afghanistan. The U.S. continued bombing areas believed

to be heavy with Taliban presence, but these areas were also dominantly Pashtun. The Pashtuns became angry towards the U.S. and felt marginalized. This marginalization would work in the Taliban's favor (Rashid 2010, 223). Mullah Omar reappeared in Quetta, Pakistan and formed a new Taliban leadership group, appointing four commanders to take over the four southern provinces of Afghanistan. One of the appointed commanders was Mullah Dadullah Akhund, who was responsible for the destruction of the ancient Buddha statues in Bamiyan. They continued collecting aid and support from Pakistani sympathizers and government workers and they travelled to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf to gain more pledges as well. By 2003, the Taliban insurgency was growing and they were attacking U.S. forces predominantly in the eastern border. In 2004 the Taliban insurgency was at full force and the drug harvesting increased significantly as a result. The insurgents were able to profit greatly from the opium trades because they took advantage of poor Afghan farmers who were trying to make a living. The U.S. and Europe were sensitive to the drug problem and hesitated getting involved until 2008. At this point, opium production was out of control and Taliban insurgents were profiting significantly from the trade (Rashid 2010, 228). In 2005, NATO got involved and started stationing in the south where there was a strong Taliban presence. Additionally ISAF was expanded at Washington's request and NATO would head the ISAF teams. NATO had also created PRT's (Provincial Reconstruction Teams) to support and train Afghan policemen and officials in various provinces. The PRT's consisted of British, Dutch, German and Canadian workers. Essentially there were two military groups, NATO-ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom. NATO was responsible for peacekeeping and Operation Enduring Freedom was responsible for fighting and capturing the Taliban. However by 2006 the Taliban were advancing their offensive against NATO and they refused to allow change. As the international community,

including Japanese financiers and Iranian philanthropists, were trying to rebuild schools, theaters, roads and hospitals, the Taliban had equal determination to destroy it all (Ansary 2014, 279). A UN end of the year assessment for 2006 determined that 187 schools were burned down, 85 teachers were killed and over 600 policemen were killed in that single year (Rashid 2010, 229). The Taliban clearly were not ready to give up their radical Islamic state. From 2006 to 2008, the Taliban were winning the war again, as they had advanced their suicide attacks and began using online media to push their agenda. At this time, the U.S. was deeply entrenched in Iraq, so their attention on Afghanistan fell short and chaos resumed (Rashid 2010, 233). In 2009 President Obama took office and he immediately put focus back on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Twenty-one thousand U.S. Marines were deployed to the south with 4,000 of them committed to training the Afghan army and police (Rashid 2010, 233). It was also the year of Afghanistan's second election so President Obama focused his strategy on keeping the elections as safe as possible with the help of NATO. President Karzai would win the election once again, despite the growing discontent from the locals. Karzai was seen as corrupt because he was making deals with warlords to stay in power (Rashid 2010, 234). The Taliban employed 400 attacks on Election Day which strongly discouraged people to vote. Locals were severely threatened, which resulted in just half of the turnout of the previous year (Rashid 2010, 234). This was not the only failure of the election but there was also a huge number of complaints about the possible rigging of the election. This election was put in the charge of Afghans for the first time. The last election was organized by the UN. However, the 2009 election was under the charge of the Independent Election Committee. Each member of the committee was appointed by President Hamid Karzai, clearly creating a conflict of interest. After the rigging was investigated, they found more than 2500 polling stations where fraud had taken place (Rashid 2010, 235). Eventually, Hamid Karzai



was given the presidency, but local optimism for a new Afghanistan declined. In 2011, General David Petraeus decided to take over Kandahar, a Taliban stronghold. After two months, the U.S. won over Kandahar, not without a lot of bombings. However there was still a lot of chaos in the city. In April of 2011, NATO managed to allow nearly 800 prisoners escape without notice. All the prisoners managed to get away before anyone noticed (Ansary 2014, 329). Finally on May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed in Pakistan by U.S. Special Forces. However, this was not the end of the war. The U.S. was deeply tangled in the Afghan unrest. The insurgency was still a problem and radicalization was only growing stronger, not only in Afghanistan, but around the world. In June 2011, Kabul's intercontinental hotel was attacked with suicide bombers and armed men. In September, insurgents attacked the U.S. embassy and used 4 suicide bombers throughout the city. In 2012 the insurgency attacks continued, except now they were disguising themselves as Afghan policemen, councilmembers and Afghan army men. The civilian casualties grew and rumors of Western abuse against Muslims only made the tensions in Afghanistan worse. In 2011, Stryker Brigade kill team had their trial. A large group of soldiers formed a kill team in Kandahar and ran around killing Afghan civilians for entertainment. They kept the fingers and body parts as souvenirs. In 2012, a video was released revealing U.S. soldiers peeing on the corpses of Afghan bodies and a few months later American troops at Bagram were seen burning copies of the Quran. In March 2012, another American soldier went on a killing spree in Kandahar and killed 16 Afghan civilians in a completely random fashion (Ansary 2014, 331). This fueled the fire of discontent from the locals.

The U.S. toppling the Taliban by 2002 had a major effect on the nation. In 2003 schools were being built with U.S. and international money and women started attending school again. The University of Kabul was fully running again and the attendance rate for women increased to

around 40% (Ansary 2014, 282). Kabul was full of music and the Kabul Radio station was running again. New singers appeared and started entertaining. Under the Taliban, the locals were forced to hide their music and only indulged in music at night in seclusion with the volume turned very low. After the fall of the Taliban, people were walking the streets and could hear music playing from every corner of the city and others were listening to their Walkman with their headphones on, enjoying the melodies they missed (Ansary 2014, 283). Stores filled with audiotapes and videotapes were opening back up, ready to sell to eager customers. The national theater Kabul Nindari opened back up. This theater used to hold plays in the 60s and 70s. One of the actresses of the old theater, Gul Makai Shah, came back and brought the theater back to life as its new director. Within a few years, she created dozens of plays with locals that she recruited to act (Ansary 2014, 283). Afghanistan had a modest but growing film industry since the 1960s called Kabul Films, a government institute. The institute had a huge collection of movies and some were Afghan made movies and documentaries. The Taliban had destroyed the entire collection, about 2,000 films and also destroyed all of the filming equipment. Luckily, the employees of the institute built a fake wall to hide as many of them as they could. These employees ended up saving more than 1,000 films and they managed to save some equipment as well. After the fall of the Taliban, they took down the wall and rebuilt the institute with Japanese funding. The destroyed 1,500 year old Buddha statues were getting good attention this time, with University Professors trying to find a way to repair the statues back to their ancient glory (Rashid 2010, 76). Additionally, they started talking about excavating another possible statue that had been mentioned in several old texts from travelers. It was a very large sleeping Buddha statue that some believed were possibly hidden in the mountains. However, the search was cautiously stopped because of the fear that the Taliban may destroy the sleeping statue as well (Ansary

2014, 284). The Kabul Museum had a very special collection of Greco-Buddhist artifacts, many from the Gandharan period. The museum had barely survived years of war with the building in poor shape. During the Soviets, a lot of artifacts were also taken and sold to the black market. What remained of the artifacts, including ancient intricate statues, were all deliberately shattered into pieces by the Taliban (Ansary 2014, 285). After the fall of the Taliban, the museum workers finally had an opportunity to collect the pieces of rubble and set it on its rightful pedestal with a picture of what the artifact originally looked like before being destroyed (Ansary 2014, 285). In April 2004, a man named Omar Massoudi announced that 15 years before, he and his colleagues hid over 20,000 of the museums artifacts in a hidden vault. He was the museum director at the time and he had been worried that the artifacts would have been destroyed if they left the artifacts out. His action saved thousands of irreplaceable treasures from the riches of ancient Afghanistan. The unraveling of the secret vault was televised and it amazed the world. The artifact collection included many pieces made from gold, silver and gemstones, dating from 2200 BC to 100CE (Ansary 2014, 286). The toppling of the Taliban resulted in the nation trying to revive its heritage, history and culture. Kabul came back to life immediately and women cautiously started reappearing in the social scene. However, the Taliban still had power and influence throughout the country and their biggest weapon was instilling fear with continued suicide bombings and isolated incidents of Sharia justice. Cases of women being flogged and stoned continued well into 2015 (Mullen 2015).

## Chapter Two: Demographics

### Introduction

Afghanistan has a population of over 32 million in 2015 according to the CIA Factbook. The country is overwhelmingly Muslim at 99.7% with about 85-90% following Sunni Islam and 10-15% following Shia Islam. The median age in Afghanistan is 18 years for both men and women. The population is fairly young with 41% of the population under age the age of 15. Over 60% of the country is under age 24 as of 2015 (CIA 2017). The languages spoken in Afghanistan include Persian, Pashto, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) and 30 other minor languages. Persian is spoken by 50% of the population and is the lingua franca, Pashto is spoken by 35% and the Turkic languages are spoken by 11% of the population. The CIA Factbook defines literacy as a person who can read or write at the age of 15 and over. As of 2015, Afghanistan has a literacy rate of 38.2%, which is 52% for men and 24% for women. Afghanistan is also the world's largest producer of opium. Additionally, Afghanistan still has the highest infant mortality rate in the world at 115/1000 (CIA 2017). The treatment of women continues to be a struggle in Afghanistan. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) for Afghanistan was 0.66 in 2015, which ranked 154<sup>th</sup> out of 159 countries. Additionally the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2015 was 0.479, which ranked 169<sup>th</sup> out of 188 countries (UNDP 2016).

Afghanistan is a country full of ethnic diversity, partly as a result of invaders and arbitrary borders. Ethnic groups, according to Fredrik Barth, are defined as social groups that meet four criteria: they are biologically replicating, share fundamental cultural values, constitute a field of communication and interaction, and are defined through self-definition and definition

by others (Barfield 2012, 20). Barfield asserts further that the final of the criteria is the most important because:

It sets the boundaries of an ethnic group and it is at the boundaries where we discern the most critical variables that people actually employ to distinguish themselves from others living beside them. The specific cultural content they share or the signs that mark that identity may change, but the group remains distinct as long as its members assert (or are forced to accept) an identity that outsiders recognize and respond to. (Barfield 2012, 21)

Furthermore, he explains that in Afghanistan the best way to understand ethnicity is to keep in mind that if people identify themselves as “X” and their neighbors agree that they are “X”, then they actually are “X” essentially. Regardless of the intermarriage and intermixing that has occurred for centuries, when a group is socially identified as such, then they general are accepted as such in Afghanistan (Barfield 2012, 21). It is important to keep these definitions in mind when thinking of ethnic communities in Afghanistan. Afghanistan’s tribes consist of the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Aimaq, Nuristanis, Pashai, Qizilbash, Baluch, Arabs, Pamiris, and the Kirghiz. There are a very small number of other groups as well, including non-Muslim groups who may have migrated more recently. The three largest groups are the Pashtuns, Tajiks and Hazaras. The demographics of these ethnic groups have importance because they have strong cultural influences over each another. For example, the concept of honor is primarily a Pashtun cultural code but its influence is far-reaching. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

## **Pashtuns**

Pashtuns have generally been the largest and certainly most powerful group throughout Afghan history. Pashtuns have been the leaders of the country for centuries. They make up about 40% of the population. Pashtuns also live in Pakistan, a result of British colonialism, dividing the tribes between two nations through arbitrary borders. The Durrand line is still disputed as being

part of Afghanistan today. Historically the term “Afghan” is synonymous with “Pashtun.” Afghanistan is translated as “Land of the Afghans” which essentially implies that it is the “Land of the Pashtuns.” Other tribes have taken issue with the title of Afghanistan in the past. Today there is still tension and protest about what people in Afghanistan should be referred as. However, since the outside world defines them as such, they have crowded around this new “Afghan” identity. There have recently been political movements that encourage people of all tribes to proudly take the name “Afghan” so that the country’s tribes can be more unified (Barfield 2012, 24). The Pashtuns have four descent groups that are associated from separate clans. These groups include Durrani, Ghilzai, Gurchusht, and Karlanri Pashtuns. The Pashtun lineage is traced back to one common ancestor named Qais. Qais was believed to have 4 children and each descent group is believed to have come from each child (Barfield 2012, 25). The Pashtuns have a unique code of conduct called the “Pashtunwali”. This code of conduct essentially determines how Pashtun a person is. The Pashtun identity is very strongly linked to the Pashtunwali and the ability to speak Pashto. Many Pashtuns today do not know how to speak Pashto but have become accustomed to speaking Afghanistan’s historically national language which is Dari Persian (Barfield 2012, 25).

## **Tajiks**

Tajik people in Afghanistan are Dari speaking and predominantly Sunni. They are nearly 30% of the population. Many Tajiks have resided in Kabul throughout history. They also live in the urban centers of Herat and Mazar-I-Sharif. They could be considered a more urban population although many of them are concentrated in northern villages as well. Barfield discusses a specifically crucial quality about Tajiks:

Rural Tajiks practice subsistence farming, but those in urban areas have historically been the bedrock of the merchant community, bureaucrats, and educated clergy. Their literacy

in Persian, long the regional language of government administration, high culture and foreign relations, gave them a powerful role no matter who was ruling the country. (Barfield 2012, 26)

Thus the Tajiks are not as tribal as Pashtuns and have had the reputation of being the educated elite with centuries of famous poetry, artwork, epics, tales and religious texts in the Dari Persian language that have educated or touched every tribe in Afghanistan throughout history. The Tajiks and the Pashtuns have also clashed a lot more because they are the two dominant groups in Afghanistan (Barfield 2012, 26).

### **Hazaras**

The Hazaras constitute 15% of the population and have the highest concentration of Shia Muslims. They generally live near the Hindu Kush although they are also scattered throughout Afghanistan, especially in the north today. The Hazaras speak a Persian dialect called Hazaragi. Hazaras have been highly persecuted by Afghan society for generations and during the Taliban era they were massacred by the thousands. The Hazaras are different from the two dominant groups because they are predominantly Shia, they are believed to have Mongoloid features, and are also believed to be descendants of Genghis Khan and the Mongols. Barfield noted that they are at the bottom of the ethnic hierarchy in Afghanistan and that they have been deliberately left out of many economic, political and social scenes because of their ethnic background (Barfield 2012, 27).

### **Uzbeks and Turkmen**

These two predominantly Sunni groups constitute around 10% of Afghanistan's population. They are an ethnic Turkic group and the languages they speak; Uzbek and Turkmen are also Turkic languages. They are believed to be descendants of Central Asians who migrated

to Afghanistan. Today's Uzbeks are believed to be ethnically the same as Uzbeks in Uzbekistan. Many Afghan Uzbeks live along the border to Uzbekistan in the North. The Turkmens are the same ethnically as the Turkmens across the border as well. The current Turkmen population is generally focused near the border to Turkmenistan in the North.

### **Other Groups**

Other groups include the Aimaqs, Nuristanis, Pashai, Qizilbash, Baloch, Arabs, Pamiris, Jugis and Jats, Kyrgyz and non-Muslim groups. Most of these smaller groups have their own distinct dialects and cultural beliefs. However, the Arabs and the Qizilbash have integrated well into mainstream culture and language, speaking Persian fluently and blending in with society. The Qizilbash are a Shia Turkish group who came to Afghanistan in the 1700s. The Baloch are actually a very large group in the region of South Asia, spanning their population from Pakistan through Iran. The Nuristanis and Pashai are mountain people that are very closely related to each other. The Nuristanis have their own distinct language that is not related to any language in Afghanistan. They were polytheistic before they were forcefully converted into Islam. The Nuristanis are also known for their distinct physical features that are not typical in Afghanistan. Many of them have blonde or red hair and green or blue eyes. The Pashais are very similar as well. (Barfield 2012, 29). The Pamiris are a very small Shia group who speak their own distinct language and they primarily live in the very north of Afghanistan. Jugis and Jats are what Afghan society generally accepts as a "gypsy" group. They are believed to be from India originally. The Kyrgyz are the smallest Turkic group that are related to the Kyrgyz populations living in Kyrgyzstan and China. Afghanistan also has a non-Muslim population, though it is very small, believed to be 20,000 or less. They are mostly Hindus and Sikhs that generally lived in the capital for a long time. Afghanistan also had a small Jewish population but most of them left for



Israel in the 1950s (Barfield 2012, 31). It is important to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity of the different tribes in Afghanistan because it highlights how each group experiences the influence of one tribal code as part of a greater nation. The next section will discuss how barriers affect girls from going to school, regardless of their tribal background. These powerful barriers affect everyone in the country but they affect women the most.

## **Chapter Three: Barriers to Education**

### **Introduction**

There are currently many barriers in Afghanistan that hold people back from being able to learn in an educational institution. I will mention a few significant barriers, although there are a countless number of them. These barriers include physical dangers, distance, financial issues, cultural stigma and marriage. These barriers are very likely to affect women a lot more than men. For instance, attending school is not a cultural stigma against men. Figure 1 (p. 36) shows a general breakdown of how each obstacle impacts girls from attending school. Since the Taliban took power in 1994, there have been more barriers for girls trying to travel or go to school. These barriers are powerful because they are strongly influenced by the concept of honor. This will be discussed more in the following section and in Chapter Four.

### **Physical Dangers**

The physical dangers people face in Afghanistan include landmines, roadside bombs, suicide bombings and civilian casualties but female schools are specifically a big target of violence. After the Civil War, women have become more prone to kidnappings, severe Islamic punishment, domestic violence and sexual assault. According to a Thompson Reuters Foundation survey, Afghanistan is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be born a female. In fact, nine out of ten women experience physical, sexual or psychological violence or are forced into marriage (Nijhowne 2008). According to Human Rights Watch, Afghanistan's police are accused of committing or threatening sexual violence against women as well (HRW 2015). This is merely one of the many issues parents have to worry about with their daughters. A 2011 joint briefing paper authored by Ashley Jackson included a survey that revealed that nearly 32%

(34.1% parents, 33.4% teachers, 30.4% school girls) of interviewees in the briefing papers survey said that insecurity is a major reason why girls are not attending school (Jackson 2011, 14). Parents are worried about the suicide bombings and shootings that are occurring. Schools are specifically targeted by extremists and threatening notes are left at the schools warning girls not to attend. In 2009 there were 50 attacks on schools each month and 250 attacks during the August elections because schools were used as polling centers. According to the Ministry of Education 34% of Helmand's schools and 61% of Zabul's schools have closed down because of the threat to security. Here's an example of a statement made by a mother in Kandahar concerned about sending her daughter to school:

“The girls here don't go to school because of traditions and insecurity. There are no separate schools for girls and the government cannot establish them as they say that no government employee in this area is safe and it is feared that they will be abducted. Even if there were teachers, we would not send our children to school as we can't keep them safe and they may be killed for even just going to school.” (Jackson 2011, 14)

In May of 2012, over 120 school girls were poisoned in Takhar, Afghanistan (Hamid 2012; Popalzai 2012). These poison attacks have occurred multiple times throughout the country, more recently in May of 2015 with another 120 school girls falling ill from poison (Mullen 2015). Poisonous gas is not the only method extremists use to harm school girls, severe acid attacks and explosions from hand grenades have occurred throughout girls schools as well. These acts of violence against girls in schools create a great sense of fear among the locals, fearing for the safety of their children. The extremists committing these acts are essentially terrorizing the society with debilitating fear, which seriously affects local attitudes towards schooling (Jackson 2011).

## **Distance Barriers**

Travelling long distances to get to school creates a great barrier for girls in Afghanistan. According to a 2010 survey by Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), nearly 24% (27.9% parents, 28.6% teachers, 17.3% school girls) of those surveyed say that distance is a huge obstacle for girls to get access to education. In rural areas specifically it is very difficult for school-aged girls trying to attend school (Jackson 2011). When the survey focused on reasons for dropping out, only 12% of those in urban cities considered distance the primary reason, but for Afghans in rural societies, nearly 37% of them reported distance being a reason for dropping out. In the rural village of Ghor, the study found that enrollment had dropped 16% for every mile that children would have to travel to go to school. For girls specifically the distance factor is even more significant, with enrollment dropping by 19% for every extra mile, whereas for boys it only dropped by 1% (Jackson 2011, 18). Furthermore, distance is also connected to cultural notions of female honor. One out of ten of Afghans interviewed (14.8% parents, 9% teachers, 8.3% school girls) saw harassment of girls during travel to school as a major barrier for girls getting education. The distance to school becomes even more challenging when a girl reaches puberty because it is feared that it will bring dishonor to the family. More specifically, parents do not like that there are not more girls-only schools and that there are not female teachers to teach girls instead of men because it is a gender segregated society.

## **Financial Barriers**

Afghanistan is a highly impoverished nation so it should be no surprise that from all the obstacles mentioned, poverty is seen as the greatest obstacle preventing girls to seek education. Of the interviewees, 41.2% (47.1% parents, 34.6% teachers, 38.9% school girls) believe that poverty is the greatest obstacle. Children play a major role in supporting the family in

Afghanistan because they often take part in carpet weaving, begging on the streets or doing chores around the house. Sometimes girls are sent to work full time in farms to make an earning. Although consisting of mostly boys, one out of five children are believed to work in Afghanistan according to the Afghan government's estimates. It is also important to note that when girls are married off, they receive a dowry and are no longer a burden to the family so they are encouraged to get married, not seek education. Therefore, financial barriers are a cause of concern for many young girls in Afghanistan who want to attend school.

### **Lack of Family Support**

It is estimated that violence against women affects 87% of women in Afghanistan and in 90% of those cases, the perpetrator is a family member (UNIFEM 2006). Cultural stigma and family support are very significant in building the attitudes towards female education. When the entire family discourages or even abuses the girls in their family to prevent them from going to school, it creates a very difficult barrier for society to overcome. From the Jackson joint briefing paper interviewees, 31.8% (29.2% parents, 36.1% teachers, 32.2% school girls) believe that lack of family support is a big factor preventing girls from going to school (Jackson 2011, 16).

Additionally, according to the AIHRC, the biggest reason for girls dropping out was because the family did not support girls' pursuit of education creating 25.7% of female dropouts. The joint briefing paper summarized,

If a daughter is enrolled in school, the fear of being shamed by extended family members in other households, neighbors and others is widespread. 'People talk,' and often this is too humiliating for members of a household – both male and female – to bear. (Jackson 2011, 16)

There is also a substantial fear that girls will elope or get harassed, kidnapped or sexually assaulted on their way to school which would destroy the family honor. There are cases of this

occurring, which dramatically affects families pulling their girls out of school. “Researchers reported several instances where issues related to the notion of girls’ honor led to violent conflict, abduction and even murder” (Jackson 2011, 16). Honor plays a significant role in women’s public involvement, especially schooling. Some regions are influenced more than others. For instance, in Kandahar, the community is involved in whether a parent sends a girl to school or not. There are reports of families being threatened by community members not to send their girls to school. Families and communities play a huge role in girls going to school. They can either be supplemental to the cause or detrimental to it because family values are very strong in Afghan culture. The graph below (Figure 2) shows the breakdown mentioned in this section illustrating the perceptions towards how influential family and community is towards female attendance trends. According to the graph, teachers have the highest perception that lack of family support is an obstacle towards education for girls. Girls also have a higher perception that lack of family support plays a crucial role.

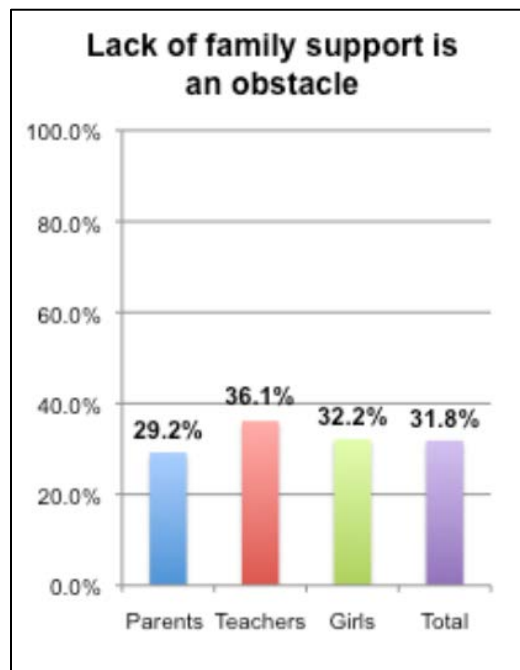


Figure 2: Lack of family support is an obstacle (Jackson 2011, 16)

## **Marriage**

Marriage can give economic benefits to families, especially poor families. This is because a family receives bride money for giving their daughter away. Additionally they will no longer have to financially support the girl since she will be in the care of her husband. Generally, when girls get married, they drop out of school. This is because they have to follow the cultural norms of being a housewife and raising children because it is more honorable. If a woman leaves her husband and child behind for school, she may be seen as a bad and dishonorable woman. Around 39.4% (49.7% teachers, 39.7% students, 33.7% parents) of the joint briefing paper's interviewees believe marriage is a barrier to female schooling (Jackson 2011, 13). Additionally, when young school-aged girls become mothers, it is hard for them to go to school if there is no childcare support and if their families are burdened to help with childcare. Marriage at a young age is also related to the notion of honor in Afghan culture because when a girl is married young, usually between the ages of 15 and 16, the family believes there is less of a risk of her bringing dishonor by dating or being raped. According to a Radio Free Europe broadcast cited online,

In Afghan villages, it's considered dishonorable for families for daughters to meet and date boys. Some parents try to marry their daughters as soon as possible to avoid such a prospect. A lack of security during more than three decades of war, and the risk of kidnapping and rape, has also prompted many families to force their young daughters into marriage. And widespread poverty still compels many parents to get their daughters married to avoid the cost of caring for them. (Najibullah 2008)

Marriage is an integral part of female honor because the role of being a wife and a mother is one that women must take part in to maintain their entire family's sense of honor. It is also used as a tool to protect women from bad rumors and from developing a bad reputation. The following chapter will discuss why honor is so important in Afghan society and why it affects women's lives the most.

## **Chapter Four: The Concept of Honor**

### **Introduction**

Honor is generally defined as having a good name and public esteem. In an article written by Baldry, Pagliaro, and Porcaro, honor is defined in two parts: In the first part, honor is a virtue that highlights the “importance of moral integrity, altruism, pride and respect” (Baldry et al. 2013, 363). According to the authors, this form of honor is admired by both men and women. The second aspect of honor is “based on a person’s (usually a man’s) strength and power to enforce his will on others or to command deferential treatment” (Baldry et al. 2013, 363). This type of honor focuses more on status and reputation. The second part of the definition is more prevalent in certain cultures, much like the culture of honor in Afghanistan (Baldry et al. 2013, 363). The development of this concept in Afghan culture is strongly linked to Pashtunwali. This section will elaborate more on the history and development of honor in the context of Pashtunwali and its two major elements – gender segregation and purdah.

### **Pashtunwali and Honor**

In order to understand the origins of honor in Afghanistan, we have to take a close look at Pashtunwali in history. Pashtunwali is believed to be over a thousand years old, predating Islamic law by centuries (Cathell 2009, 15). Although Pashtunwali is a primarily Pashtun tribal code of conduct, history has influenced the practice of Pashtunwali to encompass all of Afghanistan, including non-Pashtun tribes. Ahmad Shah Durrani strongly influenced and united all the tribes of Afghanistan to the point where his Pashtunwali beliefs and ideals influenced non-Pashtun tribes. It was under his power that a common national consciousness developed and the term “Afghan” became synonymous with all who live in Afghanistan, not just Pashtuns. He also



included every tribal group in his leadership and he allowed equal participation in the military by all ethnic groups (Ansary 2014, 15). As a result, other ethnic groups were generally comfortable under his rule and it was easy for them to accept the Pashtun influences of his policies (Ansary 2014, 15). Ahmad Shah's legitimacy was based on his tribal background, being a Pashtun. Pashtunwali governed the Pashtuns before anything else and because of this, Pashtunwali became a driving force behind the establishment of the Afghan state under Ahmad Shah Durrani (Kakar 1979). In addition, Pashtunwali was passed onto the king through his fellow Pashtuns. As a result, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks respect and practice many of the same rules in Pashtunwali. Therefore, Pashtunwali strongly influences the country, regardless of their tribe. However, Pashtunwali is most prevalent in tribal rural Pashtun regions, such as the south and the east of Afghanistan (Ansary 2014, 14).

Pashtunwali is a Pashtun tribal code of behavior (Rashid 2010, 4). Pashtunwali requires community consensus and decision-making (Dearing 2011). Furthermore, following the Pashtunwali gives the Pashtun a sense of honor. Without honor a Pashtun has no support from his community and is no longer considered a Pashtun. The major themes of Pashtunwali are *melmastia*, *nanawati*, *badal*, *tureh*, *meranah*, *isteqamat*, *sabat*, *imandari*, *ghayrat* and *namus*. Melmastia means that one should always honor their guests by being good hosts and throwing lavish parties even if it leads them to absolute poverty. Additionally it increases the social network which gives the Pashtun more authority. Nanawati is the right of asylum and the required accepting of a truce if two parties are fighting. By invoking nanawati, a person can seek refuge in the home and ask for a truce from a conflict against that person and that person must accept the truce. Badal is blood revenge against anyone who harmed a family member. Any person who is killed must receive compensation through blood. Tureh is bravery. Meranah is

manhood and chivalry; isteqamat is persistence and constancy; sabat is steadfastness; and imandari is righteousness. Ghayrat is defense of property and honor through battle or through the defense of honor against shame by another person. Namus, which is primarily the subject of this thesis, is the defense of the honor of women accomplished through gender segregation or purdah (Dupree 1980, 126).

### *Gender Segregation and Honor*

In Afghanistan, there are likely to be many parts of social life that relate to honor. However, there is still not a lot of data about the history of the concept or how far reaching it is in other realms of Afghan society. Nonetheless, there are clear links between the concept of honor and female schooling. In order to appreciate this link, it is crucial to show its connection with gender segregation because gender segregation, an element of honor, is a huge factor in how honor affects female education. For instance, the joint briefing paper by Jackson showed that 26.4% of those interviewed believe that a lack of female teachers is a major obstacle to girls attending school (Jackson 2011, 20). Only 28% of teachers are women and many of them are concentrated in the urban areas, so the distribution of female teachers is very scattered (Jackson 2011, 18). This has a significant impact on female education attendance. "It is absolutely crucial to increase the number of female teachers if you want to see more girls in school," says Matt Waldman, the Afghan policy adviser for OXFAM (Baker 2008, 42). There are definitely cultural origins related to the issue of female attendance in schools (Baker 2008).

The Taliban policy of keeping girls out of school was based on a very strong cultural prohibition against having women mix with unrelated men. Those traditions still define large swaths of Afghan society--even in urban areas like Kabul. (Baker 2008, 41)

Segregation and seclusion of women in schools can relate to the protection of female honor and the female honor, in turn, extends to the honor of the entire family:

One aspect of traditional Afghanistan culture with which Westerners are familiar is that of purdah, or the seclusion of women and segregation of the sexes. As foreign as it seems to Westerners, it is an integral part of the Afghani culture related to family honor. (Ray 2001, 20)

Analyses and studies (Jackson 2011, Baker 2008, Ray 2001, Hunte 2006) show that the Afghan concept of female honor is strongly linked to Purdah and gender segregation, which in turn, affects girls from attending school. Additionally, it shows how strongly the role of a woman can influence honor to extend to the entire family. Her actions can elevate or destroy an entire family, and thus, create instability in the entire community.

### *Purdah and Honor*

Purdah is very strongly related to honor in Afghan society (Noury 2016, 824). Although Purdah and gender segregation seem very similar, there is a difference between the two concepts. Purdah essentially means seclusion of women (Rippenburg 2004, 417). Gender segregation is the segregation of sexes. Gender segregation does not necessarily seclude women from society; it secludes them from males. Purdah, however, secludes women from society entirely, regardless of whether it was gender segregated or not. The following passage is a well summarized explanation of purdah and how it links to the cultural concept of honor in Afghan society:

Purdah has bearing on women's mobility, access to health care, education and work outside home, participation in religious rituals and contact with men (and to some extent also with women) outside the family circle. Purdah restricts women's participation in social affairs, involvement in decision-making, at least outside home, and access to public communications. A woman's experience and understanding of the world outside home is constrained. For the man, purdah is about prestige. He is proud to demonstrate high enough living standards so as to keep his women at home. A man is responsible for the behaviour of his unmarried sisters and daughters, his mother (if widow) and his wife. A man's namus, his honour, is partially derived from the behaviour of his women. (Rippenburg 2004, 417)

Veronica Doubleday, an author and ethnomusicologist who spent time in Afghanistan, has eloquently pointed out that purdah is not just about being segregated and veiled, but that it

also means that men have absolute control over the mobility of their women, and this gives men ultimate power (Doubleday 1988).

The honor of women and by extension the honor of the family depends in great measure on the good conduct of female family members. The customs of veiling, seclusion or purdah, and separation of the sexes are practices intended to protect women's honor. In exchange for subordinate status and unequal access to resources, the woman is entitled, according to the "patriarchal bargain," to maintenance and protection, in a sharp division of roles into male-breadwinner/female homemaker. (Offenhauer 2005, 58)

The passage above explains how the elements of segregation and purdah are enforced by a male dominated society to protect women's honor but that it comes with a price, the price of subordination. This subordination creates unequal access to resources like schooling and teaching. Additionally, the passage points out once again that the honor of a woman extends to the family as well, so protecting the woman's honor means protecting the honor of the family and especially, the honor of the man. Purdah is a way of protecting that honor because the man has the authority to restrict a woman's behavior and he is also entitled to restraining his wife's movements and preventing her from showing herself in public, all in the reasoning that he is protecting the family's honor (Offenhauer 2005, 58). Purdah in practice is a very effective way of preventing girls from attending school because the man has the authority to suppress the behavior and mobility of any female living in his household, including his mother, his sister, his daughter and his wife. The next chapter will reveal the passionate beliefs behind protecting the honor of a woman. The following collection of narratives will help give insight into why so many girls are prevented from going to school. The stigma of going against the family is so rigid that it hurts and scares a lot of girls from pushing through. The girls who go against the tide continue to face long term backlash from their family. Chapter Five will bring voices to the stories of young hopeful girls who just want to learn.

## Chapter Five: Analyses

### Narrative Analysis

The studies and statistics I have highlighted reveal a crucial trend between the cultural concept of honor and female involvement in school. However, there are many powerful narratives that show the deep and personal impact it has on girls and women. In order to understand how extensively strong the concept is in all parts of the culture, it is necessary to gather and investigate the many narratives of the young girls and women of Afghanistan. In this section, I will provide a collection of quotes and passages from various news articles, letters, case studies, scholarly articles and interviews that span the years 2001 to 2015 that bring light to the unknown powerful concept of honor and its influence over females in the country.

In the southern province of Kandahar, there is a particularly stronger tradition of strict male and female roles. The Ghutay family consists of three girls and two boys. Gul Ghutay reveals her experiences growing up in a household she says devalues both her and her sister as females. Her mother fought to keep her in school past the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. As a result, she was able to continue school but she feels resentment from her father and brothers. Interviewed for an audio-blog, Gul Ghutay said, “My father and brothers speak to all my sisters angrily. No-one listens to us or to what we want. They tell us we belong in other people’s homes because we will all get married sooner or later” (Speasalay 2016a).

Typically in the southern regions of Afghanistan, daughters get married and leave the home, while the sons stay behind and take care of the family, supporting the parents. There are stories about the southern region that reveal the attitude of society towards girls. When a girl is born, the family ridicules the mother and daughter. Saliha is another girl in a southern village that feels constantly ridiculed by the men in her family. When she stood up for herself against

her male counterparts, they told her women belong either in a home or in the grave. “All girls need to fight against this awful behavior” she said. “They must show the elders in their family that girls are also creatures of God and that they have rights like all other creatures of God,” she said on a podcast (Speasalay 2016a). Wali Mohammad has both daughters and sons and he openly stated on the same podcast that he loves his sons more than his daughters. “I am personally delighted if a boy child is born, because when he becomes an adult, he will bring honour to me and the family,” he said. “But a girl is always a burden to our family and we will never be rid of her problems, even after she is married.” Looking at this narrative specifically, we can see that he distinguishes a stark contrast between sons and daughters; he believes a son brings honor to the family, but a daughter only brings trouble or dishonor. He is most likely implying that a girl can bring dishonor even after she is married, therefore she will always be a burden (Speasalay 2016a). Soala is another young girl in Kandahar who aspired to continue school after getting her high school diploma and finishing at the top of her class. However, her father and brother could not allow her to risk the honor of the family. “My conscience cannot accept my young sister leaving the house every day and studying together with young men she does not know in the same class,” Soala’s brother said. “I am also ashamed of my friends mocking me. If they say even one bad word about my sister, my honour won’t be able to bear it” (Speasalay 2016b). This piece of narrative shows how the reputation of a girl can affect the honor of a family and the fear that her reputation will be destroyed if she goes to school, impacting not only her, but the men of her family as well. This is what makes the men of the household adamantly against girls’ schooling, a trend that occurs in too many households in Afghanistan. Haji Zahir is a Khost resident and father of five girls. He sent all of them to a madrassa which is basically an Islamic school for religious studies only. He does not trust that

government schools would support and enforce local traditions and Islamic law. The online Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), quoted an Afghan man,

By sending my girls to a madrassa, I avoided people badmouthing our family, and I also avoided a situation where the girls would be taught by men. That's what happens in government schools and it isn't appropriate," Zahir said. "However, boys from our family do study in the modern government schools, because we trust them more than we do the girls not to stray from the path of religion. (Shah 2015)

There is a fear among some families that government based schools will not be in line with local beliefs and Islamic traditions which may cause the "Westernization" of their daughters. Inziregul is a resident of the Matun district and remembers when the government schools were based on Soviet practices in the 1980s. He believes the women who attended school at that time were influenced by Soviet values and he fears something similar happening with his daughters if they were to attend government schools. "I don't send my girls to a modern school because they would lose their religious values there," he told the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. "If we now allow our girls to attend modern schools, they will become westernised."

It is also important to mention that girls are not only prevented from going to school from external efforts but they are also psychologically traumatized by the things they hear and see happen to other girls who attempt to go to school. They are in fear for their own lives and this causes a lot of effort on their part to continue taking the risk for school, even though the threat of dishonor and abuse echoes in their minds. Maryam Naquibullah is a young Afghan woman who interpreted for the Canadian forces in Afghanistan while living in Kandahar (Naquibullah 2016). She wrote a touching letter to the Canadian government, thanking them for opening up a community center called the Afghan Canadian Community Center where she was able to receive education and further her attendance at a university, the first in her family. She later attended

Carleton University in Ottawa where she double majored. Maryam wrote a letter because the center in Kandahar was closing and she believed that because the center changed her life and allowed her to pursue her dreams, that it could do the same for other young girls. She urged the Canadian government to support it and help keep it open. The following is a revealing passage that reflects the internalized issues Afghan women face when they decide to go to school:

When I was 8, going to school meant a two-hour walk. But that was nothing compared with the fear. The fear of being attacked at any time for the crime of being a girl who wants an education. The fear of a suicide bomber. The fear of never seeing my parents again. The fear that someone might throw acid in my face, and the neighbours might not let me in to wash it off. (Naquibullah 2016)

Furthermore, she describes the voices she hears in her mind while walking to school. These voices are powerful enough to make a grown person decide not to leave the house. She was only an eight year-old girl, like many girls her age and younger who take the risk of walking to school every day.

“Suicide bombers are few, but the voices are many. Voices that follow you during the long walk, that mutter, scream and echo:”  
“This is a country for men.”  
“Go and do your chores. Raise the kids.”  
“What is the point of school when women aren’t allowed to leave the house?”  
“We own you.” (Naquibullah 2016)

Finally she talks about how she had to deal with the mentality of family honor overtaking her dream of going to school because her own family members disapproved of her going to school:

For some of us, these voices continue at home. I learned to hide my textbooks when my uncle came to visit. I worried that family honour might demand that I leave school, ending my career before it began. I worried about being sold into marriage to cover a family debt. (Naquibullah 2016)



Shabana Basij-Rasikh is a young woman who started a boarding school for girls in Afghanistan. She was named a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and she was interviewed by National Geographic. The region of her boarding school is not included because of security purposes. When Shabana would go to school when she was young, she would dress up as a boy to be safe from backlash and she, along with other girls would cover her book in a cloth, to disguise it as a Quran. In her interview she talks about how a boarding school would be beneficial to girls because they could escape the hard work and toil of daily chores that leave them no time to do anything for themselves, including learning. She believes that if they are removed from that very busy schedule full of responsibilities and expectations, they can finally have time to learn to read and socialize and learn about the world around them. Shabana also had many fears of being attacked while going to school during the time of a regime that considered female schooling illegal:

I grew up under a regime that considered girls' education a crime. As I was walking to a secret school it did at times feel like I was committing a crime, because that's how it was considered by the government. You could easily be killed if the Taliban were to find out. We'd hear horrible stories about how some neighboring school was discovered, and they beheaded the teacher in front of the students. That fear was present all the time. Even at that young age we knew the risks we were taking every day. (Daugherty 2014)

However, Shabana knows that opening a boarding school is also a great risk because sending girls away to school even for a few hours is a controversy but sending them to live at a school is an entirely different challenge (Daugherty 2014).

"The concept of a girl living away from home to be educated isn't culturally accepted," Basij-Rasikh says. "Families receive threats, and some even risk their lives to send daughters here" (Daugherty 2014).

Ehsanullah Ehsan is director of the Kandahar institute of Modern Studies. In the following passage, he urges that societal stigmas are just as problematic as the Taliban when

it comes to female schooling, including the stigma of negatively affecting family honor (Nelson 2012).

“There are many other threats ... extremist threats, warlord threats, tribal lord threats, family honor threats, because still there are families in which education is an honor problem. So these women who are coming here, they are brave to come here for an education.” (Nelson 2012)

### **Synthesizing and Evaluating Data**

Through my research I have come across compelling data that shows a link between households with school aged daughters and their lack of attendance due to cultural issues of honor. Unfortunately there is not enough information on this topic but the data and research I have found make a strong argument that there is a correlation. The information in this section is based on research carried out by Pamela Hunte in 2005, Ashley Jackson in 2011 and Priscilla Offenhauer in 2005.

The following table (Table 1) compiled by Pamela Hunte based on her original research into Afghanistan’s education trends shows several households and their reasons for why they will not allow girls to attend school. Household #1 has two girls aged 16 and 18. They are prevented from going to school for several honor-related reasons the family listed. One reasoning the families stated is because they are Pashtun. There is a Pashto proverb that says a woman should either be in the home or in the grave (Parajuli 2013, 63). This goes back to the history of Pashtunwali, where the practice of namus is very important (Dearing 2011). Once again, namus is the defense of the honor of women with segregation and purdah. Another reasoning they mentioned was simply that female education was “not our culture”. Again, here they are clearly linking lack of attendance with culture. In other words, their daughters attending school goes against their culture. Another thing they mentioned for a reason is that “people talk.” This relates to the fear of the community dishonoring the family by talking about their girl going to school

and spreading rumors. This is an example of the earlier narrative of Soala's brother who said he feared that his friends might mock him and that his honor would not be able to bear it if they say a single thing about his sister (Speasalay 2016b). There is also a column on the chart for the members of the family that made the decision. In this case, it was the father, brother and mother who reportedly made the decision. In household #2 it shows that the grandfather had made the decision for his 16 year old granddaughter not to attend school for similar reasonings related to honor. He commented that they are "Afghan" and that "people talk". In household #4, the uncle is the determining factor and he gave the same reason of being Pashtun but he also mentioned that the teachers are male which links back to the Pashtun honor-related concept of gender segregation that requires separating women away from men in order to protect one's honor. In household #9, the father was the deciding factor for his two teenaged girls. He specifically stated "our men don't like girls to go to school" and "only boys go to school." He also said that it is not their custom, once again showing that his custom and culture does not like the idea of girls going to school. He further stated that boys alone can go to school, once again revealing the value of gender segregation in the culture. In household #10, both mother and father determined that they did not want their daughters to go to school because they are "strict" and it is "bad." However, they specifically said "We people are strict" which means that they are referring to their cultural identity, speaking on behalf of "their people." This is related to the other responses that identified being "Afghans" and "Pashtuns" as a reasoning for not allowing their own girls to go to school. Additionally, they said that it is bad for girls to go to school, further proving my argument that girls attending school is negatively associated in the culture because of the concept of honor. Household #12 includes a mother and father with pre-teen daughters who would not take their girls to school because there were no female schools in their area, another link back to

honor-related gender segregation. As seen in the graph, 5 of the 8 households would not let girls attend school for honor-related reasons, mostly specific to gender segregation (Offenhauer 2005, 58). Out of the eight households in the chart, there are three families who specifically said they would not let their girls go because there are no girls' school, although it is important to note that this is only one of their reasonings. It is also important to note that there are four households that mentioned the girls are "too old" to attend school even though the girls were teenaged. This may be related to the fact that the most common age of marriage for girls in Afghanistan is 15 and 16. Additionally 57% of girls are married before the age of 19, more than half of them (Rippenburg 2004, 206). These statistics show the cultural trend of young female marriage and may be a reason why four out of the eight households said their girls were too old to go to school.

Table 1: Children who had never been enrolled in school (13 girls from eight households)

Household	Child	Who decided	Reason(s)
#1	teenaged girls (aged 16 and 18)	father, brother, mother	girls "too old" we're Pashtun people talk not our culture people fight when girls are teased
#2	teenaged girl (aged 16)	grandfather	girl "too old" no school here we're Afghans people talk disturbances of the "fool people"
#3	teenaged girl	uncle	girls can't go to Chahar Asyab we're Pashtun teachers are male
#6	teenaged girl (aged 15)	father, mother	due to the war (too young then)
#7	teenaged girl (aged 14) pre-teen girl (aged 12)	grandfather	Afghans don't like "big girls" in school
#9	teenaged girls (2)	father	not our custom our men don't like to send their girls to school only boys go to school
#10	teenaged girls (2)	father, mother	they are grown there was no school before there was war we people are strict it's "bad" girls are not very interested
#12	pre-teen girls (2)	father, mother	no girls' school here

(Hunte 2005, 20)

In order to show a better and more detailed picture of girls' education trends, it is important to take a look at the differences of enrollment in schools between age and gender groups. Figure 3 below helps illustrate the detailed differences between specific age groups for girls, but it also shows how much variation there is between male and female attendance. Looking at Figure 3, it is immediately noticeable that the bar indicating enrollment is the highest for males aged 11 and 12, but for girls the peak actually starts earlier. This is most likely because of what was shown earlier in Table 1 about girls becoming "too old" to go to school for cultural reasons. It is important to note that once a girl reaches puberty she is pressured to get engaged or married to maintain family honor. For girls, the peak age of enrollment is at age 11 as well, but very closely behind is age 8. Aside from age 11, it generally starts declining after age 8. Another interesting observation to note is that the biggest enrollment difference between males and females is at age 16 with a 28% difference. At the early ages of 6-8, the gap is at its smallest, at 10% or less. However, once girls and boys get older, the differences become substantially more pronounced, nearly doubling at a 19% difference or higher. Once again, this may be related to the lack of tolerance for older aged girls to go to school. Finally, it is important to note that at all ages, male enrollment is higher than female enrollment. In the next section a clearer picture of how the rate of girls' schooling significantly drops when categorizing between primary, secondary and high school education emerges.

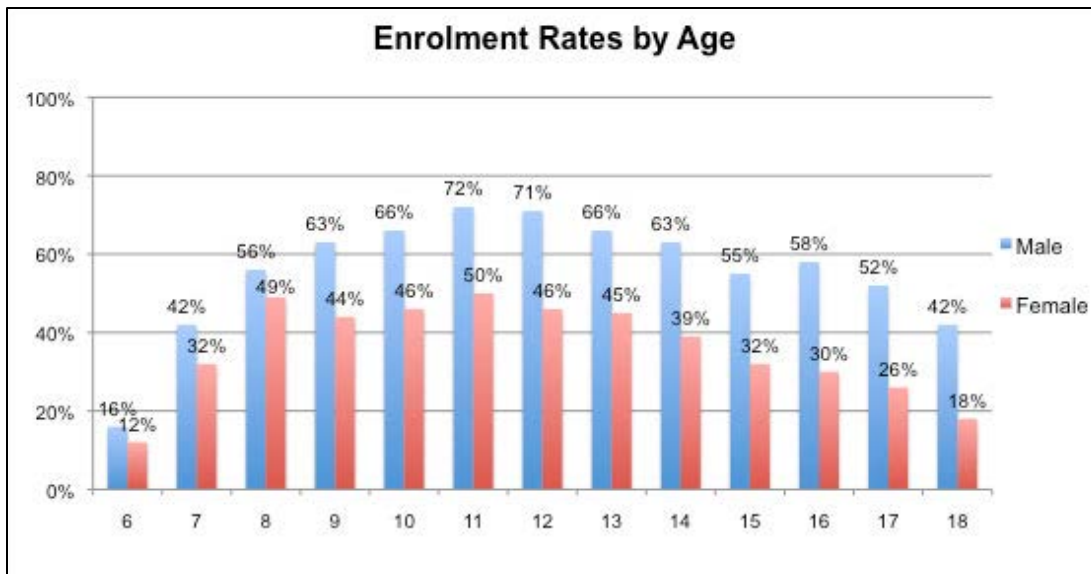


Figure 3: Enrollment Rates by Age (Jackson 2011, 9)

Looking at the breakdown of the enrollment differences between girls and boys at different levels of schooling in Figure 4, a substantial difference with age for girls can be clearly seen. Because honor is strongly related to girls' schooling and even more so as they get older, it is crucial to analyze these trends. Primary school has the highest enrollment of girls by far compared to secondary and high school. Once a girl reaches the secondary level of schooling, her chances for continuing education drop significantly and it continues to drop even lower when she reaches high school. Primary school is considered to be grades 1 through 6. At the primary school level, in 2010, there were 1.9 million girls enrolled. In secondary school, grades 7-9, enrollment dropped significantly low, down to 416,854. At the high school level, grades 10-12 it dropped even lower to 122,480 (Jackson 2011). Additionally, this trend shows once again that the gender gap increases as girls get older from .63 to .48 and finally to .38 as their schooling levels increase (Jackson 2011).

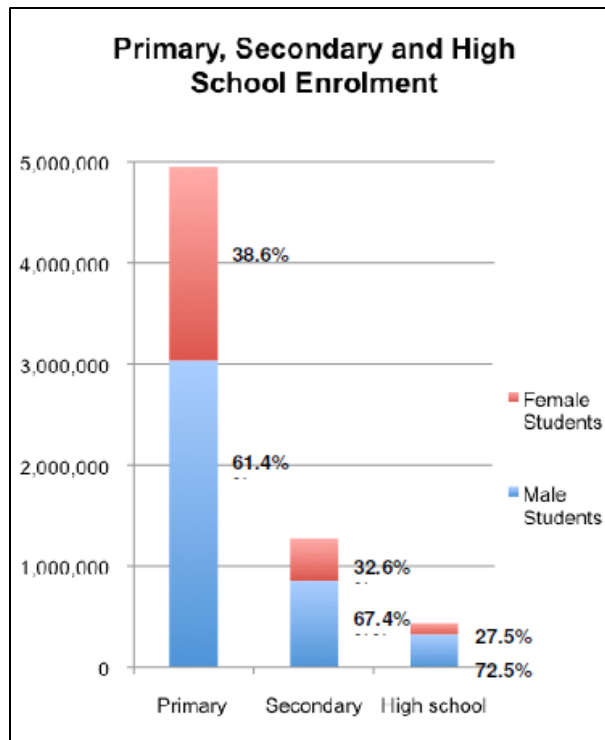


Figure 4: Primary, Secondary and High School Enrollment (Jackson 2011, 10)

In Chapter Three, I briefly described some of the obstacles that girls face in seeking education. Table 2 in this section shows how many girls in each region select which obstacles they consider a barrier to education. Furthermore, I will highlight which of these barriers are closely related to the concept of honor. In this section I will focus on the total column and look at the most significant obstacles related to honor. The first and second rows titled “No girls’ only school,” “Lack of female teachers” and the ninth row “Violence from teachers” can be closely related to honor because they are related to gender segregation, a subset of honor. The threat of violence from teachers is most likely related to violence from male teachers towards female students which can result in sexual assault, therefore possibly damaging family honor. The fifth row “Mixed classroom” is also related to gender segregation which I have discussed as a part of the concept of honor. The rows titled “Insecurity”, “Harassment”, “Lack of community support”, “Lack of family support”, “Long distance to school”, “Early and/or forced marriage”,

“Community or cultural beliefs”, “Threats” and “Kidnappings” can all be related to notions of honor as well. The issue of insecurity, harassment, threats and kidnappings as mentioned in Chapter Three are very worrisome for parents of young girls. Girls are often targeted simply because of their gender and the cultural notion that girls should not attend school (Jackson 2011). They receive death threats, their schools are burned down and they are attacked with acid frequently. As mentioned in the chapter on Narrative Analysis and the section on Purdah, lack of community support, lack of family support and community or cultural beliefs can also be a result of protecting family honor because girls are strongly tied to the honor of the family; therefore wherever they go can be controlled by their male head of households (Offenhauer 2005, 58). If they bring any dishonor to the family, they will be ostracized by the community and by their family. Early and/or forced marriages are linked to honor because girls are often married young to prevent them from dishonoring the family by being assaulted, by eloping or by being seen with a non-family male (Najibullah 2008). Distance is related to honor due to the fear that girls will be harassed on their way to school. The Jackson joint briefing paper showed that distance was a much more significant factor for girls than boys and it was even more significant if the girl was at an age of puberty. Parents worry that girls will be attacked by men which can bring dishonor to their family (Jackson 2011). Out of the 18 obstacles, 13 can be linked to cultural notions of honor. When the data is analyzed with the collected narratives and academic studies, there is a clear link between girls attending school and the fear of losing honor. When a girl loses her honor and reputation, her family will also lose their honor and reputation because their honor is linked to hers.



Table 2: What are the biggest obstacles to girls' education? (*School-aged females n=687*)

	Badakhshan	Badghis	Balkh	Bamiyan	Daikundi	Ghazni	Herat	Kabul	Kandahar	Khost	Kunar	Kunduz	Nangarhar	Pansjir	Parwan	Samangan	Takhar	Total
No girls' only school	1	0	1	8	8	4	0	0	1	0	19	5	0	0	4	14	1	66
Lack of female teacher	7	9	3	11	14	14	1	0	1	2	27	7	3	1	1	39	19	158
Poor quality of education	3	14	4	0	12	7	7	0	3	2	13	8	0	3	15	3	1	95
Insecurity	2	23	20	4	3	9	11	15	20	17	24	20	7	1	15	4	14	209
Mixed classroom	0	2	0	2	6	3	0	0	0	4	16	1	0	0	0	8	1	43
Harassment	1	2	3	0	5	1	0	9	1	7	8	5	3	1	7	4	0	57
Lack of family support	8	6	0	21	16	9	18	19	10	8	9	15	0	25	7	45	5	221
Lack of community support	0	2	0	2	4	1	6	3	1	5	11	1	0	1	3	2	23	65
Violence from teachers, staff	0	0	1	0	1	1	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Long distance to school	10	3	1	12	25	8	8	9	2	5	5	1	2	7	4	7	10	119
Poverty	10	28	13	19	22	9	25	19	5	15	2	14	12	5	24	12	33	267
Early and/or forced marriage	13	8	1	22	22	19	24	24	12	16	6	10	14	16	25	25	16	273
Community or cultural beliefs	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	4	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	2	11	31
Threats	2	0	2	2	9	0	0	1	7	4	0	0	0	0	10	0	2	39
IEDs, mines, etc	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Suicide bombings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	7	4	0	13	0	0	28
Kidnappings	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	2	9
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	0	2	9
Total	38	40	39	39	41	42	41	42	32	40	40	43	22	43	40	65	40	687

(Jackson 2011, 34)

## Historical Analysis

When observing the early history of Afghanistan, there is no doubt that Pashtuns played a significant role in the country's social and political dynamics. For example, under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Durrani, the Pashtuns were seen as a powerful group that needed to be integrated under his empire. Durrani, who was originally an Abdali Pashtun himself, worked hard to unite the Pashtun tribes under one nation. Eventually he managed to put Pashtuns along with several

other tribes under one Pashtun ruled nation (Barfield 2012). The Pashtun influence and Pashtunwali are important factors that are linked to the concept of honor in Afghanistan today.

In the 1800s, controversial policies aimed at improving the status of women in Afghanistan began to emerge. Abdur Rahman Khan was one of the early leaders who started the trend of modernization and reform. He abolished forcing young girls and women to marry men who are next of kin to their deceased husbands, a Pashtun practice (Rzehak 2011, 10). He established reforms that gave women the right to inherit property and the right to divorce (Lemmon 2012, 16). However, he had a lot of difficulty getting support because of tribal and rural resentments against his modernization (Lemmon 2012, 16). More importantly, his wife was publically involved with these reforms and she was a strong activist, which was not typical in society at the time (Oosterom 2012). His son, Habibullah Khan, continued his father's legacy, standing for women's rights and continuing to implement women's reforms. Unfortunately, he was assassinated for this reason (Ansary 2014). Amanullah Khan, the son of Habibullah Khan, took power after his father and further improved women's reforms by focusing on implementing schools for girls. His wife, Soraya, took a very important and direct role in this by supporting female education and sending girls abroad to learn. They were forced into exile because of their controversial policies (Ansary 2014).

Daoud Khan became prime minister in 1953 and he, along with his predecessors, campaigned against purdah. He showed this by demanding his deputy minister and members of the royal family, cabinet members and high ranking officials to appear in public with their wives and daughters unveiled. This shocked the nation and resulted in religious leaders demanding to meet with him and accusing him of being un-Islamic and inappropriate. (Dupree 1980). During

his reign from the 1950's to 1970's, it was considered a "Golden Age" for women (Dupree 1980.)

Between the 1800s and 1980s there have been several attempts in Afghanistan to reform social and political policies towards women, including giving them the right to vote and the right to attend school, amongst numerous other improvements. More importantly, past leaders tried to eliminate the practice of purdah in society (Dupree 1980). Each attempt was faced with significant pushback from Afghan society. This reveals a historical tension between two groups, one supporting women's participation in public and the other group supporting the practice of purdah. Although there was a shift towards improvement for women in the century and a half leading up to the 1980s, later events took the nation back in the opposite direction. The Civil War in the late 1980s and the growth of the Taliban created a society that was very hostile towards women's rights.

It was a time of fighting for power and fighting for a sense of honor (Hyman 2002). The country dramatically altered from modernized reforms and leftist secularism to complete denial of religious freedom (Barfield 2012). The Taliban's radical view of Islam would be the only interpretation of Islam allowed (Barfield 2012). The Taliban ideology was rooted in cultural beliefs and the majority of the Taliban were Pashtuns (Ansary 2014, 240). Under the Taliban the concept of purdah was strictly enforced at an entirely different level. After the fall of the Taliban and with the U.S. involvement there is still a strong Taliban influence in the region; there is a constant threat of the Taliban returning to power in the nation today (Rashid 2010, 234).

The history of Afghanistan illustrates a dichotomy between two cultural mentalities. I have presented narratives and historical accounts that support female empowerment and education, in contrast to those who oppose women's education and public inclusion through the

very same narratives and history. All of the policies I have highlighted throughout this thesis demonstrate a serious effort for reformation. It was not until the 1990s that I found specific laws and rules that strongly prohibited women from basic rights and freedoms, including the freedom of education for girls. Analyzing the history has proven that the honor concepts of purdah and gender segregation have influenced women's rights to education and other freedoms for a very long time. It has demonstrated that the issue is not policy related, but culturally related to the notion of honor. The proof of this is that there have been over 150 years' worth of political history and attempts to improve and implement policies towards women's rights and education. The one constant resistance throughout history has been the strong influence of tribal, regional and cultural communities that will not accept a government or society that does not recognize purdah and gender segregation. However, the history of Afghanistan also shows the desire to improve society and to give people better lives. It shows a sense of respect and sympathy towards a woman's cause.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion and Findings

The main objective of this thesis was to determine how influential the concept of honor has been in regards to female education in Afghanistan. My research and analysis of the history of Afghanistan uncovered several important themes. First, I noticed that politics and policy have been at the forefront of supporting female education for over 150 years. This led me to determine that national politics do not play a strong role in improving support for female school attendance because there are many laws that support female inclusion in society but unofficial laws and cultural norms have more power.

Afghanistan can be considered, in many aspects, as a country where the rule of law is set aside when it conflicts with male honor values or principals. The value of a woman's life is comparable to the dishonor of a man. (Baldry et al. 2013, 367)

I also found that international political intervention does not solve the major problems that cause a lack of female education. Additionally, I found that since the early establishment of the nation, there has been a lot of influential resistance to women's rights reforms of any kind. The history led me to conclude that the issue of female education is not political but rather a cultural one.

Therefore, I did more research on the general barriers to female education that were unrelated to national or international governments and politics. I found that there are several notable barriers that prevent Afghan girls from going to school. These include physical, distance and financial barriers, as well as lack of family support and early marriage. I found that all five of the general barriers can also be linked to the concept of honor. For example, the fear of physical danger also includes the fear of a girl being assaulted, which would destroy the honor of the family. The long distance barrier is related to girls being harassed, ridiculed or attacked on their way to school, which would demean their standing and reputation in the community, thus

affecting the honor of their family. Lack of family support is strongly factored by honor because the loss of honor affects the entire family. As a result, family members do not want to put their honor at risk and send girls in their family to school. Finally, marriage of school-aged girls is seen as a barrier to education because the marriage often occurs to preserve a girl's honor. Marriage allows the girl to fulfil the roles and traditions that society expects her to live up to, which in turn amplifies the respect and honor of her family. Financial barriers are also linked to honor because a girl's duty is to prevent herself from being a financial burden to her family. If she works at home or gets married, she relieves her family of financial burdens and maintains her honor by being obedient and financially supporting her family appropriately.

The many obstacles related to honor led me to investigate the cultural history of namus in Afghanistan and the concept of Pashtunwali. I found that Pashtunwali is a strong branch of Pashtun culture that has widely influenced the greater Afghan culture and is not limited to Pashtuns. Pashtunwali has a very interesting code of conduct for family roles; as father, son, husband, brother, uncle or grandfather, a man is expected to protect the honor of his family by secluding and controlling the women in his family. Purdah and gender segregation are an integral part of Pashtunwali. These three aspects of Afghan culture help form the concept of honor in Afghan society, which makes honor a much stronger influence over society than has heretofore been identified.

In order to prove the strong influence of honor, I had to look for more data. In addition to historical analysis, I conducted a narrative analysis and reviewed the data on girls' education barriers. I found several narratives and profiles of young women who admitted that the fear of a damaged honor prevented them from attending school, through parental and societal enforcement and prevention. It was also interesting to note that the males of their households were the

primary objectors to girls attending school. This was not limited to the father of the household, as there were several narratives of girls who feared their uncles and brothers too.

Additionally, I looked at the recorded historical data that was relevant to the topics of female schooling and cultural barriers. Data produced by Pamela Hunte, a collection of informative tables and surveys, provided insights into why parents did not want their girls to attend school. The results were overwhelmingly related to honor and the fear of losing family honor, with five out of eight households indicating that they would not send their girls to school because of the cultural stigmas related to the loss of honor. The survey in the joint briefing paper by Ashley Jackson revealed important trends about girls and their specific barriers to attending school (Jackson 2011). Thirteen out of the 18 respondents listed barriers that were directly related to notions of honor, including barriers specifically related to gender segregation, purdah and Pashtunwali (Jackson 2011, 34).

To close, I found that honor has substantial influence over female education and that it is in fact a major barrier. Perhaps most surprising is how far-reaching the concept of honor is across different aspects of Afghan society. It affects marriage, schooling, mobility, employment, well-being, community relations and familial stability. In extreme cases it affects the life and death of a girl. Although honor-related killings are not the subject of this thesis, it is a troubling event that does occur across many honor-driven cultures. This thesis analyzes the concept of honor and how strongly it affects female education. Protecting family honor is a very significant aspect of everyday life for many young Afghan girls and women. Honor affects their most basic human rights, including the right to attend school.

All the research conducted for this thesis aimed to answer one hypothesis: Does honor affect female school attendance in Afghanistan? After analyzing the available historical data and

researching the history of the region, the answer was revealed that honor does significantly affect female school attendance in Afghanistan. In addition to this, it strongly affects many specific aspects that are not only related to female presence in schools, but also female presence in society as a whole. The results of my research revealed that the cultural concept of honor is deeply influential across Afghan society and that its impact on female education is substantial.

The history of Afghanistan revealed continuous attempts from national and international players to enforce improved female schooling and other female rights. However, it also revealed that these attempts have been met with continuous resistance from locals. This confirmed that the topic of schooling and public involvement for women has always been a powerful and emotional subject for Afghan society. It revealed the dichotomy of society and government. There are locals who want to enforce purdah and gender segregation but there are also locals and politicians who strive to improve the lives of their daughters, sisters and mothers by encouraging the implementation of schools and other liberties for women.

After researching the history of Pashtunwali, I found that Pashtun culture has influenced the greater Afghan society since the formation of the country. This demonstrated that it is not only Pashtuns that prevent girls from attending school but that it is a greater trend that affects girls from other tribes and regions as well. Upon further research of Pashtunwali, I concluded that the concept consists of an intense notion of honor. Honor includes two very crucial elements: purdah and gender segregation. These two aspects of honor have an overarching influence all over Afghanistan but especially in regards to women. Women are seriously impacted by purdah and gender segregation because they are continuously and historically excluded from society.



Many women are forbidden from going to school because of the fear of damaging the honor of their family. The data I synthesized and evaluated confirmed these trends by showing that a large number of girls dropped out of school because of lack of family support due to honor-related issues. Additionally, the data revealed that many girls believe the barriers to their education include other cultural notions of honor. The data also revealed that a majority of parents would not allow girls to attend school for the same reason. The data I synthesized and evaluated and the historical analysis alone have proven that honor directly affects a girl's attendance to school. However, no analysis is more revealing and heartfelt than the collection of narratives that I have included in this thesis. The narratives revealed the emotion behind the voiceless girls who desperately wanted to go to school but were unable to because of the concept of honor alone. Overall, my findings revealed that the concept of honor has a tremendous effect on female involvement in schools and that the specific elements of purdah and gender segregation are among the most challenging aspects of Afghan culture that school-aged girls cannot overcome.

The results of this research implies that we must pay more attention to the cultural influences holding women back from attending school if we want to improve the status of women. Over the years we have seen international NGOs and governments funding and building schools for girls, donating materials and trying to maintain security in school areas. However, the data shows that there are still many girls forbidden from attending school, not because of infrastructure but because of cultural stigma. The best way we can fight against the mistreatment and abuse of girls and women in Afghanistan is to understand and include those cultural beliefs. I believe the best solution that was revealed through this research is to increase the number of all-female schools available to Afghans and include all-female teachers in these schools. We

need educational institutions that will be run by women. This would not only eliminate the huge stigma of going to a mixed school, but it would also give more female teachers the opportunity to work and contribute to society. Education is the first step in promoting equality for women, otherwise the cycle of illiteracy among women will continue.

As of today, there is a shortage of female teachers in Afghanistan. The Jackson joint briefing paper shows that there needs to be a new approach in improving school attendance for girls because since 2006 there has been a decline of girls going to school despite the efforts of international support. According to the report, 26.4% of those interviewed believe that lack of female teachers is a major obstacle to girls' education. More than half of the teachers in the study specifically reported that they need more female teachers (Jackson 2011, 20). The results of the study also summarized that "attendance in mixed classes or interaction with male teachers becomes increasingly problematic as girls approach adolescence, when cultural norms regulating their behavior become more restrictive" (Jackson 2011, 5). My research strongly confirms this because a significant number of girls are specifically affected by the cultural rules of purdah and gender segregation. My initial goal of this research was to find a solution for improving the quality of life for girls and women in Afghanistan, and I wanted to focus on education because I believe improvement needs to start at the earliest age possible. When young girls are not set up to succeed and are discouraged from taking part in society, I believe it can affect them for the rest of their lives, psychologically, socially and physically. Education is a powerful tool in society and it can help improve the status, health and future of women in Afghanistan, which in turn, will improve the nation as a whole.

The report stated that studies show improvement in the lives of girls who go to school. In fact, it states that the more time a girl spends at school, the more likely she is to be healthier and

economically empowered, which she will also pass on to her children (Jackson 2011). This alone shows that the entire course of society can be changed, simply by educating a girl because it is the girls in traditional societies that become mothers and raise their children, and they are responsible for changing and shaping the minds of an entire future generation. Studies also show that infant mortality drops around 5% to 10% the longer a girl stays in school, and it is well-known that Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world (Rashid 2010, 107). Education is not only good for the health and future of women in society but it is also beneficial for the future growth of the entire nation. A World Bank study revealed that increasing the amount of women that have finished secondary level schooling by just 1% will increase the per capita income growth by an average of 0.3% (Jackson 2011). Additionally, increased secondary schooling attendance of women will also increase returns for wage growth for both men and women. These studies reveal that education is a key factor in improving the quality of life for women while simultaneously improving the condition of the entire country (Jackson 2011). This is the reason why I focused on education because I strongly believe that education is very important, not only for women, but also for humanity.

The current statistics show that literacy rates are still substantially low for women. Literacy rates for girls is 37% and for women, 19%. The literacy rate for boys is 66% and for men, 49%. Overall female literacy has gone up from 12.6% to 19% (HRW 2017). However, international efforts have failed to implement stronger improvements in the infrastructure of schools. Today 41% of schools in Afghanistan do not have buildings. Additionally, a recent Human Rights Watch report reveals that many girls only went to school briefly with U.S. and International efforts after 2001. The current statistics for education in Afghanistan are not very reliable because the government counts children as attending school until they have not attended

for up to 3 years (HRW 2017). This inflates the data of attendance. Regardless of this, even the most optimistic data shows that no more than 50% of girls have attended school. In 2016 UNICEF reported that 40% of children do not attend school. Afghanistan also currently has a shortage of teachers, especially female teachers. In seven out of 34 provinces, there are less than 10% female teachers. In 17 provinces, there are less than 20% (HRW 2017). Additionally, female teachers are less willing to teach in rural areas. This makes it very difficult for girls living in rural areas who want to attend school but are unable due to the cultural notion of honor and gender segregation (HRW 2017).

In conclusion, I hope that this study will help improve school attendance for girls in Afghanistan by emphasizing the importance of working with cultural beliefs instead of ignoring them or trying to change them. I believe the change can come slowly but what we can do right now is work on a plan to destigmatize schooling for girls as much as possible. One of the ways we can do that is by supporting and developing more female-run schools throughout Afghanistan. We really need to have more female teachers and female-run schools in order to work around the powerful cultural barriers that can affect the livelihood of young girls. My true desire for this thesis is that it will bring productive information that will immediately impact women's lives in Afghanistan, and I also hope that it will encourage the international community to take a more effective approach towards solving the problem of female schooling in Afghanistan. In the U.S., we have a serious responsibility towards our efforts in Afghanistan. At the very least we should be aware of how our involvement affects people in another part of the world. We need to be more educated about Afghanistan because our votes directly affect what our representatives do internationally. The condition of women in Afghanistan is not just a problem for Afghans. It is a global problem, a human problem. The pain and suffering of one

nation can consequentially reach the rest of the world, whether it is acknowledged or not. I will close this paper with a poem that is very well known but written by an author who is unfortunately not known well enough. Saadi was revered as a great mystic and a literary hero in Afghanistan.

“All human beings are limbs of the same body.  
God created them from the same essence.  
If one part of the body suffers pain, then the whole body is affected.  
If you are indifferent to this pain, you cannot be called a human being.”  
— Saadi

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