

Demonizing the “Other:” Fundamentalist Pakistani Madrasahs and the Construction of Religious Violence

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Abstract:

This article explores the role of fundamentalist, extremist teachings and alleged child abuse in Pakistani Islamic schools, known as *madrasahs*, in the construction of Islamic violence. A comparison of the educational deprivation, psychological harm, and physical and sexual abuse endured by madrasah students with the experiences of former Canadian residential school survivors, indicates that these two groups generally suffer various pathological internal and external reactions to violence. Further research should attempt to investigate allegations of harm experienced by madrasah students, with the goals of policy reform to protect these children, and the modernization and standardization of problematic madrasah curricula.

Particularly in a post-9/11 world, media and the public frequently explore and debate issues involving Islamic violence. It is difficult to read a newspaper, watch the news, or listen to the radio without hearing reports about conflict in the Middle East, terrorist attacks, or the plight of oppressed Muslim women. These issues are especially important in a country like Pakistan, which has the ninth largest population in the world at over 148 million, 97% of whom belong to the Muslim faith (Mumtaz and Mitha, 2003: 49, 69). Long before Pakistan gained independence from Britain in 1947, religiously sanctioned violence (often interpreted by the West as jihad or “holy war”) flourished (Cook, 2005: 44-45). Islamic violence has targeted both outsiders, such as Soviet troops during the Soviet-Afghan war from 1979 to 1989 (Nasr, 2000: 144), and Muslims within Pakistan, with the continual conflicts between Sunni and Shia sects. Currently, one of the strongest facilitators of this violence is Islamism, alternatively known as Islamic fundamentalism, which is an “aggressively anti-modernist, tradition-preserving [movement]” (Farley, 2005: 379) whose members seek a “return to an imagined ideal from the Muslim past” (Karim, 2003: 10). Almond et al. (2003) define fundamentalism as:

‘a discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled “true believers” attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors’ (Almond et al., cited in Donohue, 2004: 431).

Schools that focus on Islamic teachings, called madrasahs,¹ are prime examples of such fundamentalist goals, since “no other area of Pakistani society has been penetrated to a greater extent than the educational system” (Alexiev, 2003: 48). Although not all of Pakistan’s madrasahs are fundamentalist in nature, the schools that are pose interesting questions about the role of education in the construction of Islamic violence.

Approximately 10,000 madrasahs exist in Pakistan, with a student population estimated at 1.7 million (Rahman, 2004: 311).² Although madrasahs already educate around one-third of Pakistani students (International Crisis Group, 2002: i), these schools continue to experience phenomenal rates of growth.³ Traditionally, the focus on Islamic teachings in madrasahs served to train students for later service in the religious sector of society (International Crisis Group, 2002: i) as mullahs, which are “[Muslims] who [are] learned in Islamic theology and the sacred law” (Avis et al., 1983: 750). The International Crisis Group (2002: i), however, regards the current plight of madrasahs differently, stating that “their constrained worldview, lack of modern civic education and poverty make them a destabilizing factor in Pakistani society . . . susceptible to romantic notions of sectarian and international jihads, which promise instant salvation.” If this analysis of contemporary madrasahs is correct, then students may be subject to potentially harmful teachings that may distort their view of society and even alter their perception of reality.

As an agent of socialization, education plays a central role in children’s development. Recently, several allegations of child physical and sexual abuse in madrasahs have emerged. When teachings of violence occur within a milieu of probable child sexual and physical abuse, the potential for dysfunctional, violent adults is enormous. Children exposed to violence experience a multitude of psychological problems, including increased aggression (Buka, et al., 2001: 304; Kopusov, Ruchkin, and Eisemann, 2003: 683), difficulty regulating and expressing emotions (Osofsky, 1995: 784), and mental illnesses such as substance abuse (Kopusov, Ruchkin, Eisemann, 2003: 683), depression, and anxiety (Buckner, Beardslee, and Barsuk, 2004: 413). These psychological dysfunctions may facilitate the internalization of violence by abused individuals towards themselves, or the externalization of violence against other victims, perpetuating the cycle of violent behaviour. Using the effects of inadequate education, neglect, and abuse suffered by Aboriginal students in Canadian residential schools as a guide,⁴ this article examines the link

¹ Several alternate spellings exist for this word, including “madrasa,” “madrassa,” and “madrassah.” For the purpose of this study, I use the spelling “madrasah.” Direct quotations, however, retain the author’s original spelling.

² Although estimates of total institutions and enrollments vary greatly across the sources I found, I use the figures that are closest to the approximate mode of these different totals.

³ The International Crisis Group (ICG) lists estimated madrasah totals of 137 schools in 1947, 401 in 1960, 893 in 1971, 1,745 in 1979, 3,000 in 1980, and a total of 10,340 madrasahs in 2003 (International Crisis Group, 2005: 6). The greatest increase occurred in the Punjab, where totals went from 700 registered madrasahs in 1975, to 2,463 in 1996 (Nasr, 2000: 142).

⁴ Although this article focuses primarily on the similarities between former Canadian residential schools and Pakistani madrasahs, I recognize that important differences in the histories of these two countries exist. For instance, most Pakistani students experience the consequences of widespread violent and ongoing religious-political conflict between Hindu citizens of India and Muslims in Pakistan that citizens of Canada do not experience. In addition, while residents of India experienced colonialization for several hundred years then eventually acquired independence from British rule in 1947, the impacts of European colonization for Canadian Aboriginals are still currently pervasive as Aboriginal peoples fight for their independence within the country of Canada, such as rights to self-government and land claim entitlements.

between pathological madrasah teachings and child abuse in the facilitation of Islamic violence.

I. Deprivation, Neglect, and Abuse in Residential Schools and Madrasahs

Christian Jesuit and Ursuline missionaries began operating residential schools for Canadian Aboriginal peoples during the 17th century, though few children attended because their parents did not see the advantage of European schooling (Miller, 2003: 358). A clause in each of the seven numbered treaties,⁵ developed by the Canadian government in the 1870s, forced the Crown to either provide schools on Indian reserves, or supply teachers to work on future reserves (Miller, 2003: 361) and caused the rapid growth of residential schools during the 19th and 20th centuries. During the 1880s, the Canadian government's Indian education policy recommended the development of residential schools, rather than day schools, because government officials alleged that day schools resulted in high rates of absenteeism and low academic performance (Miller, 2003: 361). An agreement with the Methodist (now United Church of Canada), Presbyterian, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches allowed the federal government to provide funding and general policy decisions for residential schools, while allowing the churches control of administrative duties and day-to-day operations in the schools (Llewellyn, 2002: 225). An 1894 amendment to the Indian Act by the Canadian government making residential school attendance mandatory for Aboriginal children (O'Hara and Treble, 2000: 22) accounts for the abundance of these schools in Canada.

Like Pakistani madrasahs, Residential schools quickly became "total institutions," defined by the Law Commission of Canada as institutions that aim to:

'resocialize people by instilling them with new roles, skills or values. Such institutions break down the barriers that ordinarily separate three spheres of life: work, play and sleep. Once a child enters, willingly or not, almost every aspect of his or her life is determined and controlled by the institution' (Law Commission of Canada, cited in Llewellyn, 2002: 257).

The total domination and control by staff members over powerless and dependent children in residential schools easily facilitated exploitation of these students. Sadly, similar maltreatment occurs in contemporary madrasahs.⁶ The mistreatment of children in residential schools and madrasahs takes several forms, including educational deprivation, psychological harm, as well as physical and sexual abuse.

Educational Deprivation and Its Impact on Students

Educational deprivation is the first form of maltreatment inflicted upon present madrasah

⁵ According to Cuthand (2004: A13), the numbered treaties "formed the basis of the western expansion of Canada," and included the areas of the three prairie provinces [Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan], northwestern Ontario, and northeastern British Columbia. Cuthand (2005: B1) states that these treaties "guaranteed education, healthcare, social services, and economic assistance among other rights [for Aboriginal peoples]."

⁶ Madrasahs, which Zaman (1999: 294) regards as the "principal institutions of higher Islamic learning," are not a recent creation in Islamic society. Shalaby (1954: 15) notes that the years 1066-1067 "mark[ed] an epoch in Muslim education. . . [when] schools began to flourish in the Islamic world."

students and former residential school attendees. This term involves the subjective notions of either purposive or unintentional education that is of poor quality (by Western standards), lacking aspects important for the development of students, or inclusive of teachings that provide incorrect information. Aboriginal students who attended Canadian residential schools between the 17th to 20th centuries suffered often from substandard educations. Most missionaries were non-Aboriginal Europeans who did not know any Aboriginal languages, while many Aboriginal children did not know any English, making learning extremely difficult (Miller, 2003: 368). Mary Jane Miller (2001: 76) contends that children in residential schools were “force-fed basics of the three R’s [and] often little more” because the children were “expected to spend half-days in the fields and cow sheds or cleaning or cooking--skills that were supposed to be marketable in a white world.”⁷ Using an authoritarian style of teaching, missionaries discouraged children from thinking independently, making their own decisions, and being creative (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 45), which likely negatively affected their development.⁸ Furthermore, children missed school due to the “excessive” amount of time they spent learning Christian religious doctrines, which interfered with their academic studies (Miller, 2003: 371). One former student remarked, “The school curriculum had three parts to it. Religious instruction was the first priority, work training was a second, while academic studies were a distant third” (Pooyak, quoted in Funk, 1995: 65). Consequently, many Aboriginal students received an inadequate education that provided few skills valuable for employment, likely contributing to social problems such as high unemployment rates for Aboriginal Canadians (Fiddler, 1988: 4), and thus, a lower quality of life for this segment of the population.

Pakistani children in madrasahs face many of the same educational outcomes as residential school attendees. Pakistan’s education system is “in shambles,” and there are few alternatives to madrasahs for impoverished citizens who lack the resources to pay even the smallest amounts for education (Looney, 2003: 261). Consequently, the free education, free room and board, and occasional stipend for the students’ families that madrasahs offer⁹ primarily appeals to poor Pakistani families that cannot afford to send their children to public or private schools (Looney, 2003: 261).¹⁰ Madrasah curriculums, however, focus on Islamic “faith-based knowledge” (International Crisis Group, 2002: 5), often to the exclusion of Western ideals of academia, such as mathematics, science, and English, depriving children of rounded educations useful for increasing occupational, and thus, economic opportunities as adults.

⁷ Residential schools commonly operated using the “half day system,” where one half of the day was spent learning rudimentary academic education, with the other half of the day spent labouring in or around the school (Miller, 2003: 368).

⁸ Berk (2003: 564-565) argues that the authoritarian parenting style involves a bias towards parents’ needs, rather than the needs of children. Hallmarks of authoritarian parenting include strong and coercive control with the exclusion of children’s autonomy, low acceptance of children’s behaviour, and negative disapproval that can range from yelling and criticism to force and punishment. I argue that missionaries were authoritarian not only as caregivers, but also as teachers.

⁹ The source of funding for Pakistani madrasahs is questionable, because “no madrasa is audited or submits financial statements” (International Crisis Group, 2002: 15). Looney (2003: 260) notes that some financial help comes from the annual 2.5% *zakat* (tax) that the government requires its citizens to pay. In addition, foreign sources of funding are common (Looney, 2003: 260). Private donations from groups that have puritanical or extremist worldviews, such as Wahabbi or Deobandi Saudi Arabians, likely influence Pakistani madrasah’s curricula (Looney, 2003: 260).

¹⁰ Some middle class and wealthy students attend madrasahs, although usually only as day students, in classes for memorizing the Qur’an (International Crisis Group, 2002: 1).

Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1999: 312) contends that more emphasis rests on the study of “traditional, transmitted” science in madrasahs, with a typical curriculum consisting of classes that focus on the Qur’an, the Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), Islamic jurisprudence, and Islamic history (Goldberg, 2000). Students often learn the Qur’an through rote memorization of its 6,666 verses without understanding the meaning of the words (International Crisis Group, 2002: 1; Moreau, et al., 2003: 17).¹¹ Increased focus on the traditional sciences has led to a decrease in attention to “rational science” (Zaman, 1999: 312), producing what Robert Looney (2003: 262) refers to as “a generation of students unlikely to play a productive role in creating the type of modern dynamic economy necessary to reduce the country’s grinding poverty.”

In addition to problematic curriculums, madrasah students suffer from deficient learning environments. Overcrowding is common in these schools,¹² and teachers often do not have formal qualifications (Looney, 2003: 272). Due to low salaries and a lack of monetary and non-monetary incentives to gain proper training, teachers often are uninterested in their jobs (Looney, 2003: 272), leading to substandard educations for madrasah students.

Despite high madrasah enrollment for the poor,¹³ 58% of the country’s population generally, and 72% of women specifically, remain illiterate (Dalrymple, 2005: 18).¹⁴ Furthermore, Looney (2003: 257) notes that most educational plans and policies in Pakistan have failed to raise the literacy rate, increase opportunities for employment, or improve quality of life for the poor population. Unfortunately, regardless of these dismal realities of educational deprivation, many parents are reluctant to remove their children from madrasahs because most children would not receive any education at all without these schools.¹⁵

¹¹ The International Crisis Group (2002: 1) notes, however, that “exegeses of the holy script and other branches of Islamic studies are introduced at higher stages of learning.”

¹² Berk (2003: 626) lists several benefits of small class sizes, including increased individual attention from teachers, more positive and cooperative interactions among children, and greater satisfaction with school experiences.

¹³ The International Crisis Group (2005: 6) states that the “vast majority of students [in madrasahs] come from economically deprived backgrounds.”

¹⁴ Pakistan’s literacy rate is among the lowest in the world, placing 142nd out of 167 states (Looney, 2003: 258).

¹⁵ Tariq Rahman (2004: 307) argues that there are three types of schools in Pakistan, including Urdu language-medium schools, elite English language-medium schools, and madrasahs or Islamic seminaries, primarily divided by different socioeconomic classes of Pakistani society, as well as medium of education, and curriculum material. According to Rahman, English language-medium schools educate the middle, upper-middle, and upper classes, Urdu language-medium schools are for the lower-middle and working classes, and madrasahs primarily enroll lower class, poor students.

Psychological Harm

A second type of maltreatment experienced often by many former residential school students and current madrasah students is psychological abuse,¹⁶ which Laura Berk (2003: 587) defines as “actions, such as ridicule, humiliation, scapegoating, or terrorizing, that damage children’s cognitive, emotional, or social functioning,” including emotional neglect.¹⁷ For Aboriginal children in residential schools, psychological abuse frequently included spiritual and cultural repression as well, and for many children, elimination of their Aboriginal way of life. Although types and examples of psychological abuse varied greatly both within schools, and between madrasahs and residential schools, these students commonly share the experience of violation and psychological injury that has devastating effects throughout their lives.

Psychological abuse took many forms for students in residential schools. First, the Assembly of First Nations (1994: 38) argues that children were “not encouraged to express their feelings.” Often, children felt lost due to the forcible removal from their families and Aboriginal communities, and the expectation that they renounce their old lives for the strange and unfamiliar new world of residential schools (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 21). Their new caregivers encouraged repression by ignoring the feelings common to the students, such as loneliness, fear, sadness, abandonment by their parents, shame, and humiliation. Missionaries justified this repression by arguing that expression of feelings would upset the other children (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 38).

Second, in an effort to “civilize and Christianize”¹⁸ the Aboriginal population, students in residential schools were “silenced” regarding their former worlds (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 24). Redefinition of their Aboriginal cultures as worthless and shameful, as well as rejection of their previous way of life, forced children to lose their sense of selves (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 24, 26). Caregivers forbid children to speak their Aboriginal languages, mention their former lives, and or even keep their long hairstyles, which often is important to Aboriginal cultures (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 26). To facilitate adoption of their new worlds, students frequently received new names on arrival at residential schools (Campbell, 1995: 19; Miller, 2001: 76), and in some instances, missionaries called children by numbers, rather than names (Funk, 1995: 64). Missionaries also used shame to silence children, by teaching students that Indians were savages, pagans, dirty, evil, and dumb (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 26). Humiliation served to further silence children, and included such horrific acts as:

‘Being repeatedly referred to in French as ‘la petite savage,’ or in English as ‘savages’ and ‘pagans,’ being punished in humiliating ways, such as being made to lick milk from a saucer on all fours, like a cat, in front of a room full of children; being made to wear soiled panties

¹⁶ This article uses the terms ‘abuse’ and ‘harm’ synonymously.

¹⁷ Berk (2003: 587) defines emotional neglect as the “failure of caregivers to meet children’s needs for affection and emotional support.” Although Berk considers emotional harm a separate category, I include emotional harm within the category of psychological harm.

¹⁸ Miller (2003: 367) argues that missionaries aimed to “civilize and Christianize” Aboriginal populations to assist them with their transition into a changing Canadian society. Furthermore, Miller (2003: 365) contends that the Canadian’s government sought to minimize and eventually eliminate obligations to Aboriginal people by making them more like Euro-Canadians, and thus more self-sufficient.

over heads because they did not wipe themselves properly; having their heads shaved because they ran away; being made to eat food that they had vomited; [and] being forced to wear a worn sock pinned to their collar all day' (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 41).

The internalization of these negative feelings led to generations of Aboriginal people who lack a sense of self-identity and are unable to express their feelings in healthy ways, producing a multitude of detrimental consequences discussed later in this article.

Finally, Aboriginal children suffered from emotional neglect, which includes the withholding of nurturance from missionaries (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 39), and the forced separation from their parents for up to ten or twelve months for some children or permanent separation for other children (Miller, 2001: 76). Consequently, children lacked the opportunity to establish healthy, intimate, relationships with adults, which is necessary for the development of a positive self-image (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 39). Furthermore, separation of family members was common in residential schools, and children did not learn how to build healthy relationships with their siblings and other family members (Miller, 2001: 76). Because they believed interaction between girls and boys would result in sin, missionaries segregated students by sexes, denying these children the right to learn proper relations with other children of the opposite sex (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 58). Children in residential schools experienced many forms of emotional neglect through denial of healthy relationships with parents, siblings, peers, and even the missionaries who refused to allow these interactions, resulting in severe psychological harm.

Although children attending madrasahs may not share the same experiences of psychological abuse with residential school survivors, the psychological harm inflicted upon Pakistani students is just as horrific. I argue that most fundamentalist madrasahs promote violence and hatred towards Islamic sectarian groups, other religions, the West, and women. This negative view of the "other" is psychologically harmful to children who learn through madrasah schooling and fundamentalist, extremist interpretations of scriptures, that violence is an acceptable, and even respectable, means of expressing their Muslim faith.

Islamic violence often is associated with the concept of jihad, which many Muslims argue Westerners mistranslate as "holy war" (Nimer, 2002: 17). Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946: 444) offers one interpretation of *jihad* in The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, as follows:

'It *may* require fighting in God's cause, as a form of self-sacrifice. But its essence consists of (1) a true and sincere Faith, which so fixes its gaze on God, that all selfish or worldly motives seem paltry and fade away, and (2) an earnest and ceaseless activity, involving the sacrifice (if need be) of life, person, or property, in the service of God.'

In addition, Goldberg (2000) distinguishes between *greater jihad*, which he defines as "the struggle within the soul of a person to be better, more righteous--the right against the devil within" and *lesser jihad*, described as "the fight against the devil without: the military struggle against those who subjugate Muslims." An interpretation of lesser jihad that involves sacrifice of "life, person, or property," can have substantial psychological implications for students in fundamentalist

madrasahs.

Dalrymple (2005: 16) contends that 15 percent of madrasahs in Pakistan “preach violent jihad, while a few have been known to provide covert military training.” Many children in fundamentalist madrasahs are subject to community violence, which is violence that occurs within one’s proximal environment, including the home, school, or neighborhood (Shahinfar, Kupersmidt, and Matza, 2001: 136).¹⁹ For example, some madrasahs promote violence in their curriculums, by using primary school textbooks that “teach children that Muslims have always had to confront challenges in a world dominated by infidels and urge good Muslims to struggle and strive for victory over followers of other faiths and religions” (International Crisis Group, 2004: 12). Repeated exposure to the promotion of violence, such as in textbooks, has several psychologically harmful consequences.

A review of violence literature and its role in psychopathology reveals several findings important for madrasah students. Possible results of exposure to violence include psychological problems such as increased aggression (Buka, et al., 2001: 304; Kuposov, Ruchkin, and Eisemann, 2003: 683), anti-social behaviour, defensive and offensive fighting (Buka, et al., 2001: 303, 304), deficient emotional regulation and difficulty expressing feelings, negative self images (Osofsky, 1995: 784), alcohol and other drug use (Kuposov, Ruchkin, Eisemann, 2003: 683), as well as depression and anxiety (Buckner, Beardslee, and Barsuk, 2004: 413). Through military training and the promotion of violence against the “other,” children exposed to “prolonged desensitization and lack of empathy for others may have adverse and long term social and emotional consequences” (Buka, et al., 2001: 303) that negatively affect their growth into healthy adults.

In addition to the harmful consequences of military training and exposure to violence, the lack of experience with females in all-male madrasahs,²⁰ as well as the promotion of fear and control of women in fundamentalist interpretations of scriptures, often results in psychologically harmful effects for madrasah students. Joy Shaverien (2004: 696) notes that in single-sex schools, often children experience “one-sided development where the opposite sex is viewed as [the] ‘other,’” and, thus, is to be “distrusted, denigrated, and exploited.” Many children in all-male madrasahs experience their first “contact” with idealized women during study of the Hadith. One interpretation of the Hadith idealizes relations with women in Heaven accordingly:

‘For every man among them, there will be two wives of the pure-eyed virgins, the marrow of their hind legs will be visible from behind the bones and flesh because of beauty. They will glorify Allah at morn and at night. They will have no disease and no urine and no stool and no spitting and no nose-dirt, their utensils will be of silver and gold, and their combs of gold, and the flame of their fire-pots of aloes, and their perspiration of musk . . .’ (Karim, 1939: 164).

¹⁹ In addition to community violence exposure, I argue that children in madrasahs and residential schools are subject to “family violence,” despite being removed from their biological families, because of their unique living situations with adult caregivers in these total institutions.

²⁰ During his visit to the all-male Haqqania madrasah in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province, Goldberg (2000) remarked, “the students at the madrasa almost never see women. There were no female teachers, no female cafeteria workers, no female presence whatsoever at the madrasa.”

For children who have little contact with women outside fundamentalist interpretations of scriptures, images of perfect women who lack even the simplest human element of “nose-dirt” become the idealized standard for good Muslim wives. Since few, if any, females can meet these expectations of perfect, Heavenly women, I argue that Muslim women are thus open to criticism and abuse from males who hold such unrealistic standards. In a culture entrenched with misogyny, many Islamic women experience subordination and violence from fundamentalist males who accept literal readings of scriptures. In addition to the psychological and other types of harm experienced by women, males, especially those who attended fundamentalist madrasahs, also suffer from the inability to form healthy relationships with women, along with other problems explored later in this article.

Physical and Sexual Abuse

The physical and sexual abuse of children is a further problem common in total institutions like residential schools and madrasahs. Definitions to clarify differences and similarities between these types of abuse are helpful for understanding their extent. Physical abuse involves “assaults on children, such as kicking, biting, shaking, punching, or stabbing, that produce pain, cuts, welts, bruises, burns, broken bones, and other injuries” (Berk, 2003: 587). Physical abuse also includes physical neglect,²¹ which is:

‘The persistent failure to meet a child’s physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment’ (Department of Health [London], cited in Corby, 2000: 75).

In addition to physical abuse, sexual abuse was an unfortunate reality for many children in total institutions. Lucy Berlinger and Diana Elliot (1996: 51) contend that sexual abuse involves:

‘any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given . . . [including] sexual contact that is accomplished by force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between and adult and a child, regardless of whether there is a deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity’ (Berlinger and Elliot, 1996: 51).

Unfortunately, allegations of physical and sexual abuse inflicted upon residential school survivors are abundant.

Jennifer Llewellyn (2002: 257) notes that physical and sexual abuse in residential schools was “rampant.” Corporal punishment, including spanking, whipping, and caning (Thomas, 2003: 333), was common and often done publicly to deter other children from committing the same

²¹ Berk (2003: 587) distinguishes between physical abuse and physical neglect. For the purpose of this article, however, I include physical harm as a category within physical abuse.

infraction (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 50). Some survivors reported burning with cigarettes as punishment, and being “punched in the ear so hard they lost their hearing” (O’Hara and Treble, 2000: 17). Other survivors claim denial of food for speaking their Aboriginal languages (Miller, 2001: 76). Frequently, missionaries beat children or isolated them from others for days when they attempted to run away (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 50). Failure or refusal to provide adequate clothing, sufficient nutritious food (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 47-48; Miller, 2003: 374), and satisfactory medical care (Miller, 2003: 375) also was common for children in residential schools.

The Assembly of First Nations (1994: 51) argues, “the most profound form of physical wounding occurred through sexual violations,” such as “incidents of fondling, intercourse, ritualistic washing of genitals, and rape, and some instances of pregnancy and forced abortion.” Examples of sexual abuse in residential schools are, unfortunately, plentiful. In one particularly graphic case of sexual violation and forced abortion:

‘. . . ‘Millie’ recall[ed] being raped at the age of twelve by two of the male residential school caretakers. Several months later, after confiding to a nun about the attack, she was told that she was pregnant. Some time later, in an advanced state of pregnancy, she was awakened from sleep [and] led to a basement room in a hospital near the school. ‘Millie remember[ed] that she was blindfolded and forced to take some unpleasant tasting substance, whereupon she blacked out. She also remember[ed] that when she regained consciousness, there was the smell of blood all around ’ (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 61).

Both missionaries and other students are responsible for the sexual assaults of residential school survivors (Miller, 2003: 376). Sadly, the consequences of child physical and sexual abuse remain as devastating realities for survivors, decades after their exit from residential schools.

Many children in madrasahs likely encounter physical and sexual violations similar to those experienced by residential school students. Unfortunately, in opposition to the proliferation of studies and reports about residential school abuse, there is little documented evidence regarding the abuse of madrasah students. More published accounts of residential school abuse likely exist because the Canadian government and some Christian denominations acknowledge the abuse, apologize for decades of mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples, and offer monetary compensation (Thomas, 2003: 332-333).²² In contrast, government regulation and intervention in the operations of Pakistani madrasahs is rare,²³ and the state government is reluctant to even acknowledge, let alone deal with, allegations of abuse. Furthermore, Canada is a prominent, relatively prosperous, first-world country where most citizens are likely to have the media and government resources necessary

²² Thomas (2003: 331) notes that, since the late 1990s, 12,000 Aboriginal Canadians have filed lawsuits claiming physical, sexual, and cultural damage, against the Canadian government and the four churches that operated residential schools.

²³ By refusing official state financial assistance, madrasahs maintain their autonomy and independence from the Pakistani government (International Crisis Group, 2002: 15), thus resisting secularization. Although the state government is working on reform policies to standardize curricula, to provide a madrasah registration system, and to monitor madrasah finances, these reforms are voluntary, rather than mandatory or legally enforced (International Crisis Group, 2002: i).

for reporting abuse. In contrast, Pakistan is a relatively poor, third-world country, where citizens often lack the resources to gain media or government attention. These factors probably play an important role regarding the amount of evidence documenting abuse involving total institutions such as residential schools and madrasahs.

The lack of published evidence, however, does not mean that child physical and sexual abuse is absent in madrasahs. In a rare act of official disclosure, Aamer Liaquat Hussain, a Minister in Pakistan's religious affairs department, revealed that there were 500 allegations of clerics committing child sexual abuse in the country during 2004 (Freund, 2005: 14). Interestingly, journalist Jeffrey Goldberg (2000) reported being repeatedly "asked for sex" by young, male, students while investigating a madrasah. In addition, Goldberg (2000) recounted the following conversations with some students at the school:

'Those few students who knew a bit of English seemed most interested in talking about sex. Many of them were convinced that all Americans are bisexual, and that Westerners engage in sex with anything, all the time. I was asked to describe the dominant masturbation style of Americans, and whether American men are allowed by law to keep boyfriends and girlfriends at the same time.'

Although, obviously, one cannot assume that child sexual abuse occurs throughout the madrasah school system because of a few accounts of sexual propositioning and sexually charged conversations, the issue raises interesting questions about the role of sexuality in madrasahs. For instance, children in Goldberg's madrasah possibly were expressing "traumatic sexualization," which is the "process in which a child's sexuality (including both sexual feelings and sexual attitudes) is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion as the result of sexual abuse" (Finkelhor and Browne, cited in Friedrich, 1988: 180). Children, especially boys, asking a male adult for sex is clearly a "developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional" behaviour that plausibly could result from child sexual abuse. Furthermore, questions about masturbation directed toward a total stranger (as opposed to more "appropriate" people, such as male peers), is a violation of interpersonal norms. Although little published evidence exists alleging abuse in Pakistani madrasahs, incidents like Goldberg's conversations with students, question the possibility that child abuse exists in these schools.

The fact that "poor, marginalized, or very religious" (Rahman, 2004: 307) people compose the majority of madrasah students has important implications for the students who do suffer abuse. First, as previously mentioned, parents cannot afford to send their children to other schools, so without madrasah education, impoverished children likely would not receive any education (Rahman, 2004: 312). Thus, many parents may be reluctant to withdraw their children from these schools, perhaps choosing to dismiss allegations of abuse. Second, as poor, and thus marginalized, lower class, members of society, most parents lack the credibility and resources to seek help if their children are suffering abuse in these schools. Finally, because religious fanatics are unlikely to question religiously sanctioned doctrines and rules, they also may accept and divinely justify otherwise inappropriate or harmful practices by madrasah educators. These probable implications

have devastating consequences for the lives of students and their families.

II. The Tragic Outcomes of Violent and Abusive Childhoods

The combination of the education deprivation, psychological harm, as well as physical and sexual abuse both witnessed and experienced by residential school survivors and students in Pakistani madrasahs results in a multitude of long-lasting, and often permanent, problems for these children. For instance, children who receive either direct or indirect exposure to abuse²⁴ are at higher risk for mental disorders such as anxiety disorders, depression, and oppositional defiant disorder (Pelcovitz, et al., 2000: 365). Exposure to violence at a young age also increases the risk of abuse and dependence on alcohol and other drugs (Buckner, Beardslee, and Barsuk, 2004: 413; Buka, et al., 2001: 304; Kuposov, Ruchkin, and Eisemann, 2003: 683). In addition, many children with these kinds of distressing experiences develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Begić and Jokić-Begić, 2002: 625; Buckner, Beardslee, and Barsuk, 2004: 413; Kuposov, Ruchkin, and Eisemann, 2003: 683; Osofsky, 1995: 785; Pelcovitz, et al., 2000: 360). PTSD is an anxiety disorder where victims exposed to “a traumatic event during which one feels fear, helplessness, or horror,” relive intense emotions during memories, nightmares, and flashbacks²⁵ of the stressful event (Barlow and Durand, 2002: 141). PTSD sufferers often experience “restriction or numbing of emotional responsiveness,” over arousal, and anger that frequently interferes with their interpersonal relationships (Barlow and Durand, 2002: 141).

In addition to a greater risk for mental disorders, witnesses and victims of abuse develop often a pathological aggressive response. Victims of abuse are at a higher risk for aggression against others (Buckner, Beardslee, and Barsuk, 2004: 413; Buka, et al., 2001: 302; Shahinfar, Kupersmidt, and Matza, 2001: 139), presumably as a form of empowerment and attempt to protect themselves from further traumatic experiences (Pelcovitz, et al., 2000: 366). Furthermore, victims of violence often experience a heightened perception of threat from the world, which affects their ability to interpret their social environment and to understand the behaviour of others (Shahinfar, Kupersmidt, and Matza, 2001: 139). This skewed perception may account for victims’ increased “approval of aggression as a social response, problems with the interpretation of social cues, and maladaptive social goals” (Shahinfar, Kupersmidt, and Matza, 2001: 136). As abused children mature, these pathological response patterns of aggression often result in the internal and external “intergenerational transmission” of violence (Buckner, Beardslee, and Barsuk, 2004: 413).

Residential school survivors and children attending madrasahs both internalize and externalize the pain and violence they experienced in total institutions in various ways. Many survivors of residential schools and current or former madrasah students primarily internalize pain

²⁴ Buka, et al. (2001: 298-299) differentiate between “direct” exposure to violence through victimization, which involves “intentional acts initiated by another person to cause one harm,” and the “indirect” exposure to violence experienced by witnesses. Indirect exposure is an ambiguous term that can include instances such as actually seeing or hearing violence in real-life or through fictional means such as television, and the knowledge of another person’s victimization.

²⁵ A flashback is a “sudden, intense reexperiencing of a previous, usually traumatic, event” (Barlow and Durand, 2002: G-7).

and violence through substance abuse.²⁶ In a report investigating the lives of residential school survivors, the Assembly of First Nations (1994: 107) notes, “one of the most striking consequences of the residential school experience was the number of respondents who turned to alcohol. Alcohol was used to forget, to numb pain, to punish, and to find the courage to continue living.” While alcohol abuse is a problem common amongst many residential school survivors, madrasah students likely abuse drugs other than alcohol. Because the Qu’ran states that drinking alcohol is a *hudooh*²⁷ offense (Berti, 2003: 13), Muslim madrasah students may experience less alcohol abuse due to refusal to violate their strict religious beliefs.²⁸ In addition, the Hudood Ordinance 1979²⁹ banned alcohol in Pakistan and made drinking an offence punishable by public flogging. Some critics of this decision argue “drugs became the substitute for drinks” (Bearak, 2000). In a 1977 study, Shuaib (1977: 76) argued that opium abuse was second in frequency only to cannabis smoking. Despite Shuaib’s research occurring several years ago, opium abuse likely has increased due to Pakistan’s reputation as a “world leader in the production of opium” during the 1980s and 1990s, and the unfortunate nationwide unavailability of drug rehabilitation programs (Bearak, 2000). Although reliable statistics regarding the abuse of specific drugs is difficult to obtain, the United Nations (cited in Bearak, 2000) estimates that 1.5 million heroin addicts live in Pakistan.³⁰ Direct causal relations between violent childhood experiences and later drug abuse are impossible, but substance abuse is a probable internalized reaction to the negative experiences that result from abusive and harmful total institutions.

Violence against people in the abuse victim’s immediate life, such as children, spouses, or other family members is a common means of externalizing violence for residential school survivors. Because Aboriginal children in residential schools lacked loving, intimate, and healthy, parental figures, many survivors did not develop adequate parenting skills in adulthood (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 91). Furthermore, because of strict sex segregation during childhood, many adult survivors developed dysfunctional interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex (Assembly of First Nations, 1994: 88, 91). These factors may contribute to the frustration and anger felt by survivors of residential schools, who then externalize negative feelings by abusing others, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. Although many adult former madrasah students likely externalize pain and violence by harming their families as well, I argue that adult madrasah students often specifically focus their externalization of pain against three demonized “others” in their lives:

²⁶ According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*, substance abuse involves a “cluster of cognitive, behavioural, and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues use of the substance despite significant substance-related problems” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000: 192).

²⁷ Hudood offenses are “offenses mentioned in the Qur[’]an for which fixed penalties are provided in the *Sharia*” (Berti, 2003: 13).

²⁸ Heim et al. (2004: 220) notes “individuals with strong religious beliefs generally drink comparatively less [than individuals without strong religious beliefs,]” which also may influence the rates of consumption and abuse of alcohol for madrasah students.

²⁹ On 22 February 1979, the government of Pakistan implemented the Hudood Ordinance 1979, which includes laws regarding “theft, drunkenness, adultery, rape, and bearing false witness” (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987: 100).

³⁰ Extensive research into alcohol and other drug abuse in Pakistan yielded few results. Most studies that I found discussed only opium use, and most often only studied the role of opium addiction in the transmission of HIV and AIDS. Because research on the prevalence of drugs other than opium in Pakistani society is virtually nonexistent, one may infer, with caution, that the abuse of these other drugs is not as common as opium abuse.

women, non-Muslim religions, and Western culture.

Schaverian (2004: 698) argues children in boarding schools experience often the “unconscious idealization of women on the one hand and denigration of them on the other,” which has important implications for Muslim society. As previously discussed, fundamentalist interpretations of scriptures set often an impossible standard of perfection for Muslim women, thus promoting the oppression and abuse of ordinary, “imperfect,” Islamic women. At the same time, many Muslim men fear women’s sexuality, because it is “threatening to the social order, overwhelming, impossible for women to control themselves and/or impure and, therefore, needing purification and control . . .” (Imam, 2000: 124). Female sexuality is so powerful that control over their sexuality is necessary to reduce temptation for men, and thus, maintain order in society (Imam, 2000: 130). Men, as the binary opposite of women, must claim responsibility for this management of women’s sexuality.

Many Muslim men, especially those who are fundamentalists, control women’s sexuality through several means. Patriarchal customs require women to exhibit “modesty” by adhering to strict dress codes, which in some cases, involve complete covering from head to ankles with a *chador* (Imam, 2000: 129). In addition, control over women’s fertility, including “decisions over whether or not or when to have intercourse, to decisions over knowledge of and access to different types of contraception, to permissibility or not of pregnancy termination” (Imam, 2000: 130) is the responsibility of the males in their lives. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (cited in International Crisis Group, 2003: 28), women’s sexuality is further controlled through state-sanctioned abuse that allows family members a pardon for the “honour killing” of a female relative. In addition, the legal Hudood Ordinance 1979 states that the responsibility of proof burdens victims of sexual assault (International Crisis Group, 2003: 29). Furthermore, victims who become pregnant through sexual assault may have the pregnancy used against them as proof of the crime of *zina* (Clarke, 2004: 210).³¹ Fundamentalist arenas, such as many Pakistani madrasahs, serve to perpetuate the sexual oppression and violence of Muslim women through the externalization of pain and violence experienced by current and former madrasah students.

In addition to violence against women, pathological and abused madrasah students may externalize the pain and violence they endured against more “others” in their lives. Many fundamentalist madrasah students live in environments that condone, or even encourage, the intolerance and use of violence against the “others” of non-Muslim religions and the West. Ministry officials for the government of Pakistan approximate that ten to fifteen percent of Pakistani madrasahs “have links to sectarian militancy or international terrorism” (International Crisis Group, 2002: 2). For instance, Deobandi madrasahs “exceed the total of the rest combined” (International Crisis Group, 2002: 9), and are prime recruiting locations for the Taliban in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan (International Crisis Group, 2002: 2). Alexiev (2003: 48) describes problems with

³¹ Implementation of the Hudood Ordinance 1979 made *zina* (adultery and fornication) an offence against the state, rather than the female’s husband (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987: 100). Also referred to as the *Zina* Ordinance, the Hudood Ordinance 1979 is in conflict with not only the Pakistani Constitution, but international treaties ratified by the Pakistani government as well, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) (Berti, 2003: 8).

Deobandi madrasahs accordingly:

‘The Deobandis (after a north Indian town where the doctrine originated) practice a fundamentalist creed marked by obscurantism, hatred of Western civilization and Jews, misogyny and violent dislike of Shiite Muslims. Their seminary curriculum contains little but indoctrination in their radical philosophy. Not surprisingly, students often graduate functionally illiterate, with virtually no job skills, but thoroughly prepared for a career in extremism and jihad Since approximately 15 percent of the students come from foreign countries, virtually all Islamic terrorist groups around the world have benefited from this ‘educational’ system.’

In addition, the International Crisis Group (2004: 10) contends that several Pakistani madrasahs supply foot soldiers for jihad conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Residential school survivors and madrasah students experience many similar types of traumatic events, and these two groups may express this pain and violence through various pathological outlets. Survivors of residential schools or madrasah institutions often internalize the harm they experienced by the use of alcohol and other drugs. Many residential school survivors also externalize their pathological feelings through family abuse. Although many abused, former, adult former madrasah students likely externalize their pain through abuse of family members as well, current public and media attention focuses primarily on violence targeted towards women, other religions, and the West. In an environment abundant with repressed sexuality, aggression, and child physical and sexual abuse, violence against the “other” reflects the externalization of many madrasah students’ pathological reactions to harm.

III. Conclusion

Vulnerable and powerless children attending total institutions, such as former Canadian residential schools and madrasahs presently operating in Pakistan, are easy targets for deprivation, neglect, and abuse inflicted by their all-powerful, controlling caregivers. In an environment dominated by the values of “order, discipline, routine, and obedience, rather than love, support, compassion, and assistance” (Miller, 2003: 376), the abuse of power by caregivers often has widespread consequences for mistreated children who later become dysfunctional adults. Residential school and madrasah school survivors manifest feelings such as pain, anger, and shame by the internalization of violence through substance abuse. Many victims from both groups often externalize dysfunctional feelings and violent behaviour via the unfortunate reality of family abuse. Madrasah students, however, also act often to externalize their pain by harming unfamiliar “others,” through the control of women’s sexuality and possibly even acts of militancy or terrorism.

Madrasahs have the potential to fill the educational and social needs of impoverished Pakistani children who would otherwise remain illiterate. Thus, policy reforms that focus on the modernization and standardization of curricula, as well as government controls that ensure the safety of students, are preferable to the elimination of these potentially valuable institutions.

Although the International Crisis Group (2002: ii) argues that pressure from international governments and their citizens can work to convince, or even force, governments to begin changing madrasah education systems, fundamentalists may interpret and reject such efforts as further attempts to “Westernize” and modernize Islam. While widespread research exists regarding abuse and its effects for residential school survivors, further research by national and international organizations should focus on the investigation of child physical and sexual abuse allegations within Pakistani madrasahs. Only after further inquiry, can the public, media, scholars, and others, possibly begin to understand the unfortunate reality that many Pakistani students experience.

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