

ACCULTURATION OF NORTH AMERICAN ARAB MUSLIMS: MINORITY RELATIONS OR WORLDVIEW VARIATION

Nimat Hafez Barazangi

Arab-Americans have gained political recognition as an ethnic group in the United States and recognition as a cultural heritage group in Canadian society. Yet, to investigate the Arab Muslims' learning and adjustment patterns, based only on viewing them as a minority ethnic group, is a hindrance to the understanding of this group's minority/majority relations. To understand the variations in their attempts to maintain their Islamic identity and their Arabic heritage, we need to investigate the variations in their adjustment process in North American societies and in the empowering strategies they utilize. Furthermore, we need to realize the effect of this variation on their efforts to transmit their Islamic identity and Arabic heritage to their offspring. That Muslims in America are being assimilated as Arabs, Turks, and other ethnic groups and view themselves and are viewed as such, obstructs the understanding of the metaphysical and epistemological variations in their perceptions of Arabism and of Islamicity. These variations are compounded by the differences between the Islamic and Western worldviews, on one hand, and between the Islamic and the Arabic¹ acculturation processes, on the other.

When such an immigrant community formulates an educational program (consisting of formal and informal acculturation processes) for its members, it has to face the problems involved in shaping a system for the reconstruction and evolution of its culture and ideology in a manner that allows for integration² in the new context. The basic goal of such an educational process is to transmit the community view of life to the next generation and to assist in that generation's maintenance of such a view and developing skills to practice it. Attempts by various (Arab) Muslim communities to forge educational systems or acculturation processes to fulfill this goal have failed, largely because they have not recognized the spectrum in which the Arab Muslim ideology has been perceived. The depth of the problem also multiplies when community leaders do not view this spectrum in relation to the needs of North American Arab Muslims in particular.

With only a few exceptions most religious leaders or educators of Muslims rely on the addition of a "religion" course to produce an Islamic character and on idealistic rhetoric to induce Islamic conduct or to preserve Arabic heritage. As courses in Arabic language and in Islamic/Arabic history are added, in an attempt to create the Arabic/Islamic sentiment in the Arab Muslim child or learner, the dilemma becomes more complex. Questions such as whose interpretation of history and of Islamic character one may adopt reduce the particular interpretation relevant to the new environment to certain manifestations that may or may not reflect the central concept of Islam, *Tawhid* (Oneness of God).

"We are teaching children who we are pulling out of schools in this country, and we want to have some sort of continuity. This does not mean that we can't have the same

system as we have here Islamized. In other words, adding the Islamic religion as part and parcel of it." says Tawfiq Nassar, school board chairman of the Aqsa girls school near Chicago. 3

This approach to educating the young generation of (Arab) Muslims is very similar to the approach that has been used in the majority of Muslim and Arab countries, with two differences; the environment and the fact that Arab Muslims are considered a minority in North America, whereas they were always the majority in their homeland. The main problem in this approach is that adding a religion course to a curriculum that originated within a particular philosophy and worldview can only add another dimension to the acculturation process. That is, instead of facilitating the Islamic ideals and the Arabic heritage to be appropriated in the new environment, this approach to education results in duality of the ontological and epistemological assumptions instead of integrating the acculturation objectives. By reproducing the Western educational program(s) that are developed to meet North American needs and view of life, not only do these religious leaders or educators have difficulty matching and borrowing courses of study (such as religion, social studies, etc.) from other contexts (such as the Arab Muslim world), but they are unknowingly emphasizing a compartmentalized character and personality.⁴ The subtlety in the variation between the Islamic and the Western systems of life and of education remains hidden in these reproduced programs of education or borrowed courses of study.

By the same token, Arab-American community leaders have, until very recently, failed to realize that political and nationalistic sentiments for the homeland are not sufficient to make the next generation aware of the value of the Arabic heritage.⁵ Few are those who realize that these sentiments are not productive strategies to combat the uneasiness toward the reality of being viewed as a minority, an experience that Muslims, in general, and Arab Muslims have not contemplated before. Other leaders may revert to socialization as a means to keep the heritage alive. *Hafli* (social gathering or party) is an example of a way to attract the young generation to the traditional and customary social practices. Only few understand and accept the fact that the young generation may never reverberate the older generation's sentiments and sense of mission.

To assume that the issue of Arab Muslims' acculturation process within the North American context can be resolved by "Islamizing" the North American educational system, by raising the political consciousness, or by emulating North American socialization events is simplistic. To use expressions such as "Islamization" and "cultural heritage," or to add any nationalistic or religious ideals, does not make a curriculum in an Islamic school or an informal cultural event more Islamic/Arabic. In the Islamization process, as delineated by al Faruqi,⁶ human knowledge (revealed or otherwise) can be appropriated within the Islamic ontological and epistemological worldview. One of the main goals of this process is to eliminate the compartmentalized behavioral manifestations that result from using dichotomized or incommensurable underlying assumptions that are reflected in various views of life, knowledge, and education. To deal with the acculturation of Arab Muslims from the point of view of minority/majority relations,

therefore, is only a diversion from the basic problem that has obstructed the development of Arabs and Muslims in this century. Not realizing what their ideological commitment (s) to Islamicity or to Arabism may entail, Muslims and Arabs, in general, have failed to appropriate their claimed ideals in modern times.

The following study reports on North American Arab Muslims' perception of their relations to the society at large. This study will investigate group membership (religiosity) and socialization (ethnicity) only as one variable in the understanding of minority/majority relations among the North American Arab Muslims. Further, it will approach the problem from the conceptual point of view, exploring the individual's perception of the Islamic way of life, as well as the practice of Islamic knowledge as appropriated among the Arab community and transformed in the context of North American societies. Analyzing the various perceptions of Islamicity, Arabism, and the attempts to integrate them in the Western, secular environment may lead to a fuller understanding of group empowering strategies in pluralistic societies.

This study is based on interviews with forty-seven Arab Muslims in Toronto, Buffalo, New York City, and Washington, D.C., conducted between October 1984 and December 1985. The report is part of a larger study by the present author on Muslim education in the United States and Canada.⁷ Members of fifteen Arab Muslim families of different nationalities were randomly chosen, largely through contact with Islamic centers and mutual friends. The criteria for the sample selection were partially self-imposed by the participants' willingness to be part of the study and partially set by the investigator. The latter criterion was that the parents be immigrants and have children aged fourteen to twenty-two years who were reared mainly in North America. All but four permanent residents/landing immigrant participants, were Canadian or United States citizens. Only two mothers were born in North America but were married to Arab Muslim immigrants. The participants, who were interviewed in small groups of peers (fathers, mothers, and youth) and who completed two sets of questionnaires individually, were structured as follows: eleven fathers, fourteen mothers and twenty-two youth divided almost equally by gender. All the youth except two spent their formative years (between the ages of six to eighteen) in North America. The fathers' ages ranged from forty-three to sixty-seven. The mothers' ranged from thirty-six to fifty-four.

CONCEPTUAL ECOLOGY AND EMPOWERING STRATEGIES

That commitments to and interpretations of the Islamic and the Western worldviews might vary calls for investigation of the following question:

How do the immigrant Arab Muslims develop the worldview they call "Islamic?" Although they have a problem in applying it, or transmitting it to their offspring in the context of the host societies that represent Western conceptual ecology,⁸ they claim to have practiced Islam within their Arabic heritage.

To answer this question, we need to investigate (1) the Muslim conceptual ecology, and the Arab Muslim conceptual ecology in particular, and (2) their

integration in the Western conceptual ecology. This investigation may bring forward some of the factors that might be considered as barriers or facilitators to (a) the Arab Muslims' integration process, (b) ideological acculturation of their younger generation, (c) the understanding of minority/majority relations vis-a-vis variations in worldview, and (d) the type and nature of empowerment.

Based on Siddiqi's view of Tawhid, a Muslim conceptual ecology may look as follows:

The present-day Muslim's existence is not the result of a process similar to that of the *Ummah* (the early Muslim community). The present Muslim community has passed through none of the three formative stages in the process of emancipation, restoration of independent thinking, and conscious commitment to the will of Allah.⁹

Siddiqi realizes that it is not possible for each generation of Muslims to be raised exactly in the manner in which the *Ummah* was raised, but he emphasizes the requirement that the system of education and training through which the new generation of Muslims pass "must cater for the needs of the process that is Tawhid. Central to this scheme should be the aim of creating people who think for themselves, exercise their judgment and make their own choice."

Regardless of whether Siddiqi's view describes reality for present-day North American Muslims, one can infer the relevance of certain aspects of it for the Arab Muslim immigrants and their offspring. These North American Arab Muslims, moving into a pluralistic society that values individual freedom, can be assumed to have formulated their conceptual ecology as follows: the parents have a different conceptual ecology from that of their offspring. Consequently, the empowering strategies perceived by parents as tools for adjustment may or may not facilitate the empowerment of the Arab Muslim youth as a social minority with a different identity and a different worldview. It was assumed, therefore, that three basic views dominated the Muslim's life in general and the Arab Muslims' in particular:

1. The global view, according to which Islam is understood from the Qur'anic context, is that one believes in Allah as the source of value, knowledge, and authority. Believing in Allah and the basic pillars of the Islamic faith are the essentials, and everything else is time-space bound.

2. The traditional view, according to which a human being is seen as if s/he cannot make rules even for minute day-to-day dealings. Only shari'ah rules, and space-time variations should be disregarded.

3. The historical view, according to which Islam is seen as a cultural heritage like Arabism because one is born to a Muslim/Arab family.

Hence this investigator presupposed that the North American Muslims' perception of Islamicity and of Arabism within the context of North American societies may result in different conceptualization and practice of adjustment and empowerment strategies in the North American contexts, as well as within the framework of one or the other of the above three views of Islam and the Arabic heritage.

RESULTS

The results from the questionnaires (not reported here because of space limitation)¹⁰ indicate that the discrepancies in Arab Muslims' view are not caused by the strength or weakness in the level of the individual's religiosity, which El kholy (1966)¹¹ also affirmed. Ethnic sentimentality apparently was not a major factor in the problems encountered by North American Arab Muslims. Perceiving the problem on the level of ethnic minority vs. host society majority, however, resulted in conflict in perception, as was hypothesized. The other major factors that affect the discrepancies seem to be (1) differences between the conceptual ecology of the immigrant older generation and that of the American-reared younger generation, and (2) differences between perception of the Islamic view in abstract or in context. These two factors became the focus in investigating the variations in conceptualization of the issues posed during the group interview. Two of these issues with their results are analyzed here: the socialization issue and the issue of valuing morality and of teaching/learning the Arabic language.

Socialization

Given the historical and ideological differences between Islamic/Arabic and "Western" conceptual ecologies, one might expect a demarcation between the responses of parents and youth to the issue of socialization. Being raised in the West and operating more within the secular, individualistic Western framework, youth may also vary depending on where they have spent their formative years and the nature of the educational institution they have attended.

The question, "Suppose you/your child wants to go out, with or without friends of the opposite sex, how do your parents/you respond?" was posed basically because it is the most precarious issue in the minds of Arab Muslim parents and youth alike. The concern here is about communication between parents and youth and with others, with more emphasis on how both parents and youth view the issue and what strategies they have employed to resolve it. These strategies represent to a large extent the level of empowerment that the individual has when faced with minority/majority relationships. That is, if the parent is not clear as to how such a problem can be resolved, the youth, subsequently, may feel confused and unempowered to face the society (the majority) if she or he choose not to conform with the society's "mainstream norms."

There were seventeen responses to this question: two fathers and five mothers of Arab descent, two native mothers married to Arab Muslim immigrants, and eight youth. Seven themes of relevance are generated. Two themes relate exclusively to parents' responses (one with reasons for not allowing youth to go out, and the other with conditions for allowing youth to go out), two are exclusively responses by youth (the first relates to their reaction to parents' restrictions, and the second to their own responses to the issue), two related to secondary problems this issue causes, and suggested solutions, and one, the seventh theme, relates to general reactions to the issue. Although the question concerned socialization in general, all the answers centered on mixed socialization and on dating. Also, most strategies/responses seem to be the

result of reactions to issues as they are contemplated rather than the result of consistent familial or communal policy.

Parents' Responses: One father and five mothers responded with reasons for not allowing mixed socialization among youth outside the home: "The idea of mixing is a foreign one. There is no need to mix in order to get acquainted with future husbands. Muslim women did not mix throughout history" (a mother); "because of cultural background, not out of belief and not out of religious reasons, I would like to be as strict as possible" (a father who declared at the beginning of the interview that he views Islam as a cultural, historical heritage only); and "try to reason and explain why and then give chance to make a judgment" (a mother).

One father and four mothers reported prerequisites to allowing youth to go out or to mix with the opposite sex: "First, equip our children with a clear understanding of the Islamic teachings as well as the environment and different situations and consequences"; "Now even in a Muslim society, mixing is not an absolute no. There are certain conditions, within which mixing is necessary, nothing wrong with that. But then you have to exempt that during instruction. In Islamic school you have to separate [the sexes]. In this society [in general] you cannot avoid in any case, so you have to learn how to cope with it as much as possible"; "I don't care, I grew [up] here, but I would prefer dating in group"; and "allow them, considering that they are [physically] safe."

Youth Responses: Half (four of eight) of the total youth responses were a reaction to parents' restrictions or lack of restrictions. "Parents prevent us blindly even if they know that we are aware of the teachings and the situations" ; "I don't miss going out because I never experienced it. I prefer the security of the home over being lost and not knowing what to do"; "We never ask because we know the answer will be 'No.' We prefer to lie to our friends than to ask and hear 'No'"; "Parents have no reservations. They know [the people we go with] are only friends." The complaint, "It's hard to understand why [I'm] not allowed to go with American friends" is repeated in different contexts.

Although some parents know their youth do not "ask because they know our answer will be 'No'", others attribute lack of requests to the youths' content, lack of interest, or preoccupation with work. Other parents feel that because they "explained limitations from an 'Islamic' point of view," their children decided not to go out with the opposite sex because "[they] could not restrain themselves" or [the males] did not go with American boys "because they drink."

In trying to rationalize why they do not ask to go out, some youth express "fear of feeling confused since I never experienced it [going out] before" (a female), and "feeling that I can't constrain myself from certain forbidden acts" (a male). One girl gave a theological justification to her fellow interviewee. When the latter complained: "It's hard to understand why parents prevent us blindly," she responded: "I think the reason is [for us] not [to] develop unduly an intimate relationship before marriage because it is fundamentally wrong in Islam."

Half of the youth cited their parents' reasoning regarding going out in mixed groups: "We have the example of the Prophet: 'Talk to women [wives of the Prophet] from behind a veil.' Mixing now is taken very lightly because of social

pressure here and back home." (This male youth quoted the Qur'anic verse 53 of Surah 33 as a prophetic Sunna and translated the reference to the "wives of the Prophet" as applying to all women!); "I feel comfortable, I try to choose friends who have closer values, like don't drink and don't agree with open sex" (two females and a male).

Secondary Problems and Solutions: Problems recognized by one father, three mothers, and two youth arising from constraints on social mixing, were expressed as follows: "We are left with no friends because we can't easily make friends only with Muslims since they may have different interests or may live far away and don't go to the same school" (youths); "You will fight continuously with them by being too strict" (parents).

Mothers who realize that their children feel isolated may persist in not allowing them to mix because "I don't agree with going out with the opposite sex. I bring my children [up] the way I was brought up." Other mothers realize that their youth "don't understand why they have to be different in every matter" but find it difficult themselves to provide alternative activities.

The solutions suggested by four mothers and one youth ranged from "support them in school and take part in their activities" and "get them involved in sports instead of going out with American children" to "my parents brought us [up] from [an] early age on the idea and made us aware of the consequences" and "making them [the youth] aware that because they're Muslims they should behave differently."

General Reactions: These reactions ranged from an idealistic view: "Though we don't know the significance of the Prophet's behavior, we should try to imitate it" to a practical one: "Since we live in a mixed society, we have to teach our children how to cope and behave accordingly in order to protect themselves."

The emphasis, on one end of the continuum, was on the idea that it "requires a great deal of self restriction and constraint." The other end, was characterized (mostly by youth) by "you can practice your belief anywhere, but dealing with people should change with the circumstances". A few respondents felt that the answer would depend on the age of children, the situation, the group, on whether the others involved were family or friends, and the type of conversation involved.

In summary, these seven themes provide examples of a complex strategic attempt to relate the relevant Islamic teachings and Arabic customs to the perception of Western conceptual ecology, but with wide variations, depending on what that perception is and on the type of Islamic/Arabic conceptual ecology.

On one end of the continuum, the strategy is a rejection of any mixing, either because Islamic teachings were perceived as absolute, because of cultural restrictions and the way the individuals were brought up, or because the idea is a foreign one. The pattern at the other end of the continuum (that seems a less likely used strategy) is that of an attempt to understand both the Islamic and Western values and to integrate them in harmony as much as possible. Between the two poles are a variety of strategies: compartmentalization, commitment either toward the West or toward Islam but not for a clear reason, or response by default, that is, without reasoning beyond the particular social customs in which

mixing (in the Western sense) was not practiced, or beyond the fact that mixing was practiced back home and in the host society or "It is fun, you'll be with friends and everything," or being busy and not bothering to think about it.

The Nature of Valuing

The second issue that was raised during the group interview to address the variation in conceptualization was the nature of valuing of moral and ethical codes and of teaching/learning Arabic as the parents' native language and as the language of the Qur'an.

Valuing Moral and Ethical Codes: Four themes are found in the parents' responses to the question "Why do you value the teaching against lying, cheating, stealing in a society where major crimes are committed?" The basic goals of this question were to find out (1) how the parents integrate the Islamic moral principles with the societal customs and with Western ethics, and (2) what reasons they give. The themes are grouped according to these two goals.

The responses of nine mothers and one father fit the strategy of Islamic idealism and theological reasons. Their answers ranged from "We will pay for our deeds in the Hereafter as well as in this life. God gave us the brains to do something" to "If everyone follows Islam as a whole, there will not be crime in the world." Other responses (three mothers) centered on "Not following the religion is the cause for these crimes and for neglecting these moral/ethical standards." One response that draws a relationship between Islamic principles and human interaction was given by a mother and by a youth from two different families: "Making kids conscientious of Allah (have Taqwa) will prevent them from telling lies" or "Taqwa is necessary to resolve problems of Muslims and others." Only one mother (a native-born American) and one father (who views Islam from a historical perspective) responded with ethical or practical reasons.

In summary, Most of the respondents were mothers, and even when two-thirds of the mothers attempted to relate the concept to the context (objectifying it), their reasoning was confined to a narrow religious view. These mothers do not always appear to understand how "being religious" in Islam relates to the issue of morality: "Abiding by the law of society is part of obedience to Allah." The ethical and practical themes/strategies were elucidated mainly from the responses of the native American mothers who either remained Christian or have recently converted to Islam. A distinctive variation appears in their reasoning: "These are basic things for communication with people, even if there was no God."

Valuing Arabic Language: The basic goal for asking parents and youth about teaching/learning or speaking Arabic language in the home was to understand whether attachment to the native language is Islamic (religious), ethnic (national), or practical (pragmatic) in nature. Also, by looking into the efforts parents are exerting to teach the language, we may understand the parents' ability to integrate their valuing of the language with societal demands and what strategies they have used to do so.

Seven mothers and four fathers responded to this question. Their responses were classified under five strategies and their rationale:

1. Access to religious literature. Five of the mothers' and two of the fathers' responses had to do with "learning Arabic to read the Qur'an" and "translation does not explain essence".

2. Native language as part of heritage. Six mothers and two fathers responded under this theme. Four of the mothers and one father were responding to the question "Why, then, do Christian Arabs teach their children the language, since they may not be concerned about the Qur'an?"

3. Family communication was suggested by six mothers and centered mainly on ability to communicate with grandparents and relatives.

4. The response of five mothers focused on efforts made to fulfill the need to teach the parents' native language rather than on a rationale for doing so.

5. Similarly, the fifth theme by three mothers centered on how parents feel about the need to teach the native language or the effort necessary to do so.

The youth responding to the questionnaire were given choices of how frequently they read Arabic. Twelve of those responding to the question of whether they read journals in Arabic and fourteen of those responding to whether they read books in Arabic checked "other" category and most of those wrote "never." This is in contrast to the majority of responses that indicate the ability to speak or understand the parents' Arabic dialect.

In summary, with the exception of two fathers and five mothers regarding theme 1, Arabic is taught either for sentimental reasons or to preserve tradition. Most of the respondents to this question were mothers (as was the case on questions regarding morality). Since these mothers are more concerned with the manifestations of the religion (i.e., practice) than with abstract, ideational jargon, their valuing cannot be assessed in the same manner as that of the fathers'. Mothers tend to be concerned with the practical aspect of the issues; they tend to be more realistic and less idealistic than fathers. This interpretation is evidenced in the practical considerations raised by most mothers, such as their saying it is either too hard "to decide since it's only going to stay [for] one generation," "to teach Arabic along with English and French or other second language in school," and in the idealistic considerations by most fathers, such as the statement "Learn Arabic to read Qur'an, translation doesn't explain the essence."

Therefore, though parents may not compartmentalize the issue of knowledge of the native language, at least 62 percent of them will be facing conflicting situations and difficult decision process as whether or not they may or may not be able to preserve the Arabic language. It will be a difficult reasoning process for those parents since their attachment is more with the practiced Muslim/Arabic manifestations and sentiments than with actual Islamic principles or Arabic norms. Consequently, the Muslim Arab parent or adult may not comprehend the importance of the preservation of the native language as an empowering strategy. This inability to comprehend an empowering strategy is also found among the Muslim Arab adults who perceive the value of moral codes and

socialization norms as religious obligations only and not as a frame of reference in which the young generation may be brought into in order to be clear and confident about their identity.

Native language usage may be rationalized as follows: (1) It can be considered as a variable in its own right, particularly Arabic since the attachment to it can be linguistic, nationalistic, or religiously oriented. Using this language can be an indicator of parents' serious concern with respect to transmitting the Islamic principles and/or the Arabic heritage. (2) The native language can be considered as a proxy for indicating the lifestyle parents prefer in raising their offspring. Whether parents consciously adopted English/French (i.e., made a decision that they were settling in North America and their children had no need to know their native language) or incidentally practiced it (i.e., wanted to conform with the cosmopolitan style) is beyond the scope of this study. The concern is whether parents value the native language as an important means for transmitting the belief system and the ethnic heritage.

INTERPRETATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

Though youth seem to be flexible and willing to accept intervention strategies, there are three basic problems that need to be addressed by both parents and youth before or simultaneously with the intervention process.

1. Parents will have difficulty accepting intervention because of two reasons:

a. They have difficulties in transmitting the belief system--because they deal mostly with abstracts--but they do not realize that they have such difficulties. This is evidenced also in the results regarding the question "How do you coordinate between Islamic teachings and what your children learn in school?" Twenty-nine percent of parents responding to this question stated something like "[It is] important to prepare for Hereafter and this [life] from Islam [i.e., Islamic point of view]," or "Islam is a complete way that would prepare them for both lives," or "No difference between Islam, Christianity and Judaism, but people changed the latter." Only one mother stated, "There is a difference in assumptions, so you have to make Islamic assumptions known to non-Muslims and stick to your belief."

b. Parents tend to transmit their particular customs of practicing the Islamic system. These customs have a high rejection level by the youth, as is evidenced in the youths' rejection of the only solution that some parents see as a way to bring the youth back to religion. One mother said that when their older daughter reached seventeen they realized "that it is very difficult [to make their youth accept the religion]. That's why we started to give them some advice. First of all, we sent them to [our home country] now every year to give them some impression. Second, they have been trying to listen to us, not very much... but it is not easy for them [and for us] because they live here." When the same mother was asked what she found in living in North American that she could not adjust to, she and the other three mothers in the group announced that they missed the holidays and the way they are celebrated. Meanwhile, the children of these same parents were concerned because "we cannot act as strangers with non-Muslims because then we cannot bring the message to them."

2. The second problem is that youth themselves are not clear on the differences between the Islamic and the Western systems or how to relate between them. There were eleven different responses from the thirteen respondents to the above question on coordination. They ranged from simplistic answers such as "[they] don't teach Islam in school" (Participant # 121, the daughter of a native-born mother and an immigrant father who view Islam as a religion) to sophisticated ones such as:

I think it is very important to realize that in order to refrain from something which you know is wrong, [note that the context of the response was the usage of alcohol as part of the socialization process], there needs to be a lot of self-discipline, and Taqwa is very important, because unless there is Taqwa and faith, you probably would think that nothing would be wrong. We should always look to the futuristic impact [long-range impact] of our behaviors. It is important because you can tell these people that drunken driving can kill them, but unless they know that there is something that pulls them back, this inner conscious, this Taqwa, you will not succeed in telling people what to do. (Participant # 125, a male who spent most of his formative years in his parents' home country and mainly in an Islamic familial environment.)

3. The third problem is that both parents and youth have some distrust. The parents distrust the environment, the host society, with its various manifestations. For example, we find an explicit statement such as "I do not let my girls go out with other American girls, not because I do not trust them, but because I do not trust the environment." This is matched by an apathetic response from the youth of this type of parent to the coordination issue, such as "we know there is a conflict, we need to discuss with parents, but it does not work because parents will not change their minds because they don't trust the environment."

Some youth have developed distrust for part of the Islamic teachings because the particular part does not fit, in their opinion, with scientific findings, such as:

I never mix science and faith. So if there was some scientific concept which, let's say, was dictated differently [in Al Qur'an], I would say... I look at it as Allah probably was the originator of the whole thing, I mean the Creator, but science is science and I agree that science can very much correct the Qur'an. I don't see why it should not. There is something in the Qur'an that science cannot explain or prove or do anything, like morals or virtues. In terms of natural laws, I really don't go through [Al Qur'an]. When I keep through the Qur'an [I keep with] the basic ideas of being good to yourself and others. (Participant # 123, a male who spent all his formative years in boarding missionary schools)

The impact of the above three problems is far beyond what is stated explicitly. That is, when one knows the background of each of the respondents, the evidence becomes stronger for the effect of conceptual ecology on beliefs and on the practice of such beliefs. The comparison between the three quotes above (of participants 121, 125, and 123) is a good example. The first represents the "factual" attitude to the order of things. The second represents the precept of "informed" commitment to the Islamic belief system, while the third represents the maxim of "educated" commitment to the Western point of view.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS AND EDUCATOR TRAINING

In addition to the parents and youths limitations, many problems are also expected at the implementation stage of any educational program. Many immigrant Arab Muslim leaders are suspicious of any innovative ideas even if they come from an Arab or a Muslim.¹² Furthermore, immigrant parents are generally suspicious because of their negative experiences with missionary work during the colonization of their original countries.

Policy Makers

More resistance should be expected when a new program of education is introduced to policy makers or directors of Islamic centers/mosques, because of meager financial and know-how resources. At times, they may also opt toward discrediting certain programs in order to gain the financial resources from the sponsors, the majority of whom are traditional overseas Arab Muslims who advocate the transfer of Muslim societies norms.

Even if the program was not introduced through mosques, centers, or existing institutions, the Muslim polity would take refuge in these institutions for advice or as a form of resistance. This expectation calls for surveying the policy makers and developing seminars and workshops to orient them to the new conception(s). To be more specific, this investigator strongly believes that the process of educational intervention (which is essentially a process of conceptual change and of facilitating empowerment) must start with the policy makers before educators can reach the Muslim polity. In this respect, the same objectives, content, and teaching strategies drawn for teachers, parents, and youth become applicable at that level, as well.

Teacher/Imam Training

Teacher training programs in some Muslim communities have been limited to summer and holiday workshops for publicly certified Muslim teachers, most of whom are immigrants or first generation who received their professional education in North America. The training programs, usually organized by an umbrella organization such as the Islamic Society of North America, last two to three days each and consist mainly of (1) seminars and/or lectures about the basics in Islamic religious practice and (2) some hands-on workshops concerning "Islamic" instructional materials or strategies.

Imam (community leader) training programs are carried on in the same style as teacher training programs. The content, however, differs because most of these leaders are usually certified (from their home country) in some level of Islamic law (Al Shari'ah). Therefore, the content of their training is oriented toward English proficiency and/or preparedness for the Western environment.

Since there is no systematic documentation or research on these training programs, the only piece of evaluation one may refer to is the learning outcomes among Arab Muslim children and youth. It was concluded that the present learning /teaching procedures appear to have resulted in the separation of two

spheres of knowledge, Islamic and secular. These results indicate the need for new conceptions in training programs for teachers or community leaders that should differ in both content and approach.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

Should integration strategies be expected of all Muslims in North America and of Arab Muslims as a subgroup, or only of certain Muslim groups such as those concerned with their children's Islamic/Arabic identity? How can one reduce the variations among North American Muslims and among the Arab Muslims, in particular, to make group instruction possible? The third question concerns the possibility of changes in the teacher's role. This possibility will depend on how policy makers in Muslim communities approach the new conception and teacher training program.

Each of the above questions will be discussed briefly along with what the results of this study suggest as conditions for resolving each of them.

Recommendation for Program Groundwork¹³

To assist parents and their offspring in selecting the sources and in understanding the meanings of the Islamic belief system and its relation to Arabic heritage vis-a-vis the Western secular system (as an educational objective) we need some consensus among Muslim educators and decision makers about the basic resources and the means used in the interpretations of their content. Muslim jurists (Fuqaha') differ, and at times without realizing the difference, on what they mean by *Ijma'* (consensus) as a means for arriving at some meaning and/or implication of a particular verse in Al Qur'an or of a Hadith. *Ijma'* can be understood as that which was agreed upon by the early Muslim community, by the first and second companions of the Prophet, by the eleventh-century jurists, by the present-day jurists, or by any combination of these.

Until such issues are clarified, and until Muslim educators understand where the various Muslim individuals and groups stand on such issues, it will be next to impossible to decide which source, means, or content can be used in the intended educational program, without possibly alienating certain groups of Muslims, particularly when ethnicity or nationality is polarized. This in no way an attempt to unify a set of resources, means, or content. Rather, it is an eclectic but informed attempt to relate between the individual's empowering strategies and the underlying assumptions of these strategies in an explicit manner.

General Considerations

The variation in the parents' and their offspring' responses in the above three spheres (group context, group interaction, and teacher/policy maker perception and training) of communicating the Islamic belief system and the Arabic heritage does not necessarily indicate the need for direct educational intervention from the host society. As suggested by both parents' and youths' conceptual ecology evidenced in the the results, three major limitations pertain to both parents and youth. These limitations are (1) parents' difficulty in accepting an educational program, (2) youths' and parents' uncertainty of commitment to

either system, Islam or the West, or to a group identity (Muslims, Arabs, Syrians, or any other national group) , and (3) parents' and youths' state of distrust. Therefore, the problem must be addressed by acknowledging these limitations. To minimize these limitations, the investigator attempted to elicit definitions of the problem as well as suggestions for solving the problem from the participants. The results of this attempt follow.

The Problem: By asking some participants in the study about the method they found most effective in talking about Islamic teachings and about Arabic language or customs, and by asking for suggestions that might be useful to other Muslim communities, the investigator was able to formulate tentative pedagogical aspects of the problem:

1. Parents are confused as to (a) whose responsibility it is to educate their offspring in Islam, whether it should be done by parents, Muslim scholars, or the Imams in the community; (b) the nature of the problem, whether it is youths' identity confusion, parents' mixing of Islamic and societal or ethnic values, or scholars' ineffective methods of educating the polity of Muslims and of producing the Arab Muslim character; and (c) how the institutions of Islam can be approximated in a continental organizational structure, by creating local ethnic/social/political cooperation, by individual initiative and responsibility, or both.

2. Youth, on the other hand, see the problem simply as being adults' distrust of their commitment and ability to understand and apply the Islamic belief system. This is evidenced in the recent establishment of sub-organizations, such as the Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA) that represents the American-reared generation, or the Muslim Arab Youth Association (MAYA) that represents the Muslim Arab students who have a different conceptualization of the problem and of the needed intervention strategies from that of the older immigrant generation.

The Suggestions: The confusion described above calls for further suggestions before planning any program. A summary of the participants' suggestions follows:

Most of the interviewees' suggestions centered on better communication between Muslims on the local and national levels. The basic reason was that the "children feel that there are people (other children) who live like us" and who are different from the rest of society, but they cannot communicate with them to create a sense of community.

Another suggestion emphasized that parents cannot achieve this task alone; they need continuous support. By the same token, teaching/schooling was not desired because Islam is seen as real life and not a book to learn from.

The Needs of the Audience: The end product of diagnosis of needs is to translate the identified needs into educational objectives. Through these procedures, a combination formal-informal educational programs has been designed and recommended for resolving the remaining conflict. A voluntary community-based program is designed for both parents and their offspring and for the decision makers in communities with significant Arab Muslim populations.

This program consists of a single curriculum with a common set of objectives, which addresses the needs of Muslim parents and those of their offspring separately as well as jointly.

Considering other demographic factors (such as levels of ethnicity and linguistic attachments, geographic location, age, and the like), the educational means, and other program supports, certain inferences were made. In addition, recognizing that the sample of this study was small and that the empirical data depended mainly on homogeneous responses and on analysis of the individuals' judgmental responses, it is essential to clarify the bases on which these inferences were made. These bases are grouped under four concluding points:

CONCLUSIONS

1. Issues or values are used in this study to represent the manifestations of the interaction between the principles or the central concepts of the two worldviews (the Islamic and the Western). This interaction is viewed as the reason behind the majority/minority conflict, that is not exclusive to the North American Arab Muslim immigrants and their offspring. Therefore, these issues or values are used here as a means to illustrate the level and the nature of the conflict (and the rationality involved in resolving it) between the two specific world-views (Islamic and Western) or the two particular conceptual ecologies, (the parents' and their youths', on one hand, and the Muslim and the Arab, on the other).

2. Although this study deals with Arab Muslim youth--who may not be different from any other youth in their rebellion against the older generation or the norms of the host society--the aim of the interfamilial comparison is to show the tension that can exist between two generations of the same group, and within each of the two generations, when both their conceptual ecologies and levels of rationality differ. It is argued that this tension is instigated by the variation in the perception of the Islamic central concept, which could be either in a context (as was the case of the youth) or in the abstract (as was the case of the parents). In addition, it is argued that this tension cannot be the result of variation in the perception of the ethnic or nationalistic manifestations of either of the two worldviews. Rather, it is the result of variation in the nature and level of rationality and in the sources and means of knowledge about these worldviews. Furthermore, this tension is one of the factors that will determine the starting point of educational intervention or empowering strategy. That is, the general population of North American Arab Muslims is expected to vary in its level of awareness and concern for this conflict/tension. This variation may in turn affect the audiences' readiness for and acceptance of any educational intervention or change in strategy.

3. The implications of this study are not limited to its sample or to Muslim communities that have established mosques or centers. Rather, the intent is to draw some inferences from the sample as representative of these communities for the general population of North American Arab Muslims. The fact that the majority of the subjects in the sample happened to be associated with a center or mosque and that the participants were self-selected adds some strength to the argument and to the inferences drawn from the results. The finding that parents in this study (who were highly aware of and deeply committed to resolving the conflict) were not able to resolve the conflict because of their conceptual ecology and level of rationality suggests that a similar tension and response might be predicted among the general population for the same reasons. The awareness of the individual/group of such tension, therefore, can be indicative only to the starting of educational intervention and to the type of empowering strategy for the particular individual or group.

4. The implications of this study are not limited to the immigrant Arab Muslims or to the Muslim faithful. Rather, its implications extend to the problem of integrating any belief system in a pluralistic secular society that operates, by necessity, on the separation of religious and secular lives and on replacing belief systems with ethnicity. The results, therefore, may allow us to define areas of exploration in attempting to investigate the last point of this study. This point, the design of an education program that aims at reconciling any remaining conflict between Muslims' view of Islam and its practice along with the maintenance of Arabic heritage in the Western secular context, is investigated only as a preparatory and not as a conclusive measure. The North American societies, therefore, are challenged to design more conclusive programs that will preserve the different belief systems or worldviews and their different manifestations in an integrated manner.

NOTES

1. The terms "Islam" and "Islamic" indicate here a philosophical foundation of thought and action, incorporating religion (in the secular sense and as understood by the secular view) as a system of faith only. The terms "Arab" and "Arabic" indicate here a linguistic, tribal, national, or ethnic perspective of one's identity or community membership.

2. Integration is used here to indicate the maintenance of the Islamic belief system at the level of its central concept, *Tawhid*, and to objectify this belief system in the Western secular environment without (1) compromising Islamic principles, (2) sacrificing national/ethnic group attachment (Arabic in this case), (3) living triple but separate lives (Islamic, Western, and Arabic), or (4) withdrawing from the outside society (becoming a ghetto community).

3. As quoted by A. Haleem, "Community at Risk: The Education of Our Children,," Islamic Horizon 16, 7 (July 1987): 21-30.
4. See S. H. Nasr's analysis on Westernized education in chapter 4 "The Immutable Principles of Islam and Westernized Education in the Muslim World," Islamic Life and Thought (Albany: State University of New York, 1981), pp. 31-36.
5. A survey of the Arab Studies Quarterly (ASQ), a publication of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, indicates that among the 40 plus articles and reports published between the Winter of 1987 and the Fall of 1988 (i.e., Vo 9 and 10, No. 1-4 in each) only three articles were concerned with the North American Arab community.
6. I. R. al Faruqi. Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan (Brentwood, Maryland: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).
7. N. H. Barazangi. "Perceptions Of The Islamic Belief System: The Muslims in North America." Ph. D. Thesis, Cornell University, 1988. PP 486 (under preparation for publication).
8. The expression "Conceptual Ecology" is borrowed from philosophy of science and used here to indicate the individual's current concepts that will influence the selection of a new central concept. For further explanation of a model of Islamic rationality, the reader is referred to the author's "Parents and Youth: Perceptions and Practice of the Islamic Belief System," in the forthcoming book Muslim Family in North America (Edmonton: Alberta University Press).
9. M. N. Siddiqi. "Tawhid: The Concept and the Process." in K. Ahmad and Z. I. Ansari (eds.) Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honor of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, (Leicester, United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation, 1980), pp. 27-28.
10. The reader is referred to the author's paper "Parents and Youth," (op cit), for summary of the questionnaires procedure or to her Ph.D. Dissertation (op cit) for details of the methodology and of data analysis and reporting.
11. Except for A. Elkholy's (The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation, [New Haven, Conn: College and University Press Publishers], 1966) examination of the theory of negative correlation between religion and assimilation, in which he illustrates the social conditions under which Arab Muslims live in the United States, there has been no deep analysis of the process of ideological integration. B. Abu-Laban ("The Canadian Muslim Community: The Need for a New Survival Strategies." in Earl A. Waugh, et al. [eds.], The Muslim Community in North America, [Edmonton, Alberta: The University of Alberta Press, 1983], pp. 75-92) did suggest that "one of the most pressing problems confronting the Muslim leaders is their relative inability to reach the new, Canadian-born generation of Muslim children, teenagers, and young adults. So far, Muslim leaders have directed most of their attention to the immigrant generation and its social and spiritual needs. This is understandable in view of the fact that the 'Lay' Muslim leaders are drawn largely from the ranks of the immigrant generation. More importantly, virtually all Imams...are foreign-born, as well, and it is difficult for them to appreciate fully the conditions in which the Canadian-born generation lives."

12. Y. Y. Haddad and A. T. Lummis Islamic Values in the United States stated that their experience in attempting to get interviews at various mosques indicate that "Research must be legitimated by leaders of the respective mosque if it is to be thorough and effective, and that legitimacy most likely will be obtained if the field researchers at each mosque are members in good standing, or at least are known to its members." (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987; p.11)

13. Curricular objectives of this program are discussed in the author's paper "Islamic Education in the United States and Canada: Conception and Practice of the Islamic Belief System" in the forthcoming book The Muslims of America by Oxford University Press. The blueprint of the program, however, is still under preparation by the present author.