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I. Introduction

This study examines the way immigrant Muslim parents and their Offspring perceive Islam and view its practice in the context of the Societies of the United States and Canada.

Historically and at present, the worldview of North American Muslims has generally differed from that of other groups who are either Natives of or immigrants to North America. Yet not until recently has Any substantial research been done on the presence of Muslims in North America let alone on their learning patterns or the role of differing Worldviews in the education of their children.

Muslims may not be considered a minority ethnic group because they Neither have the characteristics of the term minority ethnic nor Constitute a single linguistic, cultural, or socioeconomic group. Study of Muslims simply as minority ethnics or national groups will not Help in understanding the variations in their attempts to maintain Their Islamic identity. That is because, as Abdo A. Elkholy notes, "As Muslims in America are being assimilated, as Arabs, Turks, and other ethnic groups, many do not see the religious wrong in mixed marriage."

Elkholy's observation relates to communicating Islam in North America on two levels. The first level is the way Muslims perceive themselves and hence identify with (a) Islam as a way of life, (b) Muslims as a religious group with which one may affiliate, or (c) nationality/ethnicity as an identity given to the Muslim subcultures by Western colonizers. The Muslim's perception of his/her own identity is the cornerstone in his/her ability to adjust to the new environment while maintaining the basics of the Islamic belief system and to transmit that system to the next generation in an integrative manner. This perception of identity determines whether one's response is assimilation, integration, or withdrawal. The second level pertains to the realities of the North American pluralistic societies and their implicit and explicit demands for individual conformity to societal "norms." North American societies are established on a secular value system. They may allow for different religious practices, in the narrow sense of the word, but may not allow for ideological and epistemological differences. Therefore, Muslims will be assimilated as subcultural groups (Arabs, Turks, etc.) despite vigorous attempts by

Muslim leaders and organizations to maintain the Islamic identity. These leaders have failed to recognize that assimilation will persist as long as people's identity is in a state of confusion between ideological (Islamic), religious (Muslim), and ethnic (Arab, Turks, etc.) attachments. The clarity or confusion of one's identity is the key to the variation in Muslims' assimilation. The degree of Muslims' religiosity, as suggested by Elkholy, is only a part in the question of identification.

The effort of any Muslim community in North America to formulate an educational program that will transmit the Islamic cultural and ideological heritage to its children is viewed here more as a conceptual than a socioanthropological problem. The contrast between the Islamic and Western concepts of life and education can be explained by looking at the variations in Muslims' conceptual ecology that resulted from the different education and acculturation they have received. The term conceptual ecology is used to describe the individual's current concepts that will influence the selection of a new central concept. This conceptual ecology is said to consist of important determinants of the direction of integration. The ways in which Muslim immigrants integrate into their host societies may be discovered by analyzing North American Muslims' views on three subjects: (1) the role of the concept of Tawhid (Oneness of God), (2) the role of independent thinking and sense of mission, and (3) the two basic features of Islamic conceptual ecology, intention (making a choice) and action (practicing that choice). The idea of Tawhid and its concomitants (independent thinking and sense of mission) will always be used as measuring sticks at the individual, the interfamilial, and the community-formation levels.

On the individual level, for example, since Tawhid means that one is committed only to Allah (God) as the source of value, knowledge, and authority, every Muslim needs to question whether each aspect of his or her environment can be adopted as part of his or her own character as a Muslim. This questioning applies to a wide range of issues, from the most essential to life, such as food, to the most sensitive but also most salient to the individual, such as one's ideological conceptual commitment. In other words, how the individual Muslim questions these issues depends on how s/he perceives the following two elements in his or her own choice: the ideology chosen consciously (i.e., not merely by being born to Muslim parents) and the general conditions of the host society in which one attempts to practice that ideology. It is this conscious choice of Tawhid that helps the individual's intention to be objectified within the meaning and the spirit of the Islamic belief system.

II. ASSUMPTIONS AND PROPOSITIONS

Four underlying propositions are central to this study and to the

contrast between the Islamic and Western worldviews: (1) It is possible for North American Muslims, or any believing group, to maintain their view of life within a society that operates, or seems to operate, on a secular basis. (2) As long as a belief system does not remain merely as a set of assumptions but is objectified, as the Islamic belief system should be, the perception of such a belief system should be studied in context and not as a set of abstract codes. (3) Shifting between paradigms, in this case from the Islamic view of life to its Western counterpart is also possible. Basically, the gap between the two paradigms is viewed here as being resolvable by the way the issues are approached. That is, instead of judging the values or the moral codes, symbols, or rituals that are being transmitted or discussed within the two paradigms, the investigator will address the transmission process of a generally accepted ideology by North American Muslims to their offspring within a context that these Muslims generally view as conflicting (in reality or in appearance) with their ideological or cultural heritage. (4) This investigator's concern with the process does not mean that she underestimates the variations in the content and principles between the above two paradigms. Yet the primary concern of this study is with the objectification of both the content and the principles in a certain context, and not with a set of verbalized values and/or moral principles. Therefore, the study not only examines Muslims' expression of the principles but also investigates how these expressions are applied in practice, in different contexts, by different Muslim individuals or groups.

A.   Relevant Assumptions about Islamic Thought
    The two basic assumptions that underlie Islamic thought and its view of human knowledge and morality are, first, that human knowledge consists of the product of human reasoning plus revealed knowledge, and second, that human learning, conception, and valuing should be guided by Allah as stated in Al Qur'an and according to Allah's natural laws. These two assumptions represent the basic difference between the religious view--in the wide sense of the word--and the secular view with regard to the relation between faith or the belief system and knowledge.
    The related Qu'anic verses are the criteria for understanding the variations and contrasts in perceptions. For example, if the concept of Tawhid--as the first postulate in the Islamic view--is perceived in the verse 39:38 as a predestined will and law, that perception will affect how one interprets Islamic law.

B.   Relevant Assumptions about the Western View
    Four assumptions about the Western view are relevant: (1) Western ideology assumes secularism--the separation of church (representing spiritual life) and state (representing worldly, mundane life)--which

is alien to Islam. Furthermore, under this assumption and in multicultural societies, the decision makers are not supposed to recognize one belief system over another, even though their personal views and epistemology might be based on a particular belief commitment. Therefore, separation of church and state will be emphasized here on the institutional level and not on the individual level. (2) God, Lord, or Creator may be considered to be a religious entity that can be separated from other aspects of life, and common epistemological assumptions underline this worldview. (3) The human being is considered the master of nature or him/herself; s/he is considered to have full authority on earth, to practice his or her functions in isolation from God. Historical accounts not only provide evidence for separation of the spheres of knowledge but also contradict the basic Islamic assumption that the purpose of education is to understand natural laws so the individual can serve as Allah's vicegerent on earth. (4) Rules become the rules of man (whether of the individual or the society), and authority becomes that of man over others, at least as practiced in institutions and in legislation. Rules are drawn by policy makers on the basis of assumptions made by the political founders of secular institutions or by a philosophical view that ignores metaphysics and belief systems.

A distinction must be made here between the Western views of public policy (secular and compartmentalized) and of personal behavior. In the latter, a connection between spiritual and mundane life is often advocated, usually respected, and sometimes achieved. Although pluralistic societies tend to subordinate particular ideologies in favor of egalitarianism, it is unrealistic to ignore the fact that Islam benefits to a certain degree from the secularism in North America that it finds so alien.

III. SUMMARY OF METHOD

Members of forty Muslim families (170 subjects) of several national and ethnic origins were interviewed in five major cities in the United States and Canada. This population was composed of immigrant Muslims and their children who were members of Islamic centers in Buffalo, Montreal, New York, Toronto, and Washington, D.C. The interviewees were mainly self-selected because they volunteered through the centers or personal contacts. Attempts to reach non-participant/nonmember Muslims (i.e., community members who chose not to participate in the study or Muslims who do not frequent these centers) were not successful. The difficulties in getting even the members to participate in the study attest to this problem.

In spite of the difficulties, thirty-one sets of matched data (fathers, mothers, and youth, 118 individuals in total) were secured. The cooperation of community leaders, center presidents, and mosque Imams made this study possible. We will see in the data analysis that

the selection process may have skewed the mean scores of the entire population, particularly of the parents, toward the high end of the scale. The scale ranged from 2 to 12, and the mean scores were between 8 and 10. The only criterion for participation was that the families have children between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two who were reared mainly in North America.

The choice of subjects was made to facilitate an intergenerational comparison in the perception of the Islamic ideology and to determine whether Muslim parents were able to transfer the basic belief system in its totality as a way of life. The choice was also intended to provide an insight into the different practices of these Muslim families as influenced by the home country of the parents and the North American societies.

These families were interviewed in small groups of fathers, mothers, and youth, and they completed two sets of questionnaires individually to elucidate the points we raised above. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to determine the variations in parents' and youths' perceptions.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

Confidentiality dictates naming each community of families that were interviewed together with a Latin numeral without specifying the place. Arabic numerals were assigned to those cities to conceal the communities' identities as well.

Community I

Contact with this community, as well as with Community II and three other families that were interviewed separately, was through the local office of the well-established (but not center-oriented) Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA). This organization was started by Indo-Pakistanis, but its membership includes Muslims with other national origins. The basic feature of this organization is its effort to disseminate information, distribute literature, and help in establishing study groups and network circles. This organization relies on its membership and donations from individuals to finance its activities, which extend indiscriminately to all interested centers, mosques, or study circles.

Only three families from Community I participated in this study. The fathers were professional, and the mothers were highly educated. These families live in a prestigious suburb of metropolitan City 1 that has an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Muslims living in different sections of the city. Regular Sunday meetings are held in the leader's home. The wife of the leader (who coordinated the interviews) also conducts after-school Qur'anic and Islamic studies once or twice a week for the children of these and other Muslim families in the neighborhood.

This community belongs to and participates in the activities of

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one center whose membership, as I gathered from the interviews, consists of roughly two hundred upper-middle-class families, most of who are of the same ethnic background. Though it became apparent from the interviews that there is some friction between Community I and some of the families who belong to the center on certain issues (particularly those pertaining to children's upbringing), the center seems to be well established, has a regular newsletter, and has ambitious plans such as developing community financial institutions, a cemetery and so on.

The common features of the families of this community are that they value school and intellectual achievements, they seem to blend with the non-Muslim neighborhood, and they adhere to strictly and reinforce among their children overt Muslim behavior such as dress and greetings.

Community II

Four families participated from this community. The fathers are businessmen and entrepreneurs, and the mothers are moderately educated. These families live in a middle-class suburb of metropolitan City 1. They hold regular Saturday and Sunday meetings in the leader's home. The leader provides one room in the basement of his home for a children's class, another room for men's discussion, and the living room for women's meetings. This community is more heterogeneous with respect to country of origin and ethnicity than the other communities in this study. About ten families who live in the same neighborhood attend these meetings and classes, but only four had children aged fourteen or above and were able to participate in the study.

This community seems more closely knit than Community I, perhaps because the families live within a one- to two-mile radius of each other and the children attend the same school. This closeness can be attributed, also, to the leader and his wife. They seemed devoted to the community well-being and have built a second entrance to their basement to accommodate its activities. At the time of the interview, the husband and wife were coordinating three events that took place in their home despite having two toddlers and a new born infant. The younger children's class was taking place in one room, some of the families who belonged to this community were meeting with the investigator in the living room, and unexpected out-of-town guests were visiting with members of different families in a third room. Most of these people were given lunch as the meeting times allowed.

The common feature of this community is the members' intimate and open relationship with each other, as evidenced by the way each attempted to help others when possible and in their frank but constructive criticism of each others' opinions or actions. Very little or no concern was expressed about integrating with the non-Muslim neighborhood. Most of the discussions centered on the

availability of community reinforcement (particularly with regard to children's activities) and community facilities. The overt behavior, such as dress and greetings, was candid and not heavily emphasized, especially among the youth. There was no mention of affiliation with a center, although the families participate in the major activities of two different centers in the city depending on the event and their distance from the particular center.

Three other families in the City 1 were interviewed separately because of a time conflict. They belong to the same ethnic background and to a center in the low-middle-income section of the city. Their educational and professional levels are not homogeneous.

Community III

Contact with this community and with Community IV was through a teacher in the local all-day Islamic school located in one of the major and most popular mosques in metropolitan City 2. The Muslim population of this city is estimated at 80,000, with Muslims clustered in five of the major areas. Although the two communities generally participate in this mosque's activities, the mosque's great distance from the residents of Community IV prevented its members from participating on a regular basis. Therefore, members of Community IV were holding neighborhood meetings and attempting to establish a neighborhood mosque.

Community III consisted of families whose children attend a weekly youth dialogue group. Six families met with the investigator after the noon prayer on Saturday when all family members joined the youth in the mosque after their dialogue session. The levels of education and socioeconomic status varied within this community, as did their countries of origin.

The common feature of this community is its vested interest in the youths' Islamic cohesiveness. The sense of fraternity and smooth, open communication among the youth was obvious. The mothers appear to be the key factor in these activities. They seemed to know each other better than did the fathers and spoke candidly among themselves. A common denominator was evident, however, in the mutual respect between the families of this community and the leaders (the director of the school and the mosque, the facilitator of the dialogue group, and the school's full-time teacher--my contact person). The latter was an American-born female in her early twenties, daughter of an immigrant Muslim father and a convert European mother; the other two leaders were immigrants.

Community IV

This community consisted of six families, the majority of whom were from the same country of origin and lived in the same neighborhood. The meeting took place in one of the families' homes in

a modern single-unit housing project of City 2. The hostess was very articulate and coordinated the event very well, even serving dessert with the afternoon tea. The host family did not appear to be leaders of the community. It appeared that mutual understanding and cooperation was the key features of the community. The families are from diverse educational and socioeconomic levels, mainly middle-class and teachers.

A common feature that distinguished this community from the others was the high motivation and devotion of the youth. It became apparent during the interviews that most of these families had become involved in Islamic education and work because of pressure from their offspring. These children attended the youth dialogue group in the city and through contact with others developed a strong interest in understanding their Islamicity. Although some friction was evident between parents and youth--in the exchange of comments and responses in the discussions those were overheard because the interview took place in an open space--parents seem to have developed a commitment to change themselves in accordance with what they were learning from their offspring and other members of the community.

Community V

Four of the five families who participated from this community lived in an upper-middle-class suburb of City 3, which contains roughly 10,000 Muslims. The predominant profession of both fathers and mothers in these families was medicine-related. The countries of origin varied, yet this caused no problem in the members' relationship. More apparent were the community's differences with another community in the same city that belongs to another organization and resides in low-middle-income housing. Despite many efforts (by the investigator and by the contact person) to secure interviews with members of the latter community, there was no response. The contact person was the Imam of Community V, who was a young immigrant trained in Islamic law.

The common feature among the residents of Community V is their professional affiliation and related interests. An obvious interest in eliminating the separation between the two spheres of life, the Islamic and the Western, was evidenced in their discussion of certain issues and in their overt behavior. Although some of the youth were more candid and open in their discussion than others, the majority were very reserved and some barely participated. The candid youth were very confident in answering some questions, while the others were very hesitant.

Community VI

Three of the six families who participated from this community did not have children aged fourteen and above. Although these families were highly committed to Islamic work and actually work for a major

Islamic organization, and although they have high levels of Islamic and Western education, their meeting was the least organized of any. The members originated in different countries but share the same ethnic/linguistic background. They all live in one area around the organization headquarters in a suburb of metropolitan City 4 with an estimated 40,000 Muslims. The interview was held in one of the organization's houses. The contact person, a mother, took a neutral role in coordinating the event. The most articulate person was the director of the organization. He sat in on all the interviews even though he did not fit the criteria for the study, not having a child of fourteen years or older raised in North America.

The common features among the members of this community were their sincerity and strong attempts to acculturate their offspring into Islam. Their efforts varied from holding a local study group to sponsoring regional and national conferences for adults and youth. Some of these families, however, seemed to have succeeded better than others in integrating the two cultures, as was reflected in their youths' confidence in discussing issues such as social mixing. Other families seemed to be living their idealistic view, rejecting everything Western.

Two other families were interviewed separately in City 4, neither of which belonged to an Islamic organization (they were contacted through a mutual friend). Both families consist of an immigrant father and an American-born mother. One of the mothers was a recent convert to Islam, but her knowledge of Islam was a mixture of religious duties and the ethnic sentiments of her husband.

Community VII

The six families interviewed in this community lived in one of the neighborhoods of metropolitan City 5 with roughly 100,000 Muslims. They were in the same field, international affairs, and had the same ethnic/linguistic background although they were from two different countries of origin. The host and hostess of the meeting, who were also the contact persons, served as leaders to a certain extent, but were deferred to mostly by virtue of their seniority in North America.

The common denominator in this community was the host family, whose generosity in caring for the other families was what held them together. The youth in these families vary in their interests, place of education, and understanding of Islam. Yet they all seem to have developed a strong attachment to their "Muslim" and/or ethnic identity. The international milieu that these youth have grown up in apparently left them with an attitude of open-minded and reciprocity.

V. CONCEPTUAL CONTRAST MODEL

The curriculum specialist developing programs in communities with significant Muslim populations must keep in mind the governing ideology

of that particular community and the level of ambiguity or lack of knowledge among the residents. The governing ideology includes the belief system, the values and the codes drawn from it, and the circumstances that govern its practice.

A.   The Value of Freedom

One of the first North American values that strikes immigrant Muslims, like all other immigrants, is freedom. Drawing a contrast between the Islamic and Western conceptions of freedom is a focal point for understanding the differences in the central concepts of the Islamic and Western views, in the governing ideology, and in the various meanings given to Islamic practice.

The philosophical definition of freedom, such as that stated in the College Edition of the Random House Dictionary (1968:527) is "the power to make one's own choices or decisions without constraint from within or without; autonomy; self-determination."

Two other definitions are used here to explain the phrase "constraint from within or without." The first, "absence or release from ties, obligations," seems to explain the constraints from without. The second, "the right of frequenting, enjoying, or using at will," seems to explain the constraints from within.

The phrase "constraint from within or without," however, is understood differently in the Islamic view: constraints from without are understood to be those other than the ones ordered by Allah. The Arabic word Muharrar in (AlQur'an3:35) means that dedicating Mary to the service of Allah obliges her to obey Allah and serve the house of worship.

The constraint from within is understood to be one's consciousness and responsibility toward one's role as Allah's vicegerent (khalifah) (AlQur'an51:56) and (AlQur'an2:30-31 and 35). Therefore, the basic freedom in Islam is to free oneself from passion and desires. This is called a "major jihad" relative to "minor jihad" (holy war), according to the Prophet Muhammad. Once an individual achieves this freedom, s/he becomes able to free his/herself from the fear of mortal human beings. The immigrant Muslim who understands Allah's purpose from the narrow perspective (i.e., to perform acts of worship only) may understand the freedom practiced in the West as freedom from the constraint of social and family customs, not as freedom from Allah's purpose of human's vicegerency. Accepting this understanding takes the Muslim away from the concept of .Tawhid, and his new conception of "freedom" becomes contradictory to the Islamic meanings of freedom.

B.   Muslims in North America

As North American Muslims attempt to integrate their own beliefs with the secular ideologies of North America, they may, at times, move away from the main goal as they attempt to transmit their beliefs to

their children. This movement occurs because Muslims themselves are not clear as to what exactly they want to transmit to their children. Two reasons were found for this lack of clarity. The first is the apparent incommensurability between the Islamic ideology based on submission to Allah as the supreme guide and authority, on the one hand, and the secular system that interprets religion and faith as a form of worship isolated from other aspects of life, on the other. The second, and more important, reason is the ambiguity of the relationship between the central concept of Islam (Tawhid) and the central concept of Western ideology (secularism) in the minds and behavior of these Muslims.

   Waugh demonstrates that today's Muslims face difficulties in their attempt to mediate the classical tradition to contemporary conditions through complex institutional forms those are likely to provoke new interpretations in American culture. For the earliest Muslim immigrants to the new land, freedom meant disassociation from both religious and political elites. The early immigrants, according to Waugh, also realized that they could function and manage their lives away from bondage to the village overlords, family heads, and tribal sheikhs who represented the government structure and who incorporated the ordinary Muslim into the Islamic society. Therefore, Waugh says, these bonds remain in the mind of the Muslim immigrant as symbols or as part of Islam.

  Islam judges individuals by their reasoning and behavior, and this freedom gave Muslims the chance to rethink their Islam and the Islamization of their children. As Waugh puts it: "The experience was heady and freedom came to play a cardinal role in the kinds of institutions he [the Muslim individual] organized and fostered."

   Thus it would be an error, Waugh adds,
   to consider immigrant Islam as merely the transferal of a
   creed to a North American environment. We must also consider
   how the Islamic immigrant perceives his past and how he
   understands it to inform his new situation, then, how he must
   deal with the new situation with yet more understanding drawn
   from his past experience. It would be too much to expect
   that these complex movements could occur without friction or
   conflict. (Ibid.)

   North American Muslims' freedom from the authority of the Imam and the extended family is merely a freedom from certain cultural and social bondages and may be accompanied by new cultural bondages within the host society. For the Muslim who emigrated with the intention of fulfilling the central concept of Islam, Tawhid, freedom from the bondage of the extended family or the Imam is instrumental to that intention. If that intention was absent (and continues to be absent), however, and the individual Muslim intended merely to fulfill Waugh's definition of freedom, then such an individual cannot fulfill the

central concept, Tawhid. Regardless of whether or not s/he claims to adhere to Islam, such an individual cannot achieve the chosen identity in practice because the central concept is missing.

The individual Muslim's level of understanding of the meaning of "freedom" as it applies in the North American culture will affect and be affected by the practice of freedom as a component of his or her own ideology. This practice, in turn, will shape a pattern of adjustment that will stamp the individual's conceptual ecology and, hence, his or her ability to integrate his or her own ideology in the host society.

The meaning of individual freedom in the North American context may be extrapolated further by looking to the underlying assumptions of North American individualism and egalitarianism. Once the Muslim, whose ideas are consciously rooted in the concept of Tawhid, realizes the true meaning of freedom and individualism in Western culture, h/she has no choice but to reject the Western meanings and some of their manifestations. Otherwise, commitment to Tawhid becomes uncertain.

Summary: The dilemma described above is not much different from the continuous questioning any conscious Muslim immigrant will undergo when trying to decide whether integrating certain values or practices of the host culture will affect his or her commitment to Islam and its central concept, Tawhid. The answer to such questions is either a conflict, a commitment to Islam or to the secular view, a prioritizing of Islam or of the secular view, or a compartmentalization (see Figure 1). Therefore, the conceptual contrast is not in respect to the value of "freedom" but to the meanings attached to it and the underlying ideology and beliefs behind each meaning.

C. The Family and Community Conceptual Contrast

The above analysis of the individual's ideological contrast can also be applied to the family and the community. It will suffice here to give two examples. Regarding the family, the question is whether freedom from the social and cultural customs of the home country means dissolution of the principle of "mutual rights and expectations" as stated in al Qur'an (4:1). For the community the question becomes one of whether freedom from the bondage of the Imam or the tribal chief means the dissolution of the principle of "mutual consultation and consensus," as stated in verse 42:38. Here, too, the Muslim whose ideals are rooted in the concept of Tawhid cannot accept the ideas of individual freedom, of family private affairs, and of the rule of the majority at their face value (i.e., as being understood and practiced in the host society); otherwise, his or her commitment to Tawhid becomes uncertain.

VI. RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

A. Parents' Perception of "Practicing Islam"

It was hypothesized that (1) immigrants who apply Islamic

teachings as social codes are more likely to compartmentalize Islamic familial life from Western social life, and (2) immigrants who did not apply Islamic teachings before arrival are more likely to abandon their Muslim characteristics (becoming more committed to Western views) or to develop a better understanding of Islamic principles (becoming more committed to Islamic views or prioritizing Islam).

The patterns of application before arrival were measured by (1) the respondents' evaluation of their families' position on Islamic knowledge and conduct and on worship, and (2) the respondents' opinions on Islamic knowledge and conduct, worship, and human relationships. Family position was rated on a scale of three: "too low" (R=1), "about right" (R=2), and "too high" (R=3). The respondents' opinions were rated on a scale of four: "strongly disagree" (R=1), "slightly disagree" (R=2), "moderately agree" (R=3), and "strongly agree" (R=4).

The patterns of application after arrival were measured by (1) the respondents' feelings toward practicing Islam in North America and (2) the respondents' expectation of Muslim behavior in North America (see Table 1). It seems that the closer the parents' opinion was to the Islamic central concept (Tawhid), the stronger their emphasis on guiding their children toward Islamic patterns of application, and the farther parents were from the central concept, the stronger their attachment to the Muslims' patterns of application. It is interesting, however, that the majority of the parents disagreed with methods of punishment that isolate the child or withdraw his/her privileges. These methods, being neither exclusively Islamic nor exclusively Western, suggest that, despite their closeness to the Muslim view, parents are more influenced by the relaxed approach or lack of reinforcement of certain behavioral rules. This approach is representative of Western-oriented psychology.

Forty-two percent (27/60) of parents who responded to the question concerning their feelings toward practicing Islam in North America stated that "Islam can be practiced with some hardship" in North America, and they scored highest on both conception (10.1) and practice (9.0) (see Table 2). Another 23 percent (14/60) responded that they were able to do so "--but" (open-ended answer), and they scored second highest (9.9) on conception, but second lowest (8.7) on practice. Two of the open-ended answers deserve some elaboration.

The first comment, "It is hard to pray five times on the job, when you need to wash more often," was by a father from City 1 of Pakistani origin who was interviewed separately and who works in a physically dirty job on an odd-hours shift. This comment reflects a realistic situation, in which a Muslim feels trapped. No employer will allow his workers to shower five times during a work shift just so they can perform their prayers. During the interview with this respondent it became clear that he was very concerned about whether his children would remain Muslims. He expressed a deep faith in and reliance on the

community with its gatherings to keep his children close to other Muslims because he knew that he could not do much himself. Moreover, his view of the West was so apathetic that he did not have any hope that he would get any support from the environment.

The second comment by a father of Syrian origin from Community VII in City 5 was as follows:

Concerning worship, there is no difficulty, concerning social interaction, there is no difficulty. Concerning calling others to Islam, there is no difficulty. Yet, concerning the practice of Islamic ideology as a way of life (Iqamat al-D-in) I see that the question is irrelevant because the authority and law is in the hands of non-Muslims.

The basic concern of the Syrian father and the conception that underlies this concern do not differ much from the concerns and conception of the Pakistani father. Regardless of their different ethnic backgrounds and of the variation in their level of education, profession, and reasoning, both respondents were concerned that the Islamic ideology cannot be practiced, in full, in the Western context.

This concern shows the difference between practicing a religion and practicing a belief system in a pluralistic secular society. The above responses support the argument that an individual in a pluralistic secular society may have the freedom to practice the religious (worship) aspects, but not be able to practice freely and fully the belief system of which such faithful or religious acts are only a part.

These two parents' conceptions of the central meaning of al-D-in (Islamic ideology and way of life) are very close, even though their levels of confidence and ability to express and/or transmit the meanings to their offspring vary significantly. This was evidenced in the responses of the children of these two parents and in the parents' different levels of hope and confidence in the future of their children's practice of Islam.

One cannot underestimate the variations in the living conditions and their effect on religious concepts of the belief systems. Not only does the Pakistani father not have control over his environment-- contrary to the Syrian father--but he cannot feel comfortable in performing the most sublime act of worship before God in his dirty overalls, nor can he feels that his prayers will be accepted. Any person who faces such circumstances will have to compromise either his/her job or religious concepts (worship). Such a complex state of cognitive dissonance may oblige one to conclude that even religious acts may not be possible in a secular society. The conflict will remain alive, and it may force some modification in the faith, the conviction, or the level and nature of the belief.

Fifty-two percent (31/60) of parents agreed that "Muslims should retain Islamic values even if they are different from Western values

and culture." These parents achieved the highest (10.0) (9.0) scores on conception and practice. The second highest number (27 percent or 16/60) of parents answered, "It is all right for Muslims to become Americans/Canadians, but they should hold on to the important things from their Islamic life." These parents scored the lowest (9.7) on conception and in the middle (8.6) on practice. Eight percent (5/60) chose "none, but" and their comments ranged from "should be Muslims" to making no comment even when they circled the open-ended choice.

The level of parents' perception of Islam has more influence on the parents' adjustment process than on their patterns of application. As stated earlier, the closer the parents' perception of Islam is to the central concept level the more likely they will be to abandon Muslim or Western views, and the more emphasis they will place on guiding their children to Islam from that level of perception only. The fact that they themselves are not trained in appropriating the central concept (Tawhid) in relation to other concepts (particularly human interrelation concepts) may affect their ability to adjust and transmit Islam in the Western context.

B.   Youths' Perception of "Practicing Islam"

It was hypothesized that Muslim youth, like youth of other immigrant parents, identify primarily with American values and secondarily with the Islamic value system their parents communicate. The indicators for identifying with the Islamic value system are those related to conception and practice of Islamic principles. The patterns of practicing these principles were measured by (1) the respondents' feelings about practicing Islam in North America, and (2) the respondents' expectation of Muslim behavior in North America (see Table 3). It seems that the youths perceive the Western value system to be more prevalent than the Islamic belief system. This perception is reflected in their patterns of practice, which, in turn, influence their perception of Islam.

Fifty percent (28/56) of youth who responded to the question concerning their feelings toward practicing Islam in North America stated that "Is-am can be possible with some hardship" and scored highest on conception (9.6) and second to lowest (8.4) on practice (see Table 2). Another 20 percent (11/56) responded that they were able to do so, "but" (open-ended answer), scored second on both conception (9.5) and practice (8.7).

The open-ended answers ranged from "It is simple" by a sixteen-year-old male of Pakistani descent to "can be possible with determination" by a twenty-one-year-old male of South African descent. The above responses support the argument that youth identify primarily with North American values, since, contrary to some parents, they did not see the difference between practicing a religion and practicing a belief system in a pluralistic secular society. The above two

responses were from youths from Community III, which takes pride in its youth dialogue group's commitment to and striving for Islamic life.

Fifty percent (28/56) also agreed that "Muslims should retain Islamic values even if they are different from Western values and culture." These youth maintained high (9.6 and 8.6) scores on conception and practice (see Table 2). The second highest number (27 percent, 15/56) of the youth answered, "It is all right for Muslims to become Americans/Canadians, but they should hold on to the important things from their Islamic life." These youth scored second to lowest (9.3) on conception and high (8.6) on practice.

The results allow us to conclude that the level of youths' perception of "Islamic practice" has more influence on their perceived action than does with their conception of Islam in the North American context.

C. Implications

The basic contribution of this study lies in the attempt to bridge the gap between practical concerns of the Muslim community of North America, on one hand, and the views of "Islamic intellectuals," of curriculum theory and practice, of basic and practical research, and of conceptual views on learning and understanding, on the other.

The significance of this study lies in its investigation of the role of faith and belief systems in the process of education. More specifically, the impact of this study is not limited to believing Muslims, nor to the Muslims of North America. It is basically a study of perception and transmission of a faith and its belief system in a pluralistic, secular context, and it can be applied to any other faith, immigrant group, or pluralistic society.

Finally, because it was instigated in response to a practical need, this study can contribute to understanding the relationship between faith and knowledge. It is an attempt to recognize the differences in human conceptualization of faith by trying to understand the differences and similarities in the perception, as well as the practice, of the particular faith. Its emphasis, therefore, is not on the differences but on the interaction between perception and practice based on these differences. It attempts as well to show faith as a determinant in the process of conceptual change, understanding, curriculum planning, and educating.

1. Curricular Objectives

The discussion of the critical role played by Muslims' perception Of Islam and their knowledge of the Western context raises certain questions about their educational objectives in North America.

The first question that must be raised about curriculum objectives as a result of the findings and the discussion in this study is the following: Is it realistic to expect Islamic instruction to integrate

North American Muslims rather than merely help them relate between the Islamic and Western views? The second question for this study is, How can we expect the different groups of Muslims to change--or at least examine--their fundamental assumptions so that they can consider and deal with new ideas? The problem is not limited to the fact that neither the parent nor the youth is aware of his own fundamental assumptions. Many complications are added by the linguistic, ethnic, geographic, age, and other variables that need to be dealt with before group instruction can become feasible.

If an affirmative answer is given to the first question, the contents of the previous sections of this study suggest that we aim at developing among North American Muslims the following preliminary objectives:

a. An awareness of their basic assumptions and of those implicit in Islamic and Western views.

b. An awareness of the epistemological and historical foundations of Islamic and Western views.

c. Some sense of satisfaction that the new conception may resolve the remaining conflict.

d. A requisite for consistency between their beliefs about the world and their practices in everyday matters and within the new context.

The objectives of the curriculum for which the ground was described above are to help North American Muslims to:

a. Ground their beliefs in knowledge by enabling them to achieve the following:

1. to clarify the Islamic belief system;

2. to understand the principles of such beliefs as the bases of practice;

3. to separate elements of the belief system evidenced in Qur'anic teachings from other elements that come from ethnic or sentimental sources.

b. Understand the organization of the two belief systems (the Islamic and the Western) and arrive at a synthesis for their own beliefs. This synthesis may, in turn, help parents communicate the Islamic belief system to their offspring in the Western context avoiding potential conflict between the different elements of the two systems.

c. Abate separation or compartmentalization of Islamic and Western knowledge, but without losing the basic principles of the Islamic system or eradicating group security, such as ethnic or linguistic identification.

2. Options for the Muslim Community

Fulfilling the above objectives requires attention to the Muslim beliefs and concepts about each of the two belief systems.

It was mentioned earlier that the Western secular system is not as
explicit as the Islamic one to North American Muslims. Therefore,
educational intervention starts at one of the following three
points (see Figure 2):

a. Make the Western secular system explicit and identify its
    central concept(s) first. Then describe the different levels
    of Western and Islamic systems separately or concurrently.
    Teach the details of the Islamic central concept and its
    principles (subject matter). Finally, attempt to reconcile
    the two systems by developing practical examples.

b. Identify the structure of a belief system in general, then
    describe its implications for both Islamic and Western
    systems. Teach the subject matter (Islamic central concept
    and principles). Finally, reconcile the two systems.

c. Teach the subject matter first (Islamic concepts), then place
    them in their proper levels. Compare them with similar
    concepts from the Western system and attempt to relate them
    at the same level or at different levels to develop practical
    examples and to examine their consequences for reconciliation
    or for conflict, respectively.

VII. CONCLUSION

Communicating Islam among North American families can be viewed as
a case study for understanding and exploring the role of metaphysical
beliefs and concepts in the learning process. The problem of North
American Muslim youths' connection to Islam will not be resolved by
merely teaching the principles (schooling), or by teaching certain
practices and applications (informal training). Future educators of
Muslims need to realize these facts and move away from them. A new
pedagogical approach for education in North American Muslim communities
must relate the epistemological, metaphysical, and conceptual elements
of both the Islamic and Western systems.

The intention of such an approach is to preserve the Islamic
identity in an integrative manner within the pluralistic Western
society. Whether this intention can be facilitated by schools similar
to parochial schools or the old Islamic Madrasah system is a subject
for future discussion and study. This intention itself suggests
theoretical and pedagogical implications that must be addressed if
North American societies are to achieve educational systems that allow
each group to preserve its identity and at the same time maintain its
equilibrium within itself and with the other groups in the society.