Chapter 5

Muslim Women's Education: Between East and West*

for the volume

WOMEN, FAMILIES and CHILDREN in ISLAMIC and JUDAIC TRADITIONS

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An American Muslim girl wrote:

> "Growing up in the United States of America while to maintain a foreign language and culture is not an easy accomplishment. My parents had plans for my brothers and me; we would be Americans. They feared that we would face discrimination. Thus, my childhood was similar to that of most other American children, aside from eating Arabic food at home and maintaining many memories of Egypt. As a Muslim family, we prayed, observed our holidays, and abstained from prohibited items, yet our religion was a private matter. My mother often warned me not to talk too much about where I was born or my religious beliefs. I was so busy trying to convince the whole world that I was not Arab and Muslim that I almost convinced myself. Now, in my early twenties, I long for the identity that was denied me."[1]

Such reports, and actual incidents of suppressing Islamic identity, particularly that of women, bring to life many historical scenarios of the 19th and early 20th centuries that effected the lives and the education of Muslim women, with only one difference: They are happening now in the midst of the Western societies as well. Investigating the dynamics of these incidents and scenarios parallel to some of my empirical findings concerning North American Muslim women's perception of the Islamic belief system may shed lights on the reasons behind the limitations on the education of contemporary Muslim women.

In this chapter, I argue that it is not a coincident that the issue of Muslim woman's dress is surfacing again, beginning with the 1980s, at the same time when Western societies are experiencing the New Right movements in education

and the Muslim communities' predominantly male policy-makers are planning for reviving "Islamic" education. Historically, the issue of Muslim women's illiteracy and parents' resistance to their girls being educated by missionaries also coincided with the call to "removing the veil," following Huda Shaᶜarawi in 1922 when most of the Muslim world was colonized by Europe. It is not a coincident that Christian missions then "were particularly interested in opening schools for girls, often doing so before opening schools for boys."[2] The concern here is not the introduction of modern education in its face value. Rather, I am concerned with the lasting effect of "the influence of early Christian missionaries on Arab education" and in setting "the role for Arab women," the majority of whom are Muslims. Thought this model "could be emulated with dignity," as the authors of Arab Women and Education suggest, it is this external model for the Arab Muslim women that I am critiquing. Such external models produced a selected few elite who think of Muslim woman's emancipation only from outside the Islamic framework, and who extend their personal experience as the authority voice speaking on behalf of all Muslim women.

My focusing on the Muslim woman as an individual first and as a member of a group next in the parallel contexts of the contemporary Western and the colonial Muslim world stems from my assumption that education is a political tool. This tool, in my estimates, has been the key to suppressing the autonomous intellectual and spiritual growth of the Muslim female, the general deteriorating status of Muslim women as partners in the Islamic tradition, and consequently the Islamic education of Muslims all over the world. Both, access to education and the nature of its curriculum have been the leverage by which elites and politicians have kept control over certain segment of the world population, women as an easy target.

I will discuss the following topics. First, the background of this study as part of my overall research on the education of Muslims in North America (the United States and Canada) and of Muslim women in general. I will also describe the population from which the case-in-point was drawn. Second, I present the philosophical and historical conceptions of education for women. Third, I report some of the empirical findings, concluding with a suggestion for an action plan.

The Study Background and the Case-in-Point

The romantic views of the popular culture literature in America and the West in general are not the only sources that portray women in Islam as the "dependent, "ignorant". Kabbani states the "Victorian imagination [of orientalists] could not conceive of female eroticism divorced from female servitude and dependency."[3] And with all the conflicts of the power of the colonial and the powerlessness of the colonized, Muslim women's emancipation was conditioned by their liberation from their culture. Contrary to my trust in the impartiality of Western scholarship and activism, I am finding that such groups are as inequitable when the issue of Muslim woman's education is discussed, particularly from within the framework of Islam.[4] Similarly inequitable are Muslim scholars views that propagate limited woman's education--as the nurturer mother and wife-- projecting her as incapable of, or unfit for public encounters, and asserting that her role is unessential for transmitting scholarly Islamic knowledge.[5]

My empirical findings suggest that the absence of concerns for Muslim women's Islamic education is not only evident, but particularly polarized between the contemporary Western negative image, and the Muslim idealized unequalled position and limited religious education.[6] None of the Western scholarly and activist groups raises the issue of Muslim women inclusion in the religious, juristic, and scholarly ranks in Muslim communities, despite their advocacy of Judo-Christian women's participation in their respective religious, theological, and scholarly ranks.[7]

Meanwhile, Muslim women in the USA and Canada, as generally is the case in other Western societies, are not as free to practice certain aspects of Islam as is the case among other religious groups, such as Conservative Jewish women, the Mennonites, and so on. The often used rationale is that women are being oppressed by Islam and are coursed by their male guardians, and that there is no place in secular societies for asserting religious identity and symbolism of Muslim woman's modesty.[8]

While Muslim women are trying to build their own agenda for emancipation, they are being torn between secular humanists who do not allow them to practice their own reading of the religion, and the Muslim males and some females who think that a women's Islamicity is expressed through the wearing of a headcover and seclusion and that her Islamic responsibilities are expressed through her male household. Ruth Roded rightly questions "the extent to which alleged seclusion of women actually prevented them from engaging in a variety of endeavors that were important by Islamic and external standards." [9] What is being discussed here, however, is the contemporary Muslims' trend of measuring the Islamicity of a woman by her practice of the conservative form of dress, known as "hijab."[10]

For many Muslims, including those active in North America, citing the dictums--that the Qur'an and the Hadith are rich in teachings that speak of Almighty God's design for harmonious social order and humanity's responsibility for understanding God's design and working from within it-- is enough to prove that Islam has always embraced a well integrated educational imperative and comprehensive knowledge of the Islamic teachings for all Muslims.[11] Few, however, are critical when issues of women's Islamic education and the women's role as preservers of culture and as the primary educators within the faith of Islam are discussed. Most conservative spokesmen, while they may claim that women have more power in Islam than most Westerners realize, are unwilling that women should engage in other than domestic duties. And when the question of allowing more women to become Islamic scholars and jurists is raised, the issue becomes that of woman's primary role as nurturing mother and wife instead of an educating scholar and a partner in the interpretation of the tradition.[12]

Knowledge, particularly religious knowledge, means authority and religious authority is power. I will analyze the polarized position of Muslim women in the context of the educational history of Muslim women, beginning with the intensified interaction between the Western and Muslim societies. Ruth Roded (1994:11) discusses Western impact on reducing the number of women in biographical collections in Islamic history. I view this phenomenon as a contributing factor to the dichotomous views on Muslim women's education and emancipation. Since the concept of education in Islamic societies does not fit the utilitarian Western theories of education (Barazangi, 1995a), Muslims' contributions to religious scholarship was considered marginal by Western

educators. In addition, Western societies, being influenced by the concept of limiting religious elitism to the male clergy, have minimized the importance of Muslim female religious scholarship. Furthermore, separation of "religious" and "secular" education among North American Muslim women, and among Muslims in general, seems to result from the dichotomy in the Western and Islamic world views on education, on Islamic education, and on women's role. This dichotomy resulted in a tension between Muslims and Westerners in which Muslim women's education suffered the brunt. Synthesizing this dichotomy and the resulting historical and contemporary discrepant practices suggest that not only there was "a constant tension in Islamic society between an egalitarian ideal and the realities of social, political and economic inequalities," as Roded suggests, but also exists a discrepancy in Western ideals for itself and for others.[13]

As the case-in-point, two cases of a focus-group interviews are reported here from a sample of 25 Muslim immigrant mothers and their 25 youth daughters aged fourteen to twenty-two. These women and female youths represent a sub-sample of a larger group of Muslims who participated in the author's study of North American Muslim adults' transmission of the Islamic belief system to their offspring.[14] The youth are first-generation children of immigrants who came to North America during the latest phase of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s. The aim of this effort is to address two questions:

1. How have Muslim women arrived at a particular view of Islam that causes them to practice it in a particular way? The underlying assumption for this question is that, in addition to the historical development of the Islamic conceptual ecology and its Western secular counterpart, the Muslims of North America also have a distinct history and, presently, a living experience to be investigated. A historical analysis or, as Lortie calls it, the method of "structural chronology," was undertaken to explore the dynamics of the development of the present ideas and the relative stability or change in the understanding of the Islamic tenets over time, as they might have affected the personal concept of these tenets.[15]

2. How have the immigrant Muslim women views affected their female offspring conceptualization of Islam and its practice in the context of North American society (the host society)? The conceptual change theory and the notion of conceptual ecology has been used to analyze the problems encountered by Muslim women in their attempts to integrate their conception of Islam with the dominant Western ideology, particularly Western colonial and missionary perspectives on religious education.[16]

Mothers' and daughters' behavior modification as they resolve a cognitive conflict, represent related but different problems: (1) the attempt by Muslim mothers to adjust an existing belief system and a particular attachment to the "Islamic" heritage to their living experience in the secular West; (2) the attempt by Muslim youth to integrate the belief system (transmitted by their parents), the Islamic sentimentality (enforced by the communities), and the

"secular" system (enforced by society at large); and (3) the attempt by the female Muslim youths in the West to relate their experience to the experience of their mothers in their country of origin under Western colonization and during the postcolonial upheavals in Muslim societies. Both types of experience seem to reflect a torn identity between the ideals and practice of the East and the West.

Philosophical Conceptions of Education

It will be a mistake to attempt an analysis of Muslim women's education in isolation from what is happening in other relevant fields of study such as feminist studies of education and Islamization of knowledge, and away from the effects of economic restructuring policies and the New Right movements in many Western countries and the re-assertion of conservative morality around the world, particularly Muslims' emphasis on women's returning to "traditional" form of dress whether or not it satisfies the Islamic dictum of a modest public appearance.

Madeline Arnot states, after "twenty years of feminist education research, policy development and innovative school practice, it seems appropriate to evaluate the impact and significance of this worldwide struggle for social justice."[17] Similarly, after 200 hundred years of missionary education and more than fifty years of universal, compulsory schooling in the Muslim world, it seems timely to evaluate the results of these systems of education and their actual impact on Muslim women's education.

At the same time, the recent global economic restructuring policies and the consequent political unrest and educational provision also require a considered response from those committed to promoting greater social equality and those who are promoting the return to "Islamic education." Though many writings and feminist studies of education, as Arnot adds, "has managed to cross its national boundaries and has constructed a common agenda for the English speaking academic world (in, for example New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Canada),"[18] few studies, to my knowledge, had constructed a common agenda for the Muslim women. Even when some agenda has been constructed, it has been produced by Muslim males dealing with education from an idealistic, dichotomized (of religious and secular) perspective or by Westernized feminists (Muslims or non-Muslims) who operate from outside the Islamic framework.

Peggy McIntosh wrote: "As a girl or woman learns to read, she learns to imagine alternatives to her situation. But if what she reads leaves her out, she may see these alternatives as unreal--making her more, not less, disempowered, the more she "learns."[19] The Dichotomy of the Ideals and Practice in the Muslim female education persists even in the most recent agenda developed by Organizations in the East and the West, Muslims and non-Muslims. This dichotomy and the agenda are explained respectively by my definition of Islam, education, and Islamic education, and by the following review of feminists views of education, Muslim women's views, and Revivalists conception of modernity and education..

Islam and Education:

Islam and education are linked in a shared process, because, on one hand, Islam as a world view may not be realized without its pedagogy (the arts of teaching and learning) and, on the other hand, education has no meaning if it does not penetrate the individual's world view and invokes change in perception of human relations. Through this change in perception, education is expected to bring equality among humans, particularly between the sexes. I believe that only when education succeeds to bring about such social change for social justice will it realize the existence of justice as a-priori in the Islamic world view as well as the existence of a just supreme being, The God (Allah). Such an education is what I call Islamic education. Thus, education does not become Islamic when it is taught by Muslims nor for Muslims, neither when its content is the subject of Islam. Rather, education becomes Islamic only when it fulfills the premise of producing an autonomous individual who intellectually and spiritually makes the choice to be the Khalifah (vicegerent of God on earth) and to follow the course of action toward achieving social justice as described in the Qur'an and objectified by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

I argue here that the tension between orientalists and contemporary Western ideals of Muslim societies and these societies' building of stable social organization is a by-product of Westerners' and Westernized Muslims' insistence to "liberate" Muslim women from their Islamic culture instead of helping them emancipate from within their own world view of Islam and the West, and cultural, spiritual, and intellectual needs.

The compounded effect of deteriorating Muslim women's education in general, and Islamic education in particular, seem to result also in another tension between the Muslims ideals and their practice, on one hand, and between the West ideals for itself and for others, on the other. This tension resulted in dismissing the Islamic perspective of religion and its meaning of social construction in the understanding of Muslim women's role and education. Since women's education is a pre-requisite to achieving Islamic education as defined above, gender justice in higher Islamic learning becomes a priority because without this equality between the sexes, the balance between individuals remains threatened by the attitude of superiority of one human being over another and by the one-sided (the male's) interpretation of the text, the Qur'an and the Hadith.

Contemporary Feminists Views of Education:

Reassigning feminist politics in relation to education among Muslims, involves identifying not only different feminist visions, different strategies and tactics, and different types of research, as Arnot suggests, but also different meanings of Islamic teachings with respect to education and justice in the 1990s within the context of the realities of Muslim women and men alike.[20]

For the Australian feminist, Jane Kenway, the solution is "to develop 'gender and educational policy analysis' as a new field of study."[21] Using the example of Australian feminists' incorporation within the state bureaucracy as 'femocrats,' Kenway argues both ways. One, the successful impact of women's movements and feminist struggles on state policy- making process, but second, the

limitations of gendered assumptions behind government policies. British Feminist, Madeleine Arnot contributes to this analysis, to Kenway's new field of study, by offering "a preliminary analysis of the ways in which gender issues were part of the political context behind the recent radical reorganization of education in the United Kingdom," exemplified in the move for a National Curriculum.[22] Similarly, the American Kathleen Weiler affirms that feminist educators in the 1990 throughout the industrialized world face similar problems and issues. Despite national differences, she asserts, they share a concern about the future of education for women in societies marked by the resurgence of right-wing ideology and the conservative control of the state." The chapters in her's and Arnot's edited volume, she laments, "all share a commitment to social justice and see education as a key arena of struggle for women and other excluded and oppressed groups." Her outlines of "the two major theoretical and material challenges to left analysis" are instructive for our purpose. [23]

First, "the critique of what is identified as the post-modernist and postcolonial theories. These theories have challenged the 'master narratives' of Western thought, in general, but also the truth claims of Marxism and feminism, in particular." Second, "the realignment of politics following the success of neo-conservative forces in the 1980s, the ever more rapid growth of a world wide corporate capitalist economic system and the seeming collapse and 'failure' of socialism in Eastern Europe and Russia. " It is possible to argue, Weiler adds, that these 1980s developments "have in a sense 'freed' the left from the legacy of social democracy, with its acceptance of capitalism and its strategy of reform from within."[24] But, she adds, "it is not at all clear what sort of policies will emerge to mobilize groups around an agenda in this new world."

From the Islamic perspective, it is almost clear to me that the agenda might look progressive, but it is basically a reformulation of the same capitalistic patriarchal, humanists ideas of the 19th colonial Europe in a new scheme of the global village vision. Weiler defines education in the United States, for example, as being an "area of contestation since the common school movement of the mid-nineteenth century first proposed public supported free schools for all children as a means to control and discipline 'dangerous' groups in a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing society."[25] She wrote: The "self-proclaimed educational 'experts' vision of mass education along the model of factories, in which mechanics of reading and writing are taught, and obedience to authority and acceptance of work discipline were the ethos of learning." I find that the self-proclaimed female liberators, Muslim education "experts" in the West, and the religious elites in the Muslim world are also dictating differentiated ethos of learning and teaching for the 'oppressed' or the 'temptuous' Muslim females in a rapidly changing world.

The US educational policies were contested in 1904 by Margaret Haley and other militant women educators like Ella Flagg Young and university educators such as John Dewey, challenging the vision put forth by the 'efficiency experts' and 'scientific manager'--whose greatest concern was cost efficiency and the provision of standardized minimum education for the poor. As Weiler sums up, education has been a repeated struggle between those who want to expand

education to build a more participatory democracy and those who define education to the demands of business and corporate elites. [26] Similarly, the Muslim World educational policies were contested after indpendence from colonization, in the 1950s and 60s, by some Muslim females (Zaynab alGhazzali, and others as cited in Liela Ahmad), challenging the concept of educating women to be part of the labor force and office professionals.[27] In my perspective of Muslim women's education I am not only contesting this utilitarian kind of education that was exported to the Muslim world and that have resulted in the creation of segregated, domesticating educational system for the female, poor and rural masses, but also contesting the contemprary Muslims' surrendering to the new right-wing movements inside and outside the Muslim world. Lest there be a misunderstanding, I am not opposing the general principles espoused by those working toward girls education, Islamic education or Islamization of knowledge, but I am protesting the means by which and the attitude in which these movements have been translated in policies towards women.

Muslim Women's Views:

It is critical for a Muslim feminist model of education to analyze the degrees by which Western feminist educational scholars and their Muslim emulators have been influenced by the challenges of post-modernist feminist theory and by post-colonial critiques of racist and Eurocentric ideology and forms of domination. It will be naive to assume that all these theories are the same and that, as conservative Muslim groups claim, are all "part of an imperialist plot to destroy Islamic society." [28] Such a generalized view have led many Muslim males to insist on the centrality of women in preserving the moral character of the nation, but women could engage only in domestic duties to protect males' morality.[29] There is an obvious contradiction in this claim, because not only Muslim males are preventing Muslim females from learning the needed skills to become preservers of the moral character, but these males themselves are involved in the imperialistic plot by collaborating with the West in capitalist economic and political activities. Furthermore, as Watt suggests, if Muslims were prepared to abandon complete segregaation, they could reformulate Islamic norms which put self-restrictions on free mixing, and if these restrictions shown to work in practice, there would probably be groups in the West which would be ready to adopt these restrictions.[30]

Similarly, it will be as naive to assume that feminists critiques of racist and Eurocentric ideology and forms of domination are totally different from post-colonial policies, particularly in the feminist academic exclusion of the "others," as the labels "third world women" and "women of colors" indicate. In addition, the majority of these critical feminists are still operating from within the Western view of knowledge and education as means to intellectual, economic and social advancement, despite their struggle for "critical thinking of the established state or the authority of institutional truth."[31]

Even when Weiler, for example, points out to feminist writers' serious consideration of "the critique of the universalizing tendency of white Western feminist analysis" and that these writers are clear "that focussing on gender

alone will not capture the realities of women's education" [32] feminist scholars' views remain problematic for Muslim women if taken at their face value. That is, because these scholars view knowledge as constructed and reconstructed in conditions of historical specificity, in which truth is accepted as relative only. For a Muslim, there is some part of knowledge that has a level of universal truth. That is, only the meanings, interpretations, and applications of this universal truth might be constructed in historical specificity and cultural particularity, but not its principles.

This basic difference, renders unsatisfactory the idea of power and the challenge of the central authority as an organizing principle for Muslim women's struggle. Despite their being marginalized in reality, the solution for Muslim women is not by just becoming another 'central authority,' or part of the mainstream, but to reinstate the power of "truth" back outside the human domain, particularly that of the male, and to realize that the truth lies not within one particular individual or group, but outside the human authority. Human beings, according to Islam, may recognize this truth only when they use their intellectual growth to exercise just acts toward others, particularly the weak and the oppressed. Thus, Arnot and Weiler's call for "a more reflexive theory that can address the realties of women in different sites and with different histories" [33] should be complemented with a call for a reflective theory that can address the ideals of Muslim women within their own culture vis-a-vis the Western projected ideals and realities.

Revivalists Conception of Modernity and Education:

Fazlur Rahman describes why the revivalists' opposing modernity and the West has been problematic in relating traditional practices to contemporary needs. He states, that the revivalists focus on the application of Shari'ah by merely returning to Hudud (public punishments for diversions from the teachings of Islam), discarding interest, and demanding Muslim women's return to traditional dress (what ever that might be). [34]

The contradiction in this view is obvious. For instance, if Muslims sincerely want to return to the Hudud as a way of life, then the first punishment to be applied, (Quran, 4:1) , should be to those men who have not allowed their daughters and wives an access to education. [35] That is because, in addition to depriving females from their natural right to know what they have been entrusted with, such men are not realizing the fundamental Islamic principle that the only authority and source of knowledge and value lies in the guidance of the Qur'an.[36] Once Muslim men realize that, then the question of modesty in dress becomes a natural consequence only when a woman exercise her rights and responsibility in accessing and developing knowledge of the Qur'an, and not by being coursed in religious or moral duties.

W. Montgomery Watt wrote: "Most conservative spokesmen, while they may claim that in Islam women are equal to men, are unwilling that women should engage in other than domestic duties. The 1969 Declaration on Human Rights of the Islamic Council of Europe has no section on the rights of women, only one on the rights of the wife; and these include that of being supported by

the husband. Thus, in the traditionalist world-view, as commonly understood, women are restricted to domesticity."[37] Furthermore, the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) established in 1973 held five world conferences on Muslim education in Mecca 1977, Islamabad 1980, Dacca 1981, Jakarta 1982, and Cairo 1987. Their recommendations, Ali Ashraf reports, were to "re-classify knowledge into 'revealed' (given to man by God and contained mainly in the Qur´an and the tradition of the Prophet) and 'acquired' (by man's efforts)," and that "acquired" knowledge should be taught from the "Islamic point of view," the process of which is referred to as "Islamization of knowledge." [38] The goals, similar to those outlined by al Faruqi (1982)[39]--to integrate modern sciences and branches of knowledge within the Islamic philosophy--are stated in the Islamic Education Series' seven monographs of which Ashraf is general editor.

A core curriculum (Muhammad Hamid al-Afendi and Nabi Ahmed Baloch, 1980) with Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas's (ed.) Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education (Jeddah, 1979) and other "blueprints" for groundwork and strategies were published in this series, the basic premise of which is that the only way to develop an Islamic curriculum that will alleviate the crisis in Muslim education caused by the dual traditional and secular systems, is to "reinterpret all branches of knowledge, particularly social sciences, within the Islamic perspective."

Yet, because the emphasis was on "revealed" vs. "human-acquired" knowledge, the proposed action plan did not devise for reconstructing a fresh base for Islamic thought and educational practice in light of new discoveries and contemporary needs and despite the recognition of the need to alleviate the dichotomy in Muslim thinking that resulted from separating "religious" and "secular" knowledge. Also, despite its urgency in light of new economic developments and the women's emancipation movement, no action plan was chartered for women's education. Instead, the emphasis on different and segregated education resulted only in proscriptive statements, reiterating a perspective on girls' education that has been evolving since the introduction of Western secular education practices.[40]

Emperical Findings in Historical context

The dimensions of what I phrase, Muslim women at the crossroads of Muslim "religious" and Western "secular" education are discussed here. By presenting the kind of tensions that Muslim women are facing, I argue that Islamic education of Muslim women is the key to the solution for the dichotomous educational systems in the Muslim world as well as among North American Muslim communities.

Islamic and Western Worldviews of Education:

Although Muslims have been concerned about the intrusion of Western ideas and philosophies in their religious education system for more than half a millennia,[41] the recourse to Islamic/religious education, largely represented in the establishment of Islamic/Muslim schools in the West is a new phenomenon. It is in part related to the migration of relatively large Muslim communities to Europe

and the Americas and to the interest of these communities in the religious vis-a´-vis secular education of their children. Many Christian and Jewish schools were established earlier for the same purpose of combating the so-called secular education.[42] Like their Parochial counterparts in earlier times, these new Muslim schools are open to the entire community. Although the focus is on the Muslim population, both students and faculties can be Muslims and non-Muslims. What kind of cultural challenge do these schools present to their Muslim and non-Muslim students and faculty and to the Western cultures in general, particularly when it involves girls' education? One can assume that, like other religious communities before them, the Muslims established in the West will produce their own accultured children that will come to call themselves, and take pride in being, Muslims. Being a Muslim, however, means for the dominant belief, held by many Westerners and non-Westerners alike, that religion is a private affair, and that the teaching of religion, even if it was taught in the secular schools,[43] will only be a subject that is not among the "Foundation subjects," as the recent book edited by Pumfrey and Verma indicates. [44]

Certainly, just like the historical-theological problem that Muhsin Mahdi discusses, [45]the historical problem of non-Islamic acculturation is not likely to be reversed by such small scale attempts, given the ongoing process of Westerniztion of many millions of Muslims. Why then only some aspects of this phenomenon has been both the focus of Muslim educators and leaders alike, and are being challenged or criticized by Westerners? Why has the focus been centering on only religious education among Muslims, and particularly among Muslim girls in such "religious" institutions, and in other private and government school? [46] What does all this mean to the education of Muslim women in the Muslim world in general and to North American Women, in particular?

The problem lies in the dichotomy between religious and secular education. The misconception among Muslims that religious education constitutes Islamic education is to blame for the present misunderstandings between Muslim parents and Western authorities. However, further misunderstanding and distrust results also from the misconception among Westerners that teaching about Islam constitutes a preach to the separation of church and state more than teaching history from the Judo-Christian, the so-called, secular perspective. Although there is some element of truth for justifying these misconceptions and distrusts, I argue that these misconceptions may be altered if we address the issues at their underlying assumptions, their basic principles.

In the educational context, the "theological-historical" problem between the Muslim and the Western world, I propose, was gendered more so than secularized by the governing colonial powers and their missionary and local partners. I agree with Mahdi's analysis of the role of Orientalists in the course of secularization of the "theological-historical problem" of Islam and the West, in general, and the study of Islam in particular. I depart,to some extent, from his analysis when I look into the course of change in the theological-historical problem of education in the Muslim world. I am invoking "feminization" more so than "secularization" for two reasons. First, feminization, here means the emphasis by Westerners on the "oppression" of female as a means to shame the

Easter societies, the majority of whom that were under colonization were Muslims, of their practice in their treatment of women and to force them to accept Western practices. Second, the educational systems introduced by the Western colonizer (Europeans from the 17th century on, and the American cultural colonialism, from the 19th century on) were by no means secular, because they were mainly the product of Christian and Jewish philosophies and were presented through the missionaries despite the claimed separation of church and state. [47]

As I approach the study of Islam from the pedagogical perspective, I argue further that it was the issue of Muslim women's acculturation outside the Islamic framework that instigated the whole debate of East-West relations, in general, and the apparent conflict between Muslims and Westerners, in particular. I am not invoking here the Muslim revivalists (Abdo, Banna, Mawdudi, Z. Ghazali and others) conspiracy theory of Christianizing the women in order to christianize the next generation. Nor do I accept the Westernized feminist theory that Western and Muslim patriarchy are at work against females (McGuire, Sa'dawi, Mernissi, Leila Ahmad and others), though each of these theories has some merit. [48] I am basically suggesting that the Europeans, and their recent partners, the Americans, found an easy means to keep developing societies, Muslim societies among them, on the defensive, while they, the Westerners, achieve their utilitarian philosophies and pragmatic ends of perpetuating economic and cultural expansion of their societies.

Deniz Kandiyoti addresses the subjugation of the non-Western societies in her editorial introduction, stating the following argument: "an adequate analysis of the position of women in Muslim societies must be grounded in a detailed examination of the political projects of contemporary states of their historical transformations. [T]hey have all to grapple with the problems of establishing modern nation states and forging new notions of citizenship. This had led them to search for new legitimizing ideologies and power bases in their respective societies." I extend her argument not only to contribute to the development of "a comparative agenda," as Kandiyoti suggests, but primarily to analyze the educational development of the Muslim female that bears on the response of Muslim governments and religious elites to the new notions coming from the West.[49]

I am basically reconstructing the process through which Muslim woman was transformed from an agent of education into an instrument to subjugate the Muslim female and her society. The goal of this reconstruction is not to denounce previous history and male-dominated interpretations of events, though I may question the objectivity of such studies and reject some of these interpretations. Rather, my goal is to formulate a feminine theory of Muslim women's education from within the Islamic perspective, bearing in mind the variations of relations between Muslim and Western peoples and systems of governing and education. These points will become clearer when I present the living cases.

Meanings of female education in the dichotomous practice of Western/secular and Muslim/religious.

From the interviews that I have conducted with Muslim immigrant parents and their offspring in the USA and Canada between 1984 and 1986, I will present two cases.

Case #1.

I asked an active and respected leader in her community, I named Safia (#1, a Middle-age mother of Indo-Pakistani origin who teaches religious education to the community children some afternoons and on the weekends) the following question: "What is the method you find most useful in talking to your children about Islam?"

Her answer was: " I practice myself, and I do it myself, then I ask my children to do it." When I asked "suppose one of your girls asked to go out with a friend, what are the things that you discuss with her about the subject." Her response was that so far "my daughter asked me once to go to her friend's home, and I only let her do that after I invited the friend to my home, and find out what she does, then I took my daughter to her home, and checked that there were no boys, and I sat in the car , and checked again, and whatever she told me was right."

Later on, when I interviewed the daughters of this same mother among a group of young females, I asked "do you find any difference between the guidance you receive from your parents and the guidance you receive from school or non-Muslims?" the younger daughter did not respond at all, while the older, a 19 year-old college students I will name sana', answered: " I think schools place more emphasis on your studies than they do on religious issues. May be they believe it is the responsibility of parents if they need to tell anything to their children, then they should be doing it and not the school." When I asked "but how do schools expect you to relate between the morals of learning other subjects and of dealing with other people in the school environment if they do not teach general concepts about religious and moral matters, leaving it for the home?" Sana' answered: "Well, the thing , if they start teaching general concepts about religion, they will be teaching what they believe, and, you know, here the majority of people believe that Jesus is the son of god. We believe Jesus was a Prophet. Then there are other religions that don't believe in God. So you really can't teach general concepts of religion because there are so many different concepts of religion."

When I probed further as to whether there was really a basic difference between religions, Sana' retracted by saying "Not in the main religions; Jews, Christians and Muslims. But when you go into other religions, especially the orient, they are very different, they believe in idols. But if you set aside the believe in One God, most religions are similar because they teach you to love your neighbor and that you have a purpose in life. I guess schools can teach that but it's very vague, and I don't know [how to teach about a general concept of religion]."

Such a response suggests that the young female was not only confusing the teaching of religion with the teaching about religion, but also was not equipped spiritually and intellectually to realize the relationship of the meaning of, and believing in a One Supreme God to her practice of certain Islamic principles, such as love to one's neighbor and the purpose of life. [50] This confusion seems to result from one of the very basic failures in Muslims' religious education that is often mistaken for Islamic education. It is also a failure in teaching the practice of a religion, in this cas Islam, as something that can be done without understanding and relating the meanings of each practice to the concept of God as the source of knowledge and value. Compounded with modern Western views of religious believes as superstitious and the practice of rituals as irrational and irrelevant to intellectual growth, Muslims as well as non-Muslims accepted the argument that religion has no place in the "objective, neutral, rational" educational process.

The 19-year-old Sana' provided further evidence to this analysis when she responded to my question as to what we mean by "religion." She said, "Unfortunately what we have been doing is as if we are saying that there is a difference between man-to-man relationship and when we talk about the religion as if we are only talking about man-to-God relationships, and we really shouldn't." Later on, as we were discussing how she gets answers to her inquiries regarding Islamic practice, she pointed to the fact that when she was visiting her parents' native country, she realized that they don't have trouble in religion, explaining that "the reason we have trouble is that we see our religion different from Canadian life," and we need to reason, to make sure that we are doing the right thing. "What I saw in Pakistan," she added, "is that they do not emphasize religion, because they are supposedly living in Muslim country, and supposedly everyone is doing the same thing, supposedly the Muslim way. Whereas if they really think about it, "well, they are not really doing it the way it should be." Whereas, we see other people here, we think about it, and realize that these practices are different. In pakistan, they don't know why they are doing it, while we may question something, we are not like new Muslims who could teach us because they have studied it. We don't study Islam, we just accept it because we were born into it. "

Later in the conversation, when I asked what would be the kind of questions I may ask other youth group in oder for me to gain better understanding of their needs, Sana' answered: "I think something you can do, specially for youth, is to help parents understand the problems we go through. Because we are pulled in so many different directions; by home, by school. And a lot of time, the parents being first generation, have not gone through it, they don't realize it, and they could use some education in what types of things that we go through, and why at certain times we need to question something that they just accept."

Issues like going out with friends, even girl friends, parents not making friends with the parents of their children's friends, not even allowing to be asked whether their daughters could visit their girl friends although boys are allowed to visit any friend indiscrimenatly, and not realizing that all Muslim girls are going through the same problem where they have to either lie to their parents or to their

friends, because they do not know how to explain their different behavior. All these issues transpired at different stages of the discussion with this 19-year-old and her Muslim friends. Finally when I asked why can't they discuss these issues with their friends and tell them that this is their religion or culture, the answer was that "it is hard to explain."

Confusion and uncertainty, it seems, result from parents' well-intended shielding of the girls from the reality of the culture, instead of helping themselves and their children understand and practice Islam in the context of the new environment that they are part of now. The realities of these youth' questioning and striving to know is symbolic to their deep believe and ability to realize that there is a difference between Islamic and non-Islamic life and education. But, our ideals, we parents and educators, provide no means for them to have a deeper understanding of the "why" in order to be able to negotiate their environment as autonomous individuals. Muslim parents and educators are missing the basic elements of Islamic pedagogy: to prepare the next generation of women to be agents of preserving the culture, instead of making women instruments for transmitting some rituals. Such shielding does not differ much from what Muslim societies practiced with respect to women's education in the face of European colonial and missionary, military and cultural invasion .

This lack of preparing the young females is evident in the mother's, Safia, response when I probed more about how she expects her children to relate between the two guidance; the school's and the home's. She responded that the three religions are similar, and that she tells her children that Christian and Jews have changed what is in their books and put some human things in them. She added, one time we were talking about dress and I told them look at the statue of Mary, do you ever see her without covering her head and body, but look at the Christian and Jews, they are changing their dress."

The use of such a parallel between Mary's cover and Muslim woman's modest dress might bring a better understanding of common teachings among the three monotheistic religions. Yet, it certainly indicates a complete disregard to how the modern Western mind think of religious symbols as that is totally different from the Muslim mind. S. H. Nasr asserts that the first thing a Muslim is dazzled by in the West is the dissonance, the compartmentalization between religion and everything else.[51] I add that Muslims also don't recognize that similar comaprtmentalization is happening in the Muslim world, though not as explicitly expressed as in the West. The Mother's comparison is a sign for the failing Muslim institutions to integrate the two aspects of knowledge, the "relgious" and the "secular". History tells us that the Judeo-Christian religious institutions' emphasis on compartmentalization and the idealization of women in the person of Mary or Rachel while neglecting to provide just solutions to the social realities of women in their societies were behind women's revolt against religious institutions, and often, against religion in general. Finally, to make a parallel between Mary's virginity and the underlying ideas of celibacy and the condemnation of sex in Christian practice is counterproductive to the Islamic concepts of modesty and of encouraged sexual satisfaction through marriage.

These parallels are, knowingly and unknowingly, frequently reiterated among Muslim parents and educators. Some sources suggest that Muslims began emphasizing female strict dress and seclusion after their contacts with the missionaries. As, I have no conclusive evidence yet, I am only drawing attention to the fact that not only the Orientalists may have shaped Islamic studies and philosophy for Muslims in the last three centuries, as Mahdi suggests, but also that the missionaries and colonial forces may have shaped the pedagogy and practice of Islam as well.

Case #2

By comparing the views of the above mother-dughter case to those of the following case, we may shed further lights on the matter. I asked another group of mothers what was the most useful way to convince their children to attend the "Islamic" school or the youth group discussion (the previous sets of partents that I interviewd expressed concern that youth don't like to attend Islamic schools). A mother of an European descent in her late thirty, I 'll name Ella (#11) stated: "we did not have to convince them. We just come to the mosque as a family. We do not just drop our children at the mosque and go shopping, we go together. That's all, we started taking them to classes when they were young, and gradually they were mixing with other [Muslim] kids, and listen to what they come about Islam." Later she added, "we also discuss with them the same topics they discuss in the youth group, so we learn too." In response to my question as to what we mean by practicing Islam, she answered by explaining how she has dealt with the question of her children going out with friends. Contrary to another mother in the group who answered, "by following the Sunnah," Ella stated: " Usually the understanding is that girls go out with girls and boys with boys. If we are in a group , Muslims in a study group, we sit in a circle, men and women, who are we to say that it is wrong when youth do the same? alluding to the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) taught early Muslims together.

By realizing that idealizing the Prophetic tradition will not enable her to translate his 14 centuries behavior into today's terms, Ella has decided to address the principles behind the Prohetic practice and to provide somewhat a detailed example. When I asked her about how she deals with other social activities, she answered:"[For] going to film, I would like to know what it is about, if it was suitable." Later on when I asked all mothers why they wont their children to learn Arabic even if it was not their native tongue, Ella answered: "[It is important] to learn the Quran." She added, some people think it is too confusing for children, but it is not. They accept it [if we explain]. You know, we are [the ones] who are [confused], we come here don't know how to practice [the religious aspects of] Islam. I find Islam here, You know I did not [know] any thing about Islam. They say you cannot practice Islam in North America, that's not true. You can practice it any where, as long as you have strong feeling about it, and [know how to] work at it."

It seems that this Muslim woman of the European origin has escaped the Orientalists' view of Islam and the missionaries pedagogical practices of Islam that left a dent in Muslims' perception and practice throughout the Muslim world.

My observation does not only concern the tension among Muslims' discrepent views of Islam and its pedagogy, but more importantly the tension between the West's view of religion and its practice as transpired in their own society vis-a-vis among "other" societies. Muslims raised in Europe (i.,e. not affected by missionary and orientalist work) and before their contacts with recent immigrants from the Muslim world may have developed simple and less confused views of Islam, and educators should investigate such views further. These findings have further implications for understanding the contemporary Muslim youth needs.

The 17 year-old daughter of Ella, I'll name Ema, answered to the question about the difference in guidance between home and school by saying: " The guidance you receive from parents you usually assume it's like an Islamic kind of guidance. It's within the Islamic perspective. But the one at school is not. And to look deeper into that kind of thing, like you check it on your own. You can look it up in the Qur'an or the Hadith, or ask somebody [who knows] what is the right way to do it." When I asked what the youth discuss in their youth dialogue group, she said: "Everything is actually discussed . It is not just about God. We usually start with some Ayah (Qura'nic verse) or Hadith, and someone has a question about it, we try to resolve it. Also, we have general questions, or Dr. 'Y' brings-up some questions, and he relates some of the knowledge to us. He tries to explain."

When the discussion moved to how Muslims could set themselves apart, somewhat isolated from the rest of the society (I raised the question in response to Emma's brother's suggestion during the group interview that Muslims should build a separate gymnasium for girls), she aid: " It is not really separating, but you need to have a special group to support you, not to be pushed alone by the society. But you can't do it alone without the society." Finally, when I asked what is the best way for working with Muslim youth, she answered: "You have to deal with them on their own basis. You can't give them something they don't want. For instance, you go to a lecture, sometimes the topic don't interest the youth at all. I know, everyone tries to walk the other way [from the lecture]. I mean, it just does not appeal to them. You need something that they can understand, they can relate to." She also spelled out how best to plan for Muslims: "I don't think the planning should be massive, like for the community to change it's way, like you go for the big thing first. You have to start from the basics, and then things grow gradually. Any kind of hope or change should be very minimal, and when you concur them, then things on top come naturally."

Conclusion and Suggestion

By capturing the dynamics of these living pedagogical cases, I attempted to shed lights on the historical transformation of female role in order to find solutions that may not reverse, but at least modify the process. As the transformation of female role is not the making of the West alone, but, knowingly or unknowingly, is also the making of the Muslims, in particular male elites and policy-makers, I will argue that recent and present attempts to transform the educational systems in Muslim societies, known as the "Islamization" of knowledge and education, could be doomed to failure sooner or later if Muslim educators do not examine the

education of Muslim women at a deeper level from what is currently being considered. Similarly, any attempts of intervention by any external developing or political agency claiming to "improve" the status of Muslim women--whether inside or outside the Muslim world-- will create more problems than solve the existing ones, if the course of action remains within the scheme of keeping woman as instrument for change instead of an agent of change within her own culture.

I am proposing a relational integrative Muslim female perspective of Islam and of education and development for social justice. It is intended to replace the present idealistic, dichotomized, and polarized view of women and education with a realistic view of woman as the preserver of Islamic culture and the perpetuator of social justice.

{Table on integrative model of educ & Develop]

This perspective accepts the stability of the Islamic teachings in the Qur'an and takes into consideration, as suggested by Amina Wadud-Muhsin,[52] the social and cultural contexts in which the prophetic practice has extrapolated these teachings. It differs from the Revivalist males' perspective, however, by recognizing females as active partners in the interpretation process, and realizing, as did Muhammad Iqbal, the relevance of space and time to learning and to the reconstruction of Islamic thought. [53] I am proposing an "Islamic" perspective of development that integrates education and Islam, and that will benefit not only Muslim women but the Islamic social organization as well as gender justice in general.

Gender justice in Islam is the primary organizing principle of this female perspective; considering both Western and Muslim approaches--linear, a-religious, and rational--and Islamic approach--spiral, religious, and rational. The principles in this perspective signal the different ways in which Islamic feminists working from within the Islamic educational perspective are struggling to reconstruct the interpretation of Islamic concepts, not only in favor of girls, but also in favor of social justice for all. I have explained this point earlier when I argued that multicultural democratic education does not benefit minorities only, but it is intended mainly to keep the majority in tune with their ideals of a democratic pluralistic education and social structure.[54]

As I construct an action plan later that, in my estimates, will capture the momentum of the interest in the question of Muslim woman, but for a different purpose, I will reinstate woman as the education agent in Muslim societies, outlining her priorities. One should not, however, overlook the comparison between the investigated group's adjustment process and that of other Muslim native groups and those who immigrated earlier, and of other religious groups. How this group of Muslim mothers-daughters differ from the fathers-sons group is a subject for future work.

Notes

* This work, and the overall theme of this research was developed as part of a lectures series presented at Oxford University Centre for Islamic Studies during my Visiting Fellowship in1994. These topics were inspired by Muhsin Mahdi's article "Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy" (Journal of Islamic Studies 1 [1990] pp. 73-98). I would like to acknowledge my adaptation of his style of presentation as I find the two subjects, the study of Islamic Philosophy and of Islamic education, very relevant to the overall interaction of the Islamic and Western cultures and the impact of this interaction on the education of Muslim women.

1. ADC Newsletter "Intern Perspectives," August 1993, p.3

2. Arab Women and Education. The Institute for Women's Studies In The Arab World: Monograph Series, No. 2. (Beirut: Beirut University College, 1980), 17-18.

3. Kabbani, Rana. Europe's Myths of Orient. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 80-81.

4. See Nimat's bibliographical statistics on the study of Muslim women vis-a-vis Muslim women's educ.

5. See for example the recommendation of the Islamic World Conference on Education.

6. For further distinction between "Islamic" and "religious" education, see Nimat Hafez Barazangi. "Religious Education" in John L. Esposito, ed. The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995a), 406-11.
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7.**(Sisterhood** conf) and others such as...

8. See for example, Richard William Johnson. "Wars of religion." New Statesman & Society 2:13-14 December 15, 1989.; and "Behind the Yashmak." The Economist 313:58 Oct 28,1989.**; the New york Times report on the Algerian girl; The Atlanta Daily,etc... Also, reports on Tansima Ghazi and others.**

9. Ruth Roded. (Women in Islamic Biographical Collections: From Ibn Saʿad to Who's Who. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 12.

10. Carla Power. "America's Young Muslims: New World Pioneers." Unpublished paper, Columbia University,, 1995: 7.

11 See William Montgomery Watt. Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity. (New York: Routledge,1988),114.

12. See , for example , Muhammad Qutub. Minhaj al Tarbiyah al Islamiyah. (Beirut: Dar al Shuruq, 1981),307, 315

13. Ruth Roded, 1994 , 8.

14. (dissertation)

15. Lortie

16. Conceptual change and conceptual ecology

17. Madeline Arnot. "Introduction" in Feminism and Social Justice in Education. Falmer Press, 1993)

18. Arnot. 1993, 1

19. Peggy McIntosh. " "in the October 1994 Women's Book Review of the book *The Politics of Women's Education* (1993):

20. Arnot. (p.3-4).

21. Jane Kenway

22. Madeleine Arnot in her "A Crisis in Patriarch? British Feminist Educational Politics and State Regulation of Gender" (1993: 187)

23. Kathleen Weiler, in "Feminism and the Struggle for a Democratic Education: A View from the United States" 1991 (210-225),

24. Arnot 1991 in Arnot & Weiler 1993:210).

25. Weiler (p.211)

26. ibid.

27. Layla Ahmad. Gender.

28. W. Montgomery Watt. Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity. 1988:115.

29. Ibid, 114.

30. ibid,116.

31 Arnot?

32 Weiler, p211, 213

33. Arnot and Weiler. ibid.

34. Fazlur Rahman (Islam and Modernity,1982)

35. Nafissa Ahmed El-Amin."Sudan:Education and Family." in Philip H. Stoddard, et.al. , eds. Change and the Muslim World. Syracuse University Press. 1981), 87-94.

36. Nimat Hafez Barazangi. "Vicegenrancy and Gender Justice." in Nimat Hafez Barazangi, et al. ed. forthcoming Islamic identity and the Struggle for Justice (Gainseville, University Press of Florida).

37. M. Watt 1988, 114.

38. Ali Ashraf (New Horizons in Muslim Education. Cambridge: The Islamic Academy, Hodder & Stroughton, 1985).

39. al faruqi. Islamization of Knowledge. 1982.

40. **See for example, Anis Ahmad.**

41. I am assuming that the major shift in the balance of Islamic and non-Islamic views in the philosophy and pedagogy of education has taken place immediately after the 1492 Spanish inquisition. That is, Muslims, in response to the explicit animosity of the Europeans to everything Islamic, have shifted their view of non-Muslim ideas as worthwhile and integrative in the Islamic world view. The shift took the form of suspicion and exclusion, instead, mainly because of the fear of de-Islamizing the educational upbringing of new generations of Muslims which is adopted by contemporary Muslims, indiscremenatly.

42 Since I have discussed the difference between secular and religious education elsewhere (see Barazangi 1990, 1990a,and 1991), it will suffice here to note that Western "secular" education is largely embedded in the Judo-Christian philosophy. Furthermore, not teaching religion in schools does not mean that the educational nature of the system is not religious. Education is a political process, in which inculcation in a philosophical view takes place like any religious inculcation process since it stems from a strong believe and propagation.

43. Though it is possible to teach religion as a subject matter in British government schools, it is against the law to do so in the US public schools. The latter is being constantly contested as to whether it is constitutional or not.

44. See Pumfrey, P. and G. Verma, ed. The Foundation Subjects and Religious Education IN primary Education (Bristol, PA: Falmer Press, 1993.).

45. Muhsin Mahdi. "Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy."

46. See for example, "Muslim schools: Choosing God." The Economist 325:57 Dec 19, 1992; Khanum, Saeeda. "Finishing School." *New Statesman & Society* 3:12-14 May 25, 1990.; and Sanders, Claire, "Educating Saeeda: What do

Muslim girls want from education?" *New Statesman & Society* 2:25 June 9, 1989..

47. See Nimat Hafez Barazangi. "Educational Reform" in John L. Esposito, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 420-25.

48. See Bibliography.

49. Deniz Kandiyoti (*Women, Islam, and the State* 1991: p2

50. Islam and Islamic here are understood in their broadest sense as explained by Ismail R. al Afaruqi. *The Trialogoue of the Abrahemic Religions.*

51. S. H. Nasr. *A Young Muslim's Guide in the Modern World*, 1993.

52. Amina Wadud-Muhsin. *Quran and Woman* (1993).

53. Iqbal, Mohammad. The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Lahore, Pakistan: Muhammad Ashraf, 1962).

54. Barazangi, Nimat Hafez. "Worldview, Meaningful Learning and Pluralistic Education") 1993, RPE