

THE ARAB/MUSLIM CULTURE VICTIM OF WESTERN WORLD; INTERNAL PERCEPTIONS VS. EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS AND THE INTERCULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF STEREOTYPING.

A literature review submitted as a requirement to obtain the degree of professional in modern languages

Diana Marcela Gamba Mongui

18292

Lorena Alejandra Moreno Santana

18343

Katherine Lisseth Gonzales Chaparro

18317

Document Director

Jorge Vargas

Ana Guzmán

Modern Languages

Bogotá, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

The text provides a comprehensive literature review regarding the main cultural stereotypes related to the Arab/ Muslim culture, and how these stereotypes affect the intercultural relations. Bearing in mind that these stereotypes appear in the text across aspects like: the role and life of the Muslim woman, the Yihad as a concept involves in terms of religion and terrorism, the attacks of 9/11, the representation of Hollywood of Arab/Muslims and the terrorist group ISIS. Once mentioned the stereotypes that affect the Arab/Muslim culture, the text tries to defend and debate the negative arguments around Arab world, taking into account the external perception (point of view of Occident) and the perception internal (interview realized to a practicing person of the Islam); showing that the lack of information and the exaggeration from the mass media, make that others believe in Arab/Muslim culture as an example of fanaticism and terrorism.

Key words: Culture, stereotype, interculturality, Arab/Muslim, Western world, internal perception, external perception

RESUMEN

El texto proporciona una revisión literaria completa sobre los estereotipos culturales principales relacionados con la cultura árabe/musulmana y como estos estereotipos afectan las relaciones interculturales. Teniendo en cuenta que estos estereotipos se presentan en el texto a través de aspectos como: el rol y vida de la mujer musulmana, el termino yihad como termino religioso y/o terrorista, los atentados del 9/11, la representación de Hollywood sobre los musulmanes y el grupo terrorista ISIS. Una vez mencionado los estereotipos que afectan la cultura musulmana, el texto pretende defender y debatir los argumentos negativos hacia el mundo árabe, teniendo en cuenta la percepción externa (punto de vista de occidente) y la percepción interna (entrevista realizada a una persona practicante del islam); mostrando que la falta de información y la exageración de los medios de comunicación generalizan y hacen que los demás creen que la cultura árabe/musulmana se trata solamente de fanatismo y terrorismo.

Palabras clave: cultura, estereotipo, interculturalidad, Árabe/Musulmán, Occidente, percepción interna, percepción externa

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INTRODUCTION

The present research refers to the Arab/Muslims stereotypes and the possible intercultural consequences, taking into account the internal and external perceptions in the Islam context; Emphasizing the internal perception of a Colombian Imam or religious counselor of the Islam; who serves as guide to realize the prayer and he is an example to continue in the community, and external perception in accordance with the global point of view of people who have researched, interviewed and who have an opinion about the stereotypes around including certain facts; such as September eleven and the participation of the industry of the American movies; where some messages have harmed the image of a culture.

It is important to understand the culture concept and identify the relevant aspects of the Arab/Muslim culture, focusing on the stereotypes and the individual and social perception from the religious and social context; on the other hand the intercultural diversity relates social sets, sharing information and exchange ideologies, besides, each member of a community adapts a concept or criticizes about a different culture, based on false or positive testimonies that he received and are believable, through the mass media which expresses diverse viewpoints about organizations, actuality and relevant facts.

The conclusions lead us to sum up the stereotypes and consequences that the Arab/Muslim culture must face every day, trying to change those negatives aspects at least in reasonable doubts which will help to understand that lack of information about certain culture, because it is not a positive aspect, while if society acquire more information it is possible to allow more interaction, more freedom and more respect.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The attacks on September 11th has not been the only event which has generated a negative image about Arab/Muslim context; all these facts have marked the perception from western world to Arab world due to terrorist organizations like Islamic state of Iraq and al-sham (ISIS) which have promoted terrorism around the world.

Wingfield and Karaman (2003) cited The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) which is a civil rights organization committed that defends the rights of people of Arab descent and promotes their rich cultural heritage, in order to explain that after The Twin Towers' attacks discrimination began to be more evident against Arab/Muslim people, the most harmful images are those of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists, decade after decade, film after film, these images have been repeated (p.2).

According to ADC in the months after 9/11 informed seven hundred violent incidents against Arab Americans, Arab nationals and Muslims. In United States the discrimination rates have increased, for example, a five year old girl in San Francisco came home from school and asked her father, what does it mean terrorist? The other kids called me a terrorist” (p.1); this is one of the numerous cases of prejudice and discrimination, it is highly probably that society tends to generalize and make a relation between terrorism and Arab/Muslim, which have caused intercultural problems.

We consider that this research is different from others because it is important to infer some internal and external perceptions; in order to lead the reader to build a personal value judgment. It is possible to consider that an external culture has a positive perception of Arab/Muslim culture through an internal perception of a Muslim person who defends his culture from negative stereotypes.

Facts such as September 11/2001, the current events in France 2015, and the different stereotypes around Arab/Muslim affect the perception and the social context that people have about them. For us, the gist of the matter is that the negative stereotypes promote discrimination influencing the interaction between Arabic/Muslim and other cultures, bearing this in mind, the main purpose of this research is to mention the different stereotypes around Arab/Muslim culture, and how this have impacted the way that external cultures interpret traditions and reality of Arab/Muslims. This brings up to the question: What are Arabs/Muslims stereotypes, and what are the possible intercultural consequences taking into account the internal and external perception context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the great majority of people, it is common to relate Arab/Muslim culture with negative stereotypes such as “Terrorism”. Therefore, this research is intended to discuss about internal (Point of view of an Arab/Muslim person), and external perceptions (Perspective from external cultures). Furthermore, it discusses facts that have prejudiced the Arab/Muslim reputation, and it explains cultural interaction consequences, which entails in many cases forms of discrimination and intolerance against Arab/Muslim people.

First the term culture will be defined, because it is important to know what is the meaning of Culture with big C and with small c, to understand the different perspectives (internal and external); also the term stereotype will be defined to understand the meaning of stereotype and how can stereotypes affect the image of Arab/Muslim culture.

Culture

A culture can be object of negative stereotypes due to lack information and tendency to generalize traditions, behavior and beliefs. The first step to understand Arab/Muslim context is to define what is culture about?. Bailey and Peoples (2010) defined culture as “a group consists of shared, socially learned knowledge and patterns of behavior” (p.24). In many cases an individual inside of a culture could have erroneous ideas and attitudes which affect the rest of the members of the culture; it means that most of those patterns behaviors are used as a double-edged sword; for example, when an “Arab/Muslim” person commits terrorist attacks in the name of his/her native country, immediately the North Americans (or other not Arab person) believe that every Arab/Muslim person is a terrorist.

Trujillo (2002) explained that the most frequent definition of culture is related to two expressions, culture with capital "C", or visible culture, which implies geography, history, literature, and culture with small "c", or invisible culture which includes customs, life-style and beliefs (p.106). Our purpose with the previous information is to clarify that general knowledge is based on visible culture (general knowledge about a culture) rarely stereotyped; whereas invisible culture tends to be so deep and unknown for many, and this becomes the major focus of critics, what it happens often in Arab/Muslim context.

Arab/Muslim cultural overview

It is important to have information about Arab world, first of all its region is composed by twenty two Arab country: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

As is cited in ADC (2003) “Arab is the person who speaks Arabic as first language; most of the Arabs are Muslims but in the Arab world includes Christians and Jews who shared in the language, culture, and history of the region. Most Muslims worldwide are not Arabs” (p.1). An interesting fact it is that Arab/Muslim culture apparently enclosed in its own religious traditions; it has many influences like Greece, Rome, India and China, contrary to what many people think.

We consider this culture is much more than aspects like music, literature, food, dance and geography, its real identity revolves around religion. Islam is the religion with more followers around the world and also is the most misunderstood for the society; Association for the propagation of Islam (n.d) explain that “Islam” means peace, obedience and submission; in the sense of religion means the humanity submission to God’s will thus, man or woman who professes his religion is well known as “Muslim” (Islam and Muslims. Para 1.).

Muslim people take Mohammad as the prophet sent for God, and all his divine commandments are in Koran (Islamic holy book), Rahman, Kareem and Sheha (n.d) argue that “The aim of Islam is to establish the ideal human society and brotherhood spreading general benevolence and the divine guidance among men for their betterment and salvation” (p.6) ; according to religious laws of Koran which speak of brotherhood , make us thinking about the different violence problems in Arab countries, perhaps, due to the erroneous interpretation of the Mohammad prophesies, it means every Muslim men interpret the Koran’s words depending on the individual perception which makes a blend between religion and terrorism, with the idea of killing in the name of God; we consider it is not the religion what impels to these people to commit violent acts, is the ambition of power.

STEREOTYPES AROUND ARAB/MUSLIM CULTURE

In western world people used to distort the information about negative facts that happen in eastern world; we can say that Allah has been used to begin wars, but also it has turned into a false god who forces its followers to realize derisory things, causing this culture to be discriminated; taking into account diverse factors like the role of women, marriage, customs and beliefs; which are the cultural aspects that are more stereotyped by the western world, and we want to explain that many of these are arbitrary stereotypes.

Stereotype

Casal (2005) defined the word stereotype in this way:

A stereotype is an idea or belief that determines the image attributed to a group. One might to add that this set of ideas, normally are shared or agreed; it is transmitted and is learned naturally since we are born and socialize in the family, in the group of friends, in the school, etc.(p.137)

For us, a stereotype clearly becomes stronger at the moment when people do not create a positive perception about a culture or a group, and share it inside their social context. For example, the mass media that often prevaricate the information to generate sensationalist news that proves affecting the public opinion on the same culture even if it might not be as bad as it seems.

A contrast between external and internal perception about Arab/Muslim culture

What will be considered in this text for us, an external perception will be all that comes from the foreign opinion about Arab/Muslim culture, since we perceive it, tends to be more negative than positive. In contrast, the internal perception arises like a result of the negative stereotypes and in defense of the cultural identity; this based on the arguments given by Carlos Sanchez (a Muslim person and Imam of the Estambul mosque).

This culture has been stereotyped for reasons as: the conditions in which women live, religious, fanaticism and the marriage. The Pew Forum on religion & public life (2013) indicates that:

A majority of Muslims say that a wife should always obey her husband. At the same time, there also is general agreement – at least outside sub-Saharan Africa– that a woman should have the right to decide for herself whether to wear a veil in public. (p.91)

The previous statement makes us think that the rights of Muslim woman, as in other countries, not always are respected; and always it will exist a person inside of the Arab community that will differ and be opposed to some woman's rights; like the clothing, the obedience to her husband, marriage will be topics of opposition and criticism in the Muslim culture and in the western world.

The previous information shows us a disagreement between the Muslim populations in respect of the woman's rights; to support the argument in favor of the current roll of the Muslim women; the Imam Carlos Sanchez of the mosque Estambul (Colombian believer of the Islam for 36 years) assures that:

The Occident woman suffers more mistreats here than in the Arab countries; furthermore, he says that the Muslim woman is treated by everyone with care and respect as it is indicated in the Koran. (Appendix 1).

In our opinion, it is not valid to judge all this culture because Arab/Muslim culture disagree with the form of western life; where the women to our perception is abused and treated like a sexual object. A good example is the clothing, which is considered for many ridiculously, but for Muslim woman is a symbol of respect for herself more than a symbol of submission to her husband, because she is not interested in showing her body to other men, but the Muslim woman thinks she should look beautiful only for her husband in her home.

Another aspect that it is necessary to mention is the stereotype about arranged marriage; where the woman must marry to a man chosen by her parents without refuting but in accordance with the Islamic center of Colombia (n.d) “the woman is who chose or refuse the man with whom she wants to start her home” (“the women and Islam,” para. 9). It means that the Muslim woman has the right and power to make a decision about her future and who is going to be part of her family.

In our personal opinion, we agree that marriage inside the Arab/Muslim culture is for election not for obligation, and that stereotypes created about the matrimonial obligation is caused by the absence of information and erroneous conception about the term Muslim marriage.

The polygamous marriage, in which western people believe, it affects the woman because if husband wants to have more than one wife and consequently the will of the husband must be respected; women can give her opinion, make an objection or make a decision about a second marriage; but it is not like that. Murtada (n.d) explain that the exaggerated perception of the polygamous marriage in the Arab world, it comes from the following belief for centuries:

While the man has had the domineering position and has been the "sovereign one" on the woman, he has molded all the customs and norms in his favor. Consequently, he has become the polygamy as a norm for his own benefit, opposite to the interests of the women for centuries. (p.1)

On the contrary Carlos Sanchez on the interview spoke about the polygamy as:

The polygamy is born of the intention of gaining for him the paradise since as God said "kneel down before a woman and you will gain the sky"; the marriage with more than one woman is to help an oldster, to help a widow with children for the war, to help a woman who needs housing, clothes and meal (appendix 1)

In our opinion, people misinterpret the polygamy because they think that marriage with more than one woman is for sexual or economic satisfaction; where man marries with the intention of winning, and not with the intention of helping and trying to be a good follower of the commandments of God; Our culture has abandoned the spirituality, and God; basing the daily acts on the consumerism and to look the way of criticizing and of misinterpreting the acts and beliefs of other religions

Another stereotype related to life of the Muslim woman is about her education; the same negative image of the treatment of woman has done that the western world believes (through of the mass media), that the woman cannot study and cannot work. Regarding to Centro Islamico de Santafe de Bogotá (n.d) the Muslim, who aspires to be considered a follower of the Koran, has the commitment to learn to encourage the education and to allow both men and women to have access to the knowledge and science. (p.33)

In accordance with the previous appointment and knowing that the Arab culture is based on the religious rules; it is understood that it is erroneous to think that the woman is forbidden to be able to study and have a career. Maybe in the past century the Muslim woman did not have the same rights that a Muslim man, but at present the woman Muslim can study and become to a doctor, an engineer and can practice many other careers.

Finally, the stereotype that affects more the perception of the Muslim culture is the concept of *Yihad*; Zapata (2002) “Yihad is an Arab word that stems from the verb yahada that it means *effort*, to execute a work especially difficult, and to *fight*. Yihad it means the combat for the Islam”. We believe this word is the key of the fight or "holy war" against not believers of Islam, since the interpretation of this word marks the difference between people who believe that the Yihad is a spiritual and personal to obey the laws of Allah and people who believe that is a physical and aggressive fight, in which the intention is to defend the Islam and to win more followers for the religion.

In accordance with the previous thing it is possible to say that a word can change the external perception of other cultures opposite to the Arab/Muslim culture. How a bad interpretation of an order of Allah can affect; when man is thinking he is doing the thing rights.

Consequences

The different stereotypes about Muslim woman and related of the war in Allah’s name, have caused that the western world created a distorted image of the real Arab/Muslim culture, because only the negative aspects like "terrorism" and the maltreatment for Muslim woman are the general knowledge of most of people.

Additional to this, the mass media are not of big help, because means of communication distort the facts, and they do not show the real aspects that compose the Arab/Muslim culture, causing that the negative aspects are the "remarkable ones" in the moment of reading or listening about the Arab world, and consistently it generates a scorn to people who prophet Islam, and this scorn can generate discrimination or violence acts to Arabs/Muslim people.

A WHOLE CULTURE VICTIM OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

Discrimination is a fact so daily that is usually accepted like normal in our context; we had not gone so far as to believe that whole culture could be affected massively by disparaging comments and because of the absence of information and interaction, Arabs/Muslims that live in Western often are rejected, which could be considered an aberrant situation for such a prosperous culture, perhaps we have judged without knowing.

Interculturality affected by stereotypes

It is the lack of information what has affected a process known as interculturality, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2013) explained that:

Intercultural describes what occurs when members of two or more different cultural groups (of whatever size, at whatever level) interact and influence one another in some fashion, whether in person or through various mediated forms. Included in a broad definition of the term would be international political or economic interactions, when members from two or more countries interact or influence one another in some fashion. (p. 11-12).

When this concept is analyzed it is easy to see the image of an Arab/ Muslim person trying to survive in a western country where the interculturality process is broken, and it will never be the same again, since the youngest Arab/Muslims generations began suffering discrimination, began also a new Concept to be accepted, “Islamophobia” according to Weller (2011) stated,” The word is not ideal, but is recognizably similar to ‘xenophobia’ and ‘Europhobia’, and is a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and therefore to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims”(p.46).

After the events of 11 September 2001, specially in United States fear was surrounding between the Americans, and it is understandable, the attacks left million dead people nevertheless we think that the victims hidden from this tragedy have been up to today the Muslims, who after this fact have been chased and ill-treated almost without any opportunity to defend themselves and the saddest, because of erroneous information that stands around wars done in name of Allah.

In many countries of the world, after September 11 the repulsion against the Arab/ Muslim came up to such a point that their rights were violated, they are denigrated, and their

life in society was affected for example ,Weller (2011) describes one situation in which Arab/Muslim people are treated as enemies:

Muslims in Britain adults and children were attacked, physically and verbally. They were punched, spat at, hit with umbrellas at bus stops, publicly pelted with fruit and vegetables beside they were called murderers, and were excluded from social gatherings or the situation lived in high schools in United States where students overheard comments like “let’s kill all those Arabs”,” I hate those camels”.(p.44)

The situation in the United States tends to be more radical, since in this country the citizens have a high sense of belonging and the most minimal attack against the nationalistic feeling might create effects as negative as those which happen now with the Arab/Muslims and the bad perception they have around the world; this is clear in this phrase stated by Semaan (2014) “notions of patriotism after the September 11 attacks have distorted the life of American and Arab American citizens, also the September attacks reinforced negative pre-existing attitudes”(p.28).

These negative attitudes have been reinforced by the image of the Muslims like terrorists which has been spread in movies, more specially in Hollywood where the villain, the terrorist of the history, the Kamikaze is always the image of a Muslim, an image that ends up by affecting not an individual but the whole culture, it seems to us that Hollywood is used as strategy to manipulate the information, and disseminate the information widely; However, the most negative aspect is that societies create stereotypes without enough information which causes that a movie leads us to believe that what we are watching is the real life.

According to Elayan (2005) the image of Arabs/Muslims as terrorist is so repeated in films that at least it has been documented in Hollywood 900 Films portraying Arabs in negative and offensive manner;12 films has positive characters, and 53 even-handed, and Hollywood has used films as a dangerous tool for teaching audience about but stereotypes(p.9).The percentage continues being high in comparison with positive stereotypes, and if we take into account that movies are watched for millions of people every day, it is also possible imagine the damage caused daily for this culture apparently, nobody has clear the consequences, but it does not exist someone who want to stop them in order to clean their image and make life of Arabs/Muslims more comfortable in other countries.

All this kind of wrong perceptions that comes from Films or media have a controversial contribution to bad stereotypes, in any case those are not the only ones, this culture has been

victim of associations related to terrorist groups such as ISIS, which also has contributed to bad treatment around the world and Islamophobia, we think is probably that information about this terrorist group is focused on war and violence, terms that for Arab/Muslim people is completely unfamiliar.

Firstly, it is important understand what ISIS is; according to Rukh-Ali (2015):

This terrorist group was established in 2004 in Iraq as a division of Al Qaeda, and was rebranded as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham)The founder, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, ruled the Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda for many years. His methods were more brutal than those of Al Qaeda As a result of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, ISIS began to gain supporters, which led to a rise in sectarian violence. (p.6)

This one could be a brief introduction to one of the most harmful stereotypes for the Arab/Muslims, the relation between a terrorist group with a culture that promotes peace, it is not helpful for Arabs/Muslims try to defend an image when ISIS breaching human rights, and promote the terror, Islam religion does not sacrifice humans, because the one who does it will be condemned eternally by Allah, hence ISIS is rejected by those who practice the Islam.

The Imam Carlos Sanchez assures that:

ISIS was created for USA, Saudi Arabia, turkey to destabilize Bashar al-Ásad president of Syria, in view of he did not accept the capitalist system, ISIS has been mainly a fallacy from USA to attack the terrorism (Arab/Muslim terrorism), ISIS cannot be included in Islam since they do not know the´Fatiha´´ the first prayer in the Sura (Chapter in Koran). (Appendix 1)

ISIS is a group against Islam if we compare it with the peace, and the respect for the life written in the Koran we would not find any similarity facts like for example, clarion Project (2015) cited an example of those criminal aspects:

They usually take the older women to a makeshift slave market and try and sell them. The younger girls, basically they ... are raped or married off to fighters. It's based on temporary marriages, and once these fighters have had sex with these young girls, they just pass them on to other fighters. (p.30)

All those criminal acts are not according with Islam religion, which is in defense of life and peace they are not members, and they do not agree with the damage this terrorist group has done to the society, they just want to be free to pray to God, they are not thinking in

violence, and even when this religion is designated as fanatic or even when crimes are made in name of God, Islam just dreams one day humans can find the paradise. The Qur'an states and support the previous idea "Who so ever kills a human being, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind and who so ever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind"(as cited in Crescent Peace Society, n.d, p.2).

Consequences

Arab/Muslim culture has been victim of Islamophobia as a consequence of a bad image spread around the world; which has caused many problems with interaction and adaption in other cultures, it is difficult when an Arab/Muslim try to have a better life outside of his/her country of origin because they are not accepted and people is full of mistrust.

Another, it is the wide distribution of information, in which many data is manipulated and real facts thereby causing many people feel rejection, and misunderstood the real situation, beliefs and behaviors of this culture, then people are not acquiring enough information and they are providing wrong perceptions to another generations in western world.

Other consequence is the generalization and association with terrorist groups, causing that an Arab/Muslim person around the world can be listed as criminal therefore, society tend to create new stereotypes that stops and difficulty the interculturality process.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the present research about the different stereotypes related to Arab/Muslim culture and how those stereotypes affect cultural interactions we conclude:

The main stereotypes that affect the Arab/Muslim culture are related to the role of woman (submission, marriage, polygamy and the education), the word Jihad, and its double interpretation as Religion (submission to god), the Holy War (to fight against the person who does not profess the Islam) And all those stereotypes have established the negative image that the western world has about the Arab world.

In respect of stereotypes relate to Muslim woman it is possible to conclude that woman has all the power of decision. For this reason, she is free of tensions about what she can wear, whom she wants to marry, if she wants to work, if she wants to study and especially if she agrees with polygamy; according to our research, Islam liberates women from the slavery and subjugation caused by men, granting woman dignity, beauty and honor, in spite of the mass media think , and Hollywood movies have shown, unfortunately this resources have caused a wrong perception in western world where people think that Muslim women are slave of her husband and her religion.

The erroneous interpretation of the Arab word Jihad has caused that Western world makes a relation between Islam and terrorist acts. Many Muslims believe that the word Jihad is to fight against not believers of Islam, and against the nations that want to impose the capitalist system in the Arab countries, but not all the Muslims interpret this word with fight; it exists a different consideration related with a spiritual effort to follow and worship Allah This disagreement about the real meaning of the word Jihad has caused that the most of people believe that the Holy War is against North America.

This culture has suffered the consequences from Islamophobia, which have affected the interaction and adaption to other cultures, Islamophobia is a term that has become more common in our context, Western world is full of bad stereotypes. Therefore, Arab/Muslim people in their daily living have more difficulties to be adapted and accepted; it means, this is causing they return to their Arab countries, due to our discrimination these innocent people are sent to suffer a war in which it supposed they are involved, but they just want to live in peace.

According to the Imam Carlos Sanchez of the mosque Estambul (Colombian believer of the Islam for 36 years) it is essential to know about Arab/Muslim culture, as it is important to search for the truth about the information given; many times the mass media distort the information defending the capitalism with the target to obtain profits and the power's control, obtaining false testimonies for the absence of knowledge.

On the other hand, investigate concepts, such as Islam that explains the correct way to act for achieving the peace and having a more prosperous way of life, distinguish God's way and always search the truth about God, with the intention to clarify what the Islam religion is, it does not mean terrorism, it means the divine guide towards the truth.

"The war is not against the Islam, it is an economical War"

By Carlos Sanchez Imam Estambul mosque.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Interview with Carlos Sanchez Imam of Estambul mosque, he is Muslim 37 years ago, in the interview were answered several questions around his perception about different stereotypes over the Arab/Muslim culture.

How do you feel in other countries, is it accepted his religion?

Imam:

In other countries is the same as in Colombia, I was catholic and in Latin America is around the 50% of catholic but the mass media really affected the perception of Arabs more than what people think. The Latin American culture accept other cultures without problem, in 1991|people did not have religious freedom, the political constitution assured that the only religion could be Catholicism. Nowadays the situation is very different.

The real problem of discrimination is when countries are stereotyped about fact they have not done for example, Palestinians were exiled by Jewish they continue being killed even though they are the real victims of the terrorism or an current even as Syria which is designated as violent country, what people have not seen is that Syria is attacked for other countries, extracting oil and gas. They are treat as terrorist to justify a capitalist system beside they are discriminated not for their religion but other countries used the excuse of terrorism for stealing their goods.

What stereotypes do you consider exist around his culture?

The globalization has tried to involve Arab countries: However, it has been difficult Arab countries adopt this system, so countries like USA have created the word terrorism to invade these countries with the excuse they have weapons. They start attacking Arab countries destroy buildings, streets, houses everything, schools because USA was looking for weapons of mass destruction, The first thing is positioning and American leader to allow the consumerism in Arab world, and second USA come to countries they have destroyed to restore, they find oil and start to steal it, and what happens after USA is the savior and benefactor of all the destruction, people hear from mass media what they want, not what really happens.

War is not against Islam, it is an economical war to increase consumerism around Arab countries as it has been a difficult. ISIS was created for USA, Saudi Arabia, Turkey to destabilize Bashar al-Ásad president of Syria, in view of he did not accept the capitalist system, ISIS has been mainly a fallacy from USA to attack the terrorism (Arab/Muslim terrorism), ISIS cannot be included in Islam since they do not know the "Fatiha" the first prayer in the Sura (Chapter in Koran). The word terrorism is used to open the opportunity to steal and damage a culture to make invasions and steal peaceful countries which after are recognized for people in countries like Colombia as terrorists.

In western world exist the stereotype of women in role of submission, what do you think about?

The capitalist system specially USA, and other countries like France, England, Germany have the economic principle of consumerism, people follow and are slave of this movement, for that reason it is created days like birthday, mother's day, father's day, Christmas, carnivals etc, so people are buying every day. All this is based in a consumerism that can be considered immoral, women here are really victims of that, they are used to sell products, they are shown in Miss universe, they are not admired for their beauty but they are treated as sexual objects,

We find a wrong perception about sexual relations, women are always with different men, it does not exist a sexual responsibility but it exist a woman with terrible values, women in this society is judged every day but men are able to do what they want.

If we take as an example the Islam and this religion one day is established in Colombia all this consumerism simply will not exist anymore, because alcohol is not sold, Motels are not opened so everything will be according to God and what he is in Koran, even in the Bible it is said that alcohol and parties and Motels are sins, but here Bible is not considered with all the respect.

In the Islam that consumerism does not exist that is why that Muslims and the same religion is considered as bad. We do not want women to sell products when women cover their body is because she considers, she cannot be exploited for the economy, for us, like Muslims women have all the freedom to go university and study, we find teachers, lawyers, doctors, it is not logic that women can be slaves of Islam or Arab men because in total exist 1.600 millions of Muslims, and the 60% or more are women, so who could abuse them if they have the power, and they are free?

In Islam does not exist a single mother men are responsible for them, her husband ,father, uncle cousin do not care ,men must take care as a treasure given by God ,contrary to what happens in western world.

What happened if woman do not cover his body?

We are talking from liberty, she can choose what she wears, but I can assure if that woman is Muslim never will be in the street without Hiyab, it is a way of life, she accepts to be respect.

What about polygamy and marriage?

It is important to clarify marriage in Islam never is made if it exists sexual desire; body is not the most important, men have an obligation of all the needs women can have in her life, men only get married when they have all the necessary to get a good home, to give a good future to his family, relationships, here are finished because there is a tendency to look for the physical appearance,for that reason marriages finish after six months, love is forgotten as the main aspect to get a good future.

Obviously, men can look for a women with specific characteristics like: divorce once or single mother, the idea of marriage is help women to be happy, if men help women he will get the paradise. For example, in wars many women are widows, men do not choose other wife for pleasure, he choose her because he knows she is in a difficult situation and he has the economic means, and he feels is a way of being a good man.

It is important man can be equal with all his wives, if one of them have a car all the wives must have a car in order to be good husband, kids are also treated with equal love.

Have the September 11th affected the perception people have about Arab/Muslims?

That is the same fallacy as in the foundation of ISIS, all this is an invention to enter in these countries and after attack them. Islam does not profess violence but as USA assured were Muslims who destroyed the Twin Towers, all Muslims are terrorists. It is simple, God will not accept someone kill other, kill one human is kill all the mankind.

The mass media is manipulated for USA, Films are made there with the intention to distort information and leave the image of this culture in front of other countries as terrible. I

think USA is promoting human rights but this country is constantly violating rights in all the world.

To conclude:

What message give you the society to break these negative stereotypes?

First, acquire more information, due to United States control or manipulate the mass media, also for a capitalist system on a global scale; they are not in favor or interested in socialism and Islam. Besides, search the truth of the things, the mass media do not transmit the truth it is a form of work of the capitalist system so that the society is submitted to the mass media.

Second, clarify the meaning of Islam, which was born when god initiated the creation, Islam means submission, peace and obedience to god, also it is the biggest religion of the world and more ancient; When god did the stars, the human being, the animals and the plants, he submitted them to his will and initiated the Islam, but he gave free will for the person who wants to continue the religion or not, nobody can submit to others to do what he/she wants, God did not give us this will, he is the only god whom directs us .

Third, come to god to know the truth, there is only one truth, thus thousand religions exist, and it is not possible continue a religion just for tradition, there are many discriminations and attacks to the Muslims causing the bad image and distortion of the information.

Appendix 2

