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Islamic-Catholic Relations: A Local and Global Comparison

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Thematic Area: World Religions

Project Abstract:

In our modern world, religion remains one of the most important aspects of an individual's life, no matter what faith they choose to celebrate. Given the world's increasing interconnectedness and continuing globalization, members of different faiths are becoming more exposed to communities of one another. In modern times, the disagreements between faiths continue just as they have in the past; however there are more efforts on each side to overcome differences and establish a peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. Two of the most prominent faiths in today's world are Catholicism and Islam, which have many differences between them. As Americans, we have witnessed firsthand, religious discrimination and stereotyping against the growing Muslim population in the United States, especially since 9/11. Unfortunately members of each faith continue to stereotype and meet each other with hostility. Through all this ignorance and animosity between Islam and Catholicism, there are members of each faith whose goal is to establish a peaceful coexistence. We wish to shed light upon such positive efforts. This paper, written equally from the perspective of being members of the Providence, R.I. and global community promotes positive dialogue and understanding between Muslims and Catholics at home and abroad.

Islamic-Catholic Relations: A Local and Global Comparison

In our modern world, religion remains one of the many important aspects of an individual's

life, no matter what faith they choose to celebrate. Given the world's increasing interconnectedness and continuing globalization, members of different faiths are becoming more exposed to differing communities. In modern times, the disagreements between faiths continue just as they have in the past. However today, there seems to be more efforts on each side to overcome differences and establish a peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. Two of the most prominent faiths in today's world are Catholicism and Islam, between which many differences exist. As Americans, we have witnessed firsthand religious discrimination and stereotyping directed towards the growing Muslim population in the United States, especially in a post 9/11 world. Unfortunately, members of each faith continue to meet each other with hostility. Despite the ignorance and animosity among Muslims and Catholics, there are members of each faith whose general goal is to establish peaceful coexistence. As global studies students, we wish to shed light upon such positive efforts. We additionally hope to discover how we, as both global and local citizens, can promote positive dialogue and understanding among Muslims and Catholics at home and abroad.

The local region of Providence, Rhode Island demonstrates an overwhelmingly dominant Christian population, to which Catholicism plays a major role. As students attending the Dominican institution of Providence College, it has become our goal to analyze the interfaith relations between Catholicism and the rising Islamic minority here in Providence. Both stemming out of Judeo origins, Islam and Catholicism have a long list of similarities. However, from our previous knowledge of today's world, the two religions also have a history of disagreement. In starting our research of Islamic-Catholic relations, we sought to connect the local community of Providence and the surrounding Rhode Island area to larger global patterns of interfaith relations.

Originally we believed Providence would serve as an accurate microcosm of cooperative

interactions between these two faiths compared to the global level. Consequently, Providence would therefore serve as an archetypal model for peaceful interactions among these differing faiths. What we discovered however was that the levels of interactions between Islam and Catholicism is in fact very vast. Because we never viewed any apparent hostilities in our local community firsthand, we anticipated Providence acting as a representation of peaceful cooperation and positive dialogue between Islam and Catholicism. We also discovered that Providence and the greater Rhode Island area merely avoids hostility between the two groups because of the underlying American societal values of tolerance and freedoms of religion and expression. Through our own research, we have come to conclude that the rest of the world lies either below or above the coexistence exhibited on our local scale. Providence therefore represents some type of middle level. Based on our discoveries and conclusions, we will outline our own methods to assess relations between Muslims and Catholics, and hope that through education, each group can come to achieve a true understanding and respect for one another.

Before arriving at such conclusions we yearned to study Islam and Catholicism, two of the great religions of the world. Knowing the enormity of these faiths on the global level, we originally aimed to investigate whether this enormity is as prevalent in the state of Rhode Island. Primarily, our goal in this research process was to discover whether or not Providence serves as a microcosm to the globe in terms of the Islam-Catholic dialogue. We aimed to link local and global issues involving this inter-faith dialogue. We strove to answer the simple, yet complex, question of: what is the effect of this relationship on the local level?

Though we were not certain about the amount of interaction between Muslims and Catholics in the local environment, we anticipated that our study of the community would reveal a relationship

free of animosity. The Northeast/New England region of the United States consists mostly of Christians. In particular, Catholicism in Providence remains very popular. As residents of such an area, we felt as though there may be a high level of ignorance and lack of exposure to non-Christian faiths, particularly the Islamic faith.

In a post 9/11 world, the Muslim-Catholic affiliation seems predominant more than ever, especially in the United States. Because the discord between these two faiths was not a primary concern prior to the events of September 11th, Americans were not overly engaged in the topic. Often times, people viewed the topic from the outside in, looking at merely the global perspective. The interest rarely exceeded this global perception. However, our objective is to do the opposite. We wished to attain a view in which we look from the inside out. What is the local nature of the Muslim-Catholic relationship?

Islam and Catholicism are similar in their ideologies and origins, and peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the two is quite possible. In looking at our local community within the city of Providence, and even in Rhode Island as a state, it can be found that Catholics and Muslims do have tolerance and respect for one another's beliefs and practices. Our hope is to expose what we have perceived as positive interactions between these groups and compare them to global Islamic-Catholic relations. Not only do we wish to learn more about each faith's perceptions of the other, but we would also predominantly like to determine how they deal with their differences, locally and globally.

Inter-faith relations between the Muslim and Catholic communities on the local as well as global setting encompass an extremely diverse spectrum of issues. The main issues that we analyzed dealt with social and societal interaction. We tried and incorporate a multitude of different elements on the local scale through answering questions such as; how welcoming is the Catholic majority in our

community of the Muslim minority and vice versa; and does this affect the conforming process into the larger American society, or even into the regional one? On the global scale of this issue we incorporated such things as: how does a state's dominating religion affect and modify the state's foreign and economic policies when dealing with states of a different religious majority, and how does the opposing nation react to these differences specifically imposed on it due to this difference.

In researching the local community's Islamic-Catholic relations, we set up two interviews, each with a local school that affiliated with one of the faiths. LaSalle Academy (affiliated with the La Salle order of Catholicism), which is a high school within the city of Providence. The Islamic School, Rhode Island, our other interview site, is a kindergarten through eighth grade school located just outside of Providence in West Warwick. With each interview we hoped to learn more about the relations between the citizens of the Providence and greater Rhode Island areas, and felt that interviews with current instructors and teachers would provide immense insight into that field. Being highly educated and geared towards helping to bring up the youth of the local community of Rhode Island, such interviewees gave us very in depth looks at Muslim and Catholics in the local area.

Our first interview, at LaSalle Academy, was with the head of the Religion department (Edward Sirois) who engaged us in a very in-depth discussion on the modern direction of Catholicism, both globally and locally. We learned that the LaSalle Academy greatly values educating its students in other faiths of the world. This is evident in their world religions requirement for seniors and their annual invitation to speaker Imam Farid Nasari of the Islamic faith, who has given programs at the Academy for the past seven years. The LaSallian School also maintains a strong sense of community service and education of various groups of people in the local and global communities. They sponsor several programs for their students that include traveling to their sister school in Kenya, as well as

service and social justice programs, often suggested or even built by students. Not only do they educate their students on the diversity of the world, which contains the education of Islam, but they also make conferences readily available to their instructors. Their dedication to the education of diversity is quite evident in their mission statement which declares, "La Salle Academy has as its mission the education of young men and women of diverse backgrounds…[and] strives to create a vital community where its students, coming from varied socioeconomic, ethnic, and family backgrounds, educate one another by mutual understanding and respect, openness of mind in dialogue, and acceptance of the uniqueness and limitations of all," (http://www.lasalle-academy.org). This became the main direction of our discussion with Sirois, who was very engaging in his discussion of the development of Catholicism in relation the Islamic faith. Just as we had hoped, the religion teacher mentioned social, economic, and political relations between the two groups. This revealed his outlook that religious differences are not the only source of disagreement between Muslims and Catholics. Overall, we gained great insight as to the goals of the school within the local community and how they relate to the global institution of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our second interview, at the Islamic School of Rhode Island, was with Najd Benwahhoud, a teacher and administrator. This interview took a different path than our first in that it was much more aimed towards a discussion of the two separate faiths, their connections to each other, and Islam in the United States. Najd, himself an Islamic immigrant from Morocco, was able to give us great insight into what Muslim Americans must undergo as members of the minority in a culture. In general, the American culture has little exposure and knowledge about Islam. He additionally spoke of a positive and educational perspective of Islam, which was very enlightening. This interview did not match our anticipations in that we were not able to find answers that were less directed at religious differences for disagreement between Muslims and Catholics. Although we did not get all of the results that we had

originally hoped for from this interview, Najd brought to our attention his belief of many working for Catholic-Muslim relations. Furthermore, he believes that education is ultimately what can resolve the discourse between these two prominent world faiths. After further reflecting, Najd's dedication to giving us insight into Islam is not as divergent from our original goals as we may have thought. Being an immigrant and a member of the minority, Najd spoke with us about how people here have perceived him because of his faith and background. It was not surprising that he wanted to make a good impression of his faith on us, the interviewers. A look into what the American Muslim typically goes through enabled us to further develop our theory of a general lack of knowledge that local Catholics have in relation to Muslims. Our main conclusion from this interview was thus the idea of education becoming the bridge to a truly peaceful cooperation among these faiths.

In terms of secondary research, there was much information supporting tolerance pertaining to the Islamic-Catholic dialogue. This tolerance included a common goal to gain acceptance and forbearance in the future. One article stated, "Muslims and Catholics are natural partners in the work of justice and peace" (Fethullah Gulen). Both faiths have a belief in the unity of God and both Muhammad and Jesus advocated for the practice of peace. There is "a common platform of belief which puts Muslims and Catholics together in a world where the work for justice and peace is paramount" (Fethullah Gulen). Muslims and Catholics are therefore natural collaborators when it comes to certain issues; for example eradicating poverty.

One would think that due to the commonalities found in both Catholicism and Islam that the two faiths would share acceptance of one another. Although this statement is not completely false, it seems unfortunate that faiths of the same foundation do not cooperate globally. Nevertheless,

examining the parallels between the teachings of Catholics and the teachings of Muslims seems beneficial. “The first thing that brings Catholics and Muslims together in faith is their common monotheism” (Fethullah Gulen). The Catholic Church declares in *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from the Second Vatican Council, “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind.” From this it is known that the Council gave recognition to the monotheistic nature of Islam, which can be seen as a “first step” to ultimate acceptance. In 1972, Pope Paul VI stated in a speech, “We would like you to know that the Church recognizes the riches of the Islamic faith—a faith that binds us to the one God.” He went on in 1976 to refer to Muslims as “Our brothers in faith and in one God.” In 1994, Pope John Paul II stated, “We assure our Muslim brethren, who freely laid claim to faith in Abraham, that we wish to collaborate with them…in working for peace and justice which alone can give glory to God.”

One of the most interesting facts about the current global state of affairs between the Catholic Church and the Muslim community as a whole is that hierarchy of each religion has issued declarations promoting the peaceful coexistence between the two. While there is no official equivalent in the Muslim religion to the Catholic clergy, an assembly of over a hundred of the most respected leaders in the faith wrote to the Catholic clergy and community in 2007 lobbying for peace between the two. The plea was made in the format of a letter that was titled in its substance as *A Common Word between Us and You.* It was meant to bring a start to the end of this constantly evolving and intensifying conflict that seems to reach all corners of our world. The opening paragraph best describes the overall theme, in which the Muslim community states,

> Muslims and Christians together make up well over half of the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between
> Muslims and Christians. (2)

This quote reiterates the idea that at the center of global conflict is the issue of peaceful coexistence of the Muslim and Catholic global and local communities. This perception infers that until this issue is resolved there cannot be a lasting state of peace in the world.

The Catholic Church's official declaration on the subject occurred over 44 years ago, in October of 1965. The declaration titled *Nostra Aetate* as proclaimed by his Holiness Pope Paul IV promotes the notion of maintaining good relations with our Muslim neighbors, as well as any other individuals or nations that share a different religious belief in attempt to mirror the mind and actions of Christ. It is conveyed best in the closing paragraph of the declaration that states,

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men, (14) so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven. (4)

This clearly makes the claim that in order to more nearly follow the teachings of Christ, which should be a goal of all practicing Catholics, the effort should be made to extend a welcoming and peaceful hand to individuals and groups that share a different faith than the one that they have in the hope that it may lead to peace among all men and nations.

The notion that both groups need to be tolerant and pursue a state of peace clearly has been made and identified within both religious groups. But the reality of our world is in complete contrast to these well-intended ideals. The state of world affairs clearly contradicts Catholic Doctrine and the wishes of many of the most prominent leaders of the Muslim Faith.

The similarity of the two faiths can be clearly seen in each respective holy text. For example, the Holy Qur'an states, "Seek help through patience (and fasting which requires and enables great patience), and through the Prayer. Indeed the Prayer is burdensome, but not for those humbled by their reverence to God." Likewise, the New Testament states, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you." There are an incredible number of shared fundamental principles between the two. Such principles include working together in support of human dignity, working for human development, working for the elimination of poverty, and building peace nationally and internationally. To cite another example from the Holy texts, The Holy Qur'an states, "Make peace between you brothers and keep from disobedience from God." The Holy Bible states, "Agree with one another, live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you." Each of these passages from the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an clearly demonstrate that there is a great degree of similarity between the two faiths extending into their most fundamental principles and values.

In 1993, Pope John Paul II spoke to Islamic representatives in Assisi referring to the war torn regions of the Balkans, "Both Christianity and Islam inculcate in us a commitment to persevere in the pursuit of justice and peace for them and all victims of conflict." To coincide with this statement by the former Pope pushing for an end to conflict between the two religions is another and very similar quote made by one of the foremost authorities on inter-faith relations, "In response to the God who is

peace, and in following the directives of the Prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ, Muslims and Christians are united in their common vocation to be peace-makers, on family, neighborhood, national and global levels" (Fethullah Gulen). In essence this means that Catholics and Muslims should be natural collaborators.

The reality, however, is that they are not. Yet despite the unfortunate truth of the relationship, there seems to be a call for acceptance of the minutely different interpretations concerning the belief in God that Catholics and Muslims have as exemplified I the following passage,

"Other possibilities for interpretation exist which may well be equally defensible within the context of the larger tradition, as the new tradition of globalization steadfastly stands for a good example, and thus, depending on the authoritative consensus of the community of believers (local, regional, global, national, transnational or international) may be equally or even more orthodox in nature" (Fethullah Gulen).

There seems to be a general aim by inter-faith dialogue enthusiasts for cooperation, mutual understanding, and trust. "From the perspective of the Gulen movement, no passage of the Qur'an or Bible should be interpreted to suggest that any other group of people, by virtue of their beliefs and cultural practices, live outside the relationship of God" (Fethullah Gulen). There should, therefore, be no distinction between "believers" and "unbelievers". One tradition cannot be considered better than the other. This is the view of tolerance that peace enthusiasts aim to achieve.

In order to achieve tolerance, we need to use "all available tools of historical research and even historical development to uncover key elements of the original context of a given passage's revelation and a given passage's composition" (Fethullah Gulen). People should partake in real life experiences.

A prime example of this is demonstrated in Morgan Spurlock's documentary series *30 Days: Muslims in America*. The particular episode, which concerns the Catholic-Muslim dialogue, involves a Christian man named David Spacey taking on the role of a Muslim for thirty straight days. From this documentary, we learn how Catholics stereotype Muslims. Dave himself stated that he imagined Muslim men holding AK-47's and Muslim women with "sheets" over their heads. Dave leaves his home in West Virginia to spend thirty days in Dearborn, Michigan, the most populated Muslim town in the United States. In fact, one third of the town's population is Muslim. Dave stated, "It might as well be Baghdad." Throughout the transition, Dave often felt like he was compromising his beliefs in his own God by playing the role of a Muslim. It's found in the documentary that many Americans suffer from "Islamophobia", especially after the events of September 11th. Dave found that in public, he had to often defend himself to fellow Americans. Furthermore, Dave discovered that a lot of the tension between Catholics and Muslims in Dearborn involved the mosque's call to prayer. Rather than church bells, the mosque's call to prayer involved someone singing into a loud speaker. Although this is the Muslim equivalent to church bells, it has sparked much controversy ranging from simple complaints to death threats. Even more, it was learned that the term "jihad" does not mean terrorist. Rather, the term refers to one focusing solely on your God. Dave admitted that he himself was a jihad during this experience. It was interesting to learn that the U.S. media takes a lot of these foreign terms and promotes them as being used in solely bad contexts. Nonetheless, the documentary served as insight on the inter-faith dialogue in terms of faiths' view on one another.

During the course of our research our initial hypothesis suggesting the local status of Catholic- Islamic relations acts as a microcosm for the global status has been proven to be false. Through an extensive research period incorporating meticulously collected data from primary as well as secondary resources, we have revealed that there is a gap between the degree of understanding of

the subject that exists between the local setting of Rhode Island and the world as a whole. We have found that within the state of Rhode Island there is an atmosphere of tolerance. In practical application this means that the average citizen acknowledges the right of his or her peers within the community to exercise which ever religion or cultural practices that they choose as long as it does not interfere with their own or attempt to indoctrinate others in a blatant and obnoxious manner. Unfortunately, within the state there is not a significant degree of what we call understanding. In the community, members are ignorant to the practices and do not understand the purpose, motive, and details of the religious and cultural practices of others that do not share their own. This leads to a degree of separation within the state that does not allow for the full assimilation of both groups into one community.

Outside of the state of Rhode Island there is a status of what we will refer to as ignorance and indifference. In the vast majority of nations, in both the first and third world, the average citizen makes no attempt to understand those that are different. They very rarely tolerate other's religious and cultural practices to such an extent as they irrefutably ignore and despise their right to exercise such practices whether protected by law or not. We believe this atmosphere of ignorance is the primary factor responsible for the issues between the global Catholic and Islamic relations. This degree of ignorance comes currently from fear. The vast majority of humans have a certain level of fear of change. When a nation observes a very dramatic influx of an unknown group of people, they are unfamiliar with the immediate traditionalism. Their instinctive response is often to treat them with hostility.

There is a similarity between the local and global sectors in reference to inter-faith relations. In both realms there is no initiative to reach the level of understanding that would allow for a fully assimilated community and eliminate many of the political, social, and domestic issues that are

currently afflicting societies all over the globe. We have discovered that in a few cases, however, there is a gradual willingness to achieve a level of understanding. Yet in both settings there is a lack of means to achieve this goal. Relatively very few people have taken the initiative or even interest in educating the public about other religions and cultures. Taking into account the current global political status, a degree of understanding of foreign cultures and especially unfamiliar religions has never been so important in settling international and regional turmoil.

In assessing the activities of the local community, we ultimately found that, put simply; the local does not reflect the global. The local community reflects a tolerance to the inter-faith dialogue between Muslims and Catholics. If the local were to properly reflect the global, then there would be evident animosity between the two faiths. Although local Muslims and local Catholics are connected to their larger global institutions, their actions in the local community do not mirror the global actions. Global issues tend to initiate a ripple effect when it comes to the local community. For example, the events of September 11th heightened animosity between Muslims and Catholics worldwide. Yet in terms of the local conflict, the effects of that event spurred things such as stereotyping and racist sentiments. The event led Americans to view other Muslim Americans as solely Muslims, and not at all Americans.

At this point, local Muslims and Catholics seem to be in a state of tolerance. There is no progression or worsening, rather, the dialogue between the two faiths seems to be at some sort of stand still. There is no significant interaction or communication. In our two interviews, we found that the Catholic interviewee was very quick to address the things the Catholic school is doing to educate its students about other faiths, such as Islam. He was ready and willing to express to us interviewers that the school and its students are striving to be educated on other religions. Yet at the Muslim school, the

interviewee spoke about the Catholic faith from more of a pessimistic point of view. At one point he stated that the conflict between Muslims and Catholics would continue until the end of time. Whether or not this statement is valid is another issue entirely. Nevertheless, our interviewee from the Catholic school never went down this road during our discussion. Therefore, it can be concluded that in terms of the local conflict, the water is hot, but not boiling. Globally, the conflict seems to be boiling.

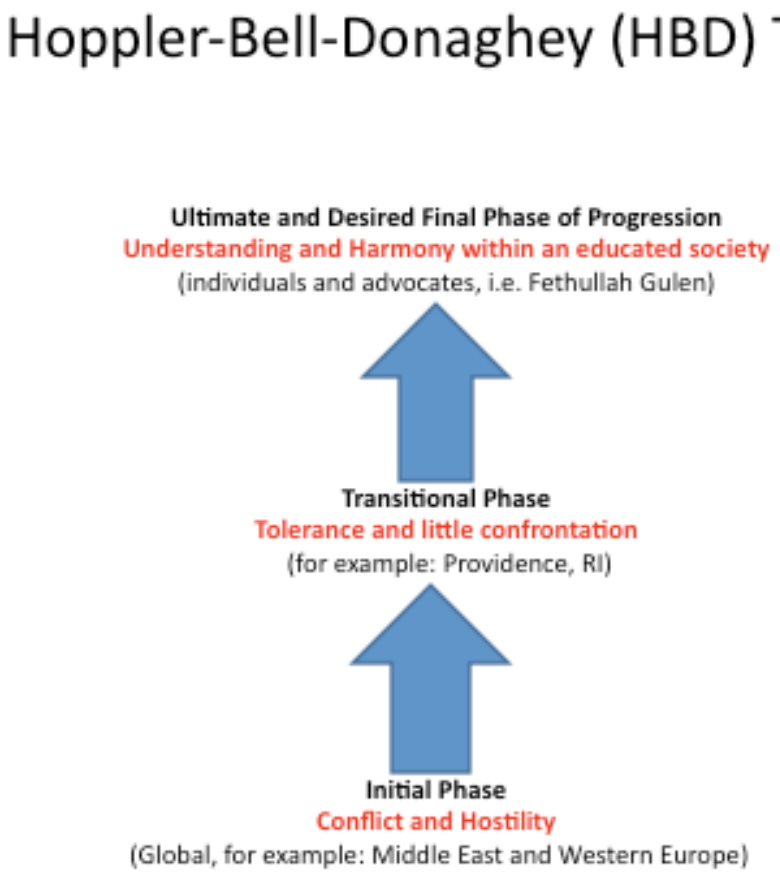
After gathering our research, both primary and secondary, we came to a somewhat different conclusion than what we had originally anticipated. Our thesis originally outlined our goal to discover whether or not Providence, and the greater community of Rhode Island, could serve as a microcosm to global relations between Muslims and Catholics. We anticipated that our research would confirm our assumption that Providence and Rhode Island were the microcosm for the larger, worldwide relations between Muslims and Catholics; however we got a slightly different result.

In each interview of our primary research, we gained information, which provided us with an in-depth view of the local community's interfaith relations. When first outlining our project, we believed that we would discover that within Rhode Island, the relationship between Muslims and Catholics would be one of tolerance and cooperation, as we did not perceive any animosity between two such groups. In comparing the local to the global, we originally predicted that our local community would very closely relate to the global efforts focused on overcoming the differences between Islam and Catholicism. Meanwhile, we expected to find that our local community would not reflect those factions of each faith. Around the world however, we discovered that they were in fact hostile towards one another. Just as we had predicted, our secondary research shed light upon both cooperation and animosity occurring between Muslims and Catholics on the global scale. We found evidence, on sides, encouraging positive relations between members of each faith, and additionally

discovered sources of animosity and unwillingness to coexist from each perspective.

In drawing these conclusions we found that while Providence does in fact reflect a larger national and global pattern of tolerance and coexistence, it in no way should serve as a model for how relations should be between these two faiths. Our local community not yet achieved the true cooperation and acceptance of each faith for the other that leaders are seeking. To assess such an interesting dynamic between our findings on the local and global level, we have constructed a guideline to evaluate levels of understanding and cooperation between both faiths. This "Hoppler-Bell-Donaghey" theory as it has come to be known can be thought of as a ladder, containing a total of three steps as seen in the visual model

below.



As an individual, or as a group, moves up the ladder, they in turn come closer to what we have concluded to be the ultimate state of peace, cooperation and harmony among Muslims and Catholics. Those upholding a hostile relationship with members of the other faith are what we consider to be on the bottom rung of this "ladder" whose goal is to reach true acceptance, knowledge and cooperation between peoples. To continue with the imagery of a ladder, we place Providence, and the greater community of Rhode Island on the middle rung. While there is an aura of tolerance within Rhode Island, and generally throughout the United States, there is no true understanding and acceptance of one another between Islam and Catholicism. The overarching societal values of the United States are reflected in the relationship between Muslims and Catholics in the United States; each tolerates the other as there is a general consensus that each person is entitled to their own beliefs and that no one is to encroach or attack that right of another. However, a widespread lack of knowledge on each side of the other must be overcome to reach the final, top rung of our ladder. This notion was strongly supported in both our interviews at the LaSalle Academy and the Islamic School of Rhode Island. That utmost step is exemplified in the works of Fethullah Gulen, one of our main sources of secondary research, as well as others focused on achieving a positive and proactive solution through education and knowledge of each faith. When one reaches this final step, they have consequently overcome hostility and mere acknowledgement, which are representations of the first and second steps of the "Hoppler-Bell-Donaghey ladder", and learned that only a full education of diversity can bring people of different backgrounds to full acceptance. We predict that through education, hostility and ignorance can be overcome to give way to a state of understanding and cooperation.

Lack of awareness and education may be deemed the cause of this separation among Muslims and Catholics on the local and global levels. Individuals such as Fethullah Gulen and our

interviewee Brother Najd (Islamic School of Rhode Island) exemplify how one can be educated without delving into conflict. Brother Najd emphasized that in the U.S citizens have the right to freely express and practice their religion. Therefore, he has the right to practice his Muslim customs and the opportunity to educate himself on faiths like Catholicism. With this awareness comes tolerance. We discovered primarily that the state of Rhode Island is at a tolerant level, in terms of inter-faith relations between Muslims and Catholics. However, why is it that at the global level, there is conflict even when some individuals are educated and aware? The difference between local relations and global relations encompasses another issue entirely. When you have two countries in conflict with each other, it is not only differences in religion that become a prominent problem, but also differences in political practice. When it comes to global issues, one must remember that it is not only religion, but also politics that play a major role in inter-faith relations. The magnitude that politics play in regards to religion is another issue entirely, but for example our interviewee at LaSalle Academy believed that religious issues mask underlying political issues. He believed that it is not religion that sparks controversy, but rather politics. Religion is an easy way to express political confrontation. Locally, there are no prominent political issues and that is why there is such a distinction between global relations and local relations.

After discovering this changed role occupied by Rhode Island in relation to the global interactions between Islam and Catholicism, we have determined that the best way to overcome differences between these two prominent faiths is through education. Through our project we followed this ideal and in fact have discovered that some of our original assumptions and predictions were incorrect. If the issue preventing peaceful coexistence and cooperation between Muslims and Catholics is ignorance, this can be overcome by open-minded education of both groups and such a conclusion has been thoroughly supported by our research on Islamic-Catholic relations.

In conclusion, it seems necessary to recount our original thesis and aim of this study. Embarking on a journey involving the inter-faith relations between Muslims and Catholics seemed both challenging and rather controversial at the commencement of our research. However, as demonstrated, we put our best effort towards extensively researching this topic. As our inquiries and interest grew, we began to realize the magnitude of this particular issue in regards to the broad topic of modern day globalization. Although the ultimate conclusion of our research differed somewhat from our original thesis, we by no means disposed of the research we found supporting an alternative thesis. Rather, we utilized all of our findings to construct one final theory concerning not only inter-faith relations, but globalization as a whole.

Our original thesis concerned the narrow idea of Providence, Rhode Island serving as a microcosm to the world in terms of relations between Muslims and Catholics. Based on our research, it would be too easy and straightforward to simply declare that our findings did not support this thesis; therefore, the local area of Providence, Rhode Island does not serve as a microcosm on the global scale concerning inter-faith relations. Based on the conglomeration of research that we found, we developed the Hoppler-Bell-Donaghey Theory. Although this theory can be specifically applied to inter-faith relations, it can also be applied to globalization.

In terms of globalization, this Hoppler-Bell-Donaghey Theory is applicable to any general topic concerning modern day global conflicts. In essence, this is a theorized method to achieve tolerance and therefore peace. It is a building block approach to this aspired goal. By studying inter-faith relations among Muslims and Catholics, we were fortunate enough to have the realization that our conclusion concerning this narrow aspect of globalization can be applied to any global conflict, within reason. Essentially, this theory is emblematic of the significance of education on both the global and

local scale. It is interesting to pose questions like: if global and local citizens were truly aware and knowledgeable of opposing cultures, religions, and societies, would modern day global conflicts still exist as they do today? Would the standards of war differ? In other words, would we, as global citizens, have different values and principles? The fact that this theory strikes curiosity is an understatement in our group's opinion. Nevertheless, this global citizenship project has not only sparked interest, but engaged and educated our group of both worldly and local issues. As citizens of today's world, we are eager to embark on our journey concerning global studies with this new grasped perception.

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