

CHAPTER 3: BRAZILIAN WORKERS IN ARAB CULTURE

3.1 Introduction

In their report on Brazil at the Lausanne Conference for World Evangelization in 1974, Shedd and Landrey stated, “We understand that the greatest opportunity and responsibility in terms of Brazilian missionary work is in relation to those people with whom we have racial and linguistic affinity (Latin America, Africa, and other Portuguese-speaking peoples).”³¹⁶ At this stage in Brazil’s history, missions in the Arab-Muslim world was not a stated priority for the Brazilian evangelical church; rather, emphasis was placed on those regions and peoples that shared cultural proximity to Brazil. Indeed, as we have shown, many Brazilians in the twentieth century went to serve in Portugal as well as in the Portuguese-speaking countries of Southern Africa.

In the present chapter, we raise the question, what does it mean, culturally speaking, to be a Brazilian evangelical missionary in the Arab world? Forty-five past and present Brazilian evangelical workers were invited to comment and reflect upon their own “Brazilianness” and how they have adapted in the Arab world. The perspectives of ten Brazilian mission leaders have also been included. I have treated Brazil as an affinity bloc of cultures in which there is clear diversity as well as some elements of cohesiveness. I have approached the Arab world in the same way. Hence, the framework for discussing Brazilians in the Arab world has been to reflect upon two affinity blocs and to ask members of one group (Brazilians) to share their collective experiences living in a second group (the Arab world) specifically regarding seven aspects of culture that have clear missiological implications. They include: race, economics, time, communication, family, relationships, and spiritual worldview. After first consulting the appropriate cultural and missiological literature

³¹⁶ See Douglass, 1344; cf. Finley, 73.

and then listening to the experiences of Brazilian missionaries and mission leaders, it has become evident, culturally speaking, that Brazilians are not Arabs and that Brazilians must surely work to adapt culturally. However, it also appears that there is generally less cultural distance between the Brazilians surveyed and their Arab contexts than what is normally experienced by Western missionaries in the Arab world, allowing Brazilian evangelical work to be less intrusive.³¹⁷

The importance of studying the relationship of the missionaries' culture and that of their host cultures has been raised by a number of scholars. Finley writes:

Once missiologists start thinking about the factors in the missionary's native culture that should be taken into account in designing their training, the logical next step is to apply those same cultural factors in deciding where in the world missionaries from any given country are likely to be more effective. This could be done by comparing and contrasting characteristics of the missionary's native culture with characteristics of possible host cultures.³¹⁸

Keyes and Pate assert that there is a greater general cultural proximity between missionaries from the majority world and their host cultures.³¹⁹ Regarding Brazilian missionaries, Mordomo affirms that "Brazilians . . . generally have much more in common culturally with unreached peoples of the world than do the traditional sending nations from North America and Europe."³²⁰ Concerning the relationship between Brazilians and Arab-Muslims, Finley adds that from "both the literature and conversations [that] . . . I have had with missionaries and Arab Christians point to similarities between Brazilian and Muslim cultures."³²¹

³¹⁷ For more discussion on reducing the Gospel's intrusiveness, see Charles Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 359-60, 400.

³¹⁸ See Finley, 250.

³¹⁹ See Keyes and Pate, "Two-Thirds World Missions," 191.

³²⁰ See Mordomo, "Unleashing the Brazilian Missionary Force," in Steffen and Barnett, 219; also Steven Downey, "Ibero-Americans Reaching Arab-Muslims," *Lausanne World Pulse* <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/worldpulse/325> (accessed March 23, 2010)

³²¹ See Finley, 252. Though her concerns are not missiological, Arabist Margaret Nydell concludes a thorough discussion on Arab culture by asserting, "many people find it similar to life in the Mediterranean area and Latin America." See Nydell, *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern Times* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 1988, 2006), 191.

In short, following a brief discussion of culture in general, I will offer some qualifications about the difficult task of describing the cultures of the Arab world and Brazil and then reiterate the theoretical framework which will enable the discussion. As missiological concerns are driving this study, the aspects of culture being discussed are intentionally limited to seven areas. After an initial consideration of the influence of Arab culture on Brazil which has occurred as a result of significant immigration from the Arab world, these seven areas will be discussed, the Brazilian experiences in the Arab world will be narrated, and the subsequent missiological implications will be explored.

3.2 What is Culture?

Though there is a general consensus toward a definition of culture in missiological and anthropological literature within the evangelical tradition—where the present study is focused—it is nevertheless helpful to state what is meant by culture. The drafters of the Willowbank Report propose a helpful and rather thick definition:

Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.) and of institutions which express these beliefs values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, security and continuity.³²²

Lingenfelter and Mayers assert more succinctly that culture is “the conceptual design, the definitions by which people order their lives, interpret their experience, and evaluate the behavior of others.”³²³ Finally, Hiebert adds that it is “the set of rules that

³²² See “Willowbank Report,” section 2, (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2. Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1978) <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/lop-2.html#I> (accessed November 14, 2009).

³²³ See Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 18.

govern the games of life that we play in our society,”³²⁴ while Nida describes culture as “the rhyme and reason” of life.³²⁵

In addition to these helpful definitions of culture, it should also be noted that culture is perceived in layers. Kraft correctly asserts that “culture consists of two levels: the surface behavior level and the deep worldview level.”³²⁶ That is, a given people group’s observed customs and symbols are undergirded by beliefs, feelings, and values which dictate their views on what is appropriate, beautiful, good, evil, right, and wrong.³²⁷ These ultimately refer to the people group’s worldview—“the culturally structured set of assumptions underlying how a people perceive and respond to reality.”³²⁸ As worldview governs observed behaviors, customs, and symbols, an important strategy toward understanding that worldview is to probe the visible elements of a people’s culture. Affirming this methodology, Hiebert writes, “Human behavior and material objects are readily observable. Consequently, they are important entry points in our study of culture.”³²⁹ Edward T. Hall well summarizes the relationship between these layers of culture by adding, “The various facets of culture are interrelated—you touch culture in one place and everything else is affected.”³³⁰

3.3 The Difficulty of Describing Culture

Before embarking on a discussion of Arab and Brazilian cultures, some qualifications and concessions about the task must be first made. Because of the diversity and complexity present within any given culture, it is admittedly difficult to make

³²⁴ See Paul Hiebert, “Cultural Differences,” in Winter and Hawthorne (4th ed.), 375.

³²⁵ See Eugene Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1954, 1975), 25, 45.

³²⁶ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 11.

³²⁷ See Hiebert, “Cultural Differences,” in Winter and Hawthorne (4th ed.), 376; and Lloyd Kwast, “Understanding Culture” in Winter and Hawthorne (4th ed.), 398; also H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 33.

³²⁸ See Kraft, “Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization,” in Winter and Hawthorne (4th ed.), 401

³²⁹ See Hiebert, “Cultural Differences,” in Winter and Hawthorne (4th ed.), 375.

³³⁰ See Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1976, 1981), 16.

definitive conclusions about that culture because, as Kraft asserts, “The inventory of a culture is, of course, very large.”³³¹ Given this, the attempt to have a conversation about two distinct cultures is even more daunting.

Commentators on Arab culture have struggled to reconcile the unity and diversity that exist among Arab peoples. Nydell notes the diversity of Arabic dialects, ethnicity, and customs that exist among the primary regions of the Arab world—the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Gulf State of UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain), the Levant (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq), Northeastern Africa (Egypt and Sudan), and the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and sometimes Mauritania).³³² Arab sociologist and novelist Halim Barakat observes discontinuity within the Arab world because some countries like Algeria have pursued a policy of Arabization in attempting to establish their post-colonial identity, while others have been less aggressive in this regard.³³³ Barakat further notes the social, tribal, and religious differences among Arabs—both within the same countries and among neighboring nations—which sometimes has resulted in social unrest and even military conflict.³³⁴ He concludes: “Like other societies, the Arabs have their dominant culture . . . its subcultures . . . and its countercultures . . . As a result of such diversity among constituent cultures, and as a product of new inventions and resources, culture changes constantly.”³³⁵

While acknowledging the complex cultural diversity among Arabs, Barakat still prefers to “view the Arab world as a single, overarching society” rather than “a mere mosaic of sects, ethnic groups, tribes, local communities, and regional

³³¹ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 360.

³³² See Nydell, 148-49.

³³³ See Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 18; also Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Hatherleigh Press, 1976, 2002), 199-215.

³³⁴ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 32-33; also Nydell, 14-16.

³³⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 182.

entities.”³³⁶ At the conclusion of her survey of the various regions of the Arab world, Nydell also affirms that these nations “all have an Arab identity.”³³⁷ Indeed, within the Arab world, despite the noted conflicts, there remains a prevailing sense of unity among Arabs in their cultural identity.³³⁸

In light of the diverse ethnic landscape among Arabs, what are the essential elements of being Arab? The most compelling unifying factor is language. Hourani, reflecting the consensus of scholarship, identifies Arabs as “all those, from Morocco and Spain to the frontier of Iran, who had adopted Arabic as their vernacular language; or . . . those for whom Arabic had become the principal medium of expression of a high literary culture.”³³⁹

A second foundational characteristic of Arab culture is the religion of Islam. While Arab Christians have had a presence in the Middle East since before the rise of Islam and continue to exist as significant minority in the present day, Arab culture has come to be dominated by a prevailing Muslim worldview. From a cultural perspective, one of the Qur’an’s greatest contributions has been to preserve the Arabic language over the course of time and as the Arab peoples have spread out and dispersed geographically.³⁴⁰ This inextricable link between the Qur’an, Islam, the Arabic language, and culture is perhaps best expressed by the eleventh-century philologist al-Tha’alib who wrote: “Whomsoever God has guided to Islam . . . believes that Muhammad is the best of the prophets . . . that the Arabs are the best of the peoples . . . and that Arabic is the best of languages.”³⁴¹ Carmichael comments

³³⁶ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, xi-xii.

³³⁷ See Nydell, 13.

³³⁸ See Patai, 14.

³³⁹ See Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), 49; also Patai, 44; Nydell, xxii; and Barakat, *The Arab World*, 33-34.

³⁴⁰ See Patai, 9-14; and Barakat, *The Arab World*, 35.

³⁴¹ Cited in Patai, 46.

further on this relationship of religion and culture among Arabs by writing, “As the Arabs gave birth to Islam, so they were, in a way formed by it.”³⁴²

Beginning with this basic foundation of language and religion, Patai suggests that there is an observable national character present among the Arab peoples. Beginning with the work of the medieval historian Ibn Khaldoun (c. 1332-1406) and continuing to assess Arab civilization into the twentieth century, Patai describes this general unity as “the sum total of the motives, traits, beliefs, and values shared by the plurality in a national population.”³⁴³ Hence, this overarching unity in Arab culture allows for some general conclusions to be made about Arabs and provides a basis for Arab peoples to be discussed with other cultural groups.

The task of making general conclusions about Brazilian culture may actually be more difficult than describing the Arabs. Though Brazilians reside within a single nation, not including those who have immigrated to other countries, the cultural and ethnic diversity among the country’s 291 people groups has led observers to ask, what is Brazil? During my interview with veteran Brazilian missionary Marcos Amado, he jokingly said, “When you figure out what Brazilian culture is, please let me know.”³⁴⁴ In the following simple but helpful overview, Brazilianist Joseph Page attempts to summarize the various attitudes and values observed in the major regions of Brazil:

Paulistas (people from the state of São Paulo) are hardworking and entrepreneurial; *cariocas* (residents of Rio de Janeiro) carefree and fun loving; *mineiros* (inhabitants of the state of Minas Gerais) cautious and frugal; *nordestinos* (Northeasterners) introverted; and *gauchos* (people from the extreme South) fiercely independent.³⁴⁵

³⁴² See Joel Carmichael, *The Shaping of the Arabs: A Study in Ethnic Identity* (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 2.

³⁴³ See Patai, 19.

³⁴⁴ Related in personal conversation, August 4, 2009.

³⁴⁵ See Joseph A. Page, *The Brazilians* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995), 12; also Phyllis A. Harrison, *Behaving Brazilian: A Comparison of Brazilian and North American Social Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Newbury House, 1983), 1-3.

Schneider appropriately warns students of Brazilian culture that the country “is so diverse that generalizations about it run the risk of being either bland platitudes or the lowest-common-denominator-variety or averages that mask great variations.”³⁴⁶

While such warnings against simplistic conclusions should be heeded, there have still been some attempts to understand “Brazilianness” in general. The most intriguing work has been done by the Brazilian sociologist Roberto DaMatta, who has described Brazil’s diversity—“this mixture of Western and non-Western, as well as modern and traditional”—as “the Brazilian puzzle.”³⁴⁷ While DaMatta’s paradigm certainly reveals the difficulty of understanding the complex cultural mosaic of Brazil, the puzzle analogy still points to a level of cohesiveness, which will allow the observer to offer descriptions of Brazilianness. Indeed, some clear aspects of shared Brazilian culture will become apparent through the seven areas of culture being discussed in the current chapter.

3.4 Theoretical Framework for Discussing Cultures

Given the complexities within Arab and Brazilian culture and being mindful of the danger of drawing simplistic conclusions about these cultures, what will be our theoretical framework for discussing both cultural groups? First, it seems helpful to follow Patrick Johnstone’s approach of regarding the Arab world as a cluster or affinity bloc of peoples.³⁴⁸ That is, as already suggested by Barakat, Patai, and Nydell among others, there is an overarching unity among the Arab peoples even amid significant diversity. My approach has also been to apply this framework to the cultures of Brazil, viewing its melting pot of peoples as an affinity bloc of cultures.

³⁴⁶ Cited in Finley, 66; further helpful discussion of this issue can be found in Finley, 65-68.

³⁴⁷ See David J. Hess and Roberto A. DaMatta, *The Brazilian Puzzle: Culture on the Borderlands of the Western World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 2, 23.

³⁴⁸ See Patrick Johnstone, “Look at the Fields: Survey of the Task,” in Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 17.

Hence, I am inviting one affinity bloc (Brazilians) to reflect on their “Brazilianness” in light of their experiences within another affinity bloc (the Arab world).

Second, in light of culture being understood in terms of layers—observed behaviors and customs which may be traced to values, beliefs, and worldview—I have asked Brazilians to reflect on their experiences in the Arab world at the level of observed behaviors, after which potential common areas of worldview may be assessed and analyzed.

Third, as the current study is concerned with Brazilian evangelical mission work among Arabs, the aspects of culture being discussed are deliberately missiological in scope; thus I have chosen to limit them to these seven areas: race, economics, time, communication, family, relationships, and spiritual worldview.³⁴⁹

With this general framework in mind, my approach has been first to gather data on Arab and Brazilian culture in these seven areas from the relevant cultural and literature. Second, with the literary evidence serving as a theoretical background, I have classified the themes that emerged from the surveys and interviews with Brazilian evangelical workers in the Arab world who have commented on their cultural experience in the Arab world in light of their own cultural background. At the end of each section, the themes have been represented through tables, which refer back to the data in Appendix B. Finally, after each area of culture has been discussed and analyzed, the missiological implications will be discussed.

3.5 The Influence of Arab Culture on Brazil

Before commencing this larger discussion, it would be helpful to consider briefly the historical influence of Arab culture on Brazil. First, it should be noted that Brazilians of pure Portuguese descent are probably quite influenced by Arab culture because of

³⁴⁹ This has approached has been greatly informed by Hiebert’s anthropological insights in Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 81, 103-104.

the Arab presence in Portugal for over 500 years—from AD 711 to the middle of the twelfth century.³⁵⁰ This historical reality probably explains some cultural similarities between Brazilians and Arabs. However, Arabs have also influenced Brazil through the waves of immigration which have taken place throughout the twentieth century. Today, there are six to ten million Arabs in Brazil—the majority residing in the state of São Paulo—putting Arabs at around 5% of the total population.³⁵¹ While most are from Christian backgrounds and immigrated from Syria and Lebanon in the earlier part of the twentieth century, in recent years many Lebanese Muslims have also come to Brazil after fleeing civil war in Lebanon.³⁵² Initially earning a living as peddlers, Arab immigrants have succeeded in becoming leaders in business, medicine, and politics over the course of the twentieth century.³⁵³

Brazilian Arabs commonly refer to themselves as “Syrian” (*sírio*), “Lebanese” (*libanês*), “Syrio-Lebanese” (*sírio-libanês*) or simply “Arab” (*árabe*); however, over time these terms have come to be understood generally as “Arab” with little distinction being made over specific Arab origins.³⁵⁴ However, much of the greater Brazilian population still refers to Arabs as *turcos* (literally “Turks”). Though the early twentieth-century Arab immigrants to Brazil were called *turcos* because the Arab peoples were under Ottoman rule and carried Turkish passports, this quickly became a pejorative term used by Brazilians who did not appreciate the presence of Arab shop keepers and peddlers.³⁵⁵ However, as Arabs began to see success in business and politics, they managed to redefine the term and actually use it toward their advantage. Karam notes: “Initially scored as *turcos*, Turks, Syrian-Lebanese

³⁵⁰ See Page, 42; also Finley, 116.

³⁵¹ See John Tofik Karam, “Distinguishing Arabesques: The Politics and Pleasures of Being Arab in NeoLiberal Brazil,” (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 2003), 11-13.

³⁵² See Karam, 180-82, 194.

³⁵³ See Karam, 65-85.

³⁵⁴ See Karam, 15, 213.

³⁵⁵ See Karam, 13.

merchants rejected the label as degrading Middle Eastern difference in mid-century Brazil. Yet, resignifying the ethnonym of *turco* today, liberal professionals emphasized its non-discriminatory valence.”³⁵⁶ In light of this, Karam adds that Arabs in Brazil have embraced *turco* for themselves as they “self-identified with what they considered an ‘affectionate’ or ‘caring’ ethnonym.”³⁵⁷ Karam quotes a Brazilian Arab physician who remarks, “The Brazilian has a caring way to call you *turco*. It’s a form of caring, typically Brazilian . . . that does not have a racist . . . or a discriminatory connotation.”³⁵⁸ While this Brazilian Arab perspective on the term does not seem exaggerated, other Arabs still understand *turco* to be a pejorative term. However, instead of taking it as a racial slur, the latter group interprets *turco* positively—as a sign of Brazilian jealousy on account of the success that Arabs have had in Brazil.³⁵⁹

Though Brazilian Arabs have not intermarried with other Brazilians to the extent that the general population has, they have integrated rather well into the fabric of Brazilian society.³⁶⁰ For instance, Arabs in Brazil have chosen not to become embroiled in the Arab-Israeli conflict because they have had generally good relationships with Brazilian Jews, especially in the area of business.³⁶¹ In addition to finding general acceptance in Brazil, the Arabs also seem to have exercised some influence on Brazilian culture. Arabs, as noted, have been successful in business and have been elected to key national political offices. Through their innovation in the wholesale industry, introducing the sale of goods on credit, and even consulting

³⁵⁶ See Karam, 9.

³⁵⁷ See Karam, 212.

³⁵⁸ See Karam, 248.

³⁵⁹ See Karam, 163, 224-30.

³⁶⁰ See Karam, 16, 173-75, 208-209.

³⁶¹ See Karam, 304-305, 330.

Brazilian international companies on how to do business in the Arab world, the words “Arab” and “rich” have nearly become synonymous in Brazil.³⁶²

Also, Arab food has found a great reception among Brazilians. Each day, 1.2 million *esfihas* (Lebanese meat pies) are consumed in the country and 25% of the meals served daily in São Paulo are Arab dishes. The Arab fast-food chain Habib’s has grown to be the number two fast-food restaurant in Brazil behind McDonalds with 150 stores located in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo alone.³⁶³ Thus, Karam does not overstate his case that “Middle Eastern culinary forms became familiar objects of consumption in contemporary Brazil.”³⁶⁴

While Arab style architecture has found a place in modern Brazil, Middle Eastern dance has also become wildly popular in the country.³⁶⁵ Finally, Brazilians became exposed to aspects of Arab culture through the very popular soap opera (*telenovela*) “The Clone”—a soap opera about a Moroccan family that aired for 221 episodes on the Brazilian Globo Network in 2001-2002.³⁶⁶

Indeed, through these noted aspects of culture—let alone the historical relationship between the Arabs and Portuguese of the Iberian Peninsula—Brazilians have been exposed to Arab culture and have arguably been influenced by it as well. This is perhaps best evidenced by the September 23, 2001, edition of *Revista da Folha*, the Sunday magazine of the popular media newspaper, which ran a cover story entitled “Brazil of the Arabias,” followed by the caption: “The strong influence of Arab culture in cuisine, music, architecture, fashion, and in the Portuguese language.”³⁶⁷

³⁶² See Karam, 38, 52, 117-19, 235.

³⁶³ See Karam, 2, 17, 33, 256-57, 263, 268-70, 354.

³⁶⁴ See Karam, 269.

³⁶⁵ See Karam, 4, 33, 38, 286, 354.

³⁶⁶ See Karam, 33, 204-207, 352.

³⁶⁷ Cited in Karam, 353.

In light of the Arab presence and influence on Brazilian life and in light of the goals of the present study, it is worth noting a final Brazilian perspective on Arabs—that of evangelicals. In 1997, João Mordomo and a research team conducted a survey with 100 Brazilian evangelicals. Their results showed that 78% would be happy to have an Arab-Muslim neighbor, that 15% already had personal relationships with Arab-Muslims, and that 84% would be willing to evangelize Arabs or provide financial support to mission work among Arabs.³⁶⁸ In short, it seems that Brazilian evangelicals are not only aware of the Arab-Muslims that live among them, they also seem to have a missional heart toward them.

3.6 Race

Race is typically defined as “a population of a species that differs in the frequency of some gene or genes from other populations of the same species.”³⁶⁹ Though some have argued that racial studies are typically outside of the parameters of cultural anthropology,³⁷⁰ it does seem worthwhile to raise some pertinent questions about race in the Arab and Brazilian contexts. First, what is the extent of racial diversity within the Arab world and Brazil? Second, is there evidence of racial discrimination in each context, particularly toward minorities? Finally, how have Brazilian evangelical workers encountered and described racial issues in the midst of their mission work and what are the missiological implications?

3.6.1 Arabs and Race

Illustrating the racial diversity present among Arabs today, Peter Mansfield writes:

“Because of the admixtures of Turkish, Caucasian, Negro, Kurdish, Spanish, or

³⁶⁸ See João Mordomo, “The 10/40 Window Moves West,” *The Network for Strategic Missions* (web site) <http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=3428&fby=3c6df0dea370e2e9d9fdeb94b56b8613&> (accessed December 5, 2009), 1-4.

³⁶⁹ Haviland cited in Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 109.

³⁷⁰ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 98.

Berber blood, an Arab today may be coal-black or blond-skinned and blue-eyed.”³⁷¹

Let us consider further the mosaic of the Arab peoples by surveying the primary regions of the Arab world.

The Maghreb countries are composed of peoples from Arab, Berber, and sub-Saharan African descent. In Morocco, though the vast majority of people are racially Berber, Arab culture has become predominant over time. Today, 25% of the population is still culturally Berber.³⁷² In neighboring Mauritania, around 70% of the people are Hassaniya Arabs. The majority of these are the dominant white Moors, while the remainder are the black Moors or Haratine people—an Arabized people who are descended from black slaves. The remaining 28% of the Mauritanian population is composed of West African peoples.³⁷³ In Algeria, 70% of the population is Arab, many of which are Arabized Berbers. Berber culture continues to flourish among the remaining 30%, especially among the proud Kabyle people.³⁷⁴ In Libya, the vast majority of the population is Arabized; however, there are still significant pockets of Berber culture. Finally, in Tunisia, though there are small vestiges of Jews and Berbers, nearly the entire population is culturally Arab today.³⁷⁵

Diversity can also be observed in the Arab countries of Northeastern Africa. In Egypt, though 94% of the population is Arab, the remaining 6% are racially and culturally Coptic. In Sudan, the country is divided between the dominant Arabs in the North and the non-Arab African peoples in the South. Among the latter, there are nineteen major people groups and 597 sub-groups while some 400 languages are spoken in the country.³⁷⁶

³⁷¹ See Peter Mansfield, *The Arabs* (London: Penguin, 1978), 534.

³⁷² See Nydell, 149; also Hourani, 434.

³⁷³ See Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 434.

³⁷⁴ See Nydell, 152.

³⁷⁵ See Nydell, 154-56.

³⁷⁶ See Nydell, 160; also Hourani, 435.

In the Levant region, Lebanon makes for an interesting case. The country is over 90% Arab, including Arabs from Syria, Egypt and Palestine. However, the Lebanese Arabs are especially proud of their Phoenician origins, which in some ways distinguish them from other Arabs. The rest of the population is made up of Armenians, Persians, and Kurds.³⁷⁷ In Syria, Arabs make up 92% of the country, including pockets of Bedouin peoples and Palestinians. The remaining 8% mostly include Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen, and Persians.³⁷⁸ In Jordan, over 97% of the population is Arab, including a massive presence of Palestinians who are, of course, distinct from the Hashemite Arabs. Jordan also has Armenian, Kurdish, Turkmen, and Chechen minorities.³⁷⁹ In Iraq, while 75% of the people are Arabs, the rest are Kurdish, Turkmen, and Armenian.³⁸⁰

Finally, let us consider the racial landscape of the Arabian Peninsula, where Arabs in the truest racial sense are located. However, since the discovery of oil, all of the Gulf States except for Yemen have been flooded by foreign guest workers, including Arabs from neighboring countries. In Saudi Arabia, nearly 84% of the population is Arab, including Arabs from Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, and Palestine. The rest include South Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans), Asians (Filipinos), Africans (Nigerians, Sudanese, Somalians), North Americans, Europeans, and Iranians.³⁸¹ Similarly, in Kuwait, 64% of the people are Arabs from Kuwait and from neighboring Arab countries, while South Asian, Asian, Western, and Iranian guest workers comprise the rest of the population.³⁸² In Bahrain, one-third of the population is from South Asia, Asia, North America, Europe, and Iran, while 65% is

³⁷⁷ See Nydell, 163; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 399.

³⁷⁸ See Nydell, 166; Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 610.

³⁷⁹ See Nydell, 169; Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 375.

³⁸⁰ See Nydell, 170.

³⁸¹ See Nydell, 173-76; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 375.

³⁸² See Nydell, 182; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 390.

made up of Bahraini and other Arabs.³⁸³ Half of the inhabitants of Qatar are Arab—including both Qataris and other Arabs—while the other half are South Asian, Asian, and Iranian.³⁸⁴ In the United Arab Emirates, only 32% of the population is Arab—a little over half being Emirati Arabs—while the rest are South Asian, Asian, Iranian, and European.³⁸⁵ In Oman, 67% of the people are Arabs, including those from surrounding countries, and the rest are South Asian, Asian, African, Iranian, European, and North American.³⁸⁶ Finally, in Yemen, the Northern peoples are largely Gulf Arabs, while those from the South are a mixture of Arabs who have intermarried with African and Indian peoples.³⁸⁷

From this brief survey, it is evident that an abundance of racial diversity exists in the countries of the Arab world. There are certainly observed differences among the Arab peoples themselves, as has been noted in the example of Yemen. Diversity, of course, also exists between the Arabs and those minorities that have migrated to the Arab countries. Barakat correctly notes that the Arabs have dominated the culture of these minorities.³⁸⁸ This has clearly been the case in North Africa where expressions of Berber culture have been suppressed by the Arab majority. Ironically, one foundational element to the preservation of culture—language—has often been denied the Berber peoples as books, newspapers, and other means of promoting the written Berber language were largely outlawed in the twentieth century. In Algeria, this issue came to a head in the spring of 1980 as thousands of Kabyle Berber people took to the streets demanding their freedom of cultural expression—a manifestation that was

³⁸³ See Nydell, 184-84; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 92.

³⁸⁴ See Nydell, 185; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 532.

³⁸⁵ See Nydell, 186-87; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 647.

³⁸⁶ See Nydell, 188; also Johnstone and Mandryk, *Operation World*, 498.

³⁸⁷ See Nydell, 179.

³⁸⁸ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 40, 182.

ultimately put down by the government.³⁸⁹ This Kabyle struggle to overcome Arab dominance has been captured well through the music of Kabyle singers Idir, Lounès Matoub, and others.³⁹⁰

Aside from demonstrating cultural dominance, it is no secret that some Arab peoples have also discriminated against the minorities and toward other Arabs. One Lebanese man noted that while growing up in Lebanon, the greatest insult that one could receive was to be called a Kurd. In Tunisia, Arabs commonly refer to Africans or even Arabs from African descent as *abad* (“slaves”) or *kahaloush* (“black”). Finally, the author has repeatedly heard discriminatory remarks by Tunisians concerning Algerians and Libyans, while other North Africans have openly criticized the Saudi Arabs for being ignorant Bedouins who happened to discover oil.

Though it may be argued that such discriminatory language is common to any society, in some Arab contexts, these tensions have resulted in violence. While the plight of the Kabyles in Algeria has been noted, the worst case of racially driven violence in the Arab world has surely been that which has occurred in Sudan. Since its independence in 1956, it seems that conflict has abounded among Sudan’s diverse peoples. The non-Arab Africans have often cited neglect from the Arab-Muslim government, which has led to continual revolts in the last half century. This, of course, led to the Darfur War in 2003, which essentially turned into a state-sponsored genocide in which 300,000 people are believed to have been killed.³⁹¹ In short, the

³⁸⁹ See “Le Printemps de Tous Ses Espoirs,” *Le Site Berbériste* (web site) <http://www.tamazgha.fr/Tafsut-n-Imazighen-Le-Printemps-berbere,589.html> (accessed December 11, 2009).

³⁹⁰ Idir’s career and music can be accessed at: *Idir: Le Site officiel* (web site) <http://www.idir-officiel.fr> (accessed December 11, 2009).

³⁹¹ See “Timeline:Sudan” at *BBC News* (web site) http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/827425.stm (accessed December 11, 2009); also “Sudan” at *Genocide Studies Program, Yale University* (web site) <http://www.yale.edu/gsp/sudan/index.html> (accessed December 11, 2009).

diversity present among the peoples of the Arab world has been characterized by discrimination and even violence as this brief survey has shown.

3.6.2 Brazilians and Race

The racial diversity present among Brazil's 291 people groups has been previously noted. Azevedo offers the general argument that Brazilians are made up of three streams of race—white, Indian, and African.³⁹² However, the white Portuguese were themselves quite diverse before reaching Brazil in the early sixteenth century. Immigrants from Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of course, added to the mix of white peoples.³⁹³ As noted, the “Indians” discovered by the Portuguese were composed of many distinct peoples. Finally, it seems impossible to provide a precise number for the many African people groups that came to inhabit Brazil beginning in the late sixteenth century. These three diverse streams of people freely intermarried, producing *mulattos*, a Portuguese-African mixture, and *cablocos*, those born from Portuguese and Indian parents.³⁹⁴ As miscegenation—interracial marriage—has been encouraged by the government throughout the country's history, Brazil's diversity has only been compounded.

The official position of the Brazilian government toward race has been termed “racial democracy”—effectively a denial of racism within the country.³⁹⁵ This view was popularized by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, who argued that slavery in Brazil was a much more compassionate and humane institution than what was observed in Europe.³⁹⁶ In fact, Brazilians have actually embraced aspects of African culture by adopting *feijoada* (black beans, rice, meats, manioc flour) as a national dish

³⁹² Fernando De Azevedo, trans., William Rex Crawford, *Brazilian Culture: An Introduction to the Study of Culture in Brazil* (New York: Hafner Publishing, 1971), 31-41.

³⁹³ See Jon S. Vincent, *Culture and Customs of Brazil* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 17-20.

³⁹⁴ See Page, 58.

³⁹⁵ See Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti, *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 352.

³⁹⁶ See Page, 70-74; also Karam, 6.

and Samba as a national dance, and allowing African influences on the Brazilian Carnival and on popular Roman Catholicism.³⁹⁷ Azevedo adds that the practice of intermarriage and the acceptance of the resulting diversity were driven by an underlying racial tolerance on the part of Brazilians.³⁹⁸ Others assert that Brazil has never pursued any form of racial segregation or apartheid as other nations such as the United States and South Africa have, nor has there ever been a recorded race riot in the country. Finally, the claim of racial democracy is further supported by the fact that Brazilians have at times been given the right to determine their own race, especially during a national census.³⁹⁹

Despite the official policy of racial democracy, discrimination does indeed exist in Brazil, though it has been manifested more subtly. Page helpfully summarizes:

On one level, blacks and whites can display in their dealings with one another a genuine human warmth that blurs color lines and has produced a high degree of social integration, a major achievement—if not *the* major achievement—of Brazilian society. Yet this does not mean that Brazilians live in a “racial democracy,” as many have convinced themselves. The manner with which individuals of different racial backgrounds intermingle has served to obscure recognition of the existence of a subtle and not-so-subtle racism that makes it difficult for blacks to enjoy the same political, social, and economic opportunities as whites.⁴⁰⁰

Generally speaking, the Brazilian upper class is much whiter, while the lower classes are much darker.⁴⁰¹ Vincent notes that whites outnumber non-whites three to one in professional jobs and that half of all agricultural and domestic jobs in Brazil are done by non-whites. Finally, Vincent observes that many of the recent Miss Brazil pageant winners as well as some of the famous female television personalities—symbols of

³⁹⁷ See Page, 59.

³⁹⁸ See Azevedo, 129-30.

³⁹⁹ See Vincent, 21.

⁴⁰⁰ See Page, 11.

⁴⁰¹ See Cynthia A. Sarti, “Morality and Transgression Among Poor Families,” in Hess and DaMatta, 123; also Page, 59-61; and Karam, 9.

Brazilian beauty—are blonde-haired, blue-eyed women. He refers in particular to Xusha, the “blond marketing phenomenon of Brazilian television,” who spent six years in a relationship with Brazilian soccer icon Pele, who, of course, is black.⁴⁰²

Despite the existence of clear racial inequalities in Brazil, Karam writes that “what intrigued social scientists was not racism per se, but its seemingly ‘smooth preservation’ or ‘accommodation’ in the Brazilian racial order.”⁴⁰³ Indeed, Brazil’s racial diversity and the ambiguity between discrimination and racial democracy have contributed to the overall struggle to understand Brazilianness.⁴⁰⁴

3.6.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Race in the Arab World

Having considered the racial diversity in the Arab world and Brazil as well as the unique challenges of racial discrimination in both contexts, how do the racial backgrounds and experiences of Brazilian transcultural workers have a bearing on their ministry in the Arab world? Let us begin to answer this question by consulting some recent literature and then hear the voices of the Brazilian workers in our study.

The first rather obvious implication is that since Brazilians come from a racially diverse background, they tend to be naturally comfortable serving in a diverse Arab context. In his study of Brazilian transcultural workers, Finley observes that Brazilians “have experience dealing with people who look different.”⁴⁰⁵ He adds that some Brazilian missionaries observed that the common practice of intermarriage in Brazil prepared them to adapt cross-culturally.⁴⁰⁶ Another transcultural worker added that coming from a diverse background helps the Brazilian to be less fearful and more

⁴⁰² See Vincent, 21-23.

⁴⁰³ See Karam, 7.

⁴⁰⁴ See Finley, 72-73; for a further discussion on the race debate in Brazil, see Levine and Crocitti, 351-94.

⁴⁰⁵ See Finley, 215.

⁴⁰⁶ See Finley, 196; also Mordomo, “The Brazilian Way: A Brief Study of Brazil and Its People,” (unpublished paper, 2005), 4-8.

compassionate about racial issues in the Muslim context.⁴⁰⁷ In 1980, Read and Ineson predicted: “Because of a unique heritage from different peoples and tongues of other nations, Brazil has the potential to become a major Protestant missionary-sending country in the world.”⁴⁰⁸ This is apparently becoming a reality for Brazilians serving cross-culturally and among Arab-Muslims.

Second, despite the noted inequalities in Brazilian society, even some that have affected the evangelical church and missions movement,⁴⁰⁹ it seems that the racially diverse Brazilian evangelical church has generally been a model for overcoming discrimination. Around 1900, Hugh Tucker, commenting on mission work in Brazil, asserted: “The race or color line is not one that need specially affect the work of a Protestant missionary.”⁴¹⁰ Eugene Nida, an eminent anthropologist who certainly had a grasp on the global church in the mid-twentieth century, also found the lack of racial prejudice in Brazil to be remarkable.⁴¹¹ Willems, a sociologist and outsider to Brazilian evangelicalism, observed that Protestants were indeed successful at planting racially diverse churches.⁴¹² Similarly, Martin, in a more recent study, has noted that Pentecostal churches have been known for actively involving Afro-Brazilians in their congregations.⁴¹³

Some Brazilian workers interviewed indicated that racial discrimination in the Arab world was a real challenge for them. One missionary remarked that “[a difficulty in Arab-Muslim culture is] no acceptance [respect] as a Latin or non-English

⁴⁰⁷ See L.C., “Mais Missionários Brasileiros Para O Mundo Muçulmano,” in Bradford, Winter, and Hawthorne, *Perspectivas*, 470.

⁴⁰⁸ See Read and Ineson, 6.

⁴⁰⁹ See Karina McLeod, “Transformando Atitudes Raciais e Sociais Através do Preparo Missionário,” *Capacitando* 8 (1999), 6; also Isabel Murphy, “Etnocentrismo e Racismo no Campo Missionário,” *Capacitando* 8 (1999), 40.

⁴¹⁰ Cited in Harlan Beach et. al, *Protestant Missions in South America* (New York: Student Volunteer for Foreign Missions, 1900), 68.

⁴¹¹ See Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, 64, 284.

⁴¹² See Willems, 207.

⁴¹³ See Martin, 67-69.

speaker,” while another added that there was “only one [difficult] aspect [in Arab-Muslim culture]—racial discrimination.”⁴¹⁴ Some Brazilians of African heritage especially found this difficult. One woman related, “The mistreatment of black women is difficult for me,” and that, “I don't like the racial discrimination (I am a black Brazilian woman).” Her husband reported that he is often questioned by Arab men about why he married a black woman. Some assume that his desire for the woman's money was the only possible explanation for such a marriage.⁴¹⁵

Despite these difficulties, it seems that Brazilians, coming from a culture and church experience that is more racially inclusive, might prove to be catalysts of transformation in the Arab world. That is, Brazilians might be helpful in planting churches that are more racially diverse, while encouraging Arab believers to overcome tensions with the minority peoples in their context. One Brazilian worker, modeling these values, related: “We are seeing God work more among the minority peoples despite the fact that Arabs can be so racist against them.”⁴¹⁶ Another worker, demonstrating his ability to minister to various racial groups and social classes shared, “It's a pleasure to start [relationships] with rich businessmen and poor carpenters.” Finally, the same interracial couple mentioned above related that, despite having to endure discriminatory remarks, their marriage has also provided open doors to share the Gospel with Arab friends. Specifically, they share with Arab friends that God is pleased with His creation that is ethnically diverse (Genesis 1:31) and that this mixed multitude will praise Him for all eternity (Revelation 7:9).⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ All survey responses from Brazilians on this subject are represented in Table 3.1.

⁴¹⁵ Related to me in personal conversation, January 6, 2010.

⁴¹⁶ Related to me in personal conversation, January 6, 2010.

⁴¹⁷ Related to me in personal conversation, January 6, 2010. Similar values are communicated in a recent article from Ariovaldo Ramos in which he argues that no premise for prejudice or racial segregation exists in the Bible. See Ariovaldo Ramos, “A Bíblia e as Questões Raciais e Sociais,” in Bradford, Winter, and Hawthorne, *Perspectivas*, 174; also Antônia Leonora Van der Meer, “O Preparo Social do Missionário para a Realidade do Campo: A Influência Destrutiva dos Preconceitos Sociais e Racias,” *Capacitando* 8 (1999), 53-67.

A final race related implication for Brazilians serving among Arabs is simply that Brazilians, unlike many North Americans and Europeans, have a “look” that helps them to fit in nicely in many parts of the world, including the Arab world. Ussama Makdisi, in his rather scathing assessment of Protestant missions in the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth century, noted that one difficulty for North American missionaries was that their physical appearance alone created barriers for ministry.⁴¹⁸ Having lived for ten years in the Arab world, I (with blonde hair and blue eyes) can certainly attest to feeling out of place and uncomfortable at times due to appearance.

One Brazilian worker asserted: “I believe that Brazilians have lots of advantages in serving in the Arab world . . . our physical appearance is also a plus, since a lot of Brazilians have Arab/Turkish physical traits.” Another added, “I have been accepted by Arabs rather easily because culturally (including our general appearance) we are similar.” Yet, one worker related that having a similar “look” can also have its disadvantages: “It can be difficult because I look very Arab. It is nice to blend in but I can also get treated badly like locals treat one another.” We should not forget that for some Brazilian workers, this resemblance is due to the fact that they are actually of Arab descent.

While this view has often been repeated by the Brazilian mission community as a key aspect for reaching Arabs, Finley asserts with a bit more caution: “If a missionary’s physical appearance does not create a barrier in the minds of people, that is a plus.”⁴¹⁹ Yet, he does temper this view with an appropriate warning: “The danger exists, however, that Brazilian missionaries and mission leaders will make the

⁴¹⁸ See Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 90.

⁴¹⁹ See Finley, 178; also Laura Heikes, “Una Perspectiva Diferente: Latin Americans and the Global Missions Movement,” *Missiology: An International Review* 31:1 (2003), 76; and Mordomo, “Unleashing the Brazilian Missionary Force,” in Steffen and Barnett, 219.

mistaken supposition that superficial similarities like racial features facilitates identification and contextualization.”⁴²⁰

Table 3.1 Brazilian Perspectives on Race

(31) [a difficulty in Arab-Muslim culture is] no acceptance [respect] as a Latin or non-English speaker
(23) Only one [difficult] aspect [in Arab-Muslim culture]—racial discrimination.
(35) The mistreatment of black women is difficult for me. I don't like the racial discrimination (I am a black Brazilian woman).
(38) It's a pleasure to start [relationships] with rich businessmen and poor carpenters.
(2) I believe that Brazilians have lots of advantages in serving in the Arab world . . . our physical appearance is also a plus, since a lot of Brazilians have Arab/Turkish physical traits
(30) I have been accepted by Arabs rather easily because culturally (including our general appearance) we are similar.
(39) I am comfortable because I look Arab and my skin helps me a lot.
(36) It can be difficult because I look very Arab. It is nice to blend in but I can also get treated badly like locals treat one another.

3.7 Economics

The economic situation within the Arab and Brazilian contexts also makes for an interesting study. Though space does not allow for an exhaustive study of either context, a basic economic overview of the Arab world and Brazil will be presented. Afterward, the perspectives of Brazilian workers and mission leaders regarding economics will be considered, including the implications for mission.

3.7.1 Arab World Economics

Historically, the social structure within the Arab world has been primarily class-based, which has also had economic consequences. The upper or wealthy class was comprised of landowners who later became politicians. In more recent years, the center of wealth has shifted from land ownership to the control of oil production.⁴²¹ A second traditional social class was the petite bourgeoisie, made up of small land owners, shop keepers, self-employed artisans, and farmers. Today, this group includes

⁴²⁰ See Finley, 178.

⁴²¹ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 81-84, 87-88; also Nydell, 67.

government workers, teachers, and army officers.⁴²² The final group was the working class. Historically, these were landless peasants; however, today they include servants, wage workers, street vendors, and the unemployed.⁴²³ Within this general class structure, the possibilities for social mobility have been rather limited. Barakat illustrates this point by citing the following Arab proverb: “Money begets more money; and poverty begets more poverty.”⁴²⁴ Finally, because Arab identity is based in large part on social standing, it is common for upper class Arabs to introduce themselves by making reference to their position in society or their family background.⁴²⁵

Historically, the Arab economy was based on farming, herding, and, to a lesser extent, mining. Some key crops cultivated and traded by farmers included cereals, beans, lentils, olives, sugar, spices, fruits (including dates and figs), and vegetables. Also, soon after the discovery of coffee in Ethiopia in the sixteenth century, this staple became popular in nearby Mecca where Muslim pilgrims began to buy it and take it home, effectively creating a market for coffee throughout the Arab world.⁴²⁶

In arid lands where farming was impossible, Arabs also made a living through herding sheep, goats, camels, and even cattle. While the meat from these animals provided subsistence, the sheep’s wool also became the basis for an eventual textile industry.⁴²⁷ As the pastoralists regarded their work and class as superior, the relationship between farmers and herders was not without tension among the Arab peoples.⁴²⁸

⁴²² See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 89-90.

⁴²³ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 91-92.

⁴²⁴ Cited in Barakat, *The Arab World*, 95; see also Nydell, 68.

⁴²⁵ See Nydell, 19.

⁴²⁶ See Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 158-62, 168-69; see also Hourani, 100, 111.

⁴²⁷ See Lewis, *The Middle East*, 167-68; also Hourani, 100, 111-12.

⁴²⁸ See Hourani, 100-101.

With the expansion of the Arab-Muslim empires, commercial activity in each of these domains flourished. Such expanding business also expanded a slave trade that included European, Eurasian, and African servants. In fact, slavery among African peoples can be traced to the Muslim advance on the continent.⁴²⁹

Finally, as noted, the economic landscape for much of the Arab world changed forever in the twentieth century with the discovery of oil. Indeed, by the latter half of the century, monies from the sale and export of oil became the primary source of national revenue for Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Iraq.⁴³⁰

As a result of the changing economic conditions in the twentieth century, Arab countries, like so many others, experienced rapid urbanization. Barakat notes that the urban population in the Arab world jumped from 10% in 1900 to 40% in 1970, and it is projected that 70% of Arabs will live in cities by 2020.⁴³¹ Unfortunately, the economies of the Arab cities have not grown as fast as the population and there have been a number of negative side effects.⁴³² Today, many of the large cities have housing shortages and infrastructure (water, electricity) overload, and the schools and hospitals are simply overwhelmed. Many who have migrated from the villages to the cities in search of work have ended up in the slums in poverty. Nydell reports that 20% of Cairo's residents live in illegal housing.⁴³³ While urbanization has had a debilitating effect on the Arab world's impoverished peoples, the educated elite have responded by emigrating to Europe and North America. Nydell reports that this has been the case for 25% of university graduates, including 15,000 medical doctors who

⁴²⁹ See Lewis, *The Middle East*, 174-76; also Hourani, 116-17.

⁴³⁰ See Hourani, 378-82.

⁴³¹ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 62; also Nydell, 5.

⁴³² See Hourani, 386, 437-38.

⁴³³ See Nydell, 5; also Barkat, *The Arab World*, 62; and Hourani, 336, 374-75, 390-91.

emigrated between 1998 and 2000 alone.⁴³⁴ Hence, as economic problems continue, many with the training and expertise to offer solutions are leaving the Arab world.

Reflecting the noted historic class distinctions, another result of the recent economic challenges has been a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Barakat writes, “Extreme concentration of national wealth in a few hands has prevailed in most Arab countries, and disparities are increasing.”⁴³⁵ While this is the case within Arab countries, it is also a reality among the Arab states. Barakat adds, “Growing disparities between rich and poor Arab countries have created further rifts between them, notwithstanding labor migration and other forms of interdependency between oil-producing and non-oil-producing Arab countries.”⁴³⁶ Indeed, in 2003, the Gulf States of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates boasted a per capita income of \$30,000 and \$19,755 respectively, while families in the non-oil producing countries of Yemen and Sudan earned \$520 and \$460 respectively.⁴³⁷

Finally, it is impossible to separate economic issues from global politics. In particular, Western intervention in the Arab world from the nineteenth century to the present day has impacted the economies of the Arab world.⁴³⁸ The colonization of Arab countries by European powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries implied an economic dominance, which included the rights to oil exploration being placed in the hands of Western companies. Even after the Arab nations gained their independence in the latter half of the twentieth century, economic growth in the Arab world actually led to increased economic dependence on the West.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁴ See Nydell, 7.

⁴³⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 10-11.

⁴³⁶ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 45; also Hourani, 384-88, 436-39.

⁴³⁷ See Nydell, 148.

⁴³⁸ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 14, 78.

⁴³⁹ See Hourani, 377-78.

Not surprisingly, this political and economic dominance has led to a great sense of victimization and resentment on the part of Arabs toward the West.⁴⁴⁰ Indeed, a hopeless sense of poverty coupled with increasing anti-Western political sentiment has fueled many of the Islamic fundamentalist movements of the last 100 years.⁴⁴¹ Unfortunately, these sentiments have also been directed toward well meaning North American and European missionaries serving among Arabs over the past century and half as evangelical mission work has been perceived by Arab-Muslims as just another form of imperialism aimed at exploiting the poor and weak.⁴⁴² Commenting on the work of American evangelicals in Egypt, Sharkey writes, “Bold, brash, and expansive, the spirit of missionary evangelism resembled the spirit of British imperialism in this period and infused the work of American Presbyterians in Egypt.”⁴⁴³ Hence, the American missionary presence in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which operated under the protection of the British government, probably contributed indirectly to the rise of nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist movements.⁴⁴⁴

3.7.2 Brazilian Economics

The Brazilian economic situation is characterized by significant extremes. On one hand, supported by developed agricultural, mining, manufacturing, and service industries, Brazil’s economy dwarfs that of its Latin American neighbors. In fact, the economy of São Paulo alone is larger than that of any other South American

⁴⁴⁰ See Nydell, 16.

⁴⁴¹ See Nydell, 106.

⁴⁴² See Umar Ryad, “Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in Egypt: With a Special Reference to the Al-Azhar High Corps of ‘*Ulama* (1925-1935),” in Heleen Murre-Van den Berg, ed., *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 287-98. This reproach to a perceived Western cultural imperialism also forms the basis for Makdisi’s work *The Artillery of Heaven*, which seeks to explain why American evangelical missions in the Middle East failed during this period.

⁴⁴³ See Heather J. Sharkey, *American Evangelicals in Egypt: Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 49.

⁴⁴⁴ See Sharkey, 4-6.

country.⁴⁴⁵ Brazil has also emerged as a world leader in the export of beef, chicken, orange juice, coffee, and other goods.⁴⁴⁶ On the other hand, the country is plagued by a massive national debt, has problems with income distribution, and has battled inflation. Beginning in 1981, when Brazil had the eighth largest economy in the world, the country endured thirteen years of crippling inflation until recovery began in 1994.⁴⁴⁷

Similar to the Arab context, Brazilian society has been organized by class more than race—a reality that also has economic implications.⁴⁴⁸ The traditional structure included the planter class who dominated the peasants who worked the land.⁴⁴⁹ Hess and DaMatta offer this description: “The plantations were controlled by patriarchs who exercised a nearly absolute authority over their dominions in a way similar to that of the king over the realm.”⁴⁵⁰

Though Brazil underwent massive industrialization in the twentieth century which has also led to significant urbanization—from 30% in 1940 to 80% in 2000—the class hierarchy has largely remained.⁴⁵¹ Hess and DaMatta point out that the new upper class—composed of bankers, industrialists, exporters, and entrepreneurs—often appeal to their status in public contexts with statements like, “do you know who you’re talking to?”⁴⁵² A natural outcome of industrialization was an increase in jobs in engineering and in the technology sector, which has served to develop and strengthen the Brazilian middle class. Members of this sphere of society not only have access to good jobs, but they have the increasing ability to offer their children a better

⁴⁴⁵ See “Economy: Brazil” *CIA—The World Factbook* (web site) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html> (accessed December 28, 2009); also Vincent, 12-15.

⁴⁴⁶ See Prado, “A New Way of Sending Missionaries,” 50.

⁴⁴⁷ See Vincent, xiv; also Prado, “A New Way of Sending Missionaries,” 49-50; Page, 2, 4, 21.

⁴⁴⁸ See Harrison, 3-5.

⁴⁴⁹ See Vincent, 23.

⁴⁵⁰ See Hess and DaMatta, 5.

⁴⁵¹ See Vincent, 9.

⁴⁵² See Hess and DaMatta, 9; also Vincent, 24.

education and future.⁴⁵³ Industrialization has also given rise to an urban lower class, including those employed in more labor intensive and factory jobs. Finally, such rapid urbanization has also witnessed the emergence of a class of marginalized poor—millions who have immigrated to the cities for work but have taken refuge in the *favelas* (slums) or *invasões* (“invasions” or squatter communities). Page vividly describes the plight of this group: “About two thirds of all Brazilians have been classified as poor. Of all the families that make up this ‘miserable majority,’ 71% lack running water, 79% have no refrigerator, and 85% live without sewage disposal.”⁴⁵⁴ In short, despite great strides in industrial development in Brazil within the last century, including the development of world class cities, there is a significant gap between the rich and the poor.⁴⁵⁵

3.7.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Economics in the Arab World

From this brief survey of the literature, it seems that there are a number of areas in which Brazilian transcultural workers can relate to the economic context of the Arab world. First, Brazilians understand the class structure which governs Arab society in general and that shapes its economic systems. Thus, Brazilians seem equipped to conduct business and navigate the economic and administrative matrices of the Arab world. Second, Brazilians can intimately relate to the challenges that come with urbanization such as poverty, housing shortages, violence, and the neglect and abuse of children. Missionaries coming from Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo will not be surprised by the social problems of Cairo, Casablanca, or Amman. Third, Brazilians know what it means to live in a society where there is such great disparity between the rich and the poor. Finally, Brazilians and Arabs share a history of being colonized and dominated economically by European and North American political powers.

⁴⁵³ See Vincent, 25-26.

⁴⁵⁴ See Page, 6.

⁴⁵⁵ See Vincent, 26; also Finley, 68-71.

Given these areas of similarity, it also seems that Brazilian transcultural workers can identify with their Arab contexts because of their own economic challenges. Makdisi argues that historically the high standard of living of North American and European missionaries in the Arab world has proven to be a hindrance to their ministry.⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, many affluent missionaries have been unable to identify with the poor around them, and poor Arabs have not felt comfortable in the homes of such upper-class Western Christians. Naja rightly argues that missionaries from the Global South are more closely aligned economically with their target peoples.⁴⁵⁷ Commenting more specifically on Latin American missionaries, Heikes adds, “Latin Americans live on much less than their Western counterparts . . . the standard of living in Latin American countries is closer to that of any unreached people in the 10/40 window.”⁴⁵⁸

As the survey responses in Table 3.2 suggest, many Brazilians serving among Arabs experience some real economic challenges. While affirming the health of his financial situation on the field, Marcos Amado, indicated that his story was the exception because most Brazilian missionaries seemed to struggle financially. Others noted that financial difficulties arose when churches or individuals discontinued financial support or when the Brazilian Real dropped against the currency of their host country. As a result of limited finances, most Brazilian workers have not had health insurance, much less a pension or retirement plan. Others indicated that they were unable to afford language lessons, making it very difficult to gain a proficiency in Arabic. Finally, some were forced to return home while others were somewhat

⁴⁵⁶ See Makdisi, 189-90. Shaw also argues that differing standards of living have created misunderstandings between Westerners and Arabs serving in the same Christian organization. See Perry W.H. Shaw, “Westerners and Middle Easterners Serving Together: Potential Sources of Misunderstanding,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 46:1 (January 2010), 17.

⁴⁵⁷ See Naja, 30-31.

⁴⁵⁸ See Heikes, “Una Perspectiva Diferente,” 72-73.

stranded on their field—struggling financially but lacking the means even to return to Brazil.

It should be noted that, in my surveys, I did not ask the participants to indicate their annual income. However, during my three trips in 2009 and 2010, my general observation was that the Brazilian workers lived at a standard of living significantly less than that of North Americans and Europeans in the same contexts. For instance, only eleven of the twenty-nine participants that I met owned a car, and only one could be considered a newer model vehicle. Also, the apartments that I visited were very basic accommodations. Thus, my own observation confirms the repeated themes that have been communicated above.

Despite these difficulties, the Brazilian workers responded repeatedly that their needs were met and that they were not lacking anything. In fact, the vast majority of those surveyed (83.8%) indicated that their financial support was very adequate (14%) or adequate (69.8%). While this report on the economic situation of Brazilian workers may seem ambiguous or even contradictory, Amado's comments and reflections help to interpret the data. He asserts that “‘adequate’ support for Brazilians is enough to get by every month—but far from the ideal (furlough funds, health insurance, pension).”⁴⁵⁹ One single worker affirmed this by sharing that his support is “not what a Brit or American lives on but it is enough,” while another couple added, “We have less support than the Americans or Europeans.” Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that most Brazilian missionaries in Arab contexts are struggling financially to some degree; however, their expectations for basic financial support are quite different from those of their North American or European colleagues.

⁴⁵⁹ All Brazilian survey responses on this topic are listed in Table 3.2.

While my aim is not to celebrate poverty or financial difficulties, it does seem that the modest economic background of many Brazilians may actually prove to be an advantage as they serve among Arabs. Finley notes that Brazilians, unlike those missionaries criticized by Makdisi, “can identify with people suffering great economic hardship.”⁴⁶⁰ Amado adds, “Because of our background of relative poverty and economic crises and inflation, we can identify with [Arab] Muslims.” He continues, “People perceive that and it is possible to bond with Arabs in a deep level of friendship.” Another missionary affirmed: “They see us as Latinos, partners and similar, not as Westerners, dominant and indifferent. It seems as we share the same struggles, the same pain.”⁴⁶¹ While the theological relevance of the economically modest reaching the poor as well as the practical issues of Brazilians cultivating better financial support will be addressed in the next chapters, we can conclude for now that the economic difficulties of Brazilians have actually allowed these workers to identify better with those in their host cultures.

Table 3.2 Brazilian Perspectives on Economic Challenges⁴⁶²

(21) We were one of the few Brazilians in this situation (with full and adequate support).
(38) It's not what a Brit or American lives on but it is enough. My church has been a faithful supporter and my job subsidizes the rest. 95% of Brazilians have problems raising support through their church.
(37) Our support is better now but there are still challenges. We are thankful as many other Brazilians struggle much more than we do. Raising support from Brazil is not easy and it takes regular communication.
(6) ...Financial support [is lacking].
(ML 7) Certainly not [Brazilians do not have adequate support].
(ML 5) About 50% do [have adequate support]; 50% do not.
(22) When I left Brazil my support was good, but as the “Real” devalued against the dollar overtime, it became not enough.
(ML 1) In general, Brazilian missionaries overseas face the syndrome of the financial crisis. Whenever one hits, whether local or global, the first commitment to be

⁴⁶⁰ See Finley, 196.

⁴⁶¹ See L.C., “Mais Missionários Brasileiros Para O Mundo Muçulmano,” in Bradford, Winter, and Hawthorne, *Perspectivas*, 470. English translation by Barbara Hubbard.

⁴⁶² Please note the “ML” refers to “Mission Leaders” responses. See Appendix D.



<p>jettisoned is the missionary contribution. This I say to our shame. Quite often Brazilian missionaries leave with full support and are reduced to less than half two years after arriving on the field.</p>
<p>(ML 10) Some churches 20 years ago got emotional and made a commitment and then stopped giving after 6 months . . . we wanted every missionary to have health insurance, pension, and an emergency fund. But 60-70% of Brazilian pastors do not have these privileges; so it was hard for the church to think of giving these things to missionaries when pastors did not have them.</p>
<p>(36) It does not mean that we don't face financial problems. Sometimes supporters and churches forget to send support and it is stressful to have to contact them about continuing to give.</p>
<p>(ML 7) Financial challenges [are among the greatest difficulties].</p>
<p>(ML 10) [There is] The long-term problem of financial support and future financial planning.</p>
<p>(8) It [financial support] has swayed back and forth . . . My church did not understand the idea of partnership. They were proud to have missionaries in the Arab world but sometimes did not follow through on sending support.</p>
<p>(9) It would be nice to have some financial support from a church as well as health insurance.</p>
<p>(43) We do not have health insurance.</p>
<p>(6) [I have experienced failure in] the language learning due to my low financial support. I can't afford the lessons!</p>
<p>(44) We have support for basic things. I don't have everything I want, but everything that I need. Studying Arabic depends on a special offering.</p>
<p>(M 9) Some have really struggled with their finances--some have had to return because of this; others could not return because of finances and stayed [on the field].</p>
<p>(M 7) Lack of finances [why Brazilians are leaving the field].</p>
<p>(M 10) Financial strains [are why Brazilians leave the field].</p>
<p>(6) I have half of what I need. But God has been carrying me!</p>
<p>(32) We have not lacked anything but there have been some specific needs that we have found much difficulty in fulfilling.</p>
<p>(24) My support has been insufficient but I have not lacked anything for my needs.</p>
<p>(34) It is inadequate but I can survive.</p>
<p>(35) We lack nothing but we do not have much extra. Preparing to pay our health insurance can be a challenge; also, preparing to go to Brazil for a furlough is financially difficult.</p>
<p>(41) We trust God to pay the rent and to pay for our kid's school. We have less support than the Americans or Europeans.</p>
<p>(31) We do not lack anything.</p>
<p>(40) I'm glad for what we have and we have our needs met. We don't have all that we want but we don't need that.</p>
<p>(M 10) "Adequate" support for Brazilians is enough to get by every month—but far from the ideal (furlough funds, health insurance, pension). We often promote Brazilian missions by saying they can get by with half of what an American can live on. But in the long run, this is problematic for Brazilians who have not planned ahead financially (i.e. for those who experience health problems later on but have no insurance). Because of our background of relative poverty and economic crises and inflation, we can identify with Muslims. People perceive that and it is possible to bond with Arabs in a deep level of friendship.</p>

3.8 Time

A third area of culture that will be considered is time. Robert Redfield writes that

“one cognitive theme found in all societies is a sense of time.” Hiebert adds,

“Although all people experience repetition and sequence, they organize these differently.”⁴⁶³ In the present section, we will explore the general way in which Arabs and Brazilians view time. After this review of the literature, the perspectives of Brazilian workers will be considered in light of their transcultural mission work.

3.8.1 Arabs and Time

Edward T. Hall’s categories of time—namely monochronic (M-time) and polychronic (P-time) time—provide a helpful framework for understanding how Arabs regard this aspect of culture. Describing the monochronic (M-time) view held by most North Americans and Europeans, Hall writes:

As a rule, Americans think of time as a road or ribbon stretching into the future, along which one progresses. The road has segments or compartments which are to be kept discrete (“one thing at a time”). People who cannot schedule time are looked down upon as impractical.⁴⁶⁴

Hence, “M-time emphasizes schedules, segmentation, and promptness.”⁴⁶⁵ On the other hand, Hall summarizes the polychronic (P-time) perspective, the predominant view among Arabs, with the following:

P-time systems are characterized by several things happening at once. They stress involvement of people and completion of transactions rather than adherence to preset schedules. P-time is treated as much less tangible than M-time. P-time is apt to be considered a point rather than a ribbon or a road, and that point is sacred.⁴⁶⁶

Hall asserts that while North Americans have eight categories of time ranging from an instantaneous event to forever, Arabs have only three—no time at all, now, and

⁴⁶³ Redford and Hiebert’s comments are cited in Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 51.

⁴⁶⁴ See Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1959, 1980), 6.

⁴⁶⁵ See Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1976, 1981), 17.

⁴⁶⁶ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 17.

forever.⁴⁶⁷ This, of course, makes it difficult for Arabs to measure “a very long time” as North Americans would. It also helps to explain why the peoples of traditional Arabia would not be considered late even they arrived one hour after the agreed upon meeting time.⁴⁶⁸ Also, an appointment scheduled for the afternoon could refer to anytime between noon and the late evening. All meetings are made with the caveat *inshallah* (“God willing”), which is also an indication that time is ultimately out of one’s control.⁴⁶⁹

Patai observes that the Arabic language also provides some helpful insights for understanding how Arabs view time. For instance, the imperfect tense of the verb can be used for past, present, and even future actions. Also, a verb conjugated in the past can at times have implications for the present. Finally, the perfect tense can also refer to the future. Contrasting this linguistic structure with the typical European language systems, which emphasize a definite past, present, and future, Patai summarizes:

The conclusion from this unavoidably technical presentation of the use of the perfect and imperfect verb forms in Arabic is that for people speaking a language in which the verb has these semantic features, time cannot have the same definite, ordered, and sequential connotation that it has for people speaking a strictly time-structured language.⁴⁷⁰

In short, we can safely conclude that Arabs are largely focused on the present. Patai argues that Islamic determinism actually produces a peace and calm in Arabs that encourages this present orientation. Hence, since much is out of one’s control, why not invite a friend spontaneously for a meal or overspend on a wedding or celebration? As one Arab proverb states, “The provision for tomorrow belongs to

⁴⁶⁷ See Hall, *The Silent Language*, 149-51

⁴⁶⁸ See Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 54; also Tim Matheny, *Reaching the Arabs: A Felt Need Approach* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 30.

⁴⁶⁹ See Patai, 70.

⁴⁷⁰ See Patai, 72-73.

tomorrow.”⁴⁷¹ Barakat adds that the living conditions for traditional Bedouins, including the growing seasons which essentially ordered their lives, have also contributed to an overall sense of patience and spontaneity. While little could be done to rush the growing of crops, there was also little to inhibit celebration when the harvest had come.⁴⁷²

Finally, it should also be noted that Arab time is governed by events and relationships. Patai records the work of one sociologist working in a Lebanese village who discovered that the history of the village was not recorded by dates, but rather by key events—weddings, holidays, and even notorious feuds.⁴⁷³ While a North American tends to see time in compartments (i.e., time is “up”), Hall observes that an Arab “starts at one point and goes until he is finished or until something intervenes.”⁴⁷⁴ Hence, a good conversation cannot be abruptly ended for the next appointment nor is an exam necessarily over when time is up.⁴⁷⁵ While this event and relationship orientation is true in much of the Arab world, Nydell notes that many Arabs involved in international business are paying more attention to their watches in an increasingly globalized world.⁴⁷⁶

3.8.2 Brazilians and Time

Brazilians also seem to be rather polychronic in their view of time.⁴⁷⁷ While official government events begin at the scheduled time, many events in the rest of society—including parties, concerts, and even classes—may begin thirty minutes to one hour

⁴⁷¹ See Patai, 160-61; also Nydell, 59.

⁴⁷² See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 57-60.

⁴⁷³ See Patai, 76.

⁴⁷⁴ See Hall, *The Silent Language*, 158.

⁴⁷⁵ See Matheny, 31. While teaching at a North African university for several years, I observed firsthand the refusal of students to surrender their exam copies when time was “up.” This was often encouraged by tolerant Arab professors who allowed students to continue until they were comfortably finished.

⁴⁷⁶ See Nydell, 57.

⁴⁷⁷ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 17; also Harrison, 13-14.

late. Thus, one who arrives at a party thirty minutes late is still considered on time.⁴⁷⁸

Social events surrounding the family will not have a specific ending time, and it is not unusual for a weekend party to last until two o'clock in the morning.⁴⁷⁹

Brazilians are also quite focused on the present. Not unlike Patai's arguments for the Arab present orientation, Finley notes that Brazilians are also fatalistic in their world view. Since the future is out of their hands, they are more content to concentrate on what can be accomplished and enjoyed now. Finley adds that for Brazilians, this focus is driven by a strong sense of *immediatismo* ("instant gratification").⁴⁸⁰ Azevedo, contrasting instant pleasure with working toward the future, supports this by adding, "The present is what counts . . . a worthy leisure always appeared more excellent and even capable of conferring nobility than the insensate struggle for daily bread."⁴⁸¹

Finally, Brazilian time is strongly governed by events and especially by relationships. While parties generally have no official ending time, the Brazilian chapters of Alcoholics Anonymous decided to abandon the internationally prescribed meeting schedule of one hour, voting instead to continue individual meetings as long as the leader saw fit to direct them.⁴⁸² Also, in a fascinating study of competitive swimming—a sport necessarily governed by the clock—Conrad Kottak also observed a strong relational element:

In Brazil, racing is more relational: one is racing against the other people in the meet, not against oneself. Swimmers therefore do not walk away from meets with a sense of accomplishment against their own best times; everything is contingent on the relational status of winning or losing.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁸ See Harrison, 44.

⁴⁷⁹ See Vincent, 83; also Harrison, 45.

⁴⁸⁰ See Finley, 136-37.

⁴⁸¹ See Azevedo, 125.

⁴⁸² See Jeffrey Jarrad, "The Brazilianization of Alcoholics Anonymous," in Hess and DaMatta, 224.

⁴⁸³ See Hess and DaMatta, 32 in their introduction of Conrad Phillip Kottak, "Swimming in Cross-Cultural Currents," in Hess and DaMatta, 49-58.

Though appointments are certainly important to Brazilians, the unexpected arrival of a friend will take priority over a scheduled meeting.⁴⁸⁴ One Brazilian missionary asserted, “In Brazil, you would sacrifice anything for relationships.”⁴⁸⁵ Observing that a prompt arrival to an appointment could actually put pressure on relationships, Mordomo helpfully concludes:

In Brazil, punctuality only serves to confound people’s schedules! If some were to arrive on time, they would “lose time” waiting for others to arrive, not to mention that their “on time arrival” would very possibly be considered impolite! . . . They place a much higher value on the relational activity rather than on achieving certain goals within certain timeframes and thus, time is event or personality related.⁴⁸⁶

3.8.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Time in the Arab World

From this survey of the literature, it is apparent that there is some continuity in the Arab and Brazilian views of time. Both cultural groups are largely polychronic and present-oriented, while events and relationships seem to play a deciding role in how time is organized. The vast majority of the Brazilian transcultural workers surveyed (68.9%) affirmed that their view of time was very similar (8.9%) or similar (60%) to what they perceived in their Arab contexts.

Despite these similarities, some of the Brazilian respondents still shared some monochronic perspectives. One worker related: “Maybe this is just a personal thing, but I value people being on time. If I make an appointment at 5 pm, I do not like to feel trapped at my house waiting for a friend to come whenever he makes it.”⁴⁸⁷ Another added, “I’m always punctual so for me this would present a difference.”

Some Brazilian workers were of the opinion that while both Brazilians and Arabs were flexible about time, Arabs were still more flexible. “Brazilians are late, but not as much as the Arabs,” said one worker. The continuity and tension between

⁴⁸⁴ See Vincent, 83; also Finley, 138.

⁴⁸⁵ Cited in Finley, 166.

⁴⁸⁶ See Mordomo, “The Brazilian Way: A Brief Study of Brazil and Its People,” (unpublished paper, 2005), 13.

⁴⁸⁷ All Brazilian responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.3.

the two cultures is quite apparent in the following response: “In Brazil you should be late in some cases, not in every situation. If you have a formal appointment you should be on time. Here [in my Arab context], they are late for everything!”

A couple of respondents suggested that the view of time shared by Brazilians from the North and Northeast most closely resembled that of the Arabs. One Northeasterner shared, “In my home region of Northeast Brazil, it is okay to be thirty minutes late to an appointment; so I was used to things not starting on time.” Nevertheless, he added, “But, it did take some adjustment to people arriving two hours late!”

Though these responses rule out an overly simplistic comparison of Brazilian and Arab views of time, the vast majority of Brazilians nevertheless affirmed an overall cultural proximity in this area. One Brazilian worker shared, “As them [Arabs], we [Brazilians] are almost always late,” while another related, “Both Brazilians and Arabs value events more than the actual clock time.” Finally, another Brazilian worker summarized:

There is no such thing as being on time for us Brazilians (we are usually late compared to the American view of time), as it is with the Arab culture; also, when we visit someone's house, we forget about time, as we are relational people and could spend the entire day at someone's house talking, having fellowship. I found the Arab culture to be the same in that aspect.

The similar regard for time shared by most Brazilians and Arabs becomes more apparent when compared to the struggles that North Americans and Europeans—those with an M-time perspective—often encounter in similar transcultural work. Hall observes, “Americans overseas are psychologically stressed in many ways when confronted by P-time systems such as those in Latin America and

the Middle East.”⁴⁸⁸ This is particularly evident when transcultural workers attempt to make appointments.⁴⁸⁹ Westerners prefer to make them well in advance, record them in a daily planner, schedule only one meeting at a time, do not deviate from the agreed upon time, and try not to break or change the appointment. While Westerners may feel stress when attempting to adapt to a P-time context, Kraft helpfully notes that they might also cause harm to the relationship building process if they impose the M-time values of efficiency and punctuality in more event oriented cultures.⁴⁹⁰ Interestingly, one Brazilian respondent shared, “I had conflict with one American colleague because I did not schedule my work day as they did and I was seen as not serious.” Hall adds that M-time appointments can often isolate relationships and focus on individuals, while P-time meetings tend to invite more group participation.⁴⁹¹ This aspect of time orientation raises another issue of culture—individualist and collectivist tendencies—which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Generally speaking, most Brazilian transcultural workers do not seem to encounter the type of cultural stress about time that North American and Europeans will. Rather, given their own polychronic views of time, Brazilians seem quite equipped and poised to adapt well to and thrive within this aspect of Arab culture.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁸ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 17.

⁴⁸⁹ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 18. Indeed, I encountered this worldview difference very early on while living in North Africa, which required some uncomfortable adaptation to making appointments according to an Arab, P-time perspective.

⁴⁹⁰ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 384; also Hall, *The Silent Language*, 9.

⁴⁹¹ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 20.

⁴⁹² In his article on incarnational ministry to Muslims, Bashir Abdol Masih observes that an unhurried and free approach to time is key in the Arab-Muslim context. See Bashir Abdol Masih, “The Incarnational Witness to the Muslim Heart,” in Don McCurry, ed., *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1979), 90.

Table 3.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Time

(11) Maybe this is just a personal thing, but I value people being on time. If I make an appointment at 5pm, I do not like to feel trapped at my house waiting for a friend to come whenever he makes it.
(40) Personally I like to be on time. Before coming overseas, I worked on a military base and so I am used to being on time for everything. A half hour late is okay for something, but when people come three hours late that is difficult.
(29) It's very relative. I'm always punctual so for me this would present a difference.
(17) In Brazil you should be late in some cases, not in every situation. If you have a formal appointment you should be on time. Here, they are late for everything! And the things happen so slowly.
(5) Brazilians are late, but not as much as the Arabs.
(34) Normally we [Brazilians] are a half hour late to things, but they [Arabs] arrive later. I have adapted. When I am invited at 8pm, I go at 9pm.
(44) Brazilians are a little bit late, but not like here. We are similar in how we like to spend lots of time together.
(21) [I enjoy the fact that it is a] very relaxed place. I come from Sao Paulo which is a busy city. So spending two-three hours in a cafe was nice but also a bit challenging.
(8) It was easy to communicate with Arabs; but sometimes the length of the conversation went much longer than what I was used to in Brazil.
(38) While Brazilians are less punctual than Brits or Americans, Arabs are less punctual than Brazilians. We Brazilians are in the middle between the West and Arab world.
(39) Arabs can easily be two hours late. It is easier for us to understand than North Americans. It's easy for us to spend three hours sitting with someone.
(23) Brazilians are a little bit more punctual but we can basically say that we are the same.
(8) In my home region of Northeast Brazil, it is okay to be thirty minutes late to an appointment; so I was used to things not starting on time. But, it did take some adjustment to people arriving two hours late!
(41) We who come from the Northeast of Brazil are very close to Arabs [regarding time].
(21) Those from the Northern part of Brazil may have less stress here.
(18) [I enjoy] The flexibility and ability to change plans.
(9) Brazilians are very flexible about time.
(16) As them [Arabs], we [Brazilians] are almost always late, and there this is not seen as a bad thing.
(14) Brazilian people are not punctual (never on time).
(42) In Brazil its okay to be a half hour late.
(2) There is no such as a thing as to be on time for us Brazilians (we are usually late compared to the American view of time), as it is with the Arab culture; also, when we visit someone's house, we forget about time, as we are relational people and could spend the entire day at someone's house talking, having fellowship; I found the Arab culture to be the same in that aspect.
(22) A lot of time is spent in building a friendship or a relationship. Simply spending time together without even having much to say has a lot of meaning to both cultures.
(37) We are not always on time but here [my Arab context] nothing is on time. Relationships trump appointments.

(1) Yes, our cultures are very similar in many aspects, such as time.
(33) Both Brazilians and Arabs value events more than the actual clock time.
(36) Brazilians are also not always on time [like Arabs].
(32) In some aspects [about time], I still find things similar to my growing up.
(11) They [Arabs] are focused on today. If they have enough food for today, they are content.
(18) I had conflict with one American colleague because I did not schedule my work day as they did and I was seen as not serious.

3.9 Communication

Intercultural communication is essential to the work of any cross-cultural missionary.

Failing to learn the heart language and communication patterns of the host culture will greatly reduce the effectiveness of a transcultural worker and in many cases will result in the worker not continuing long-term in his or her ministry. While the number of studies in intercultural communication theory and practice is vast, the present section will simply deal with three aspects of communication in both the Arab and Brazilian contexts—verbal communication, non-verbal communication, and orality. Following a survey of the literature, the reflections of Brazilian transcultural workers will be analyzed and the missiological implications will be considered.

3.9.1 Arab Verbal Communication

As we have shown, the Arabic language is probably the greatest defining element of Arab culture and that which unifies the diverse cluster of Arab peoples.⁴⁹³ It is no secret that Arabs are extremely proud of their language and enjoy the rhetorical nature of their medium of communication.⁴⁹⁴ Nydell, a researcher and authority on colloquial Arabic, asserts, “In the Arab world, how you say something is as important as what you have to say.” McLoughlin adds, “Arabs take pleasure in using language for its own sake.”⁴⁹⁵ As Arabs are generally gregarious people, their conversations can often be loud, characterized by exaggeration, and filled with emotion—including anger and

⁴⁹³ See Patai, 13-14.

⁴⁹⁴ See Nydell, 95.

⁴⁹⁵ Both statements are found in Nydell, 97.

joy. All of this communication is capably facilitated by the Arabic language.⁴⁹⁶ While the average person may exhibit some rhetorical skill, politicians are especially known for citing poetry, proverbs, and passages from ancient books in their speeches as well as being deliberately repetitive.⁴⁹⁷ In short, Arabs express themselves with no shortage of words.

Though Arabs are quite verbal, as members of a high context culture, much of their intended meaning is not conveyed in the explicit code of words. Unlike the low context cultures of North America and Europe where communication is more direct and greater value is placed in the actual words, Arabs tend to communicate in an indirect and even non-verbal manner.⁴⁹⁸ Hall asserts that “most of the meaning is in the physical context or internalized in the person.”⁴⁹⁹ So it is not unusual for a thirsty and famished Arab visitor to refuse repeatedly offers of drink and refreshment before mildly communicating acceptance. Tunisian guests often respond to such an offer with the rather ambiguous word *mesalesh* (“no problem”), which in other contexts would communicate “don’t worry about it” or “it’s no big deal.” However, in the context of hospitality, it communicates indirect acceptance.

Also, Arabs will never respond to a request for help or for a favor with a direct “no.” Rather, whether they are willing and able to meet the need or not, they will respond affirmatively because on one level there is value placed in communicating one’s desire to help.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, there is not a necessary connection between words and concrete action. Patai summarizes, “The verbal utterance, which expresses such mental functions as feelings, aspirations, ideals, wishes, and thoughts, is quite

⁴⁹⁶ See Bill Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam* (Crowborough, UK: Monarch Books, 1995), 145-49; also Patai, 170; and Nydell, 31-32, 98.

⁴⁹⁷ See Nydell, 97.

⁴⁹⁸ For a more complete discussion on low and high context cultures, see Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 39.

⁴⁹⁹ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 91.

⁵⁰⁰ See Nydell, 18-19.

divorced from the level of action.”⁵⁰¹ Therefore, when an Arab says “yes,” it may actually mean “perhaps.” Again, most communicated intentions are covered with the important caveat *inshallah* (“God willing”).

3.9.2 Arab Non-Verbal Communication

The verbal messages related by Arabs—particularly those of an indirect nature—are supported by a great number of non-verbal signals. How do Arabs communicate in a non-verbal manner? First, Arabs interact with one another within a generally small sphere of personal space. This is especially apparent when the personal space requirements of North Americans are considered. It is not uncommon for Arab men to greet one another with a kiss and, in some contexts, to hold hands for extended periods of time.⁵⁰² In Lebanon, Matheny observed “Arabs confronting each other more directly, moving closer together, more apt to touch each other while talking, looking each other more squarely in the eye, and conversing in louder tones.”⁵⁰³ Though focused on one Arab context, Matheny’s observations about communication seem to hold true for the Arab world in general.

A second key aspect of Arab non-verbal communication is the use of gestures. Though North Americans and Europeans certainly employ gestures in communication, Arabs use them much more. Nydell writes, “Arabs make liberal use of gestures when they talk, especially if they are enthusiastic about what they are saying. Hand and facial gestures are thus an important part of Arab communication.”⁵⁰⁴ Robert Barakat, who has catalogued and photographed 247 Arab gestures, adds, “To tie an Arab’s hands while he is speaking is tantamount to tying his

⁵⁰¹ See Patai, 173; also Nydell, 98.

⁵⁰² See Nydell, 37.

⁵⁰³ See Matheny, 97.

⁵⁰⁴ See Nydell, 37.

tongue.”⁵⁰⁵ Noting that Arab gestures are almost entirely limited to the hands, Barakat further adds that some gestures serve to accompany and enhance verbal communication while others exist to replace speech altogether.⁵⁰⁶ Thus, with a single gesture, an Arab might communicate religious devotion, gratitude, respect, an insult or an obscene remark.⁵⁰⁷ For instance, in order to communicate friendship, North Africans will immediately touch their heart after shaking hands. By clicking the back of their upper teeth with the thumbnail, Tunisians communicate that they are completely broke. Finally, other Arabs express general disapproval by clicking their tongue. Though men and women may tend to use different gestures, communication in the Arab world would be impossible without this key non-verbal device.⁵⁰⁸

3.9.3 Arabs and Orality

As noted, the Arabic language has served to unify and sustain Arab culture. Though each Arab country has its own dialect of colloquial Arabic, the Arab world is unified by Modern Standard Arabic—also known as *fusha* (“the most eloquent”) Arabic.⁵⁰⁹ Such high regard for the language of the Qur’an has naturally led to the development of a rich literary tradition. Following innovations in paper production in the ninth century which facilitated the publication of books, a vast body of works in philosophy, science, medicine, poetry and prose became available to the educated elite. Hourani notes that Arabs were also early leaders in the science of linguistics. By the twentieth century, Arabic language newspapers began to circulate widely, and books in print became increasingly common.⁵¹⁰ Also, printed materials have become more relevant to Arabs as literacy across the Arab world has increased dramatically

⁵⁰⁵ See Robert Barakat, “Arabic Gestures,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (Spring 1973), 751.

⁵⁰⁶ See Barakat, “Arabic Gestures,” 751.

⁵⁰⁷ See Barakat, “Arabic Gestures,” 756-65.

⁵⁰⁸ For a list of more common gestures, see Nydell, 37-38 and Barakat, “Arabic Gestures,” 772-93.

⁵⁰⁹ See Nydell, 94-96, 193-96; also Lewis, *The Middle East*, 245-47.

⁵¹⁰ See Hourani, 50, 199-200, 338, 393-94.

since the 1960s. During this period, literacy in the Gulf countries has jumped from 10% to 86% of the population while at present, 68% of all Arabs are able to read.⁵¹¹

Despite this rich literary tradition, the peoples of the Arab world have historically been oral communicators and learners. Rick Brown, a linguist and specialist in Arabic, helpfully defines oral learners as “ones who depend mostly on verbal, non-print means to learn, to communicate with others, to express themselves.”⁵¹² While some contexts are primary oral cultures, where little or no literacy exists, most of the Arab world would be classified as a secondary oral culture. That is, while many in the society may be able to read and value books and printed materials, the majority still prefer to receive information (i.e., news) and communicate (i.e., making appointments) in an oral manner.⁵¹³ According to a recent study on orality, the majority of the world’s cultures operate within this secondary oral paradigm.⁵¹⁴

How is orality observed in the cultures of the Arab world? First, the affairs of daily life—including business and basic communication—are conducted in colloquial Arabic.⁵¹⁵ This is true for both the educated and illiterate members of Arab society. It is not unusual to observe official speeches or talk show discussions begin in Classical Arabic and then digress into colloquial Arabic over the course of the presentation.

Second, expressions of Arabic art, including “folk stories, folk poetry, proverbs, sayings, riddles, folk songs, [and] folk music” are necessarily oral.⁵¹⁶

Supported by what Patai calls “the mystical allure” of the Arabic language, the canon

⁵¹¹ See Nydell, 2-3.

⁵¹² See Rick Brown, “Communicating God’s Message in an Oral Culture: Communicating Effectively to non-Readers,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21:3 (Fall 2004), 122.

⁵¹³ See Brown, “Communicating God’s Message in an Oral Culture,” 122-23; also Hourani, 425.

⁵¹⁴ See Avery Willis, et. al., *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (Bangalore, India: Sudhindra, 2005), 4-7.

⁵¹⁵ See Patai, 196-98.

⁵¹⁶ See Patai, 303.

of poetry possessed by the Arabs is especially rich.⁵¹⁷ Since pre-Islamic times, the Bedouins have transmitted orally their traditional *qasida* poems. Not surprisingly, some of the most capable orators have been illiterate.⁵¹⁸ Hitti adds that poetry has remained a cherished art form for Arabs as “modern audiences in Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo can be stirred to the highest degree by the recital of poems.”⁵¹⁹

While Arabic poetry is often likened to music, the Arabs also have a rich tradition of song that is also necessarily oral. Hourani notes that in Andalusia, songs were sung to commemorate different seasons, including times of war, harvest, and marriage. While serving to preserve the memories of Andalusian civilization, these songs were passed down orally and a science of preserving music orally was developed.⁵²⁰

Second, the religion of Islam itself is quite oral. According to Muslim historians, Muhammad received the Quranic revelations orally over a period of twenty-three years (610-632), and the Muslim holy book was not officially codified until 657 under the reign of Caliph Umar. Resembling an epic poem which, of course, rhymes in the original Arabic, the Qur’an was received and preserved in a largely oral manner within the first generation of Islamic history. The Hadith tradition, a record of Muhammad’s actions and sayings, was also passed down orally before being committed to writing.⁵²¹

Though the Qur’an has been preserved in written form since the seventh century, modern Muslims continue to learn and remember the Qur’an by chanting it. Many Muslims, including children, have attained the status of *hafedh* for having successfully memorized the Qur’an. Orality is also important within the Sufi tradition

⁵¹⁷ See Patai, 51.

⁵¹⁸ See Lewis, *The Middle East*, 250-58; also Patai, 52, 186; and Hourani, 12, 50-51.

⁵¹⁹ Cited in Patai, 51.

⁵²⁰ See Hourani, 198.

⁵²¹ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 137-38.

of Islam as members worship God through *dhikr*—constantly repeating the name of God until a form of spiritual ecstasy is attained.⁵²²

Finally, the oral nature of Arab culture can be observed in how history and legal matters have been recorded. Hourani notes that legal judgments in courts were rendered for hundreds of years solely on the basis of oral witnesses.⁵²³ The history of the pre-Islamic Arabian tribes was passed down orally for centuries and, as noted, early Islamic history—especially the record in the Qur’an and Hadith—was initially remembered orally. Patai and Lewis assert that even when written Arab histories began to emerge, they still resembled oral records because of their significant repetition and general lack of sequential organization.⁵²⁴

Though a rich Arab literary tradition cannot be denied, Arabs have historically preferred oral communication. Despite the noted advances in paper technology in the medieval period which facilitated book publication, Lewis argues that publication did not find broad acceptance among Arabs until the eighteenth century because the language was considered too sacred to be reduced to print on a page. While increased levels of literacy in the twentieth century have certainly benefited the peoples of the Arab world, Patai suggests that it may have endangered some of the noted traditional art forms which are decidedly oral. He concludes, “The spread of literacy militates against the retention in memory of the treasures of oral literature.”⁵²⁵

3.9.4 Brazilian Verbal Communication

Like Arabs, Brazilians are generally outgoing people who communicate freely through their words. Phyllis Harrison, in her comparative study of Brazilians and North Americans, asserts that “Brazilians feel much freer to express themselves

⁵²² See Hourani, 199.

⁵²³ See Hourani, 114.

⁵²⁴ See Patai, 186-87; also Lewis, *The Middle East*, 262.

⁵²⁵ See Patai, 303.

conversationally, through comments and questions.”⁵²⁶ She adds that, “Brazilians do let their emotions show through tone, volume . . . believing that one ought to vent one’s feelings for one’s own sake and for the sake of others.”⁵²⁷ Gifted at small talk, Brazilians often interrupt one another during informal conversation and make comments about subjects that North Americans would not normally discuss in public (i.e. weight, acne).⁵²⁸

While Brazilians are verbal, they also belong to a high context culture and thus, their intended messages do not rest fully in their words. Harrison adds that, “Because of the value placed on human relations and comfortable interaction, [Brazilians] often approach a subject or a problem indirectly, working toward a solution by degrees.”⁵²⁹ She notes that in an indirect attempt to invite a guest to leave their home, Brazilians will say, “you must be tired.”⁵³⁰ Commenting further on this indirect manner of communicating, one Brazilian missionary added, “If Brazilians want you to leave, they say ‘stay.’”

3.9.5 Brazilian Non-Verbal Communication

Like Arabs, Brazilians communicate comfortably with very little personal space.⁵³¹

This is very true with greetings. When two Brazilian women meet, they will usually kiss multiple times. Harrison notes that though two women meeting for the first time may greet one another with a handshake, they will commonly say goodbye by embracing.⁵³² Brazilian men greet one another with a hearty handshake or a “bear” hug. If a man’s hand is dirty, then he will offer his forearm to greet a friend. Harrison adds that if two Brazilians know each other well, they will offer extended greetings

⁵²⁶ See Harrison, 12.

⁵²⁷ See Harrison, 24.

⁵²⁸ See Harrison, 24-27.

⁵²⁹ See Harrison, 17.

⁵³⁰ See Harrison, 25-26.

⁵³¹ See Harrison, 20-22; also Vincent, 33.

⁵³² See Harrison, 28-29.

and embraces.⁵³³ Even after the initial greeting, Brazilians continue to communicate through touching, holding hands or arms, and maintaining a good amount of eye contact.⁵³⁴

Again, like Arabs, Brazilians communicate non-verbally through gestures. Harrison, who dedicated the longest chapter in her book *Behaving Brazilian* to gestures, states that “Brazilians use gestures frequently, far more frequently than the average North American.”⁵³⁵ Harrison’s Brazilian friends made statements such as “I am more comfortable when people use their hands,” and, “My hands are part of my oral communication.”⁵³⁶ One Brazilian worker that I interviewed affirmed, “We [Brazilians] communicate with our hands a lot,” while another went so far as to say, “Brazilians cannot speak without their hands.” Hence, Brazilians use gestures to support their verbal messages; however, some gestures succeed in replacing words altogether. For instance, to communicate the idea “more or less,” Brazilians shake an open palm or hand sideways. To say “excellent,” they give a “thumbs up” or pinch their ear lobe. Finally, to communicate “I doubt it,” Brazilians will tilt their head to the side and raise their eyebrows.⁵³⁷

3.9.6 Brazilians and Orality

Hess and DaMatta maintain that Brazilian history and culture has been enriched by a strong literary tradition.⁵³⁸ Azevedo, in his overview of Brazilian culture, offers a helpful summary of Brazil’s key writers and their works.⁵³⁹ On a more popular level, following the emergence of the printing press in the country in 1808, newspapers began to circulate especially as more freedom was granted to the press after 1821. For

⁵³³ See Harrison, 27.

⁵³⁴ See Harisson, 12, 20-24.

⁵³⁵ See Harrison, 92-118.

⁵³⁶ See Harrison, 92.

⁵³⁷ I am indebted to Barbara Hubbard for personally relating these explanations.

⁵³⁸ See Hess and DaMatta, 19.

⁵³⁹ See Azevedo, 193-228.

much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the print media became a powerful industry and served as a vehicle to communicate political ideas. Though freedom of the press was suppressed by some of the twentieth-century regimes, Brazil's daily newspapers continue to be a key medium of popular communication. They have also become more relevant because, as noted, literacy in the country has increased from 15% in 1890 to 88% in the present day.⁵⁴⁰

While affirming Brazil's literary tradition, Hess and DaMatta nevertheless assert that "Brazilians in general tend to prefer oral communication."⁵⁴¹ That is, they prefer to receive information and communicate through oral means rather than print media. Manuel Bandeira's poem the "Evocation of Recife," seems to offer further support:

Life didn't teach me through newspapers or books
But came from the mouth of the people,
Bad speech of the people
Good speech of the people.⁵⁴²

Also, in his study of Brazilian Alcoholics Anonymous, Jarrad reports that members preferred the leader's verbal encouragement and teaching over the organization's literature, which in other contexts occupies a more central role in meetings.⁵⁴³

Brazilian orality can be observed in at least a few other ways. First, Brazilian Portuguese is much more of an oral language than a written one. That is, unlike France, Brazil has no official academy of letters which monitors and filters the language for slang and other "barbarisms." Thus, innovation in spoken Portuguese seems to be valued more than upholding the written language.⁵⁴⁴ Second, poetry and other forms of drama have maintained a consistent place in Brazilian culture. While

⁵⁴⁰ See Vincent, 95-99.

⁵⁴¹ See Hess and DaMatta, 19.

⁵⁴² Cited in Vincent, 27.

⁵⁴³ See Jarrad, "The Brazilianization of Alcoholics Anonymous," in Hess and DaMatta, 224, 232.

⁵⁴⁴ See Vincent, 29-30.

these art forms are necessarily oral, Vincent adds that much of Brazilian literature also has a distinctly oral feel to it.⁵⁴⁵ Finally, it seems that the media of radio and television have especially connected with and drawn out some oral aspects of Brazilian culture. Following the initial broadcasts in Brazil in 1922, radio has been a key means to transmit news, sports, and radio dramas. By 2001, 90% of Brazilians homes had a radio.⁵⁴⁶ Television debuted in the country in 1950 and aside from also broadcasting news and sports, the medium has been responsible for delivering probably the most popular cultural text in Brazilian society—the *telenovela* (“soap operas”).⁵⁴⁷ Page asserts that as Brazilian *telenovelas* have gained popularity both within the country and even around the world, there has been a general decline in reading among Brazilians.⁵⁴⁸ Thus, it seems that Brazilians fall into the category of being secondary oral learners and communicators and that radio and television have stoked these tendencies.

3.9.7 Brazilian Perspectives on Communication in the Arab World

This survey of the literature has shown that there are apparent similarities between Brazilians and Arabs in verbal communication. Both cultures seem to encourage a general extroversion in which ideas and emotions are freely communicated. Despite these apparent similarities, just over half (51.2%) of the Brazilians surveyed felt that Brazilian verbal communication was very different (15.6%) or different (35.6%) from Arab verbal communication, while a slight minority felt that it was very similar (13.3%) or similar (35.6%).

As the responses in Table 3.4 show, some Brazilian transcultural workers reported that communicating with Arabs was not difficult. One worker related, “[I

⁵⁴⁵ See Vincent, 131-32.

⁵⁴⁶ See Vincent, 102-105.

⁵⁴⁷ See Vincent, 110; also Page, 444-65.

⁵⁴⁸ See Page, 448-49.

enjoy] their way of expressing their feelings and thoughts. Arabs in general are ‘hot blooded,’” while another stated, “They are very loving people, they are transparent and communicate well.”⁵⁴⁹ In fact, one Brazilian confessed, “I can communicate more easily with Arabs than I can with my colleagues from the UK.”

One clear area of difference is that some Brazilians perceive Arabs to be more aggressive and harsh in how they use their words. This tendency clashes with the cordiality valued by most Brazilians in their verbal interactions. Brazilian workers observed, “It seems though that Arabs are yelling at each other when they are talking,” “Arabs shout at each other more than Brazilians,” and “Arabs are more aggressive than Brazilians with their words.”

Other Brazilians felt that these verbal tendencies were similar. One worker admitted, “They [Arabs] seem to be fighting when verbally communicating. But Brazilians [also] talk very loudly.” Another related, “Both cultures are very loud, ‘aggressive’ in a way, and people talk at the same time (i.e., it's very common to be in a room full of people and multiple conversations happen at the same time).” Finally, one worker who was returning to Brazil after fifteen years in the Arab world made this helpful observation: “I thought it was different but being back in Brazil after fifteen years I find out that Brazilian people are similar. Everybody talks at the same time and they shout!”

As noted, both Brazilians and Arabs are members of high context cultures in which indirect verbal communication is common. However, some Brazilians interviewed expressed some struggles with how Arabs communicate indirectly. One worker stated, “Their indirect communication [was difficult for me].” Others have struggled to interpret the often used Arab-Muslim caveat *inshallah* (God willing).

⁵⁴⁹ All Brazilian responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.4.

While this expression reveals a fatalistic worldview, it also seems to be a strategy used by some to avoid a direct response. One Brazilian worker shared, “[it was difficult for me] trusting that North Africans are telling me the truth. The response to everything is *inshallah*.” Similarly, another related, “They use the expression . . . *inshallah* a lot, but in a stronger sense . . . it is hard to know if the person makes an effort to do what they say.” Finally, some Brazilian workers observed more continuity between Brazilians and Arabs in this area. Describing Arab communication, one worker described it as “Lots of reading between the lines. Not very straightforward; similar to here in Brazil.” Another admitted, “Our Brazilian cordiality (“come to see us”) is not always a concrete plan. Same in the Arab world. More is communicated by what is not said.”

In the area of non-verbal communication, there seemed to be more similarities between Brazilians and Arabs as further responses in Table 3.4 suggest. In all, a healthy majority (73.4%) of Brazilians surveyed shared that their non-verbal communication was very similar to (26.7%) or similar to (46.7%) that of Arabs. While Brazilians disagreed over which cultural bloc uses body language and non-verbal symbols more and pointed out the different meanings communicated by various gestures, there was no question that both Brazilians and Arabs communicate a great deal non-verbally. One worker noted, “We [Brazilians] also use a lot of body language when we talk,” while another added, “I believe we are very similar, because they [Arabs] use a lot of gestures when they talk.” Another worker related, “Both cultures use hand movements as they talk.” Finally, one Brazilian suggested that there was an Arab influence on Brazilian non-verbal communication: “Brazilians have many gestures like Arabs do. In fact, because there is an Arab influence in São Paulo, we Brazilians have probably picked up on some of this.”

Though the differences in Arab and Brazilian verbal communication have been noted, Brazilians still seem to be culturally closer to the Arabs in this area than to the low context peoples of North America and Europe. Though needing to adapt to the perceived harshness of Arab communication, Brazilians are generally more expressive, emotional, and outgoing than their North American and European colleagues, and more able to relate to indirect communication. In terms of non-verbal communication, there seems to be some continuity between Brazilians and Arabs. As noted, Brazilians intuitively communicate through body language and gestures and certainly require less personal space in their interactions.

3.9.8 Brazilian Perspectives on Orality in the Arab World

Throughout the history of evangelical missions, most transcultural workers, especially North Americans and Europeans, have been highly literate people who have assumed that their audiences are print learners—those who “depend on reading and writing for the communication of important information.”⁵⁵⁰ In a recent study by a network of mission practitioners concerned with orality, they concluded that this tendency seems largely unchanged:

Ironically, an estimated 90% of the world’s Christian workers presenting the gospel use highly literate communication styles. They use the printed page or expositional, analytical and logical presentations of God’s word. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for oral learners to hear and understand the message and communicate it to others.⁵⁵¹

As noted, in the initial North American efforts to evangelize Brazil, missionaries emphasized Bible distribution in a context where the majority of the people were illiterate. Makdisi points out that nineteenth-century Andover Seminary students preparing for ministry in the Arab world received a highly academic and literate education devoid of any contextual study of Arab culture or Islam. Once these North

⁵⁵⁰ See Brown, “Communicating God’s Message in an Oral Culture,” 122.

⁵⁵¹ See Willis et. al., 3.

American missionaries arrived in the Arab world, their training translated into a polemical approach with great emphasis on Bible and literature distribution—most of which was largely ineffective in connecting with the host peoples.⁵⁵² It seems that the work of Samuel Zwemer—the most famous missionary to the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—had similar outcomes. Sharkey writes, “Zwemer was a driving force behind the American Christian Literature Society for Muslims” which “defined its purpose as ‘spreading . . . the Gospel through the printed page where Moslems are found.’”⁵⁵³ Aside from being perceived by some Arab-Muslims as disseminating imperial propaganda,⁵⁵⁴ Zwemer’s efforts at tract and literature distribution also failed to connect with the oral aspects of Arab culture. Thus, in light of these shortcomings in the history of Western missions to the Arab world, Matheny’s suggestion that printed literature remain a key in evangelizing Arabs needs to be reconsidered.⁵⁵⁵ Rather, as Musk asserts, “Story-telling should not be feared by Western missionaries to Muslims” but should be regarded as a viable means of communicating Christ and the Scriptures.⁵⁵⁶

To be sure, Western mission movements are rapidly becoming sensitized to the needs of oral learners and are beginning to change their methodologies. A rich literature on orality is developing and groups such as the International Orality Network and the OneStory Partnership are pursuing concrete strategies for communicating the Gospel to oral communicators.⁵⁵⁷ While the Western church is working to catch up, it seems that Brazilian transcultural workers—themselves

⁵⁵² See Makdisi, 58-59, 88-90, 143-44.

⁵⁵³ See Sharkey, 109.

⁵⁵⁴ See Ryad, “Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in Egypt,” in Van den Berg, 285-88; also Sharkey, 1, 21-22, 27-28, 112-16; and Thomas Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 63, 67.

⁵⁵⁵ See Matheny, 90.

⁵⁵⁶ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 154.

⁵⁵⁷ See *International Orality Network* <http://ion2008.ning.com/> and *OneStory Partnership* <http://www.onestory.org> (both accessed on January 27, 2010).

secondary oral communicators—already have a natural affinity with Arabs in this area. This seems especially true for those who come from Pentecostal congregations where Bible storying is a common approach.⁵⁵⁸ Commenting on the work of churches in poor communities in Northeast Brazil, Carlos Mesters writes: “They are using song and story, pictures and little plays. They are thus making up their own version of the ‘Bible and the Poor.’ Thanks to songs . . . many who have never read the Bible know almost every story in it.”⁵⁵⁹

Between their backgrounds and in some cases their experiences, Brazilian transcultural workers seem to identify with many Arabs through developing oral strategies for communicating the Gospel. For instance, one Brazilian worker reported:

We created a series of biblical stories with an evangelistic tone, and they were translated to the local dialect and are now available at a website in the internet. Those stories were chosen in order to address the worldview of the people we serve.

Another related:

[I am most excited about] storytelling ministry. I like to sit with the women while we work on manual projects and tell them biblical stories that help them grow in their understanding of God and also to prepare the way for them to come to know Jesus.

Finally, a number of Brazilians are using soccer as an approach to ministry—a strategy that will be explored in more detail in an upcoming chapter. It is worth mentioning here that part of the strategy is very much geared toward oral communicators. At the conclusion of each soccer practice, the coach takes time to debrief the team’s performance after which he communicates a biblically-based life principle relevant to the experience on the field that day.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ See Martin, 177-78, 226-27.

⁵⁵⁹ Cited in Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 29.

⁵⁶⁰ I was able to observe this firsthand during a trip to the Middle East in October, 2009.

Table 3.4 Brazilian Perspectives on Communication

(32) [I enjoy] Their way of expressing their feelings and thoughts. Arabs in general are “hot blooded.” Many times they act more than they think in their effort to maintain their culture.
(13) They [Arabs] are very loving people, they are transparent and communicate well.
(8) It was easy to communicate with Arabs; but sometimes the length of the conversation went much longer than what I was used to in Brazil.
(38) I can communicate more easily with Arabs than I can with my colleagues from the UK.
(7) The impression I receive from their words is that they [Arabs] are being very harsh and insensitive.
(13) It seems though that Arabs are yelling at each other when they are talking though.
(25) They [Arabs] speak very loudly and a lot.
(10) Arabs shout at each other more than Brazilians.
(33) Arabs are more aggressive than Brazilians with their words. Arabs are more emotional than Brazilians when there is a conflict.
(5) The Arabs are much more expressive than Brazilians in terms of their verbal communication.
(42) Arabs are more emotional than Brazilians in their communication.
(38) One difference is that they [Arabs] are more harsh in their tone and language.
(15) We [Brazilians] are not so impolite like them [Arabs].
(36) [Arab] rudeness [is difficult].
(34) We [Brazilians] have similar sayings in Portuguese that they have in Arabic.
(38) Brazilians and Arabs have similar sayings and expressions.
(31) They [Arabs] seem to be fighting when verbally communicating. But Brazilians [also] talk very loudly.
(17) I thought it was different but being back in Brazil after fifteen years I find out that Brazilian people are similar [to my Arab context]. Everybody talks at the same time and they shout!
(16) We talk a lot, very loud, and we like to show our emotions in the way we communicate.
(2) Both cultures are very loud, “aggressive” in a way, and people talk at the same time (e.g it's very common to be in a room full of people and multiple conversations happen at the same time).
(37) We [Brazilians] also both speak loudly.
(32) We [Brazilians and Arabs] are somewhat similar because of being hot blooded; yet they [Arabs] are different from Brazilians because we do not start off fighting and arguing.
(11) [It was difficult for me] Trusting that North Africans are telling me the truth. The response to everything is <i>inshallah</i> (if God wills).
(22) They [Arabs] use the expression “if it is God’s will” (<i>inshallah</i>) a lot, but in a stronger sense, meaning, it is hard to know if the person makes an effort to do what they say—if it didn’t work or if they just got lazy, and therefore they would say that it wasn’t God’s will.
(1) Another thing they do that is very hard to cope with is how they give excuses when they don’t want to do something, intrinsically associated to the lies they tell. The idea is to always have an excuse, even if they other person knows it is a lie.



(31) Their [Arab] indirect communication [was difficult for me].
(26) They [Arabs] have a difficulty in expressing themselves and say what they really think. They [Arabs] are much less direct in their communication than we are.
(35) Brazilians and Arabs can both be indirect; but we are more direct.
(21) Lots of reading between the lines [in the Arab world]. Not very straightforward; similar to here in Brazil.
(18) Our Brazilian cordiality ("come to see us") is not always a concrete plan. Same in the Arab world. More is communicated by what is not said.
(37) Brazilians and Arabs both speak indirectly (we use our <i>jeintinho brasileiro</i>).
(40) Both cultures are indirect in their communication.
(44) Brazilians are indirect like Arabs. If Brazilians want you to leave, they say "stay."
(45) Both [Brazilians and Arabs] use indirect communication.
(24) They [Arabs] use lots of gestures and facial expressions. They express their feelings through body language.
(21) They [Arabs] use a lot of gestures, sounds with their mouths, fingers, head movement, eyes, maybe more than Brazilians. The non-verbal communication is very rich, the words by themselves do not communicate enough.
(4) The Arabs express themselves much more than the Brazilians, when they even seem to be aggressive sometimes.
(42) Arabs are more expressive than Brazilians.
(41) Arabs use gestures more than us [Brazilians].
(3) Body language is very important to Brazilians. I believe we use more body language than the Arabs. Emotion is also a very important value for us.
(39) We have more gestures in Brazil.
(44) Brazilians use the body language more [than Arabs].
(33) We both [Brazilians and Arabs] use lots of body language. We both use gestures though they mean different things.
(34) Brazilians and Arabs both use lots of body language.
(36) We both use lots of gestures though the meaning of our gestures is different.
(38) They [Arabs] use body language that we [Brazilians] don't use.
(30) We [Brazilians] also use a lot of body language when we talk.
(13) I believe we are very similar, because they [Arabs] use a lot of gestures when they talk.
(1) Both cultures use hand movements as they talk (like Italians as well)
(37) We [Brazilians] communicate with our hands a lot.
(45) Brazilians cannot speak without their hands.
(12) It depends on the region of Brazil. People from Rio de Janeiro for example have similar gestures to Arabs in Southern Brazil.
(7) Arabs have many gestures as we do in Brazil but the meaning of them was different. It was important to learn their gestures and to communicate.
(31) They [Arabs] express themselves a lot with their actions. Their body language is different than ours [Brazilians].
(32) Brazilians have many gestures like Arabs do. In fact, because there is an Arab influence in São Paulo, we Brazilians have probably picked up on some of this.
(22) We created a series of biblical stories with an evangelistic tone, and they were translated to the local dialect and are now available at a website in the internet. Those stories were chosen in order to address the worldview of the people we serve.

(22) [I am most excited about] storytelling ministry. I like to sit with the women while we work on manual projects and tell them biblical stories that help them grow in their understanding of God and also to prepare the way for them to come to know Jesus.

3.10 Family

Hoebel states that “the family, in one form or another, is the primary unit of human culture and sociality.”⁵⁶¹ In nearly every society, the family is the place where children are nurtured, where the division of labor between men and women is established, where relationships with others in the social network are established, and where other social functions are dictated and carried out.⁵⁶² While some basic functions of the family can be observed across cultures, there is also much diversity in how the family is structured, how roles within the family are determined, and in general how family values are disseminated.

In terms of transcultural mission work, failing to understand and appreciate the structure, values, and roles present within the Arab family will certainly make evangelism and church planting difficult if not impossible. Thus, in this section, following a survey of the literature on Arab and Brazilian families, the Brazilian perspectives on family in the Arab world will be explored, including the missiological implications.

3.10.1 The Arab Family

Upon hearing the proverb, “You are like a tree, giving your shade to the outside,”⁵⁶³ Arabs are instantly reminded that family should always remain a priority. When non-Arabs hear the proverb, “I against my brothers; I and my brothers against my cousins; I and my cousins against the world,”⁵⁶⁴ they are made aware of the powerful sense of solidarity that exists within the Arab family. Both proverbs underscore the vital role

⁵⁶¹ Cited in Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 291.

⁵⁶² See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 291-92.

⁵⁶³ Cited in Nydell, 101.

⁵⁶⁴ See Patai, 44.

that the family plays within the cultures of the Arab world. Barakat affirms: “The family unit is the basic unit of social organization and production in traditional and contemporary Arab society, and it remains a relatively cohesive institution at the center of social and economic activities.”⁵⁶⁵

In terms of structure, the Arab family is patrilineal; that is, the family continues through the father’s line. In one respect, this means that children are identified in official documents as the “son of” (*ibn*) or “daughter of” (*bent*) their father. In another, it signifies that upon marriage, a woman becomes part of her husband’s household and often the newlywed couple will live with her husband’s parents.⁵⁶⁶

The Arab family also functions largely within an extended family structure, which generally includes a father, his sons, their wives, and their children.⁵⁶⁷ Thus, it is not unusual for multiple generations to occupy the same house or property. Compared to the Western nuclear family, which is restricted to a husband, wife, and their children, the notion of family in the Arab world is much broader.⁵⁶⁸ Rooted in a Bedouin social structure, the Arab village is merely a network of extended families, and in Palestine, the village is regarded as a “family of families.”⁵⁶⁹

Hence, the traditional practice of intermarriage within Arab tribes and clans serves to preserve and promote family solidarity.⁵⁷⁰ Patai adds that the networks of extended families provide the basis for solidarity throughout the Arab world in which the “Arab nation” is also referred to as an “Arab family.”⁵⁷¹ Even as urbanization

⁵⁶⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 23; also Nydell, 71.

⁵⁶⁶ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 294-95; also Nydell, 38; and Barakat, *The Arab World*, 100.

⁵⁶⁷ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 23; also Hourani, 105; Matheny, 41; and Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 292.

⁵⁶⁸ See Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, 96.

⁵⁶⁹ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 55-56.

⁵⁷⁰ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 46.

⁵⁷¹ See Patai, 44, 300.

challenges the preservation of the traditional Arab extended family, Barakat maintains:

Relatives generally remain closely interlocked in a web of intimate relationships that leaves limited room for independence and privacy. They continue to stay in the same neighborhood, to intermarry, to group together on a kinship basis, and to expect a great deal from one another.⁵⁷²

In terms of its authority structure, the Arab family is strongly patriarchal.

Traditionally, the father's primary role has been to protect the members of the family, particularly the women.⁵⁷³ Though the Arab family certainly experiences change, Barakat asserts that, "The father continues to wield authority, assume responsibility for the family, and expect respect and unquestioning compliance with his instructions."⁵⁷⁴ A second key role for Arab fathers has been providing for the family. Traditionally dubbed "lord of the family" (*rabb al-usra*), the father not only works to provide for the family's needs, but he also controls the family finances—including money earned by other family members.⁵⁷⁵ The father's authoritative posture, typically accompanied by a measure of sternness, often leads to his being emotionally distant from the children. Also, it is not unusual for many Arab fathers to spend their evening hours out with other male friends in cafés instead of being at home with their families.⁵⁷⁶

Barakat adds that the father's authoritative role within the family also extends to other spheres within society, including schools and the work place, where a father figure or strong leader emerges to play a dominant role. Hence, leadership structures are quite vertical and subordinates not only are without empowerment, but they seem

⁵⁷² See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 106.

⁵⁷³ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 25; also Hourani, 105.

⁵⁷⁴ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 23.

⁵⁷⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 98, 101.

⁵⁷⁶ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 101; also Nydell, 74.

incapable of functioning without the father figure.⁵⁷⁷ For Barakat, this tendency also explains the continued presence of dictators in the Arab world even in the post-colonial twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵⁷⁸

What is the woman's role within the Arab family? Traditionally, men and women have been segregated within Arab society—the veil being the clearest indication of this—and women have largely worked and functioned within the home.⁵⁷⁹ With the father often absent from the home, the mother is primarily responsible for raising the children. While Arab children respect and fear their fathers, they have a great deal of affection for their mothers, who provide most of the emotional support for the family.⁵⁸⁰ Mothers are also responsible for running the general affairs of the home, which certainly includes preparing meals and keeping up the home and often overseeing the household expenditures.⁵⁸¹ Hence, Arab mothers possess a significant behind the scenes influence within the home that seems to increase as they grow older.

In many Arab countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq among others, women have begun to work outside of the home.⁵⁸² Despite this development, Barakat argues that women go largely unappreciated as breadwinners and are marginalized both in the work place and in society.⁵⁸³ Though Arab women have gained more civil rights in the last half century, including the right to vote, most civil laws in the Arab world still do not favor them.⁵⁸⁴ Indeed, some women are still victims of honor killings, forced marriages, circumcision, and

⁵⁷⁷ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 23, 149. In a recent article, Shaw (Shaw, “Westerners and Middle Easterners Serving Together,” 20) also discusses this challenge within Arab Christian organizations.

⁵⁷⁸ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 176.

⁵⁷⁹ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 30, 102; also Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 23-24; and Hourani, 120.

⁵⁸⁰ See Patai, 27-28; also Nydell, 74; and Musk, also Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 33.

⁵⁸¹ See Hourani, 440.

⁵⁸² See Nydell, 45.

⁵⁸³ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 30, 102

⁵⁸⁴ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 102; also Hourani, 441; and Nydell, 46-48.

polygamy in parts of the Arab world, and most women continue to be subservient to their husbands and are certainly not viewed as equal to men.⁵⁸⁵

What are the prevailing values for the Arab family? First, related to the father's primary role as protector, the Arab home and family is a place of protection. This can be taken quite literally in one sense, as Hourani notes that traditional Arab homes were "built to be seen from within, not from outside."⁵⁸⁶ Aside from this physical protection, children are also sheltered by the rules imposed by their parents. Barakat adds, "Parents are usually overprotective and restrictive, and children grow up to feel secure only on familiar ground."⁵⁸⁷ Consequently, children are not encouraged to assert their independence or to be free in their thinking.

A second related value is that the Arab family has a group orientation. That is, as Musk has helpfully written, "The proper functioning of a family far outweighs the niceties of individual choice or desire for personal independence."⁵⁸⁸ Nydell adds that "Loyalty to one's family takes preference over one's personal preferences."⁵⁸⁹ Thus, the individual finds their identity within the family, and it is not unusual for Arabs to introduce themselves by making reference to their family name.⁵⁹⁰

This group value can be observed in how the family maintains itself economically as each member works and sacrifices in order to contribute toward the family's needs. Thus, it is not uncommon for Arab families to operate a family business. Though starting off as dependents, Arab children are expected to grow up, work, and eventually provide support for their own parents—essentially a traditional

⁵⁸⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 102; also Nydell, 50-51; Patai, 34; and Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 35-36.

⁵⁸⁶ See Hourani, 126.

⁵⁸⁷ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 106.

⁵⁸⁸ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 57.

⁵⁸⁹ See Nydell, 15; also Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 127.

⁵⁹⁰ See Patai, 107. For a more detailed description of group oriented societies, see Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 21; also Moreau, Corwin; and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 274.

form of social security. As the family works and dwells together, Barakat notes that a prevailing sense of commitment and unity among the members.⁵⁹¹

A final essential value for the Arab family is honor (*sharaf*)—maintaining the family’s good reputation before the rest of Arab society. Unlike Western societies in which the individual’s behavior toward the society is emphasized—resulting in praise or guilt—Arab culture and group solidarity is maintained by this pursuit of honor and avoidance of shame.⁵⁹² Musk notes that “hard work, wealth, success [and] generosity” among other efforts and activities are aimed at strengthening and preserving the family’s honor.⁵⁹³ In light of this emphasis on honor, maintaining face (*wajih*) is also a strong value. This helps to explain why some Arabs have a hard time admitting guilt and also why mediators are called upon to resolve a dispute between two parties.⁵⁹⁴

The honor-shame paradigm also helps to explain honor killings—particularly in cases where Arab daughters have been sexually immoral. While the family has failed to maintain its honor by allowing the daughter to make such poor decisions, this violent response is an effort to overcome the family’s shame. In a similar way, female circumcision is intended to remove a woman’s sexual temptation and thus decrease the potential for the family being shamed.⁵⁹⁵ Ultimately, honor serves to maintain solidarity within families, even amid transitions in the broader culture.⁵⁹⁶

3.10.2 The Brazilian Family

Generally speaking, family life is quite important to Brazilians, too. Finley writes that “‘Family’ is more than a category of Brazilian culture; it is a basic value close to the

⁵⁹¹ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 97-100.

⁵⁹² See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 98; also Nydell, 43; Hourani, 105; Matheny, 14-16; and Patai, 95-96.

⁵⁹³ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 68.

⁵⁹⁴ See Patai, 111.

⁵⁹⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 98; also Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 28-29, 69-73, 80-81; and Patai, 101.

⁵⁹⁶ See Matheny, 15.

heart of every Brazilian.”⁵⁹⁷ Like Arabs, Brazilian families are patrilineal in that families continue through the father’s line. Also, even in more urban areas, it is not unusual for a couple to live with the husband’s parents for the first few years as they are getting established.⁵⁹⁸

In terms of structure, the traditional Brazilian family functions within the extended family framework. Harrison writes that in Brazil, “Family means parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, second, third, and fourth cousins plus spouses and siblings of all of these.”⁵⁹⁹ Often, this group of people, many of whom already occupy the same dwelling, will traditionally gather on Sunday for a meal.⁶⁰⁰ In fact, the Portuguese word for extended family (*parentela*) implies a deep social network within the family. In more conservative areas such as Recife, it is not uncommon for the extended family to be strengthened through the marriage of cousins.⁶⁰¹ While the expressions of family in the regions of Brazil are diverse and the family has certainly become more nuclear in nature in the urbanized areas, the extended family structure is still experienced by many Brazilians and certainly understood by all.

Historically, the Brazilian family has also been patriarchal. The father has been an authoritative figure whose key role is providing protection for the family, especially the women.⁶⁰² Sarti adds that this role has been particularly apparent in Brazil’s poorer regions.⁶⁰³ Similar to the Arab world, one element of Brazil’s high context culture is that the leader of an organization (i.e., family, company,

⁵⁹⁷ See Finley, 112.

⁵⁹⁸ See Finley, 113.

⁵⁹⁹ See Harrison, 9.

⁶⁰⁰ See Vincent, 81-82; also Harrison, 9, 84.

⁶⁰¹ See Levine and Crocitti, 338.

⁶⁰² See Finley, 116.

⁶⁰³ See Sarti, “Morality and Transgression Among Poor Families,” in Hess and DaMatta, 124-28.

organization) takes responsibility for all members of the group.⁶⁰⁴ Thus, Jarrad notes that Alcoholics Anonymous group leaders take a very parental posture toward the group members.⁶⁰⁵ Finally, authoritarian leadership styles have been observed in Brazil's political leaders as well as its evangelical pastors.⁶⁰⁶

Though today, many Brazilian women pursue careers outside of the home, traditionally they have found their place within the home. Generally subjugated to their husbands, women have been expected to remain morally pure. However, many women have endured marital unfaithfulness as well as physical and emotional abuse from their husbands.⁶⁰⁷ While more laws protecting Brazilian women from domestic violence have been enacted, Page remarks:

It is clear that the changes in the law and in law enforcement programs aimed at reducing violence against women can bring about incremental progress only, but they will not succeed in any way until deeply ingrained societal attitudes evolve.⁶⁰⁸

Thus, many women manage to survive through manipulating their husbands and, in turn, their circumstances.⁶⁰⁹

In some poorer regions, the man remains the head of the household while the woman runs its day-to-day affairs.⁶¹⁰ Finally, as the Virgin Mary provides comfort and support to Brazilian Catholic worshippers, the mother is the source of emotional support for children in the home.⁶¹¹ The role of women in Brazil certainly differs according to the regions, and women definitely experience more rights and freedoms today than they did a century ago. While the tension between the traditional and more

⁶⁰⁴ See Hall, *Beyond Culture*, 113.

⁶⁰⁵ See Jarrad, "The Brazilianization of Alcoholics Anonymous," in Hess and DaMatta, 229-31.

⁶⁰⁶ See Willems, 22-23, 31; also Martin, 259; Berg and Pretiz, "Five Waves of Protestant Evangelization," in Cook, 64; and Comblin, "Brazil: Base Communities in the Northeast," in Cook, 220.

⁶⁰⁷ See Tucker, 68-69; also Page, 254-56.

⁶⁰⁸ See Page, 256.

⁶⁰⁹ See Kraft and Kraft, "Spiritual Warfare in Brazil: A Study Concerning the Interaction Between Culture, the Church, and Evil Supernaturalism in Brazil," (unpublished paper, 1993), 18-19.

⁶¹⁰ See Sarti, "Morality and Transgression Among Poor Families," in Hess and DaMatta, 124-28.

⁶¹¹ See Kraft and Kraft, "Spiritual Warfare in Brazil," 19-20.

modern elements of society should be understood, it seems that most modern Brazilian women can still relate on some level to the plight of more conservative and traditional women in Brazilian society.

What values can be observed in the Brazilian family? First, the most prominent value seems to be that the family is a place of protection. It is where children are nurtured, where family members are provided for materially, and where the elderly can reside when they can no longer care for themselves.⁶¹² Finley adds that “Well-defined families with a high sense of home and group . . . act in defense of their physical possessions, as well as in defense of weaker members of the group, such as children, women, and servants.”⁶¹³ Even the physical home is built with a protective wall which literally insures the family’s protection and privacy.⁶¹⁴ DaMatta argues that this barrier symbolizes the protective nature of the family in a paradigm that he labels the “street and the home.”⁶¹⁵ Finley offers the following helpful summary of DaMatta’s thought:

The category *street* basically denotes the world, characterized by the unknown, by work, struggle, deception, dirty tricks, and individualization . . . [Home] . . . is a place where harmony should reign, crowding out the confusion, competition and disorder that characterize the street. At home nothing can be bought, sold or exchanged. Political discussions, which reveal individual differences within the family, are banned from the table and intimate areas of the house.⁶¹⁶

A second apparent Brazilian family value is its group orientation. That is, as newlyweds initially live with the husband’s parents, as multiple generations occupy the same living space, or as every extended family member makes it to every birthday

⁶¹² See Vincent, 82; also Harrison, 81.

⁶¹³ See Finley, 113.

⁶¹⁴ See Vincent, 83-83; also Harrison, 12.

⁶¹⁵ See DaMatta, “For an Anthropology of the Brazilian Tradition; or ‘A Virtude está no Meio,’” in Hess and DaMatta, 276.

⁶¹⁶ See Finley, 119.

party, Brazilian family members find their identity in the family.⁶¹⁷ Like Arabs, the Brazilian family has traditionally worked together or contributed toward sustaining the family economically.⁶¹⁸ While the Brazilian family's group nature is being challenged through urbanization, all Brazilians can relate to this family value.

Finally, Brazilian families also operate within an honor and shame framework. One Brazilian transcultural worker serving in a Muslim context affirmed, "Brazilian culture is an honor based culture: honor is the base of relationships."⁶¹⁹ Tucker asserts that in the nineteenth century, men had the legal right to murder their wives if they were caught in adultery.⁶²⁰ While these laws have, of course, been repealed, Page notes that domestic violence is still common, especially in cases when husbands learn of their wives' infidelity.⁶²¹ While this is a difficult social problem that cannot adequately be treated here, it should be noted that such violence is ultimately undergirded by the family value of honor.

3.10.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Family in the Arab World

As noted, failing to understand the family structure and values within a given culture will certainly hinder transcultural mission work. Sadly, this also seems to have contributed to the failure of Western mission work in the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kraft notes that historically, Western missionaries have essentially communicated that the nuclear family structure was the only acceptable model for a Christian family, which has, of course, alienated members of host cultures that value the extended family structure.⁶²² Matheny adds that the Protestant emphasis on individual conversion has often been perceived as a threat because it runs counter

⁶¹⁷ See Harrison, 9, 49; also Finley, 113.

⁶¹⁸ See Page, 184.

⁶¹⁹ See L.C., "Mais Missionários Brasileiros Para o Mundo Muçulmano," in Bradford, Winter, and Hawthorne, *Perspectivas*, 470. English translation by Barbara Hubbard.

⁶²⁰ See Tucker, 69.

⁶²¹ See Page, 254-56.

⁶²² See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 293.

to the communal values of the Arab extended family.⁶²³ Finally, North American evangelical missionaries experienced difficulty in Syria and Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by focusing their ministries on children and girls. Though they desired to reach families through these strategies, the Western missionaries ultimately defied the patriarchal structure and protective values of the Arab family.⁶²⁴

Kraft correctly asserts that “strategies should work with rather than against culturally appropriate lines of authority, leadership, and decision making.”⁶²⁵ It seems that Brazilian transcultural workers are able to identify with the Arab family better than their North American or European colleagues. In this brief survey, it has been shown that Brazilians experience or can at least relate to the extended family structure. There is also some resemblance between the traditional roles of men and women in Arab and Brazilian families. Finally, the similar family values of protection, group orientation, and honor and shame have been presented in both contexts.

While only 38.6% of the Brazilian transcultural workers surveyed felt that the Brazilian family was very similar (6.8%) or similar to (31.8%) the Arab family—compared to 61.4% who found it to be very different (15.9%) or different (45.5%)—the narrative responses given by the Brazilian workers revealed that they could still relate to the Arab extended family structure and its communal nature. In fact, a number of Brazilian workers communicated admiration for the Arab family. One worker said, “[I like] their relationship with their family members, [they are] very united, they act as a clan.”⁶²⁶ Others, making specific reference to members of the

⁶²³ See Matheny, 117-19.

⁶²⁴ See Ellen Fleischmann, “Evangelization or Education: American Protestant Missionaries, the American Board, and the Girls and Women of Syria (1830-1910),” in Murre-Van den Berg, 267-68; also Makdisi, 173; and Sharkey, 123, 127-29.

⁶²⁵ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 310.

⁶²⁶ All Brazilian responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.5.

extended family, commented, “[I like that] they have a love for one another, a strong sense of family, and they care for their elderly,” and “[I like the Arabs] respect for the elderly . . . Emphasis in community and family, not in the individual. [I like] the importance of the tradition in community, family, and person.”

Some Brazilian workers noted the similarities between Arab and Brazilian families. One worker related, “We [Brazilians and Arabs] both value the sense of community in the family,” while another added, “I am from Northeast Brazil where our family spends lots of time together and [we] have many meals together.” Finally, another Brazilian worker confirmed some of the findings in the literature which have been presented:

In both cultures the concept of the immediate family as well as the extended families being very close to each other (emotionally and physically sometimes) is very evident. Also, it's very common in both cultures for family members to work together (share businesses).

While affirming basic similarities between the Arab and Brazilian family, several Brazilian missionaries suggested that the Arab family was more tightly knit and generally stronger than the Brazilian family. One worker noted, “Brazilians and Arabs both have close families. But the family relationships among Arabs seems much closer,” while another added that “Arab families are much more involved with each other.”

Though not denying the authoritative role of Brazilian fathers, some workers asserted that Arab men and fathers occupied a more powerful place in family and society. One person stated that “the machismo is much stronger there [in the Arab world],” while another added, “The [Arab] father is more of an authority figure. Men (fathers, uncle) have authority over the women. In the Brazilian family, women are more independent.”

Some Brazilians also asserted that the Brazilian family was experiencing more rapid change than the Arab family. “The Arab family feels like the Brazilian family twenty-five years ago. Brazilian families seem to be getting more nuclear, while Arabs still focus on the extended family,” stated one worker. Another added, “Family life among Arabs is stronger. I think in Brazil we are losing this.”

Finally, one Brazilian added that since the Brazilian family differs from region to region, families from the Northeast of Brazil more closely resemble Arab families, while those from the urban areas do not:

It depends on what part of Brazil you are from. Personally, I see things a bit different because I come from a big city like São Paulo where we are very independent and individualistic. But for example, in the Northeast region of Brazil I see that there are similarities in some aspects.

While some Brazilian workers have pointed out similarities between the Brazilian and Arab family, others have highlighted some clear differences. The first is in the area of raising children. One missionary said, “Raising children [in the Arab world] is very different. The children are left to themselves. Discipline is very weak. The entire family and relatives interfere. The children are not so much punished. There are threats but they are not enforced.” Another added, “[In the Arab world] everyone can correct a child. In Brazil, no, and never in the parents’ presence!”

Another significant difference between Brazilian and Arab families is the difference in men’s and women’s roles. One worker remarked, “There [in the Arab world] the man is more important! Here [in Brazil] not,” while another added, “The Arab family is heavily dominated by the father. He is the one who pressures his children to marry and then to have kids. In Brazil, the father is not the ‘king’ of the family like this.” Commenting specifically on Arab marriages, one Brazilian worker said, “But the marital relationship is different [between Arabs and Brazilians]. The

relationship [in the Arab world] is similar to that of master and servant.” Finally, another Brazilian missionary observed, “The Arab woman has limitations and a different place in the marriage and society. Their opinion is not valued and their role is different in society. They see women as the personification of sin. Men have extreme freedom and a different role.”

For some Brazilian transcultural workers, these differences in men’s and women’s roles have been some of the most difficult aspects of Arab culture that they have encountered. For example, one worker related, “The husband-wife relationship is very difficult. Also, life is difficult for the girls in the family,” while another added, “[It is difficult to] see domestic violence and the extreme dominance of the father in the home.” Another worker shared, “[It is difficult to see] oppression towards women and lack of freedom,” while yet another said, “The woman's role inside of the family and community [is difficult for me].” While Brazilian women missionaries have found it painful to observe the plight of Arab women, many have also encountered difficulties as Brazilian women living in Arab society—an issue that will be discussed in a forthcoming chapter.

While the clear and subtle differences between the Arab family and Brazilian family have been noted, Brazilian transcultural workers still seem quite able to relate to the Arab family structure—certainly much better than their North American or European colleagues can. In light of this, what are the implications for ministry? First, Brazilians are naturally equipped to minister to and evangelize Arabs on a family to family basis. Matheny, recalling the Western mistake of focusing too heavily on the individual, urges that ministry in the Arab world should take place at the family level

and that group conversions should be celebrated.⁶²⁷ Indeed, in his study on conversion to Christianity among Palestinian Muslims, Ant Greenham affirmed that the support and encouragement of family and friends was a leading factor which helped Palestinians to make this decision to follow Christ.⁶²⁸ Allen and Duran assert that Brazilians and Latin Americans, because of their own group-oriented backgrounds, actually prefer to communicate the Gospel to families instead of individuals, which makes their witness effective in the Arab-Muslim context.⁶²⁹ In addition, some Brazilian transcultural workers interviewed shared that they had enjoyed ministering to Arabs as a family. One worker related, “Our whole family is involved in ministry,” while another added, “As a family we had a great testimony to the Arab families in Southern Brazil. Generally, Arabs have no respect for Brazilian women but they really respected my wife.” Thus, in addition to proclaiming the Gospel verbally, these Brazilian families have also offered a powerful witness through the quality of their family life.⁶³⁰ This incarnational witness certainly has the potential to bring transformation to the Arab family as they embrace Christ.

⁶²⁷ See Matheny, 99; also Abol Masih, “The Incarnational Witness to the Muslim Heart,” in McCurry, *The Gospel and Islam*, 91. The relevance and value of group conversion has also been nicely articulated in paragraph 7E of “The Willowbank Report” <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/lop-2.html#7> (accessed March 17, 2010): Conversion should not be conceived as being invariably and only an individual experience, although that has been the pattern of Western expectation for many years. On the contrary, the covenant theme of the Old Testament and the household baptisms of the New should lead us to desire, work for, and expect both family and group conversions. Much important research has been undertaken in recent years into “people movements” from both theological and sociological perspectives. Theologically, we recognize the biblical emphasis on the solidarity of each *ethnos*, i.e., nation or people. Sociologically, we recognize that each society is composed of a variety of subgroups, subcultures or homogeneous units. It is evident that people receive the gospel most readily when it is presented to them in a manner which is appropriate—and not alien—to their culture, and when they can respond to it with and among their own people. Different societies have different procedures for making group decisions, e.g., by consensus, by the head of the family, or by a group of elders. We recognize the validity of the corporate dimension of conversion as part of the total process, as well as the necessity for each member of the group ultimately to share in it personally.

⁶²⁸ See Ant Greenham, “Muslim Conversions to Christ: An Investigation of Palestinian Converts Living in the Holy Land,” (PhD dissertation, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 194-95.

⁶²⁹ See Don Allen and Abraham Duran, “Pre-Field Preparation to Sow,” in Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 286.

⁶³⁰ See Finley, 162.

Second, in addition to ministering to Arabs on a family basis, Brazilians also seem poised to facilitate church planting among Arabs. Kraft has suggested that church planting models in communal contexts like the Arab world ought to be developed intentionally around the extended family.⁶³¹ Musk adds that “Around the Muslim world today there are many examples of such groups, growing amid pain, founded around families who are able, within their cultural contexts, to help build a new family—the family of the church.”⁶³² Thus, in light of their own cultural background regarding family and the general ability to understand the Arab extended family structure, Brazilians seem prepared to help nurture the church in the Arab context.

Finally, Brazilian men serving among Arabs seem especially able to reach Arab men and the leaders of families. Though it appears that Arab men have more of an authoritative role in the Arab families than Brazilian men do in their families, Brazilian male transcultural workers can still relate to this patriarchal aspect of the family. Thus, they will want to focus on reaching the Arab family with the Gospel through the father.⁶³³ As church planting movements are established—ones that remain sensitive to the father’s role in the Arab family—Brazilian men, due to their own background, will be able to mentor Arab men toward being strong, yet godly leaders.

⁶³¹ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 311.

⁶³² See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 65.

⁶³³ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 311; also Phil and Julie Parshall, *Lifting the Veil: The World of Muslim Women* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel Publishers, 2002), 243.

Table 3.5 Brazilian Perspectives on the Arab Family

(19) The extended family lives together, meaning, in-laws with the sons and daughters, uncles, etc.
(32) The family circles have good relationships.
(15) [I like] their relationship with their family members, [they are] very united, they act as a clan.
(13) [I like that] they are a family culture.
(12) [I like] the family relationships and the respect they have for one another.
(10) [I like that] they have a love for one another, a strong sense of family, and they care for their elderly.
(4) [I like the Arabs] respect for the elderly . . . Emphasis in community and family, not in the individual. [I like] the importance of the tradition in community, family and person.
(3)[I like] how they value the family and the elderly, importance of hospitality, importance of human relationships. They have a more sensitive outlook of a person as a human being.
(2) [I like] their hospitality, family values (the family is very important to them), they are fun people to be around.
(33) [I like that] families are very welcoming--especially the Bedouin peoples in the villages.
(34) I enjoy the family aspect [of Arab culture].
(35) I like their family values.
(37) I like the emphasis on family and the time they spend together.
(32) Arabs are very devoted to the family and family ties.
(21) [Arabs have] a big emphasis on family life. This is a high value in Brazilian culture so I liked this.
(10) We [Brazilians and Arabs] both value the sense of community in the family.
(40) We [Brazilians and Arabs] both love to get together, eat, and have fun.
(44) We [Brazilians] are very together and so are Arabs. We are very much in peoples' lives. For us, this is not strange for us.
(2)In both cultures the concept of the immediate family as well as the extended families being very close to each other (emotionally and physically sometimes) is very evident. Also, it's very common in both cultures for family members to work together (share businesses).
(36) I am from Northeast Brazil where our family spends lots of time together and have many meals together.
(5) Life is very similar to the Brazilian way of life, though the Arabs seem to be a bit closer to their relatives.
(33) Brazilians and Arabs both have close families. But the family relationships among Arabs seems much closer.
(34) We are both family oriented; but Arab families are closer than Brazilian families.
(37) Arab families are much more involved with each other.
(21) [Arab and Brazilian families are] somewhere between similar and very similar. In the North African big cities, they make a bigger effort to be together as a family than what we do in Sao Paulo.
(16) The machismo is much stronger there [in the Arab world].
(37) The father is more of an authority figure. Men (fathers, uncle) have authority over the women. In the Brazilian family, women are more independent.



(38) The Arab family feels like the Brazilian family twenty-five years ago. Brazilian families seem to be getting more nuclear, while Arabs still focus on the extended family.
(45) Family life among Arabs is stronger. I think in Brazil we are losing this.
(1) It depends on what part of Brazil you are from. Personally, I see things a bit different because I come from a big city like Sao Paulo where we are very independent and individualistic. But for example, in the Northeast region of Brazil I see that there are similarities in some aspects.
(31) Here [in the Arab world], there is a tribal context. In Brazil this is not common.
(22) Raising children is very different. The children are left to themselves. Discipline is very weak. The entire family and relatives interfere. The children are not so much punished. There are threats but they are not enforced. The children are viewed as having no sin until they reach puberty. There are less personal belongings, since everything must be shared. There are family responsibilities that are very well defined and cannot be ignored.
(17) [In the Arab world] everyone can correct a child. In Brazil, no and never in the parents' presence!
(13) The kids are very aggressive. We noticed that when the boys played soccer they would freely kick the girls but the girls could not retaliate.
(35) The Arab family plays a bigger role in an individual's life than the Brazilian family does. For instance, Brazilian families do not choose a marriage partner for their children.
(17) There [in the Arab world] the man is more important! Here [in Brazil] not.
(8) The Arab family is heavily dominated by the father. He is the one who pressures his children to marry and then to have kids. In Brazil, the father is not the "king" of the family like this.
(13) There is a strong machismo among Arabs. The Arabs in Southern Brazil are from Southern Lebanon so they are very tense and there is a great sense of aggressiveness within the family.
(26) But the marital relationship is different. The relationship is similar to that of master and servant.
(25) The Arab woman has limitations and a different place in the marriage and society. Their opinion is not valued and their role is different in society. They see women as the personification of sin. Men have extreme freedom and a different role.
(14) [Islam] is able to influence a culture, family relationships and the discrimination and lower value of women.
(10) The husband-wife relationship is very difficult. Also, life is difficult for the girls in the family.
(9) [It is difficult to] see domestic violence and the extreme dominance of the father in the home.
(6) [It is difficult to see] oppression towards women and lack of freedom.
(2) [It is difficult to see] the treatment of women (it seems to me that women are considered of a lower value to the Arab men), "dictatorship style" of leading the family.
(32) Treatment of women [is difficult for me].
(30) The woman's role inside of the family and community [is difficult for me].
(27) The women's role in the Arab world [is difficult for me].
(24) The women's situation [is difficult for me].
(35) The mistreatment and harassment of women is difficult for me--that women are

viewed as possessions.
(37) I don't like the way women are treated.
(22) Something that still bothers me a lot is how “macho” the society still is in many aspects, focused on the man.
(31) Our whole family is involved in ministry.
(13) As a family we had a great testimony to the Arab families in Southern Brazil. Generally, Arabs have no respect for Brazilian women but they really respected my wife.

3.11 Relationships

All Christian ministry—especially transcultural mission—is quite impossible without meaningful relationships. Kraft asserts that if warmth and friendship are present between missionaries and members of the host culture, then cultural change and even conversion to Christianity are much more likely to occur.⁶³⁴ In the present section, a brief study of relationships in the Arab and Brazilian contexts will be considered. Specifically, how do friendships begin? What are the prominent values observed in friendships? How do Arabs and Brazilians resolve conflicts? After treating these questions in the literature, and considering the input given by Brazilian transcultural workers who serve among Arabs, the missiological implications will be discussed.

3.11.1 Arab Friendships

Because Arabs easily talk to strangers and express themselves freely, spontaneously, and warmly, Nydell asserts that “Friendships start and develop quickly.”⁶³⁵ Even basic greetings and communication are filled with warmth and emotion that may seem rather exaggerated for the average Westerner.⁶³⁶ For instance, Syrian Arabs will say *nharkoum said* (“may your day be prosperous”) for “good morning” to which the response is *nharkoum said wa mubarak* (“may your day be prosperous and blessed”).

⁶³⁴ See Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 394.

⁶³⁵ See Nydell, 17; also Barakat, *The Arab World*, 24-25.

⁶³⁶ See Nydell, 28.

Also, *kater kheyarak* (“Allah increase your well being”) is commonly used to convey thanks.⁶³⁷

While friendships may develop quickly among Arabs, it should be noted that Arabs do not regard everyone in the community or society as a friend. Rather, as Nydell notes, “In the Arab way of thinking, people are clearly divided into friends and strangers.”⁶³⁸ Among friends, they can be “polite, honest, generous, and helpful at all times”; however, among strangers in public, it is not uncommon to see pushing in lines, discourteous driving, and even lying and cheating in business.⁶³⁹

Once friendships are begun among Arabs, what values help to maintain those relationships? First, Arabs prefer to remain in frequent contact; thus, it is normal for friends to visit and spend time together at least every few days. As conversation is the most popular form of entertainment in the Arab world, frequent meetings do not necessarily mean planned activities that cost money.⁶⁴⁰ If friends are unable to see each other, they will call or even send a brief text message to maintain contact until the next face-to-face meeting is possible.

Second, loyalty is also a strong value in Arab friendships.⁶⁴¹ One clear expression of this is the favor system that exists in Arab society. As noted, it is impossible for an Arab friend to refuse verbally a request from a friend—whether or not they are willing or able to meet the need. However, in many cases, Arabs will sacrifice and search for creative solutions to help out a friend—a favor that will certainly be called in sometime in the future. While it seems that Arabs keep fairly good track of favors, this does contribute to loyalty within a friendship.

⁶³⁷ See Patai, 53; also Nydell, 99.

⁶³⁸ See Nydell, 26.

⁶³⁹ See Nydell, 26.

⁶⁴⁰ See Nydell, 20.

⁶⁴¹ See Nydell, 17-19.

A final characteristic of Arab relationships is the undergirding value of the group. Stemming from the communal nature of the traditional Arab extended family, friendships should also be understood within this group framework. Barakat asserts, “A highly distinctive feature of Arab society is the continuing dominance of primary group relations” [in which] “individuals engage in an unlimited commitment to one another.” He adds that Arabs “derive satisfaction from extensive . . . affiliations and develop a great sense of belonging.”⁶⁴² As “privacy” is synonymous with “loneliness” in Arabic, Arabs continually default to cultivating relationships within the group context.⁶⁴³ While the sense of group continues to be stronger in rural settings, family, community, and friendship of a communal nature is still maintained even in larger urban contexts.⁶⁴⁴

How do Arabs approach conflict resolution? Hiebert notes that as members of a communal society, Arabs prefer to avoid direct confrontation if possible.⁶⁴⁵ Despite this, Patai correctly asserts that Arabs, like many other cultures, are quite prone to conflict on family, tribal, as well as national and political, levels.⁶⁴⁶ As Arabs freely communicate emotion, it is not unusual for even a small conflict to become explosive rather quickly. The inherited Bedouin values of bravery require them to offer a strong verbal defense in the face of conflict—words that very often do not translate into concrete action.⁶⁴⁷

In light of this tendency to defend one’s honor through strong words, how do Arabs concretely resolve a conflict? While one possibility is that the enemy (a rival clan, tribe, or army) might actually be destroyed in the conflict, a more common Arab

⁶⁴² See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 24.

⁶⁴³ See Nydell, 20-21.

⁶⁴⁴ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 24.

⁶⁴⁵ See Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 21.

⁶⁴⁶ See Patai, 232-40.

⁶⁴⁷ See Patai, 63-69.

response is to appeal to a mediator. Traditionally the mediator (*wasit*) was a man of wealth and prestige whose aim was first to intervene and separate the two fighting parties—an action that actually increased the honor of each group. The mediator’s job was not to render a judgment in the conflict; rather, it was to restore and uphold the groups’ honor. In fact, a routine strategy was to invite the groups to cease fighting for the sake of their respective families.⁶⁴⁸

On a political level, mediation and conflict resolution often takes the form of conferences attended by delegations from rival Arab nations. From a Western perspective, it seems that these meetings are filled with never ending discourses that result in little concrete action other than scheduling another conference. However, for Arabs, this unhurried time to talk at length restores honor, builds friendship, and offers hope for a peaceful future.⁶⁴⁹

3.11.2 Brazilian Friendships

One of the most distinguishing aspects of Brazilians is their friendly nature and penchant for relationships. Harrison cites a Brazilian friend who relates: “‘Friend’ likewise means something different in Brazil. ‘A friend is like a brother or sister. You share things, be honest with them. They will accept you as you are. They will question you, argue with you. It leads to growth.’”⁶⁵⁰ That said, like Arabs, Brazilians are certainly not friends with everyone in society. In light of DaMatta’s home and street paradigm, it should be noted that friendship in Brazil is necessarily exclusive and that relationships can be observed on different levels.⁶⁵¹ Many Brazilians remain strangers to one another, while others, such as those who work together, are regarded as

⁶⁴⁸ See Patai, 239-43; also Nydell, 25-26. For more discussion on the role of a mediator, see Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 65-79.

⁶⁴⁹ See Patai, 252-60.

⁶⁵⁰ See Harrison, 10.

⁶⁵¹ See Page, 229-58.

colleagues (*colegas*). After some time, a colleague may become a friend (*amigo*), which as indicated in the description above, means that the friend has in a sense become a part of the family.⁶⁵²

Given these levels of relationship within Brazil and the process of going from stranger to colleague and possibly to friend, how do Brazilians meet one another? First, Brazilians often become friends through their work. It is not unusual for businessmen working on a deal to strike up a friendship because, as Harrison notes, “Brazilians often approach business as a particular kind of social interaction.”⁶⁵³ Also, it is common for co-workers in a company to go out for drinks after work, even for many years, before consecrating their friendship by inviting one another to their homes.⁶⁵⁴ Second, Brazilians also meet in otherwise public places. Friendships have been started on buses, in the market, and of course, at the beach. The latter is a key public place in Brazilian society and it’s often where young people, including young men and women with romantic interests, become acquainted and strike up a friendship.⁶⁵⁵ Finally, in both work and public places, Brazilians have been known for their warmth, charm, and friendship toward foreigners. Page correctly asserts: “Cordiality is a defining characteristic of their behavior. They radiate an irresistible pleasantness, abundant hospitality, and unflinching politeness, especially to foreigners.”⁶⁵⁶

Not unlike Arabs, Brazilian friendships seem to thrive on the favor system. While some colleagues may ask for a favor, such requests happen more often among friends. Sometimes the request, generally communicated in an indirect manner, is actually made to test the friendship. Indeed, if it is within one’s power to act, a

⁶⁵² See Harrison, 10-11; also Finley, 113.

⁶⁵³ See Harrison, 72.

⁶⁵⁴ See Vincent, 83; also Harrison, 77.

⁶⁵⁵ See Harrison, 63-67; also Vincent, 89.

⁶⁵⁶ See Page, 9.

friend's request for a favor cannot be refused. Even when Brazilians are not able to help, they will rarely communicate this directly.⁶⁵⁷

Also like Arabs, Brazilians build friendships within the context of a largely communal culture. Harrison writes that "The general concern for the group rather than the individual, and an appreciation for the human world around them, all create situations in which Brazilians are rarely alone."⁶⁵⁸ A by-product of the traditional Brazilian extended family, the communal nature of Brazilian society can be observed on a number of fronts. Though certainly apparent in the life and business of small towns, the group orientation can also be observed in the cities, for instance, when employees take their coffee breaks.⁶⁵⁹ Vincent writes, "[Brazilians] stop their work, come together at the coffee bar or around the coffee server, drink, converse, and then return to previous duties."⁶⁶⁰ Outside of work, Brazilians of all races and classes meet and interact on public transportation, at the beach, and of course at soccer (*futebol*) matches. Describing the soccer match as a community gathering, Page vividly writes:

Crowds attending major matches are not mere onlookers; they are participants in an ecstatic rite that begins when teams take the field. Waving banners, setting off firecrackers, tossing talcum powder, and chanting cheers, the fans enter into a symbiotic relationship with the players, who feed off the energy that comes from the stands.⁶⁶¹

Another venue in which Brazilians demonstrate a collective spirit is at Carnival, the pre-Lenten celebration which officially marks the end of the summer. Page adds:

For five nights and four days, a marathon of merrymaking convulses the city, as delirious celebrants shed all their inhibitions (along with most of their outer garments) and respond to the ubiquitous, nonstop pulsing of drums conveying the infectious beat of the samba.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁷ See Harrison, 14-15; also Finley, 114-15.

⁶⁵⁸ See Harrison, 12.

⁶⁵⁹ See Rosanne Prado's very insightful study in Prado, "Small Town, Brazil: Heaven and Hell of Personalism," in Hess and DaMatta, 59-82.

⁶⁶⁰ See Vincent, 85.

⁶⁶¹ See Page, 392.

⁶⁶² See Page, 469.

Finally, Brazilians achieve a form of community through popular religion. Though the practices and underlying beliefs of Brazilian Spiritism will be addressed shortly, it is sufficient here to conclude with Wiebe that “Spiritism in Brazil is primarily a group activity.”⁶⁶³

Some may object to the assertion that Brazil is predominantly a communal culture, arguing for a certain Brazilian individualism. However, Finley helpfully distinguishes Brazilian individualism from that which is observed in North America or Europe. He writes:

Brazilians have a different kind of individualism. Brazil is still a relational culture, and people always sense that they need others. Brazilian individualism consists, therefore, not of isolationism, but of efforts to assert oneself within a group.⁶⁶⁴

Finally, how do Brazilians generally go about resolving conflict? There is a Brazilian proverb that says, “When one doesn’t want, two don’t quarrel.”⁶⁶⁵ This saying serves as a reminder that Brazilians are high context people who tend to prefer indirect communication and therefore do not prefer direct, verbal confrontation.

Rodrigues adds:

The basic Luso-Brazilian personality has a horror of violence and always seeks a way of smoothing things over, a path of moderation that avoids definite breaks. Cleverness, prudence in shunning extremes, an ability to forget, a rich sense of humor, a cool head and a warm heart get the Brazilians through difficult moments.⁶⁶⁶

In short, Brazilians continue to value cordiality even in conflicts and will pursue a solution for the problem in a diplomatic and indirect manner. A key value in Brazilian culture, which will be discussed more shortly, is finding a solution (*jeito*) to problems or challenges. Rather than confronting the issue directly, Brazilians will lean on

⁶⁶³ See James P. Wiebe, “Persistence of Spiritism in Brazil,” (DMiss dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), 10.

⁶⁶⁴ See Finley, 192.

⁶⁶⁵ Cited in Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, 276.

⁶⁶⁶ Cited in Harrison, 18.

relationships or appeal to favors to resolve it. This approach certainly applies to resolving a conflict with friends.

3.11.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Relationships in the Arab World

While this survey of the literature has revealed some continuity in how Arabs and Brazilians regard friendships, a little over two-thirds of Brazilian workers surveyed felt that the Brazilian approach to relationships was very similar (29.5%) or similar to (38.6%) that of Arabs. The narrative responses strongly confirmed this data.

A significant number of respondents communicated a general admiration for the value that Arabs placed on relationships. One Brazilian worker said, “[I like] their [Arabs] relational attitude,” while another added, “[I like that Arabs] are very loving people, they are transparent and communicate well . . . they are very sociable.”⁶⁶⁷ Similarly, others shared, “[I like that Arabs] value relationships,” and “I enjoy that they [Arabs] are people oriented, open to friendship.” One worker showed his appreciation for the Arab emphasis on relationships by contrasting this with how (presumably) Europeans approach relationships: “[I like that Arab] culture is relational. I appreciate the fact that they are warm, and almost always open to deeper relationships. [This is] different from cold climate cultures.”

Some transcultural workers noted that Arabs seemed especially open to getting to know Brazilians. One worker said, “[I like that] Arabs are friendly and like to talk. They like Brazilians and we feel welcomed,” and another added, “[I like that Arabs] are very friendly. They love Brazilian people . . . They like to talk and eat a lot . . . They are open to relationships.”

Other Brazilians affirmed that building relationships with Arabs was generally easy and happened rather quickly. “Arabs make friends quickly,” related one worker while another added, “The Muslims are very easy to build friendships with.” Another

⁶⁶⁷ All Brazilian responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.6.

missionary said, “[I like that] there are open doors to relationship and it is easy to make friends and share the Gospel.”

Once relationships were built, other Brazilian workers affirmed that Arabs were loyal friends. One worker indicated, “Among Arabs, once someone is a friend, they are a very close friend,” and another added, “[They are] always in touch.” Finally, another missionary shared, “Friendships [with Arabs] tend to last a long time and do not die in spite of the physical distance.”

A number of Brazilian workers affirmed the communal nature of Arab culture. “[I like the Arab’s] people-oriented mentality; they are people who enjoy celebrating,” shared one worker. Another added, “[I like that Arabs] are friendly and offer friendship. They are very integrated in the community they live in: [each] one helps one another,” while another related, “[I like that Arabs] are laid back and it is easy to spend lots of time together.” Finally, one Brazilian worker summarized, “[I like the Arab] emphasis in community and family, not in the individual.”

Other Brazilian missionaries interviewed noted some similarities regarding relationship between their own culture and their Arab contexts. One worker said, “Both [Arab and Brazilian] cultures are very relational,” and another related, “The way they [Arabs] make friends here is very similar to Brazilians.” More specifically, some workers commented on how relationships were begun. “It is easy to make an immediate relationship with Arabs,” shared one worker. Another added, “It is very easy for us [Arabs and Brazilians] to make friends, start a conversation, etc.,” while another affirmed, “It is very easy to get to know [Arab] people. It is not necessary to have an official reason to meet a new person.”

Other Brazilian workers commented on similarities in cultivating and maintaining a relationship that has already started. One worker said, “[I like that

Arabs] are very curious to know everything about your life. In Brazil, we do this, too. They [Arabs] are really friendly.” Another shared, “A lot of time is spent in building a friendship or a relationship. Simply spending time together without even having much to say has a lot of meaning to both [Arab and Brazilian] cultures.” Finally, another Brazilian observed, “Like us [Brazilians], it takes time to gain their [Arabs] trust.”

Some Brazilian respondents indicated that there were some slight differences in how Arabs and Brazilians approached relationships, which also reveals some diversity among Brazilians on the issue. Commenting on Brazilian individualism, one worker related, “[I like the Arab’s] sense of community. Because I feel that we [Brazilians] are very individualistic. I appreciate it so much even though it is hard for me, like to share a glass, a food, water bottle, etc.” Another admitted, “I am more people-oriented than a North American but not as people oriented as North Africans; North Africans are more status ascribed than myself so this was challenging.” Finally, another worker shared, “In the Arab country where I serve, they take people home so easily! In Brazil, we are more afraid of that (perhaps for me because I am from a big city).”

Other Brazilian missionaries cited some clear differences in how Arabs and Brazilians approach friendship. Indicating that Arabs are more closed than Brazilians, one worker shared, “Arabs are very devoted to the family and family ties. At first, it is not easy to connect with them and create deeper relationships. They appear to be hospitable but it takes time to create trust.” Another added, “They [Arabs] are very much among themselves.”

Commenting on how relationships begin, one Brazilian noted, “It is different in how we begin the relationship. Brazilians open up more quickly. But, over time Arabs open up, though more slowly.” On the other hand, another Brazilian related,

“I’m from Minas Gerais. We don’t make friends as quickly or easily as they do here in my Arab country.” Describing the type of people with whom Arabs and Brazilians make friends, one worker said, “Arabs seem to begin friendships based on appearances and status. In Brazil, we become friends with our work and classmates. In Brazil once you become a friend, you are part of the family.” Another added, “Arabs are more likely to build friendships based on social class than Brazilians are. It’s slower to start a relationship with Arabs but it gets stronger over time.” Finally, another Brazilian commented on the different ways that friendships are maintained: “Arabs call each other all the time; Brazilians give each other a little more space and time.”

For some Brazilians, the way that Arabs pursued relationships was challenging for them. Commenting on the lack of privacy in relationships, one worker said, “The concept of privacy [was difficult]. North African’s sense of privacy is ‘more loose’ than mine,” while another added, “Lack of privacy [among Arabs is difficult].” Finally, for one Brazilian the communal nature of Arab culture, especially as it affected one’s decision to follow Christ, was difficult: “As their identity is in Islam, even those who are open to Christ were very reluctant to believe in Christ. There is a strong pressure from the group.”

Regarding conflict resolution, the vast majority (79.6%) of Brazilian transcultural workers felt that the Arab manner of resolving conflicts was very different (20.5%) or different (59.1%) or from the Brazilian approach. Citing similarities between Arabs and Brazilians in resolving conflict, one worker related, “In some cases, Brazilians also have difficulty resolving conflict,” and another added, “As Brazilians, the Arabs try to avoid direct conflict.” One Brazilian worker admitted, “I was more similar to North Africans . . . in resolving conflict in a roundabout way.”

Some of the observations made by Brazilians about Arab communication implied differences in dealing with conflicts. One worker said, “They yell a lot here,” while another added, “They [Arabs] talk very loud, scream at each other and get everything resolved in twenty minutes. Only God knows if there was a true repentance, forgiveness and apology.” One worker jokingly added, “They love ‘fake wrestling’ here [and resolve their conflicts like that].” Others commented, “They [Arabs] argue a lot, ask for forgiveness of each other and everything goes back to how it was before,” and, “Generally, conflicts are not resolved, and if resolved, it is not done in the best way.”

Some Brazilian workers asserted, in contrast to the Arab tendency to shout and argue, that Brazilians tend to maintain their cordiality even during a conflict. One worker related, “Arabs will scream a lot and shout but there is lots of talk and no action. Brazilians do not shout like that,” while another said, “Brazilians do not like confrontation; we are generally diplomatic in these things.”

Other Brazilian workers indicated that Brazilians are generally more confrontational than Arabs during a conflict. One Brazilian shared, “Brazilians do not like confrontation. But we are more confrontational than Arabs are,” while another added, “Brazilians confront each other more than Arabs do. Here [in my Arab country] there is no verbal confrontation.” Similarly, one worker related, “In my Arab context there is no direct confrontation. Personally, I prefer to confront someone when there is a problem,” and another added, “Brazilians can also be indirect but personally I am more direct in confrontation. Arabs do not want to face a problem and you cannot communicate with them too directly.”

Finally, Brazilian transcultural workers affirmed one aspect of Arab conflict resolution that was quite different from the Brazilian way—appealing to a mediator.

One Brazilian said, “In Brazil, we can resolve a problem directly with the person. Arabs have to call someone as an intermediary.” Another affirmed, “In Brazil, the conflict is between you and the person. In the Arab world, a mediator is needed. In a conflict, Arabs must show themselves to be strong and the mediator serves to boost this strength.” Describing this process in a rural context, one Brazilian shared, “Sometimes they make use of a mediator. In the villages where we work they have a meal together. The offending party slaughters a sheep and offers it to the offended party and his family.” Finally, one worker highlighted the important role of the mother in conflict resolution: “The mother is the mediator of disputes in the Arab family and problems are worked out within the family.”

In light of the summary from the literature and survey responses given by Brazilian transcultural workers regarding friendship, what are the missiological implications for Brazilians serving among Arabs? First, perhaps the strongest quality that Brazilians bring to transcultural mission is their ability to initiate and cultivate quality friendships. As it has been shown, both Brazilians and Arabs deeply value relationships, and they approach friendships in a similar way. One Brazilian worker illustrated this in sharing some difficulty that he encountered serving under a British mission team leader who exhorted the team to go out and “make friends” with Arabs—in essence, make impersonal contacts in order to share the Gospel.⁶⁶⁸ However, this worker seemed to find more success in his ministry by approaching relationships in a more Brazilian way. In fact, another Brazilian missionary argued that Brazilians were effective among Arab-Muslims because they were not afraid to develop deep and meaningful relationship with Arabs and because they were able to

⁶⁶⁸ Related to me in personal conversation during a visit, January 5, 2010.

place people above projects.⁶⁶⁹ In short, the Brazilian way of building relationships seems quite meaningful in the Arab context and provides a foundation for authentic evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.

Second, it is quite natural for Brazilians to approach ministry in a group-oriented society. As noted, unlike North Americans and Europeans who can be so focused on personal (individual) evangelism or discipleship, Brazilians are able to build relationships and communicate the Gospel to families and groups of friends—a natural basis for a church planting movement.⁶⁷⁰ Brazilians also seem naturally equipped to partner with Arabs in ministry teams. In spending time with a mission team composed of Brazilians and Arabs, I observed that the team meeting was planned around a meal and that kids were present. In addition to studying the Scriptures and praying for one another, many personal needs were shared, and very little ministry business was communicated. Indeed, cultivating Christian fellowship was valued more than dealing with ministry projects. For me, this was quite distinct from many mission team meetings in which I had participated where ministry business is the central focus.⁶⁷¹

Finally, while Brazilians can relate to Arabs in the general manner of building relationships in a communal culture, there are some clear differences in how conflicts are resolved. Though Brazilians are also from a high context culture and many may not prefer direct confrontation, most Brazilians will have to adapt significantly in this area when serving among Arabs.

⁶⁶⁹ See L.C., “Mais Missionários Brasileiros Para O Mundo Muçulmano,” in Bradford, Winter, and Hawthorne, *Perspectivas*, 470; also Finley, 199.

⁶⁷⁰ See Allen and Duran, “Pre-Field Preparation to Sow,” in Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 286.

⁶⁷¹ These observations were made with this team, January 9, 2010.

Table 3.6 Brazilian Perspectives on Arabs, Friendship, and Conflict

(20) [I like] their [Arabs] relational attitude.
(13) [I like that Arabs are] are very loving people, they are transparent and communicate well . . . they are very sociable.
(11) [I like that Arabs] value relationships.
(35) I enjoy that they [Arabs] are people oriented, open to friendship.
(7) [I like that Arab] culture is relational. I appreciate the fact that they are warm, and almost always open to deeper relationships. [This is] different from cold climate cultures.
(38) I love relationships.
(33) I was quite comfortable with friends made there. Most of my relationships were work relationships.
(39) Arabs are caring and loving people. I feel at home here and have adapted in my four years here.
(10) [I like that Arabs] have a love for one another.
(3) [I like the Arab] importance of human relationships. They have a more sensitive outlook of a person as a human being.
(2)[Arabs] are fun people to be around.
(26) [I like that] generally, they [Arabs] are friendly and hospitable.
(38) [I like that] they [Arabs] are friendly.
(41) I like the friendly aspect [of Arab culture]--spending time with people.
(34) [I like that Arabs] are open to relationships (even though they want to be with you all of the time).
(43) [I like that] Arabs are friendly and like to talk. They like Brazilians and we feel welcomed.
(44) [I like that Arabs] are very friendly. They love Brazilian people. . . They like to talk and eat a lot. . . They are open to relationships.
(29) [I like that] we [Brazilians] are well received. There are friendships after you've gained trust.
(36) Arabs make friends quickly.
(16) The Muslims are very easy to build friendships with.
(39) [I like that] there are open doors to relationship and it is easy to make friends and share the Gospel.
(33) Among Arabs, once someone is a friend, they are a very close friend.
(35) [They are] always in touch.
(4) Friendships [with Arabs] tend to last a long time and do not die in spite of the physical distance.
(18) [I like the Arab's] people-oriented mentality; they are people who enjoy celebrating.
(16) [I like that Arabs] are friendly and offer friendship. They are very integrated in the community they live in: [each] one helps one another.
(8) [I like that Arabs] are laid back and it is easy to spend lots of time together.
(4)[I like the Arab] emphasis in community and family, not in the individual.
(1) [I like the Arab] value of community . . . good sense of humor.
(2) Both [Arab and Brazilian] cultures are very relational.
(5) The way they [Arabs] make friends here is very similar to Brazilians.
(43) It is easy to make an immediate relationship with Arabs.
(16) It is very easy for us [Arabs and Brazilians] to make friends, start a conversation,



etc.
(8) It is very easy to get to know [Arab] people. It is not necessary to have an official reason to meet a new person.
(18) Both [Arab and Brazilian] cultures are quite informal in this process [of building relationships].
(45) [I like that Arabs] are very curious to know everything about your life. In Brazil, we do this, too. They [Arabs] are really friendly.
(22) A lot of time is spent in building a friendship or a relationship. Simply spending time together without even having much to say has a lot of meaning to both [Arab and Brazilian] cultures.
(31) Like us [Brazilians], it takes time to gain their [Arabs] trust.
(17) [I like the Arab's] sense of community. Because I feel that we [Brazilians] are very individualistic. I appreciate it so much even though it is hard for me, like to share a glass, a food, water bottle, etc.
(21) I am more people-oriented than a North American but not as people oriented as North Africans; North Africans are more status ascribed than myself so this was challenging.
(17) In the Arab country where I serve, they take people home so easily! In Brazil, we are more afraid of that (perhaps for me because I am from a big city).
(25) Except for the separation between men and women, [relationship building] is very similar.
(32) Arabs are very devoted to the family and family ties. At first, it is not easy to connect with them and create deeper relationships. They appear to be hospitable but it takes time to create trust.
(14) They [Arabs] are very much among themselves.
(34) It is different in how we begin the relationship. Brazilians open up more quickly. But, over time Arabs open up, though more slowly.
(39) I'm from Minas Gerais. We don't make friends as quickly or easily as they do here in my Arab country.
(19) Here [in the Arab world], the way people approach each other in order to start a friendship is very delicate.
(40) Arabs seem to begin friendships based on appearances and status. In Brazil, we become friends with our work and classmates. In Brazil once you become a friend, you are part of the family.
(38) Arabs are more likely to build friendships based on social class than Brazilians are. It's slower to start a relationship with Arabs but it gets stronger over time.
(37) Arabs call each other all the time; Brazilians give each other a little more space and time.
(21) The concept of privacy [was difficult]. North African's sense of privacy is "more loose" than mine.
(29) Lack of privacy [among Arabs is difficult].
(13) As their identity is in Islam, even those who are open to Christ were very reluctant to believe in Christ. There is a strong pressure from the group.
(31) In some cases, Brazilians also have difficulty resolving conflict.
(5) As Brazilians, the Arabs try to avoid direct conflict.
(21) I was more similar to North Africans . . . in resolving conflict in a round about way.
(40) Brazilians themselves can be different on resolving conflict.
(43) They yell a lot here.

(19) They [Arabs] talk very loud, scream at each other and get everything resolved in twenty minutes. Only God knows if there was a true repentance, forgiveness and apology.
(44) They love “fake wrestling” here [and resolve their conflicts like that].
(16) They argue a lot, ask for forgiveness of each other and everything goes back to how it was before.
(26) Generally, conflicts are not resolved, and if resolved, it is not done in the best way.
(45) <i>Maleesh</i> [“no worries”] often summarizes things
(33) Arabs are more emotional than Brazilians when there is a conflict; but maybe this freedom of expression leads to better forgiveness.
(32) We are somewhat similar because of being hot blooded; yet they are different from Brazilians because we do not start off fighting and arguing.
(41) Arabs will scream a lot and shout but there is lots of talk and no action. Brazilians do not shout like that.
(18) Brazilians do not like confrontation; we are generally diplomatic in these things.
(35) Brazilians do not like confrontation. But we are more confrontational than Arabs are.
(37) Brazilians confront each other more than Arabs do. Here [in my Arab country] there is no verbal confrontation.
(36) In my Arab context there is no direct confrontation. Personally, I prefer to confront someone when there is a problem.
(39) Brazilians can also be indirect but personally I am more direct in confrontation. Arabs do not want to face a problem and you cannot communicate with them too directly.
(34) There is no direct confrontation with Arabs because they get easily offended.
(9) In Brazil, we can resolve a problem directly with the person. Arabs have to call someone as an intermediary.
(38) In Brazil, the conflict is between you and the person. In the Arab world, a mediator is needed. In a conflict, Arabs must show themselves to be strong and the mediator serves to boost this strength.
(22) Sometimes they make use of a mediator. In the villages where we work they have a meal together. The offended party slaughters a sheep and offers it to the offended party and his family.
(13) The mother is the mediator of disputes in the Arab family and problems are worked out within the family.
(23) Arabs are less transparent in their friendships therefore they do not come into conflict as much.
(2) Conflict resolution has to be according to their [Arab] way of doing things
(8) As a Brazilian and a foreigner, I was automatically the “loser” when it came to conflict. This was true with Arab-Muslims but also with some Arab Christians, too.

3.12 Hospitality

Quite related to the preceding discussions on family and relationships, we now turn our attention to the cultural value of hospitality—the general act of welcoming another into one’s home, to one’s table, and generally into one’s life. A qualification

for church leaders in the Pastoral Epistles,⁶⁷² offering hospitality is also a vital element for transcultural mission work as it creates an environment for relationships, authentic evangelism and discipleship, and Christian fellowship. In this section, we will examine how Arabs and Brazilians regard and practice hospitality. After analyzing the responses of Brazilian missionaries regarding hospitality in the Arab world, the missiological implications will be explored.

3.12.1 Arabs and Hospitality

Hospitality (*diyafa*) is a defining characteristic of Arab culture.⁶⁷³ In fact, the basic Arabic greeting for “hello” (*ahhlan wa sahhlan*) literally means that there is a family and a valley of abundance. That is, with the harvest finished and the family present, it is time to sit down and spend some unhurried time together.⁶⁷⁴ Hence, a sense of welcoming hospitality is embedded in this daily greeting.

While Islam strongly encourages and informs Arab hospitality, this cultural value can also be traced to the Bedouin roots of Arab culture.⁶⁷⁵ Motivated by a desire to increase one’s reputation within the community as well as to strengthen group solidarity, Bedouins were obliged to offer protection and shelter to strangers—even fugitives.⁶⁷⁶ Thus, it is impossible for Arabs, including the poor, to turn away a visitor and deny him hospitality.⁶⁷⁷ Commenting further on the importance of Arab hospitality, one Arab woman helpfully summarized:

For Arabs, hospitality lies at the heart of who we are. How well one treats his guests is a direct measurement of what kind of a person she or he is. Hospitality is among the most highly admired of virtues. Indeed, families judge themselves and each other according to the amount of generosity they bestow upon their guests they entertain. Whether one’s guests are relatives, friends, neighbors, or relative

⁶⁷² See 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8; also 1 Peter 4:9.

⁶⁷³ Patai (see Patai, 93) helpfully points out that *diyafa* is the same word for generosity in Sudanese Arabic.

⁶⁷⁴ See Nydell, 56.

⁶⁷⁵ See Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam*, 89-90; also Barakat, *The Arab World*, 52, 60.

⁶⁷⁶ See Matheny, 17; also Patai, 90-93.

⁶⁷⁷ See Patai, 90; also Nydell, 56.

strangers, they are welcomed into the home and to the dinner table with much the same kindness and generosity.⁶⁷⁸

In most cases, Arabs show hospitality in the context of their home. Matheny notes that even the shortest visit includes a drink and some food.⁶⁷⁹ Often, unexpected visitors are invited to stay for a meal. In Tunisia, such visitors are greeted with the expression *hisaneh jiraya* (“your horse makes good time”), meaning that they showed up at just the right moment.

In most Arab contexts, the largest meal of the day is at mid-day or in the early afternoon. As evening meals can be quite late (around ten or eleven o’clock), guests will often arrive a couple of hours before the meal is served to sit, have a drink and snacks, and to talk. When the food does arrive, there is typically much more placed on the table than can possibly be consumed—an opportunity to “feast with the eyes.” Guests are generously served food and are constantly urged to eat more.⁶⁸⁰ In Moroccan Arabic, the common table expression is *kul ma kliti waylo* (“Eat! You haven’t eaten anything!”). As visitors express their intention to depart, the host will protest that it is too early, and the actual leaving process may include another half hour of discussion as the host walks guests to the door.

In the Arab world, there are also occasions which require special and more labor intensive hospitality. These include weddings, circumcisions, funerals, religious feasts, and the month of Ramadan.⁶⁸¹ While the home is the common place for offering hospitality, Arabs will also demonstrate this value in public places by paying for a guest at a café or restaurant.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁸ Cited in Nydell, 57.

⁶⁷⁹ See Matheny, 18.

⁶⁸⁰ See Nydell, 59-60.

⁶⁸¹ See Patai, 91.

⁶⁸² See Patai, 93; also Nydell, 55-56.

3.12.2 Brazilians and Hospitality

Brazilians are also quite known for their hospitality. In fact, Azevedo argues that Brazilian hospitality, with its implicit kindness and tolerance, is one of the strongest attributes of the culture as a whole.⁶⁸³ In light of DaMatta's home and street paradigm, Brazilian hospitality is most immediately observed in gatherings of the extended family and friends in the home. The typical Brazilian extended family will gather at least once weekly—often on Sunday—for a traditional meal of *feijoada*.⁶⁸⁴ If a family friend should stop by during meal time, they are expected to stay unless they can offer a compelling reason for why they cannot. In some Brazilian homes, an unexpected visitor is told, “we will put more water in the beans,” meaning that there is always plenty of food to go around. Outside of meals, Brazilians also show hospitality by offering coffee, juice, and cookies.⁶⁸⁵ Also, outside of the home, Brazilians remain hospitable as one friend will pay for his invited guest's coffee, drink, or meal.⁶⁸⁶

In terms of food, Brazilians typically eat a smaller breakfast consisting of bread, fruit, and a cup of coffee. Similar to the Arabs, Brazilians eat their biggest meal of the day at mid-day; thus many businesses close for two hours at lunch time to accommodate this. Finally, Brazilians eat a lighter meal at night between seven and nine o'clock, though this may be even later in the summer. In light of the home being a place of protection and harmony, meal-time discussions are generally light in nature. More serious interactions about business or politics are saved for coffee.⁶⁸⁷

Brazilian hospitality is further observed as guests enter the home. Essentially asking permission to enter, they will say *da licença* (“with your permission”) to which

⁶⁸³ See Azevedo, 121-23; also Tucker, 70.

⁶⁸⁴ See Vincent, 83.

⁶⁸⁵ See Harrison, 87-88.

⁶⁸⁶ See Harrison, 40.

⁶⁸⁷ See Harrison, 84-85; also Vincent, 84-85.

the reply is *fique a vontade* (“be at ease”).⁶⁸⁸ As guests indicate a desire to depart, the host will also protest that it is too early and Brazilians may spend up to thirty minutes at the door saying goodbye.⁶⁸⁹

Though, as noted, Brazilian hospitality is most naturally offered to family and friends, Brazilians certainly have room for new friends—those who go from the street into the home and from being a *colega* to an *amigo/amiga*. Aware of this, a first time visitor to a home will bring a gift while someone invited to a party may send a bouquet of flowers ahead of his arrival.⁶⁹⁰

3.12.3 Brazilian Perspectives on Hospitality in the Arab World

From this brief survey, it seems evident that the cultural value of hospitality is quite similar between Arabs and Brazilians. In fact, this may be the area in which there is the highest degree of cultural proximity between the two affinity blocs. Of the Brazilian transcultural workers surveyed, the vast majority (77.8%) felt that that Arab hospitality was very similar (31.1%) or similar to (46.7%) hospitality in the Brazilian context.

When asked what they liked most about Arab culture, many Brazilians workers indicated that it was the hospitality. One worker noted, “[I like that] they [Arabs] are laid back and it is easy to spend lots of time together. They are very hospitable,” while another added, “I appreciate their hospitality. It is an honorable thing here.”⁶⁹¹ Another related, “[I like that Arab] families are very welcoming—especially the Bedouin peoples in the villages,” while another affirmed, “[I like that] it [my Arab context] is a welcoming and hospitable culture—especially in the poor

⁶⁸⁸ See Finley, 120.

⁶⁸⁹ See Harrison, 88-89.

⁶⁹⁰ See Harrison, 45.

⁶⁹¹ All Brazilian responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.7.

areas.” Finally, another worker shared, “They [Arabs] are very happy to welcome visitors and offer them their best.”

A number of Brazilian missionaries affirmed the similarities between Arab and Brazilian hospitality. One worker said, “[For Brazilians and Arabs] food is a reason to gather” and that “we [Brazilians and Arabs] both love to receive people.” Another worker asserted, “In general we are similar [in showing hospitality], especially in the rural parts of Brazil/the Arab world.”

Workers from the Northeast of Brazil saw a special connection between Arab hospitality and that of their region in Brazil. One worker related, “My parents are from Northeast Brazil and the culture is so similar to Arab culture. Sometimes I feel like I am back home. [I like that] They [Arabs] like to talk and eat a lot. They are hospitable. They are open to relationships.” Another added, “Arabs in the countryside are like Brazilians in Northeast Brazil. We always have an open door for visitors. If you come to the door in Brazil, you just clap your hands to let someone know you are there. Also, there is a similarity because you do not have to go to the trouble of scheduling visits; you just stop in.” Finally, one woman from the Northeast affirmed, “Personally, I grew up in a family where we always had people living with us; so I am used to opening my home.”

While no Brazilian workers felt that Arabs were inhospitable, some felt that Brazilians were more adept in this area. One worker related, “Brazilians seem more open to inviting people to their home.” Citing differences between the hospitality values in their home region in Brazil to a large Arab urban context, another worker shared, “In the Northeast of Brazil, we invite people a lot. More than in the big Arab city that we live in.”

Other Brazilian missionaries felt that, while hospitable, Arabs were more open to welcoming Western visitors. One Brazilian shared, “It seems that Arabs are not as interested in ‘Arab looking’ foreigners,” while another added, “Arabs receive us very well. But they receive white Westerners better.”

Some Brazilians related that sociological reasons made hospitality different in the Arab world. Commenting on the different place of women in Brazilian and Arab society, one worker noted, “One difference is that when you go into the Arab home, the women disappear. In a Brazilian home, men and women sit together more freely.” Another Brazilian missionary added, “Among Arabs though, if you are single or family without kids, you are limited [which is different from Brazil].” That is, from his point of view, Arabs prefer to extend and receive hospitality from the basis of a complete nuclear family unit (parents and kids) or from the extended family.

Finally, according to the Brazilian workers interviewed, the biggest perceived difference was that Arabs were generally more hospitable than Brazilians. “Both cultures [Brazilians and Arabs] are hospitable but Arabs are more hospitable,” shared one Brazilian worker. Another worker added:

Hospitality here [in my Arab context] is extremely important. Here more is given, spent (financially and in terms of time), [and] there are a lot of expressions of one being nice to one another. In fact, many times people spend what they don’t have. It is a social burden and the reason of much debt in the family.

Finally, a Brazilian pastor ministering to Arabs in Southern Brazil, added, “The Arabs are superior to the Brazilians in this area. If they like you, they’ll give you anything. Sometimes, it breaks my heart to think that I was often visited more by Muslims than by Christians in the church [in Southern Brazil] that I pastored!”

Aside from the value of hospitality, many Brazilians shared that they liked Arab food. Certainly, the noted presence and influence of Arab food in Brazil has

contributed to this. One worker shared, “I like the food [in my Arab context]” while another added, “They [Arabs] use lots of butter and oil but I do enjoy the food.”

Finally, another shared, “I am a Brazilian of Lebanese descent [so I like Arab food].”

Some Brazilian missionaries indicated that the general taste of Arab food was similar to that of Brazilian food. One worker shared, “[Arabs have] Similar foods to what I was used to back in Brazil (i.e., rice, meat)” and another affirmed, “They [Arab and Brazilian food] are similar in the senses that we both use a lot of natural ingredients [and we both] eat lots of grains and nuts, cheese, and olive oil.” Similarly, others related, “We have the same basic food: lentils, vegetables, coffee. Also [we have] similar spices,” and “Similar foods (rice, beans, meat, and chicken) are consumed by Brazilians and Arabs.” Finally, one worker saw particular similarities between Northeastern Brazilian food and that of his Arab context: “North African food is quite similar to that of Bahia.”

Other Brazilian workers found the food in their Arab contexts to be quite different. One worker related, “I am from Northeast Brazil. What I like to eat, I do not find here [in my Arab context].” Another shared, “In Brazilian culture, we are a mix of cultures (European, African, Indian). Here [in my Arab context] the food is more limited.” Some Brazilian workers noted that Arab food used different spices. One worker shared, “We [Brazilians] use different spices [than Arabs]” and another added, “Some spices they [Arabs] use are different and also the quantity used differs.” The fact that some Brazilians had different opinions on the taste and quality of Arab food is surely indicative of the diversity of foods within Brazil itself.

A final difference between Arab and Brazilian food is actually in the preparation process. A number of Brazilian women missionaries shared that personal hygiene and how it related to food preparation was a big difference. One woman

shared, “The hardest thing for me [in my Arab context] is that food preparation is not very clean.” Another shared, “We [Brazilians] are cleaner in our food preparation.”

What are the missiological implications for Brazilians serving among Arabs regarding hospitality? Despite some noted areas in which Brazilians need to adapt to the Arab context—different tastes in food and differences in hygiene in food preparation—Brazilian missionaries seem to understand intimately the Arab values of hospitality. Thus, these workers seem naturally equipped to open their homes as well as to receive hospitality from Arabs—a basis for relationships in which authentic evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and Christian fellowship can be pursued. This incarnational value of a hospitality-based ministry was nicely illustrated by a Brazilian pastor ministering to Arabs in Brazil. Realizing that his Arab guests did not care for Brazilian food, he related simply, “Arabs prefer Arab food and we offered them Arab food when they came to our house.”

Table 3.7 Brazilian Perspectives on Arab Hospitality and Food

(8)[I like that] They [Arabs] are laid back and it is easy to spend lots of time together. They are very hospitable.
(22) I appreciate their hospitality. It is an honorable thing here.
(34) I enjoy their hospitality.
(2)[I like] Their hospitability.
(5)[I like] Their hospitality.
(31) [I like] Their joy, hospitality, and generosity.
(25)[I like Arab] Hospitality.
(3) [I like the] importance of hospitality [in my Arab context].
(1) [I like Arab] Hospitality, value of community.
(33) [I like that Arab] Families are very welcoming--especially the Bedouin peoples in the villages.
(26) [I like that] Generally, they [Arabs] are friendly and hospitable.
(40) [I like that] It [my Arab context] is a welcoming and hospitable culture--especially in the poor areas.
(16) They [Arabs] are very happy to welcome visitors and offer them their best.
(14) Muslims are very hospitable and always do their best!
(40) [For Brazilians and Arabs] Food is a reason to gather! We [Brazilians and Arabs] both love to receive people.
(39) In general we are similar [in showing hospitality], especially in the rural parts of



Brazil/the Arab world.
(44) My parents are from Northeast Brazil and the culture is so similar to Arab culture. Sometimes I feel like I am back home. [I like that] They [Arabs] like to talk and eat a lot. They are hospitable. They are open to relationships.
(19) They [Arabs] are hospitable like the Brazilians from the Northeast.
(8) Arabs in the countryside are like Brazilians in Northeast Brazil. We always have an open door for visitors. If you come to the door in Brazil, you just clap your hands to let someone know you are there. Also, there is a similarity because you do not have to go to the trouble of scheduling visits; you just stop in.
(35) Brazilians and Arabs are hospitable but in different ways. Personally, I grew up in a family where we always had people living with us; so I am used to opening my home.
(5) If you compare the Arab culture to the culture of the Northeast of Brazil they are very similar, but compared to the culture of Sao Paulo they are very different.
(18) Remember that the regions of Brazil vary and so, for instance, the people of the Northeast are more hospitable than they more European-influenced Southern Brazilians.
(34) Arabs from the rural areas are more hospitable. In the big city, Arabs are more reserved.
(36) Brazilians seem more open to inviting people to their home.
(37) In the Northeast of Brazil, we invite people a lot. More than in the big Arab city that we live in.
(37) Also, it seems that Arabs are not as interested in “Arab looking” foreigners.
(42) Arabs receive us very well. But they receive white Westerners better.
(33) One difference is that when you go into the Arab home, the women disappear. In a Brazilian home, men and women sit together more freely.
(45) Among Arabs though, if you are single or family without kids, you are limited [which is different from Brazil].
(18) Both cultures [Brazilians and Arabs] are hospitable but Arabs are more hospitable.
(44) It [hospitality] is almost the same. Among Arabs, it is a little stronger though Arabs are more hospitable than Brazilians.
(22) Hospitality here [in my Arab context] is extremely important. Here more is given, spent (financially and in terms of time), [and] there are a lot of expressions of one being nice to one another. In fact, many times people spend what they don't have. It is a social burden and the reason of much debt in the family.
(13) The Arabs are superior to the Brazilians in this area. If they like you, they'll give you anything. Sometimes, it breaks my heart to think that I was often visited more by Muslims than by Christians in the church [in Southern Brazil] that I pastored!
(9) I like the food [in my Arab context]!
(31) [Despite differences] they [Arabs] have delicious food!
(37) They [Arabs] use lots of butter and oil but I do enjoy the food.
(9) I am a Brazilian of Lebanese descent [so I like Arab food].
(8) [Arabs have] Similar foods to what I was used to back in Brazil (i.e. rice, meat).
(19) We [Brazilians and Arabs] eat bread everyday and rice is very much used as well.
(17) They [Arabs] eat a lot of bread and they have to eat together! You can have a cup of coffee at any time! In Brazil, you can go and drink a coffee any time, have a biscuit, etc.

(2) They [Arab and Brazilian food] are similar in the senses that we both use a lot of natural ingredients [and we both] eat lots of grains and nuts, cheese, and olive oil.
(36) We have the same basic food: lentils, vegetables, coffee. Also [we have] similar spices.
(38) Similar foods (rice, beans, meat, and chicken) are consumed by Brazilians and Arabs.
(40) We like similar things (meat, rice, beans, coffee).
(39) Many things [types of foods] are the same.
(23) The Arabs appreciate similar spices as Brazilians [do].
(21) North African food is quite similar to that of Bahia.
(34) I am from Northeast Brazil. What I like to eat, I do not find here [in my Arab context].
(44) In Brazilian culture, we are a mix of cultures (European, African, Indian). Here [in my Arab context] the food is more limited.
(14) Our [Brazilian] brown rice with white rice is missing here [in the Arab world].
(41) We [Brazilians] use different spices [than Arabs].
(22) Some spices they [Arabs] use are different and also the quantity used differs.
(2)The Arab food uses much more spices than our [Brazilian] food.
(5)Some spices are similar, but in general the food is different.
(4)The Brazilian food is not so spicy and takes a lot more salt.
(45) The hardest thing for me is that food preparation [in my Arab context] is not very clean.
(40) We [Brazilians] are cleaner in our food preparation.
(12) Lack of personal hygiene, including in food preparation [is difficult for me].
(32) The hygiene in some public restaurants [is difficult for me].
(13) Arabs prefer Arab food and we offered them Arab food when they came to our house.

3.13 Spiritual Worldview

In this section, we will summarize the general religious worldviews observed among Arab-Muslims, particularly Folk Muslims, and Brazilians. Indeed, in both the Arab and Brazilian contexts, there is an official religion (Islam and Roman Catholicism) to which the majority of people show a nominal adherence. Like most Arab-Muslims, the majority of Brazilians also syncretize the official religion with animistic practices.⁶⁹² By surveying the relevant cultural and missiological literature, we will first describe how the official religion is regarded in both contexts, which will be followed by a discussion of the motivations for and practices of popular religion in Brazil and the Arab world. Building on this background, the missiological

⁶⁹² For a further discussion on syncretism, see Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, 240-41.

implications, incorporating the perspectives of Brazilian transcultural workers serving in Arab contexts, will be explored. My aim is to show that Brazilian missionaries in general have a spiritual worldview that allows for the supernatural and demonic; thus, they are not alarmed by the spiritual realities of Folk Islam. Indeed, some members of the Brazilian missionary force have a personal background in Brazilian Spiritism prior to coming to Christ, while the rest, including Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals alike, have grown up around and are quite accustomed to Brazilian popular religion.

3.13.1 Arabs and Islam

Though birthed in a seventh-century Arabian tribal context, Islam spread rapidly and established itself quickly as the official religion of most Arabs. As the majority religion, Islam has also served as a defining and cohesive element for Arab society in general.

As an official religion, Barakat notes, Islam is characterized by “religious texts, the *shari’a* (Islamic law), absolute monotheism, the literal interpretation of religious teachings, ritualism, the absence of intermediaries between believers and God, and the religious establishment’s close connection with the ruling classes.”⁶⁹³ Based upon sacred books (the Qur’an and Hadiths), the religion is characterized by recognized practices (prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage), officially sanctioned sacred places (mosques, pilgrimage sites), and recognized religious leaders (imams, muftis). Islamic orthodoxy has been articulated through the centuries through a significant corpus of writings by Muslim theologians and, as Islam has spread into the world, there have also been theological reform movements such as Wahhabism which have sought to preserve the religion’s purity.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹³ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 118-19.

⁶⁹⁴ See Hourani, 348-49, 397-400.

Islam has, of course, shaped the spiritual worldview of Arabs. This is best observed in how the name of God is invoked in daily situations. In communicating “please,” North Africans will say *b-rabbi* (“by God”), *yaishek* (“God extend your life), and *Allah hamda walidek* (“God bless your parents”). “Thank you” is conveyed with *baraka Allah fik* (“God bless you”), *Allah ybarak fik* (“God bless you”), and again *yaishek* (“God extend your life). “Goodbye” is communicated through *rabbi yawenek* (“God help you”), *Allah yawen* (“God help you”), and *rabbi mak* (“God be with you”). Arabs around the world remember God’s provision and blessings throughout the day by uttering *hamdulillah* (“Praise God”). Finally, fatalism—a prominent aspect of the Muslim worldview—is affirmed daily through the oft repeated phrase *inshallah* (“God willing”).⁶⁹⁵

While Islam has served to define Arab society in general, it has also provided an identity for Arab individuals and families who cannot conceive of being anything but Muslim. Indeed, the religion—sustained by the family and community—does not allow for conversion to another belief system. Hence, for the vast majority of Arabs, to be an Arab is to be a Muslim.⁶⁹⁶

3.13.2 Arabs and Folk Islam

Despite the significant work of Muslim theologians, the presence of world- renowned Islamic theological schools such as Al-Azhar (Cairo) and the *Jammat al-Zeitouna* (Tunis), and the efforts of Muslim reformers such as Abd-al Wahhab, most Arab-Muslims are not strict adherents to the official religion. Rather, they practice is what commonly called popular or Folk Islam—“A broad, catch-all phrase that describes the

⁶⁹⁵ See Nydell, 28.

⁶⁹⁶ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 120; also Patai, 9-11; and Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976, 1983), 375-76.

mixing of formal or orthodox Islamic practices with primitive animistic practices.”⁶⁹⁷

Animism is, of course, understood as “the belief that all of creation is pervaded or inhabited by spirits or souls, that all of creation is in some sense animate or alive.”⁶⁹⁸

Rick Love asserts that 75% of Muslims worldwide practice Folk Islam, and that number increases to 95% among women.⁶⁹⁹ Though more prevalent in villages, Folk Islam is also commonly practiced in urban centers.⁷⁰⁰

Contrasting Folk Islam to the official religion, Barakat writes:

Popular or folk religion . . . refers to a very different religious orientation. This pattern of religious life personifies sacred forces, emphasizes existential and spiritual inner experiences, seeks intermediaries between believers and God, and interprets texts symbolically.⁷⁰¹

Musk adds that while the official religion emphasizes morals, ethics, institutions, and hierarchy, Folk Islam is less institutional and more pragmatic.⁷⁰² Indeed, official Islam seeks to answer the religious question “what is true?” while Folk Islam is more concerned with getting at “what works?” Swartley describes official Islam as a “shopping mall” with “neatly organized shops,” while folk Islam is “an open market or bazaar, a fluid, free-flowing maze that sprang up without careful pre-planning.”⁷⁰³

Having established that most Arab-Muslims are syncretistic in mixing official Islam with animistic practices, let us now explore the motivations behind such actions. The first motivation seems to be a yearning to connect with the divine. Swartley helpfully writes: “Overall, Muslims are seeking a connection with the spiritual world and with God. In Islamic theology, God is primarily transcendent: He

⁶⁹⁷ See Keith D. Swartley, ed., *Encountering the World of Islam* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic, 2005), 196.

⁶⁹⁸ See Swartley, 196.

⁶⁹⁹ See Rick Love, “Power Encounter Among Folk Muslims,” in Swartley, 209; also Love, *Muslims, Magic, and the Kingdom of God* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 23.

⁷⁰⁰ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 4; also Barakat, *The Arab World*, 118.

⁷⁰¹ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 118.

⁷⁰² See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 1989, 2003), 180-84.

⁷⁰³ See Swartley, 196; also Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 21; and Hiebert, “Power Encounter in Folk Islam,” in Woodberry, *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road* (Monrovia, CA: Marc, 1989), 45-46.

is distant and uninvolved in human affairs . . . This heartfelt need for connection with God (immanence) is a driving force in popular Islam.”⁷⁰⁴ Barakat affirms, “The role of shrines and saints is to provide mediation between ordinary believers and God, whom official religion has rendered too remote and abstract.” Thus, such practices are a “highly personalized and concrete alternative for common people.”⁷⁰⁵

Second, Muslims seem driven to animistic practices out of fear. Hiebert asserts that a primary motivation for any religion is the desire for security and comfort, especially during a crisis.⁷⁰⁶ Swartley adds: “Many Muslims are fearful of the pressures affecting their daily lives: sickness, death, jealousy, infidelity, and privation, to name a few. They have mounted an unrelenting search for supernatural forces to counteract these forces.”⁷⁰⁷ Arab-Muslims are particularly afraid of *jinn* (evil spirits or demons), which are generally blamed for many of these difficulties.⁷⁰⁸

Third, in the absence of an immanent deity and with the presence of *jinn*, Folk Muslims are concerned with finding solutions to daily problems. A farmer hopes for rain and an eventual good harvest. Young women long to conceive and give birth to healthy children. A university student hopes to pass his exams and then find a job. A young wife needs assurance that her husband is being faithful and that her jealous neighbor will not put curses on her. Hence, Folk Muslims are concerned with dealing with these heart-felt issues rather than speculating over philosophical or eternal questions.⁷⁰⁹ Again, their religion is more motivated by answering “what works?” instead of “what is true?”

⁷⁰⁴ See Swartley, 194.

⁷⁰⁵ See Barakat, *The Arab World*, 119.

⁷⁰⁶ See Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 375-76.

⁷⁰⁷ See Swartley, 194.

⁷⁰⁸ *Jinn* are mentioned in the Qur’an in Sura 18:50 and 55:14-15. See also Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 94-96, 174; and Patai, 154.

⁷⁰⁹ See Swartley, 197; also Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 71, 122; Barakat, *The Arab World*, 59, 119; Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 22; and Hiebert, “Power Encounter in Folk Islam,” in Woodberry, *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, 47-49.

Fourth, in light of the absence of an immanent deity as well as the fact that Islam is strongly fatalistic, Folk Muslims desire to have some power and control over their lives.⁷¹⁰ In fact, Woodberry argues that, “The felt need for power is so great among folk Muslims that their entire worldview is seen through the spectacles of power.”⁷¹¹ In an extended discussion on power, Love asserts that Muslims perceive spiritual power on a number of levels. First, there are powerful spiritual beings—angels and demons—that Muslims desire to appease and manipulate.⁷¹² Second, there are powerful people whose services can be retained in times of need. While they may consult an imam, Folk Muslims are more likely to call upon a shaman (a practitioner of magic).⁷¹³ Musk adds that women also figure among the powerful people in Folk Islam, and they include—midwives (*qabila*), who are not only skilled in delivering babies, but also capable of using herbal potions and working magic; sorceresses (*sahhara*) whose powers are believed to diminish or heighten sexual desire; and matchmakers (*shawwafa*) who are helpful in arranging marriages.⁷¹⁴ Love further asserts that Muslims are interested in objects of power (charms, amulets), places of power (saints’ tombs, Mecca), times of power (Muhammad’s birthday, the period of the hajj), and power rituals (Quranic prayers).⁷¹⁵

With these motivations in mind, let us now explore further some specific Folk Muslim practices. Love helpfully places such practices into four categories of magic—productive magic, protective magic, destructive magic, and divination. Productive magic is observed, for instance, when a university student consults a shaman for blessing (*baraka*) in order to pass his exams. It is further observed as

⁷¹⁰ See Nydell, 29; also Matheny, 25.

⁷¹¹ Cited in Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 1.

⁷¹² See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 24.

⁷¹³ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 29-30.

⁷¹⁴ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 106-111.

⁷¹⁵ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 30-35.

Muslims—the sick, infertile, and unemployed—visit the tombs of Muslim saints (*marabout*).⁷¹⁶ Commenting on this regard for Muslim saints, Musk writes:

Alive or dead, saints are believed to possess great power. The kind of miracles (*karama*) attributed to them include raising the dead, walking on water, covering great distances in very short times, healing, having knowledge of the future, guarding people or tribes, and being in two places at one time.⁷¹⁷

During the shrine visit, Muslims honor the saints and make their petitions known through lighting a candle, making a sacrifice, offering a meal, or leaving a piece of a sick person's clothing at the tomb.⁷¹⁸ In Southern Tunisia, where a significant number of shrines are located, some 20,000 Muslims attend an annual festival in which participants make sacrifices, dance, and even fall into trances as they seek *baraka* from the saints.⁷¹⁹

Protective magic can be observed when Muslims visit a shaman for *baraka* to ward off a curse.⁷²⁰ It is also evident when pregnant women visit shrines in hopes that their unborn children will come to full term and will be born healthy. This type of magic is also practiced through the use of certain potions. For instance, in Morocco, a woman will place a drop of her urine in her husband's tea to insure his faithfulness to her. It is said that every man in Morocco, from the king to the poorest peasant, has at some point consumed his wife's urine.⁷²¹

Protective magic is also evident when Muslims attempt to protect themselves from the evil eye—a look of envy that is believed to cause harm.⁷²² Musk writes that “the fundamental concept of the evil eye is that precious persons or things are

⁷¹⁶ On a hike through the mountains of North Africa, the author observed a pregnant woman travel for hours by donkey on a rocky path in order to seek blessing from a famous Muslim saint.

⁷¹⁷ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 47.

⁷¹⁸ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 47-50.

⁷¹⁹ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 20.

⁷²⁰ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 1; also Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 23.

⁷²¹ See Love, “Power Encounter Among Folk Muslims,” in Swartley, 209-210.

⁷²² See Sura 113:5 of the Qur'an.

constantly vulnerable to hurt or destruction caused by other people’s envy.”⁷²³ While those most often accused of giving the evil eye are poorer and less fortunate women, those regarded as victims of it include barren women, unmarried women of a higher social standing, the sick, and animals. The latter are cursed because they are the source of a family’s livelihood.⁷²⁴

To protect themselves against the evil eye, Muslims will hold out their hand (making a “stop” gesture) in the direction of the one suspected of giving the evil eye. Because such a gesture is quite offensive under ordinary circumstances, many Muslims choose to wipe their forehead with the back of their hand in a subtle manner, which gives them protection from the evil eye but also saves them any potential embarrassment if they are mistaken. A second mode of protection against the evil eye is simply repeating the phrase *mashallah* (“God willing”). Finally, Muslims find protection by using amulets—an object worn on the body. Often infused with power by a shaman, amulets include the hand of Fatima, the *nazar* (a replica of the evil eye), a pouch with Quranic verses, a miniature Quran, and certain types of jewelry. Also, it is common for families to place an amulet in the home—typically a wall hanging—in order to protect the entire family.⁷²⁵

While many Folk Muslims focus on protecting themselves from *jinn* and human enemies, others engage in destructive magic in order to harm others. Such strategies include giving the evil eye and placing curses on others.⁷²⁶ Love notes that in Yemen, curses are placed on others by stealing some of their hair, while in Tunisia, it happens through taking an enemy’s finger nail clippings.⁷²⁷

⁷²³ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 23.

⁷²⁴ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 18, 94.

⁷²⁵ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 30-33.

⁷²⁶ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 23.

⁷²⁷ See Love, “Power Encounter Among Folk Muslims,” in Swartley, 209.

Divination is the final common form of magic practiced by Folk Muslims.

Motivated by a desire to know the sex of an unborn child, to have wisdom for important decisions like marriage, and even to know the cause of a certain sickness, Muslims commonly visit fortune tellers in search of answers about the future. While some fortune tellers use tarot cards, others perform a ritual by letting the Qur'an fall open to a random page and then offer an interpretation of that verse.⁷²⁸

While Arab-Muslims certainly ascribe to the official expression of Islam with its sacred texts, meeting places, and its recognized leaders, the vast majority still resort to animistic practices for their daily survival. Though it seems apparent that the official religion proves inadequate for daily practice, Patai correctly notes that “the believers are unaware of any incompatibility between their belief in Allah the only God, and these numerous super humans who people their world of the unseen.”⁷²⁹

3.13.3 Brazilians and Roman Catholicism

Despite significant evangelical growth in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Brazil remains one of the largest Roman Catholic countries in the world. Adherence to the church in Brazil has, of course, been weakened by the influence of liberal-minded leaders such as Pedro II, which has encouraged a general free spirit toward religion in Brazilian society.⁷³⁰ In addition, the shortage of priests—half of whom are foreign born—and the lack of Roman Catholic teaching have resulted in Brazilian Catholicism being largely nominal.⁷³¹ Observing Catholic devotion in Recife, one writer commented that “Sunday mass is not an institution, and many regard an annual confession as sufficient.”⁷³² This nominalism is also apparent through the Brazilian

⁷²⁸ See Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 61-64.

⁷²⁹ See Patai, 154; also Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam*, 202-203.

⁷³⁰ See Vincent, 71-72; also Page, 91; and Finley, 104.

⁷³¹ See Vincent, 72; also Wiebe, 96.

⁷³² See Levine and Crocitti, 340.

expression that a man needs to go to church just three times in his life—to get baptized, to get married, and to die.⁷³³

Despite the overall lack of devotion to Roman Catholicism, the Catholic Church remains “the institution that defines public religion in Brazil.”⁷³⁴ Hess argues: “Although lay support is soft . . . the Catholic Church is still the hegemonic religion in Brazilian society. Catholicism was the official religion until the end of the nineteenth century, and its hegemony in the religious arena has continued into this century.”⁷³⁵ Ribeiro adds that “it is so difficult, in truth, to separate the Brazilian from the Catholic: Catholicism was the cement of our unity.”⁷³⁶ Indeed, Catholic influence on the Brazilian spiritual worldview can be observed in how God’s name is used in daily expressions. When saying goodbye to a friend, Brazilians commonly say, *Deus o acompanhe* (“God be with you”) or *fique com Deus* (“stay with God”). In response to a favor or an act of kindness, Brazilians say *Deus te pague* (“God will repay you”). *Graças a Deus* (“thank you God”) is used to express gratitude or contentment, while *meu Deus* (“my God”) communicates surprise, shock, or disbelief. Finally, Brazilians also reveal a fatalistic worldview when adding the qualification *se Deus quiser* (“God willing”). While Arab-Muslims and Brazilians share a similar practice of using the name of God in daily expressions, some of these expressions actually have similar meanings—especially the example of *inshallah* and *se Deus quiser*.

Another similarity between Islam and Brazilian Catholicism is that, historically, it was unthinkable that a Brazilian would convert to another faith. Writing in the earlier part of the twentieth century, Tucker asserted that “for a native

⁷³³ See Vincent, 73.

⁷³⁴ See Finley, 95.

⁷³⁵ See Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 200.

⁷³⁶ See Darcy Ribeiro, trans. Gregory Rabassa, *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000), 102-103; also Finley, 82.

Brazilian, who was brought up a Roman Catholic to apostatize and become a Protestant is intolerable.”⁷³⁷ Though evangelicalism has exploded in Brazil and Latin America, this has not been without resistance from the Catholic Church.

3.13.4 Brazilians and Spiritism

Though Roman Catholicism is Brazil’s dominant religion and leaving it is not encouraged, Brazilians certainly mix the official religion with Spiritism.⁷³⁸ In fact, Neuza Itiokia argues that the Roman Catholicism that came to Brazil in the sixteenth century was already quite syncretistic and included the worship of saints and even witchcraft.⁷³⁹ This tendency was furthered by the Portuguese authorities who, in an effort to control the African slaves in the colony, encouraged the practice of African religions alongside Roman Catholicism.⁷⁴⁰ Finally, Jesuit missionaries, aiming to contextualize the Gospel, also accommodated the animistic practices of their target peoples and, as a result, encouraged syncretism.⁷⁴¹ This history has contributed to a prevailing tolerance toward religious syncretism. Illustrating this attitude in reference to the peoples of Bahia, Silverstein writes: “A popular saying describes Bahians as a practical people who go to church in the morning, a Spiritism session in the afternoon . . . and a Candomblé ritual in the evening.”⁷⁴²

Given the syncretistic nature of Brazilians, let us now define Spiritism, explore the underlying motivations for it, and then describe the various strains of Spiritism in the Brazilian landscape, including their prominent practices. Kloppenburg helpfully describes Spiritism as:

⁷³⁷ Cited in Willems, 60.

⁷³⁸ See Prado, “The Brazil Model.”

⁷³⁹ See Neuza Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda A Comunidade Evangélica O Baixo Espiritismo Brasileiro Implicações Teológicas e Pastorais,” (DMiss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986), 438-40; also Finley, 79-80.

⁷⁴⁰ See Leni M. Silverstein, “The Celebration of Our Lord of the Good End: Changing State, Church, and Afro-Brazilian Relations in Bahia,” in Hess and DaMatta, 137; also Vincent, 74; and Wiebe, 81.

⁷⁴¹ See Wiebe, 100-103; also Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 443.

⁷⁴² See Silverstein, “The Celebration of Our Lord of the Good End: Changing State, Church, and Afro-Brazilian Relations in Bahia,” in Hess and DaMatta, 137.

A pretentiously evoked, perceptive communication with spirits from the beyond, whether to receive news from them, to consult them (necromancy), or to place them at the service of men (magic); whether to do good (white magic) or to perform some evil (black magic). To be Spiritist, therefore, it suffices to accept this minimum doctrine: that spirits exist; that these spirits are ardently interested in communicating with us in order to instruct us or help us; that we can evoke perceptible communication with these spirits.⁷⁴³

Highlighting its animistic foundations, Park points out that Spiritism involves “the belief [in] innumerable spiritual beings concerned with human affairs and capable of helping or harming men’s interests.”⁷⁴⁴ While Finley asserts that 30% of Brazilians are involved in some form of Spiritism, Itiokia argues that this number is more like 70% of the population.⁷⁴⁵ Even the more conservative estimates indicate that millions of Brazilians are active participants in Spiritism.

Brazilians seem motivated to practice Spiritism for at least three reasons. First, not unlike the Muslim worldview, the Brazilian Catholic conception of God is distant and uninvolved in daily life. Vincent helpfully writes:

Brazilians are drawn to such religions at least in part because traditional Catholicism seems to offer unsatisfactory answers in a society in flux. With its emphasis on the eternal, on life *after* death, and with a doctrine being advocated by a largely foreign priesthood, Catholicism seems to many Brazilians to offer few answers to more immediate concerns . . . The perceived failure of Catholicism to respond to such mundane problems is also one of the reasons Brazilians are attracted in ever larger numbers to other religious doctrines.⁷⁴⁶

Second, also like Folk Islam, Spiritism, is “primarily concerned with day-to-day matters, not with metaphysical or other worldly concerns.”⁷⁴⁷ Itiokia adds that Umbanda adherents are look for something “more tangible.”⁷⁴⁸ Describing the work

⁷⁴³ Cited in Wiebe, 13; also Finley, 84.

⁷⁴⁴ Cited in Wiebe, 14.

⁷⁴⁵ See Finley, 86; and Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 432; also Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 70.

⁷⁴⁶ See Vincent, 77.

⁷⁴⁷ See Wiebe, 15.

⁷⁴⁸ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 478-79.

of one practitioner, Hess notes that his specialty was dealing with “lover’s quarrels, impotent husbands, long strings of financial setbacks, and disease—in short, bad luck.”⁷⁴⁹ Because problems beset the rich and poor alike, devotion to Spiritism can be observed in every social class. Page asserts: “People from all social classes belong to Afro-Brazilian cults. Businessmen follow cult rituals before making important deals. The poor find comfort and hope in places of cult worship.”⁷⁵⁰

Finally, because Brazilians are open to creative solutions (*jeito*) to such daily problems, they are willing to consider all of the spiritual possibilities available within Brazil’s diverse cultural landscape.⁷⁵¹ Commenting further on the appeal of Spiritism, Vincent adds, “It is natural to wonder why such an eclectic religion would enjoy such popularity, but Brazilian society is a fluid and eclectic one, and on reflection it may seem a perfectly logical manifestation of the kind of free-wheeling spirit of the culture.”⁷⁵² Describing the animistic spiritual worldview of Bahians, Silverstein shows that their involvement in Spiritism is driven by a “who knows what will work?” mentality. He continues, “In a constantly changing and insecure world—a world in which adroit manipulation of one’s available social network could mean the difference between having and not having a job, food, or medicine for one’s suffering children—all doors must remain open.”⁷⁵³

Given these motivations, let us now describe the major expressions of Brazilian Spiritism. The first is called Candomblé, though it is also known as Macumba in Rio de Janeiro, Xangô in Pernambuco, and Batuque in Pará.⁷⁵⁴ The cult

⁷⁴⁹ See Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 197; also Wiebe, 56, 108-122, 137-42.

⁷⁵⁰ See Page, 353.

⁷⁵¹ See Finley, 79.

⁷⁵² See Vincent, 77.

⁷⁵³ See Silverstein, “The Celebration of Our Lord of the Good End: Changing State, Church, and Afro-Brazilian Relations in Bahia,” in Hess and DaMatta, 138; also Finley, 107.

⁷⁵⁴ See Finley, 86-87; also Vincent, 75-76.

originates from the Bantu and Yoruba peoples of Southern and Western Africa who came to Brazil as slaves.⁷⁵⁵ Despite these origins, many white Brazilians have also embraced Candomblé through the influence of African servants and mistresses.

Within Candomblé, there is a belief in ancestral spirits called *orixás*, which are associated with the sea, water, thunder, and ancient kings and queens. Though the Yoruba honored a supreme god named Olorum, the *orixás* developed because Olorum was perceived as being too distant.⁷⁵⁶ Candomblé rituals take place at a small shrine within a courtyard (*terreiro*)—a plot of land often donated by a wealthy benefactor. Accompanied by singing in the Yoruba or Bantu languages, animal sacrifices are offered by a *mãe de santo* (“saint’s mother”) or by a *pai de santo* (“male priest”).⁷⁵⁷ Through this, the *exú* (demons) are appeased and leave the shrine and the *orixás* come and take possession of adherents—“sons” and “daughters” of the spirits who attain this status after some months of instruction and practice.⁷⁵⁸ Page adds that, once possessed, adherents will go into a trance and “will shake convulsively, scream, gyrate wildly about the room, and flop to the floor like a rag doll.”⁷⁵⁹

In general, the rituals are complex and follow a set calendar, surely a practice borrowed from the Catholic Church. Also, many of the *orixás* are named after some of the famous Catholic saints. In addition to these syncretistic practices, Candomblé adherents are encouraged by their leaders to remain in the Catholic Church and deliberately benefit from both spiritual contexts.

⁷⁵⁵ See Silverstein, “The Celebration of Our Lord of the Good End: Changing State, Church, and Afro-Brazilian Relations in Bahia,” in Hess and DaMatta, 135.

⁷⁵⁶ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 445.

⁷⁵⁷ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 451-52.

⁷⁵⁸ See Wiebe, 24; also Page, 362-63; Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 451-52; and Silverstein, “The Celebration of Our Lord of the Good End: Changing State, Church, and Afro-Brazilian Relations in Bahia,” in Hess and DaMatta, 136.

⁷⁵⁹ See Page, 362.

A second form of Brazilian Spiritism is called Kardecismo. Developed in the late nineteenth century by a Frenchman named Allan Kardec (1804-1869), Kardecismo is a combination of philosophy, science, Hinduism, and Catholicism.⁷⁶⁰ Appealing to educated Brazilians already influenced by French philosophy and culture, Kardec emphasized “rationality without dismissing Catholicism.”⁷⁶¹

Affirming a Deistic doctrine of God in which the creator is no longer involved in the affairs of the world, Kardec emphasized the importance of communicating with spirits in outer space and also with the dead. The latter practice was developed to meet the felt needs of those who had lost loved ones. Communication with spirits and the dead was facilitated through séances performed in the home of a trained Kardecist.⁷⁶²

Kardecismo has also been characterized by a strong commitment to morality and charity, which over time has eclipsed communication with the dead in importance. Because of its popularity among the middle class, the educated, and intellectuals—a predominantly white population—the group has encountered less opposition from the Brazilian Catholic Church.⁷⁶³

The final prominent form of Brazilian Spiritism is Umbanda. Having developed in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in the mid-twentieth century, it is still regarded as an Afro-Brazilian religion.⁷⁶⁴ “The ultimate evolution of Brazilian Spiritism,” according to Itiokia, Umbanda is the most definitive expression of Brazilian syncretism as it mixes Roman Catholicism with Candomblé, Kardecismo, and Indian Spiritism.⁷⁶⁵ While Umbanda has managed to “whiten” Candomblé and

⁷⁶⁰ Kardec was born Denizard Hyppolyte Leon Rivail. See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 456.

⁷⁶¹ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 455-56; also Finley, 85; and Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 187-88.

⁷⁶² See Wiebe, 26-27; also Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 457-60.

⁷⁶³ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 456-60; also Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 201.

⁷⁶⁴ See Vincent, 76-77; also Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 195; and Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 462.

⁷⁶⁵ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 464.

bring it more into the mainstream of Brazilian religious practice, the movement still regards itself as Roman Catholic. Through the influence of Kardecismo's rationality, animal sacrifices and trances have been eliminated in Umbanda. Though Umbanda retains the Candomblé rituals of *orixá* possession, the rituals have come to resemble the Roman Catholic sacraments. Indeed, the *orixás* have been venerated as Catholic saints, while Jesus is depicted as the great *orixá* and the *exu* is reinterpreted as the devil. In addition to these rituals, sorcery is prominently practiced in Umbanda, especially as adherents seek to defend themselves against curses and destructive magic.

While highly syncretistic, Umbanda, which literally means “all of us”⁷⁶⁶ or “the limit of limitlessness,”⁷⁶⁷ also prides itself on being extremely tolerant. Umbanda leader Jota Alves de Oliveira asserts that “Umbanda does not support any racial prejudice and intends to unite all races and all different social strata and cultures in Brazilian soil.”⁷⁶⁸ Indeed, Umbanda does appeal to the diversity and creative spirit within the cultures of Brazil. Though Umbanda practitioners must always be mindful of the potential of government repression, the 40,000 Umbanda centers in Rio de Janeiro alone are evidence of its widespread popularity.⁷⁶⁹

3.13.5 Brazilian Perspectives on Spiritual Worldview in the Arab World

Though the practices of Folk Islam and Brazilian Spiritism differ significantly, some general continuity in the spiritual worldview and motivation for such practices can be observed. First, between their official religions and accompanying popular practices, both Arabs and Brazilians demonstrate a strongly spiritual worldview. Speaking of

⁷⁶⁶ See Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 198.

⁷⁶⁷ See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 462.

⁷⁶⁸ Cited in Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 438.

⁷⁶⁹ See Hess, “Hierarchy, Heterodoxy, and the Construction of Brazilian Religious Therapies,” in Hess and DaMatta, 198; also Finley, 88.

Brazilians, DaMatta remarks that “we are a people that believes profoundly in another world.”⁷⁷⁰ One Brazilian transcultural worker, observing this similarity between his home culture and his Arab ministry context, wrote: “Brazilian culture is ‘theologically’ oriented [and] Brazilians (Christians and non-Christians) refer to God daily in their speech. The use of expressions such as ‘God willing,’ ‘God bless you,’ ‘God be with you’ are very common. Arabs speak much in the same manner.”⁷⁷¹ Within this general spiritual worldview, Arabs and Brazilians are both strongly fatalistic—a value expressed in the daily expressions *inshallah* and *se Deus quiser* (“God willing”). Page argues that due to their presence in Portugal until the thirteenth century, the Arabs influenced Portuguese Catholics toward being more fatalistic—a worldview that came to characterize Brazilian Catholicism.⁷⁷²

In light of these similar aspects religious worldview, Arabs and Brazilians also share some similar motivations for practicing Folk Islam and Spiritism. First, in Islam and Brazilian Catholicism, God is perceived as distant and uninvolved in the affairs of the world and thus unavailable to help with daily problems. Second and related to the first, adherents to popular practices in both contexts are concerned with felt needs and daily problems rather than eternal, philosophical, or cosmological questions. Finally, though more apparent in the Folk Muslim context, both Arabs and Brazilians engage in animistic practices in order to have some power or control over their lives.⁷⁷³

In light of these observed similarities in the spiritual worldview of Folk Muslims and Brazilian Spiritists, what are the implications for Brazilian evangelical missionaries serving among Arab-Muslims? Having been raised in a context of Catholicism syncretized with Spiritism, Brazilian transcultural workers generally

⁷⁷⁰ Cited in Finley, 77.

⁷⁷¹ See L.C., “Mais Missionários Brasileiros Para O Mundo Muçulmano,” in Bradford, Winter, and Hawthorne, *Perspectivas*, 470.

⁷⁷² See Page, 235.

⁷⁷³ See Wiebe, 58.

possess more of a pre-modern worldview in which they are aware of the supernatural and demonic world. Consequently, they are more sensitive to ministering to the needs of Muslims plagued by the spiritual conflicts brought on by Folk Muslim practices.

Before elaborating further, it should be noted that a key shortcoming of Western missions in the Muslim world has been failing to relate to the spiritual world of Folk Muslims.⁷⁷⁴ Essentially describing Hiebert's "excluded middle" paradigm in the worldview and ministry of Western missionaries, Love helpfully writes:

Since most Western missionaries come from a materialistic-oriented culture which relegates the supernatural to other-worldly concerns, when faced with the realities of the spirit realm, they often either ignore the issues or offer naturalistic solutions to what are perceived by Folk Muslims as supernaturally-caused problems—so opportunities for ministry are lost.⁷⁷⁵

Nevertheless, Hiebert urges that all missionaries serving among Muslims be equipped to minister to the spiritual needs of those practicing Folk Islam: affirming God's presence and care for their daily needs, sharing the availability of God's power for their lives, and encouraging them to call upon the Lord for physical healing and deliverance from evil spirits.⁷⁷⁶

While North American and European workers among Muslims have heeded Hiebert's call and are learning to approach Muslims with a more integrated worldview, it seems that they have much to learn from Christian workers from the Global South in this area. This influence is apparent in the following excerpt from the 1978 Willowbank Consultation:

A number of us, especially those from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, have spoken both of the reality of evil powers and of the

⁷⁷⁴ See Hiebert, "Power Encounter and Folk Islam," in Woodberry, *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, 45.

⁷⁷⁵ See Love, *Muslims, Magic*, 6; Itiokia (see "O Desafio Da Umbanda," 482-84) adds that historic Protestant North American missionaries to Brazil in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also failed to address the spiritual world of Brazilian Spiritists.

⁷⁷⁶ See Hiebert, "Power Encounter and Folk Islam," in Woodberry, *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, 54-60.

necessity to demonstrate the supremacy of Jesus over them. For conversion involves a power encounter. People give their allegiance to Christ when they see that his power is superior to magic and voodoo, the curses and blessings of witch doctors, and the malevolence of evil spirits, and that his salvation is a real liberation from the power of evil and death. Of course, some are questioning today whether a belief in spirits is compatible with our modern scientific understanding of the universe. We wish to affirm, therefore, against the mechanistic myth on which the typical Western worldview rests, the reality of demonic intelligences which are concerned by all means, overt and covert, to discredit Jesus Christ and keep people from coming to him. We think it vital in evangelism in all cultures to teach the reality and hostility of demonic powers, and to proclaim that God has exalted Christ as Lord of all and that Christ, who really does possess all power, however we may fail to acknowledge this, can (as we proclaim him) break through any worldview in any mind to make his lordship known and bring about a radical change of heart and outlook.⁷⁷⁷

Brazilian evangelical missionaries certainly number among these Global South peoples and again, their worldview and experiences growing up in a syncretistic Brazilian religious milieu seems to have prepared them to minister in spiritual contexts such of the Folk Muslim world. In his study on pre-field training for Brazilian transcultural workers, Finley offers support by observing that “Brazilians take seriously the subject of spiritual conflict, following the Brazilian tendency to acknowledge the existence of middle-level spiritual beings, but going against the culture in viewing these beings as demonic rather than deities.”⁷⁷⁸ Commenting further on their preparedness to minister in contexts of spiritual battle, Finley writes:

In terms of worldview, these first- and second-generation Christians usually have little hesitancy in continuing to affirm the reality of spiritual beings beyond the physical senses of the world. This would tend to make them somewhat more prepared for some of the spiritual realities that can be anticipated on pioneer fields, where entrenched non-Christian religious systems sometimes exacerbate the potential for spiritual conflict.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁷ See “The Willowbank Report,” section 7D, <http://www.lausanne.org/all-documents/lop-2.html#1> (accessed September 2, 2009); also Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 125, 145-47, 257; Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*, 34; and Greg Livingstone, “Laborers from the Global South: Partnering in the Task,” in Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 54.

⁷⁷⁸ See Finley, 170.

⁷⁷⁹ See Finley, 206; see also Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, 53-54, 351.

Silas Tostes, present director of Missão Antioquia, affirmed that growing up in an environment of Spiritism has prepared Brazilians for the Folk Muslim context, especially those who had engaged in Spiritist practices themselves prior to professing faith in Christ and pursuing the missionary call. Tostes illustrated this by referring to one such Brazilian church planter serving in a Folk Muslim context in West Africa. While preparing to baptize two believers, he noticed that the men were beginning to vomit and show signs of spiritual conflict. He rather routinely stopped the baptism and began to pray for the men and take authority over the oppressing evil spirits. After the issue was resolved, the Brazilian missionary went ahead with the baptism.⁷⁸⁰

It also seems that Brazilian workers from Pentecostal backgrounds have a particular sensitivity to the spiritual world of Folk Muslims due to their theology and worldview. While observing some similar sociological patterns in Pentecostalism and Spiritism, Freston concludes that, “Pentecostalism is . . . tuned in to an inspired world.”⁷⁸¹ Commenting further on the Pentecostal worldview and how they have engaged Spiritism in Brazil, Itiokia adds:

It was this group [Pentecostals] which acknowledged the supernatural view of reality including the interaction of angels and demons in the everyday lives of people. With [their] emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals involved themselves in “power encounters,” calling Satan by name and expelling demons . . . Their evangelistic approach toward Spiritism was never polemic.⁷⁸²

Though Pentecostals represent less than one-third of the Brazilian evangelical mission force in the Arab world, those that have gone have nevertheless applied a Pentecostal worldview to ministry in Folk Muslim contexts. One worker in the Middle East, who was personally converted in Brazil after his mother was healed from cancer, described his Arab ministry context as spiritually oppressive. He attributed things like his son’s

⁷⁸⁰ Tostes related this in personal conversation with me, July 23, 2009.

⁷⁸¹ See Freston, “Contours of Latin American Pentecostalism,” in Lewis, 255-56; also Finley, 93; Escobar, *The New Global Mission*, 115; and Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 70.

⁷⁸² See Itiokia, “O Desafio Da Umbanda,” 485; also Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 201.

constant illnesses and an automobile accident to the spiritual battle around them. Acknowledging that spiritual conflicts are prevalent in both Brazil and the Arab world, he commented that in Brazil the spiritual evils are more outwardly observed while in the Arab context, they go on more in people's hearts. In terms of his ministry strategy, this worker reported that throughout his ministry, he has seen people physically healed after praying for them. While cautioning against sensationalizing these outcomes, he simply emphasized that he has learned to pray with faith and expectation.⁷⁸³

A similar worldview and subsequent willingness to engage in spiritual warfare is apparent in the following account from a female Pentecostal missionary in the Arab world. She shared: "Once I was praying for a family. In the family was a boy who was spiritually oppressed. I told my mom in Brazil about this and she had a vision about the family. She prayed and I prayed for the family and the boy's problems were resolved."⁷⁸⁴ Finally, another Brazilian Pentecostal worker related that Muslim background believers still experience many spiritual conflicts and it was important that missionaries be prepared to minister to them.⁷⁸⁵

Though it seems logical that Brazilian Pentecostals would be eager to engage in spiritual warfare in the Arab-Muslim world, Brazilian pastors and missionaries from the historic churches and denominations have also demonstrated similar spiritual sensitivities.⁷⁸⁶ In 1992, Kraft and Kraft conducted interviews with twelve Brazilian pastors (nearly all were from historic churches) from eight different states around the country. All agreed that spiritual warfare was an important part of church ministry and each pastor reported being personally involved in some form of deliverance ministry.

⁷⁸³ This was related in personal conversation with me, January 6, 2010.

⁷⁸⁴ All Brazilian responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.8.

⁷⁸⁵ This was related in personal conversation with me, January 6, 2010.

⁷⁸⁶ See Greg Livingstone, "Laborers from the Global South: Partnering in the Task," in Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 54.

Though none had formulated a specific spiritual warfare strategy, these pastors addressed spiritual conflicts somewhat intuitively and on a case-by-case basis. In short, while certainly sensitive to spiritual warfare, they did not give undue attention to this part of their ministries.⁷⁸⁷

Other Brazilian workers from the historic churches serving in the Arab-Muslim world have affirmed similar values. One woman from a Presbyterian background offered some helpful insights as she correlated her experiences with spiritual warfare in Brazil to her current ministry in the Arab world. She related: “There are lots of evil influences in Spiritism rituals in Brazil. Also, my own brother who was not a believer was possessed. I have had some real experiences praying for him and others and seeing them delivered and this has helped to prepare me for spiritual warfare here [in my Arab context].” Also, a Baptist pastor serving among Arabs in Southern Brazil shared the following moving account of spiritual warfare in a Muslim context. He stated:

After eight years, I became deathly ill and felt the spirit of death. I was losing weight everyday and the doctors did not know what to do for me. A group of Christians came and prayed for me. They discerned that a curse had been placed on me by Muslims. They could not stop the work of our church and ministry so they wanted to stop me. The group prayed for me and I was healed and was able to return to ministry.

Hence, from these accounts, it seems that Brazilian workers from Pentecostal churches and the historic churches share a similar perspective on spiritual warfare in the Arab-Muslim context. Indeed, this regard for the spiritual world by non-Pentecostal Brazilians workers affirms a general observation made by Mark Noll about majority world Christianity. He writes: “Westerners who minister in Latin America, China, the Philippines, Africa, or the South Seas consistently report that

⁷⁸⁷ See Kraft and Kraft, “Spiritual Warfare in Brazil,” 56-61.

most Christian experience reflects a much stronger supernatural awareness than is characteristic of even charismatic and Pentecostal circles in the West.”⁷⁸⁸

Additional insights were gained after surveying Brazilian missionaries—from both Pentecostal and historic church backgrounds—regarding their views on spiritual warfare in the Arab context. Of those surveyed, about one-third reported that prayer and spiritual warfare ministry were regular aspects of their ministry. Interestingly, not a single respondent indicated that dealing with spiritual conflicts was a difficult or impossible ministry. Also, none reported a lack of spiritual warfare training in their pre-field preparation.⁷⁸⁹ This is significant because Western missionaries often feel unprepared and inadequate for the spiritual challenges in a Folk Muslim context.

Brazilian workers indicated a strong awareness of the spiritual battle around them. One worker related, “We know that there is a great battle. We have had some periods of great crises because of this,” while another added, “There is a great spiritual battle here. If you have no spiritual life, you will die spiritually.” Similarly, others affirmed, “This [attention to spiritual life] is an area of which we need to always pay much attention to in the Muslim world, because we are constantly in spiritual battle in all levels,” and “It’s fundamental that we are aware of the spiritual battle because we live in it daily. We need to use our spiritual weapons.” One worker from a Baptist background asserted, “I try to have a balanced view of the spiritual. Like C.S. Lewis, not give too much attention to the devil, but not ignoring him either.” Another affirmed, “We certainly pray against the Evil One; but I am not obsessed with every problem being caused by a demon or the devil.”

In addition to the cases already noted, other Brazilian workers attributed health problems to the spiritual battle around them. One missionary shared, “Sometimes I

⁷⁸⁸ See Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*, 34.

⁷⁸⁹ See Appendix B, questions 15 and 27 for the complete responses.

have not felt well but I do understand that there is a spiritual context, especially during the month of Ramadan” while another related, “I was once very ill during a ministry outreach and after prayer from colleagues, saw myself quickly recover.”

Building upon this general awareness for the spiritual world, some Brazilian workers asserted that spiritual warfare differed in various contexts. One missionary who had previously served in North Africa before moving to Southern Brazil asserted, “There is a greater spiritual battle among Muslims in Southern Brazil than there was in North Africa. This is especially true among the Shia Muslims.” On the other hand, one worker observed: “It is easier to perceive the evil in Brazil, it is more subtle here [in my Arab context]. The Evil One works in a different way.” Similarly, a Brazilian woman shared, “I feel that the spiritual battle is greater here [in my Arab context] than in Brazil (though in Brazil I have been involved in praying for people oppressed by the devil).”⁷⁹⁰

Some of those interviewed observed that Brazilians are generally more sensitive to spiritual warfare than Western missionaries are. The same woman cited in the last quotation related, “I think I feel a greater sense of prayer than my husband (who is from North America).” Describing his organization’s training strategy for prayer and spiritual warfare, Mordomo, a North American, admitted: “We do emphasize prayer and spiritual warfare training with our Brazilian workers. Any weakness in this training would be because of shortcomings by our North American leadership.” By shortcomings, he was aware that the North American leadership might tend to default to an “excluded middle” paradigm on spiritual warfare issues.

Respondents also offered insights on their strategies and general approaches to spiritual warfare. Most Brazilian workers stated that prayer was their primary

⁷⁹⁰ This is the same woman from a Presbyterian background cited on p. 215.

strategy. One worker indicated that, “[prayer and spiritual warfare] are necessary for work in a Muslim country. There is an oppression that can only be defeated by prayer,” while another added, “Spiritual warfare is very big; so prayer is a necessity.” Reflecting on the importance of personal prayer, one missionary shared, “I learned that in order to survive on the field among the Muslims it is necessary to have a strong prayer life, because it is the key of our victory because of the constant spiritual battles that we go through.” Another added that prayer and meditating on Scripture was also important: “I have my normal, regular prayer and I also claim the promises of God's Word in prayer.” One woman related that intercessory prayer was actually her main ministry in the Arab world: “This is a major part of my ministry; the foundation of all that I am doing here. Prayer is the first thing I do when starting a new project. It is prayer that helps me to love this country and to see change. It is very spiritually oppressive here.” Finally, others shared that praying in groups and developing prayer networks were also important strategies. One worker stated, “Prayer is an important concept and we try to pray as a team and with the church regularly. There are moments where the spiritual battle gets stronger, and in those times we pray and fight in the spiritual battles with much effort.” Another affirmed, “Prayer is the foundation of the mission agency that I am part of, and that has influenced me a lot in my transcultural ministry. I am part of a prayer network in some countries where there are people praying for our work on the field.”

Some Brazilians indicated that fasting with prayer was an important spiritual warfare strategy. The Baptist pastor ministering in Southern Brazil shared, “We had a great dependency on God. Our work was only possible through fasting and prayer. In fact, we prayed and fasted every Friday when the Muslims were at the mosque that there would be a spiritual breakthrough.” A Brazilian woman serving in the Middle

East added, “My husband and I have experienced separating a period of three days, four times a year, for fasting and prayer. We saw results and need to start doing that again.”

Finally, some Brazilian workers reported that deliverance prayer and power encounters were part of their experience with spiritual warfare. For instance, one worker shared, “Arabs have a strong spiritual mindset (demons, spirits, dreams). God works miracles and can speak to Muslims through their dreams and our message speaks to their spiritual mindset.” Another added, “It [spiritual warfare] is important in freeing lives from the hands of the enemy, especially when he manifests himself.”

In summary, these Brazilian voices seem to affirm that Brazilian transcultural workers possess a spiritual worldview that not only makes them sensitive to the spiritual realities in the Arab-Muslim world but also capable of ministering in this context. Having grown up in a context of Catholicism mixed with Spiritism, Brazilian evangelical missionaries, including ex-Spiritists, Pentecostals, and historic Protestants, seem prone to adapt to the spiritual context of Folk Islam. In this sense, they are not only more prepared than their North American and European colleagues, but they also have much to teach them about spiritual warfare ministry. Their emphases on prayer, fasting, and engaging in appropriate power encounters could also serve as relevant models for ministry.

Table 3.8 Brazilian Perspectives on Spiritual Warfare

(39) Once I was praying for a family. In the family was a boy who was spiritually oppressed. I told my mom in Brazil about this and she had a vision about the family. She prayed and I prayed for the family and the boy's problems were resolved
(40) I think I used to be too focused on spiritual warfare issues. There are lots of evil influences in Spiritism rituals in Brazil. Also, my own brother who was not a believer was possessed. I have had some real experiences praying for him and others and seeing them delivered and this has helped to prepare me for spiritual warfare here [in my Arab context].
(13) After eight years, I became deathly ill and felt the spirit of death. I was losing



<p>weight everyday and the doctors did not know what to do for me. A group of Christians came and prayed for me. They discerned that a curse had been placed on me by Muslims. They could not stop the work of our church and ministry so they wanted to stop me. The group prayed for me and I was healed and was able to return to ministry.</p>
<p>(32) We know that there is a great battle. We have had some periods of great crises because of this.</p>
<p>(42) There is a great spiritual battle here. If you have no spiritual life, you will die spiritually.</p>
<p>(43) Every day we pray and sense the spiritual battle.</p>
<p>(5) This [attention to spiritual life] is an area of which we need to always pay much attention to in the Muslim world, because we are constantly in spiritual battle in all levels.</p>
<p>(29) It's fundamental that we are aware of the spiritual battle because we live in it daily. We need to use our spiritual weapons.</p>
<p>(18) I try to have a balanced view of the spiritual. Like C.S. Lewis, not give too much attention to the devil, but not ignoring him either.</p>
<p>(11) We certainly pray against the Evil One; but I am not obsessed with every problem being caused by a demon or the devil.</p>
<p>(ML 10) We had a big emphasis on prayer but not necessarily spiritual warfare prayer probably because we were a bunch of Baptists, Presbyterians, and Mennonites. We believe in prayer but we were careful in not going overboard. Now PMI has more emphasis on spiritual warfare because of the present leader is from a Pentecostal background.</p>
<p>(16) The only thing that affects me a lot [in my spiritual life] is the stress and the spiritual oppression by being on the field.</p>
<p>(17) It so important to be victorious in spiritual warfare! In the Muslim world, the warfare is so hard and if you don't understand it or know how to pray, you can't survive there.</p>
<p>(26) [My spiritual life has been healthy] in spite of encountering a lot of difficulty in this spiritual context.</p>
<p>(24) Sometimes I have not felt well but I do understand that there is a spiritual context, especially during the month of Ramadan.</p>
<p>(18) I was once very ill during a ministry outreach and after prayer from colleagues, saw myself quickly recover.</p>
<p>(13) I recovered from a serious illness after the intercessory prayer of a group of believers.</p>
<p>(45) I was sick but I was prayed for and now I am better.</p>
<p>(12) There is a strong sense of spiritual oppression in working with Muslims in Southern Brazil.</p>
<p>(8) We have no choice but to be involved in this type of prayer. If we stop praying then we stop ministering. I have seen leaders fall into sin and leave the ministry because we are in a spiritual battle. In Southern Brazil, it is a spiritually oppressive atmosphere with Muslims, Buddhists, and Spiritism; so we must pray. We are mobilizing an intercessory prayer network with our churches.</p>
<p>(11) I feel like there is a greater spiritual battle among Muslims in Southern Brazil than there was in North Africa. This is especially true among the Shia Muslims.</p>
<p>(34) While it is easier to perceive the evil in Brazil, it is more subtle here [in my Arab context]. The Evil One works in a different way.</p>



<p>(40) Some days we must pray just to make it. We can feel the oppression and we must pray against spiritual powers. I feel that the spiritual battle is greater here [in my Arab context] than in Brazil (though in Brazil I have been involved in praying for people oppressed by the devil).</p>
<p>(40) I think I feel a greater sense of prayer than my husband (who is from North America).</p>
<p>(ML 5) We have a prayer network among our supporting churches. We do emphasize prayer and spiritual warfare training with our Brazilian workers. Any weakness in this training would be because of shortcomings by our North American leadership.</p>
<p>(30) Both of these [prayer and spiritual warfare] are necessary for work in a Muslim country. There is an oppression that can only be defeated by prayer.</p>
<p>(14) I learned that in order to survive on the field among the Muslims it is necessary to have a strong prayer life, because it is the key of our victory because of the constant spiritual battles that we go through.</p>
<p>(25) Spiritual warfare is very big; so prayer is a necessity.</p>
<p>(12) I have my normal, regular prayer and I also claim the promises of God's Word in prayer.</p>
<p>(34) This is a major part of my ministry; the foundation of all that I am doing here. Prayer is the first thing I do when starting a new project. It is prayer that helps me to love this country and to see change. It is very spiritually oppressive here.</p>
<p>(4) Prayer is an important concept and we try to pray as a team and with the church regularly. There are moments where the spiritual battle gets stronger, and in those times we pray and fight in the spiritual battles with much effort.</p>
<p>(5) Prayer is the foundation of the mission agency that I am part of, and that has influenced me a lot in my transcultural ministry. I am part of a prayer network in some countries where there are people praying for our work on the field.</p>
<p>(13) We had 350 intercessory prayer partners and we felt their prayers indeed.</p>
<p>(27) Prayer is the base of any ministry regardless of what is being done.</p>
<p>(23) Spiritual warfare and prayer are essential parts of the ministry. When I am weakened in my personal prayer life, I quickly feel the difference. But that is when I get back on track with my prayer life.</p>
<p>(6) It [spiritual warfare] is what has made me stand firm and grow in my ministry and faith. All the answers and victories we have from God were through prayer!</p>
<p>(13) Without prayer and fasting our ministry would have been impossible. We had a great dependency on God. Our work was only possible through fasting and prayer. In fact, we prayed and fasted every Friday when the Muslims were at the mosque that there would be a spiritual breakthrough.</p>
<p>(22) My husband and I have experienced separating a period of three days, four times a year, for fasting and prayer. We saw results and need to start doing that again.</p>
<p>(9) Arabs have a strong spiritual mindset (demons, spirits, dreams). God works miracles and can speak to Muslims through their dreams and our message speaks to their spiritual mindset.</p>
<p>(15) It [spiritual warfare] is important in freeing lives from the hands of the enemy, especially when he manifests himself.</p>

3.14 *Jeitinho Brasileiro*: A Case Study in Adaptation

Having explored the cultural and missiological literature regarding these seven specific aspects of culture, and having listened to Brazilian missionaries and mission leaders describe how Brazilians adapt in each area, let us consider how Brazilians seem to adapt to culture and new things in general, and how this affects their cultural adaptation in the Arab world.

A vast majority (84.4%) of missionaries responded that they felt very comfortable (31.1%) or comfortable (53.3%) living cross-culturally in the Arab world. Only 15.6% said that they were uncomfortable, while no one responded that they were very uncomfortable. The survey comments largely affirmed these numbers. One worker shared, “I am a person who adapts easily to new things.” Others related, “I felt no culture shock in Arab culture,” and “I didn’t have any problems in terms of adaptation.”⁷⁹¹ Another shared, “This [my Arab context] has become my second home,” while another affirmed, “The things that upset me here are so small compared to how we feel blessed.”

Other Brazilian missionaries noted that they adapted with time. One worker shared, “I would say that I am entering the phase of being comfortable here after three years. Cultural and language adaptation bring this comfort but it takes time.” Another added, “In my first impression, it was uncomfortable but soon after it became comfortable.”

Finally, the comments of others reflected an ability to adapt even when training is lacking. One worker shared, “I would do my pre-field training again. But you really learn most things on the field.” Another related, “I was the first Brazilian missionary to Arabs in Southern Brazil. No one had gone before so there was no set preparation. I wrote the first manual for training. I went with my ‘face and courage.’”

⁷⁹¹ All Brazilians responses on this topic are represented in Table 3.9.

Page observes that “Brazilians cope amazingly well. In the face of discomforts and hardships that might drive others to protest or even open revolts, they exhibit forbearance and an extraordinary degree of adaptability.”⁷⁹² Though his remarks are directed at Brazilians in general, they are also quite relevant to Brazilian missionaries and their efforts to adapt to and thrive within Arab culture. They also point to an aspect of Brazilian culture called *jeitinho* or *jeito Brasileiro*, which will also be explored as it relates to Brazilian transcultural mission work.

While this cultural value has been evaluated at length by anthropologists,⁷⁹³ let us move toward a definition and consider the underlying motivations for it. While *jeitinho* literally means “a solution,” Barbosa further defines it as:

A special way of resolving some problem or difficult or prohibited situation; or a creative solution to an emergency, whether in the form of working around an established norm or rule (through trickery or fraud), whether through appeasement, or whether through skill or cleverness . . . the situation must be unforeseen and adverse to the person’s objectives.⁷⁹⁴

Leonardo Boff adds that Brazilians possess “great creativity . . . to always make a way, [to] find an escape from any problem.”⁷⁹⁵ On one level, *jeitinho* seems to be a way in which Brazilians cope with a fatalistic view of the world.⁷⁹⁶ As noted, Spiritism offers a spiritual *jeito* (“solution”) for Brazilians. On another related level, *jeitinho* provides a way for otherwise powerless Brazilians to navigate and survive within the hierarchical and corrupt systems of administration in government and business. Thus, Hess and DaMatta remark that “the *jeitinho* can be an equalizing and

⁷⁹² See Page, 10.

⁷⁹³ Some of the most helpful work has been done by Livia Barbosa. See Barbosa, *O Jeitinho Brasileiro: A Arte de Ser Mais Igual que os Outros* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Editora Campus, 1992); and Barbosa, “The Brazilian Jeitinho: An Exercise in National Identity,” in Hess and DaMatta, 35-48.

⁷⁹⁴ Cited in Mordomo, “The Brazilian Way,” 17.

⁷⁹⁵ Cited in Mordomo, “The Brazilian Way,” 11; see also Barbosa, “The Brazilian Jeitinho: An Exercise in National Identity,” in Hess and DaMatta, 36.

⁷⁹⁶ See Page, 10.

humanizing institution.”⁷⁹⁷ Ultimately, *jeitinho* signifies that relationships—a foundational element of Brazilian culture—trump rules. Barbosa writes:

It [*jeitinho*] also emphasizes the side of Brazilian society that privileges the human and neutral aspects of social reality over the legal, political, and institutional ones. Thus, the *jeitinho brasileiro* expresses the cordial, conciliatory, happy, warm, and human spirit of a country that is young, tropical, sensual, beautiful, and full of possibilities.⁷⁹⁸

In light of this definition and motivations, should *jeitinho Brasileiro* be regarded as a beneficial quality for Brazilian evangelical missionaries? Magaretha Adinawara, a Brazilian mission leader, argues that there are many moral problems implicit in *jeitinho*, including a lack of respect for authority and rules, selfish individualism, a desire for instant gratification, a superficial spiritual life, and an unhealthy desire to always win. Thus, for Adinawara, *jeitinho* is clearly incompatible with the Christian life and missionary call.⁷⁹⁹ Similarly, Silas Tostes expressed concern that Brazilian missionaries would compromise their integrity by relying on their *jeitinho*.⁸⁰⁰

On the other hand, given that Brazilian transcultural workers are being transformed by a biblical worldview, it seems that one aspect of *jeitinho*—the ability to adapt and survive in difficult circumstances—ought to be retained. One Brazilian worker asserted, “With *jeito*, the Brazilian missionary is able to make do and find a way around problems.”⁸⁰¹ Finley also adds, “The Brazilian missionary, if well-prepared, adapts well because of coming from a culture of improvisation; also, Brazilians are able to adapt to precarious conditions because Brazil is a third world

⁷⁹⁷ See Hess and DaMatta, 23.

⁷⁹⁸ See Barbosa, “The Brazilian Jeitinho: An Exercise in National Identity,” in Hess and DaMatta, 46.

⁷⁹⁹ See Magaretha Adinawara, “Treinar Missionários Para Perseverar: Um Preparo Holístico Para Situações de Adversidade,” *Capacitando* 9 (2001), 7; also Barbosa, “The Brazilian Jeitinho: An Exercise in National Identity,” in Hess and DaMatta, 47; and Mordomo, “The Brazilian Way,” 19.

⁸⁰⁰ Related to me in personal conversation, July 23, 2009.

⁸⁰¹ Cited in Finley, 181.

country.”⁸⁰² Daniel Calze concurs, remarking that “success” in ministry “comes as a result of the [Brazilian’s] natural gifts to adapt himself to a context and particularly to Muslim culture. Because of that, they are able to share the Gospel in an effective and holistic way.”

As Brazilian workers in the Arab world continually face the challenges of limited financial resources, language learning, visa and administration issues, security issues, and (for women) the difficulties of living in a male-dominated culture, this innate ability to adapt is probably a strength. In spite of their difficulties, it is interesting to note that the vast majority of Brazilian workers surveyed plan on spending more than ten years (62.5%) or up to ten more years (28.1%) in ministry in the Arab world.

Table 3.9 Brazilian Perspectives on Cultural Adaptation

(18) I am a person who adapts easily to new things.
(11) I felt no culture shock in Arab culture.
(5) I didn’t have any problems in terms of adaptation.
(43) This has become my second home.
(44) The things that upset me here are so small compared to how we feel blessed.
(26) I would say that I am entering the phase of being comfortable here after three years. Cultural and language adaptation bring this comfort but it takes time.
(21) After eight years, [I] felt very comfortable.
(24) In my first impression, it was uncomfortable but soon after it became comfortable.
(23) With time and getting to know the culture, we feel comfortable.
(42) I would do my pre-field training again. But you really learn most things on the field.
(13) I was the first Brazilian missionary to Arabs in Southern Brazil. No one had gone before so there was no set preparation. I wrote the first manual for training. I went with my “face and courage.”
(ML 6) I believe that this success comes as a result of the Brazilian’s natural gifts to adapt himself to a context and particularly to Muslim culture. Because of that, they are able to share the Gospel in an effective and holistic way.
(39) As Brazilians, we think we know more than we do. We need to be humble and learn from others. We cannot rely on our <i>jeito</i> but need to work hard on learning the language and culture. We have things in common with the Arab culture so it is easier for us to be here, but we need to be persistent to learn.

⁸⁰² See Finley, 181.

3.15 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the cultural aspects of race, economics, time, communication, family, relationships, hospitality, and spiritual worldview have been discussed in both the Arab and Brazilian contexts. While a study of the relevant literature has been foundational, the theme analysis has been founded the descriptions of Brazilian transcultural workers and mission leaders at work in the Arab-Muslim world. It has become evident that there are some definite differences between the cultures of the Arab world and that of Brazilian missionaries. These have been most notable in the areas of conflict resolution, personal hygiene as it relates to food and hospitality, and the role of women. On the other hand, some aspects of Arab and Brazilian culture are rather similar. The strongest areas seem to be hospitality, relationship building, and a general spiritual worldview that acknowledges the role of demons and spirits. It has also become apparent that transcultural workers from the Northeast of Brazil seem be closest to the Arabs culturally. This was especially evident when considering the cultural aspects of economics, time, family, and relationships. In short, as Brazilians have described their experiences, it seems that there is some favorable continuity between the cultures of Brazilian evangelical workers and the Arab contexts in which they serve. Coupled with the reality that Brazilians seem to adapt well in other cultures, it seems that the contribution of Brazilian transcultural missionaries is important in the Arab world. It also seems that, generally speaking, Brazilians adapt better to ministry in the Arab-Muslim world than their North American and European colleagues.

Marcos Amado agrees that Brazilians have fewer cultural barriers to contend with in the Arab world. However, he reminds Brazilian missionaries that they are still not Arabs and that they must still discipline themselves to learn the language and

culture, and not assume that they can adapt without effort.⁸⁰³ Amado's convictions are further supported in the remarks of a single woman presently serving in the Middle East:

As Brazilians, we think we know more than we do. We need to be humble and learn from others. We cannot rely on our *jeito* but need to work hard on learning the language and culture. We have things in common with the Arab culture so it is easier for us to be here, but we need to be persistent to learn.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰³ Over the course of his twenty years of service in the Arab world, Amado developed a Transcultural Training Course, which is summarized in Amado, "A Capacitação Contínua do Obreiro," *Capacitando* 9 (2001), 39-46.

⁸⁰⁴ See Table 3.9.