The Purposeful Demonization Of Muslims And Arabs By The Mass Media

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THE PURPOSEFUL DEMONIZATION OF MUSLIMS AND ARABS BY THE
MASS MEDIA

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the three most important beings in my life, my Father God Yahweh, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and my beautiful wife Nuria Lerma. I know only through you do I have strength.
THE PURPOSEFUL DEMONIZATION OF MUSLIMS AND ARABS BY THE MASS MEDIA

by

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THESIS

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Topic

The mass media (henceforth defined for the purposes of this paper as news programs, television shows, and Hollywood films) have and continue to have the ability to define in audience members’ minds, individuals and the characteristics they allegedly possess. The individuals that are being shown and defined on a consistent basis in the present geopolitical environment of world events are Muslims and Arabs. The real life terrorist attacks of September 11th and other minor terroristic incidents involving Muslims and Arabs have been reflected in the mass media’s content. These real life incidents have given the mass media enough examples to create many different stories involving Muslims and Arabs. The representations created by the mass media that involves Muslims and Arabs is usually based on stereotypical depictions that make them look dangerous, barbaric, anti-Christian, descended from a violent religion, and lastly, anti-American. These “barbaric” Muslims and Arabs are usually shown as a legitimate threat to Western society, its citizens, and its values.

The mass media have created many programs and films that have resorted to using stereotypes in order to gain viewers. The most prominent stereotypical representation of Muslims and Arabs is that they are terrorists and represented as violent deviants in general. The fictitious and non-fictitious based representations have been derived from past events (Ex: Iranian hostage crisis, the September 11th attacks, and the 7-7 London bombings) that have involved the Middle-East, Muslims, and Arabs. The most current event involving Muslims and Arabs is the Boston Marathon bombings, which will likely become future fodder for the mass media to continue to exploit Muslims and Arabs as violent and dangerous individuals that threaten Western civilization. The creation of violent stereotypical images as it pertains to minorities has been a long time practice of Hollywood, and the news media. The lazy and/or criminal African-American, the greasy and/or violent Mexican-American, and the Asian who is the master of the martial arts are but a few of the stereotypes created by the mass media as it pertains to minorities. These are but a few examples of how the mass media have come to represent minorities in
the eyes of the viewing audience. The representations created by the mass media are at times the only first-hand experience that viewers have to the minority groups shown. So, the mass media create the reality of what being a part of a certain minority and/or religious group is about in the viewer’s mind. The mass media whether intentionally or not, acts as an educator as the audience is shown places and people that they would normally not have any interaction with. This power that the mass media have do not do many favors to those shown as the mass media favor showing negative characteristics to attract the largest viewing audience. Muslims and Arabs are usually shown as brown individuals that partake in using terrorism to forward their political goals. The other visual used by the media to represent Muslims and Arabs is to show them praying before they commit a terrorist attack. Thus, the mass media have successfully created the impression of a violent people that worship the allegedly violent religion of Islam.

This study will deal with how the mass media deliberately represent Muslims and Arabs in a negative fashion. This leads to audience members having a distorted and negative view of Muslims and Arabs as there are few positive counter-representations. The theory that will be used to support this argument is Cultivation Theory. Cultivation Theory explains that continuous media viewing will have an effect on molding audience member’s perceptions. The main concept that Cultivation Theory explains is that the more a viewer experiences media content, the more that person will come to believe that the real world reflects the media’s version of it. According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (2009), “Cultivation theory addresses the relationship between TV content and viewers’ beliefs about social reality, primarily asserting that compared with light TV viewers, heavy viewers perceive their social environment as more similar to the world as portrayed on TV than it really is” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli as cited in Nabi, p. 214). The more a person views news programs, television shows, and Hollywood films, the more likely that person will come to believe that the real world is reflective of the world that is shown in the mass media. This will be supportive of the argument that the media purposely
create negative representations of Muslims and Arabs in their content that comes to be the reality of how viewers perceive these individuals. For the purposes of this study Cultivation Theory will be used for the hypothetical effects of heavy media viewing rather than statistical data as Cultivation Theory is typically related with numerical findings.

1.1 Literature Review

The intent of this review of literature is to demonstrate that the mass media do purposely target Muslims and Arabs in their media content. The mass media do in turn have the capability to mold audience members’ perceptions, attitudes, and values towards individuals of different races, and religions. The mass media purposely show Muslims and Arabs as being different in terms of how they live and their beliefs. The primary representation shown by the media content is that Muslims and Arabs are violent, come from violent countries of the Middle-East, and ultimately, are violent because of their violent religion’s doctrine. The representations pre-dating the September 11th attacks of Muslims and Arabs did show them as violent and dangerous towards the American public, but, the representations were sometimes done in a comical fashion. The September 11th attacks created an environment where the mass media went on a campaign of only showing the most negative aspects of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs. This review will examine the representations that have become prevalent in the mass media as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs. The media content that will be studied will be news programs, television shows, and Hollywood films. The study of how minorities are represented in the media will be highly stressed.

1.2 Problem Area

The problem that this study will deal with is how the mass media represent Muslims and Arabs on various media content. The representations that are related to Muslims and Arabs are based on stereotypical and racist visuals that make them seem to have only negative characteristics. The characteristics shown as it relates to Muslims and Arabs show them as primitive, savage, barbaric,
unquestioning dogmatic followers of their violent religion, and ultimately, violent. The pre-September 11th representations in the mass media show brown Arab Sheiks who ruled over the vast wastelands of desert in the Middle-East. This representation showed them as backwards in terms of having no modern cities, and having no modern technologies. The backwardness of the society shown in the media content related to showing the people who resided there as uncivilized, violent towards foreigners, and aggressive towards white women that they desired. The Arab Sheik eventually evolved into the terrorist individual that was identified as being both Arab and Muslim. This terrorist individual unlike the Arab Sheik character was shown to be a threat to the U.S., its people, and its interests. The September 11th attacks took the terrorist character to a whole new level as new characters created were officially called Muslim terrorists, instead of just a terrorist. The mass media have continued to show primarily negative representations as it pertains to Muslim and Arab individuals as it makes for more interesting stories that attract viewers, which ultimately is the goal of the American media conglomerates who create the media content.

This study will deal with how the media conglomerates have purposely victimized minorities, in this case Muslims and Arabs. The victimization of these individuals by the mass media has been based on the mass media defining the characteristics that make up these individuals. The characteristics created by the mass media are primarily negative and involve showing Muslims and Arabs as a danger to the United States and its people. The dangerous Muslim and Arab representation shown is complimented by showing them praying and/or reading from religious books such as the Qur’an before a terrorist attack. Thus, creating the impression that terrorism and Islam are one in the same as these individuals are represented as being both a terrorist and a Muslim. The Muslim and Arab peoples are represented in the mass media as having primarily negative characteristics. This dismisses the positive characteristics that these individuals possess and the positive qualities that they add in immigrating to other countries. The mass media rarely show the positive attributes that these people possess, that could
contradict the primarily negative representations of Muslims and Arabs as terrorists. The negative representations of Muslims and Arabs become one of the only references that some audience members have in terms of learning of these groups. The audience truly does not know these individuals as the mass media primarily covers a small marginal group (Muslim extremists) that do not reflect the larger and primarily peaceful group of law abiding Muslims and Arabs.

1.3 Methodology

The methodological approach that will be used in this study will be based on qualitative strategies (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The primary methodology that will be used in this study is textual-analysis. The textual-analysis will be based on the study of various different media contents. The first mass media to be studied will be American news programs as this is the most influential in educating viewers as it based on reporting real life events. The study of the news will involve seeing how Muslims and Arabs are represented and described. The other mass media that will be studied are television shows that have Muslim and Arab characters. The representations will be studied to see how Muslims and Arabs are shown and defined by TV shows. The third and last media content that will be studied has the most powerful influence around the world, Hollywood films. The mass media content will be studied to see how Hollywood films are presenting and describing characters that are Muslim and/or Arab in their films.

1.4 Research Questions

Research Question 1:

Are the mass media representing Muslims and Arabs in a negative form?

Research Question 2:

Do the mass media provide alternative positive viewpoints on top of the primarily negative representations of Muslims and Arabs?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The mass media have an immense power in influencing how audience members perceive their world. This is especially true as the mass media have introduced places and people of the world that the viewing audience might never get to experience first-hand. The exclusivity of the mass media to introduce foreign people and foreign cultures to their viewers, allows the mass media to define people and their characteristics. The audience will likely be influenced into believing that by watching media content that they know the people shown and their true nature. The most important theory that attempts to explain the mass media’s power to influence audience member’s perceptions is Cultivation Theory. Cultivation Theory was created by George Gerbner and his colleagues’, the theory attempts to explain the effects of television viewing on influencing audience member’s perceptions, attitudes, and values (Severin & Tankard as cited in Nurullah, 2010, p. 1024). Cultivation Theory explains that long term exposure to mass media content will have an influence on the viewer’s thought process. The mass media thus could be seen as an educator of viewers that “educates” viewers on races and religions different than their own. The exposure to the mass media could possibly influence how audience members perceive individuals that have different characteristics than themselves.

The mass media give all minorities their time in the spotlight as they are presented to the masses. The time for Muslims and Arabs came to fruition because of the September 11th attacks. The reason being is that the 9/11 attacks were the most devastating terrorist attack in American history in terms of life lost and destruction of property. According to Sandler, “the deaths associated with 9/11 were unprecedented: the human toll was equal to the number of deaths from transnational terrorism from the start of 1988 through the end of 2000” (Sandler as cited in Enders and Sandler, 2006, p. 1). The result of this one terrorist attack is that the mass media began a campaign to condemn Islam, Muslims, and Arabs through the representations that they began to show. The representations that the mass media resorted to using as it pertained to Muslims and Arabs were the use of stereotypical representations. The most
The popular stereotypical representation being of these individuals is that they are associated firstly, with Islam, secondly, with violence, and thirdly, with terrorism. According to Jackson (2010), “Mass media associates Islam and Muslims, by and large, with terrorism, portraying the religion and the group most frequently as unreasonable, fundamentalist, and/or prone to reactive violence” (p. 6). The mass media portray Muslims and Arabs as being blatantly violent individuals that resort to the use of terrorism. This completely disregards the fact that only a small percentage of Muslims and Arabs are associated with terrorist groups and terrorism in general.

The Muslims and Arabs of the world have become associated with uncivilized behavior as it pertains to their representations in the mass media. The pre-9/11 representations of Muslims and Arabs had them threatening Americans in fictitious (Hollywood films) and non-fictitious (Iranian-Hostage Crisis, Beirut barrack bombings, and the oil crisis of the 1970s) portrayals. This evolved into the representation of Islamic-Arab terrorists who attempt to strike at the United States, which was given some credibility as truthful with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The result of the September 11th attacks was that the mass media began to report more stories and created stories involving terrorists of Muslim and Arab descent. According to Amiri (2012), “As Cultivation Theory suggests, exposing the public to recurrent negative images about Muslims resulted in convincing Americans the threat of Muslims is real” (p. 10). The representations primarily deal with Muslims and Arabs being a threat to the United States and its citizens. This one-sided representation of these people could likely lead to viewers believing that Muslims and Arabs are not only violent, but also, terroristic by their sheer nature. This is possible as the mass media is sometimes the only vehicle that viewers have to interact with people that are different than themselves. According to Tan (1981), “The mass media have made us aware of cultures, social issues, and events that few of us could experience directly. Thus, we rely on the pictures presented in the media as guides of construction of our own social realities” (p. 253). The mass media thus can come to define what it is to be of a certain race and religion. The media primarily disregard the
positive characteristics that Muslims and Arabs possess. Instead, the mass media primarily emphasize the negative characteristics of a small minority group in the Muslim and Arab world considered and called terrorists. The coverage of “Muslim” and/or “Arab” terrorists’ attracts viewers to the mass media’s content, but ultimately ends up leaving a negative impression of all Muslims and Arabs as there are few positive representations shown of them.

The mass media have decided to give a small subgroup (Muslim extremist terrorists) the majority of the media’s attention, rather than regular law-abiding Muslims and Arabs. The terrorist subgroup that are Muslim and/or Arab is very small (population wise), but, receives the majority of the attention of the mass media. The mass media coverage of extremist Muslims and Arabs involves the coverage of a small group of violent deviants who make for more interesting television and films. According to Joyce (2009),

When the news media present an object, certain attributes, properties or traits of that object are emphasized and others de-emphasized. The media’s selection and presentation of an object’s attributes are thus transferred to the public’s agenda and affects how the public thinks about or feels about the object (p. 114).

The mass media have decided to emphasize violent individuals that publicly state that they are going to destroy America, its way of life, and its people. The presentation of these kinds of individuals makes for more interesting television and film as they seem dangerous and therefore, interesting. This though can have the effect of educating viewers that these people should not be trusted as they will not assimilate into the population, and will attack the people of the country they are living in. This is the impression that will likely be thought of by viewers as they have few positive representations to contradict the negative representations that the mass media continually show as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs. The mass media though profits handsomely from these representations as they attract viewers and film goers by having fanatical Muslims and Arabs play the boogie-man that is trying to hurt innocent individuals that are almost always American.
The mass media traditionally emphasize negative characteristics of individuals that are of different races (usually exempting individuals that are white) and religions (usually exempting the religion of Christianity). The likely reason being that emphasizing negative characteristics of foreign people, cultures, and religions, allows the TV networks, and film studios to create evil characters that the audience tune in or buy tickets to see die or be punished in other ways. According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli,

Given the tight links among various industries involved in the production and distribution of electronic media content, and the fact that most of them are trying to attract the largest and most heterogeneous audience, the most popular program materials present consistent and complimentary messages, often reproducing what has already proven to be profitable (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli as cited in Severin and Tankard, 2000, p. 271).

This formula is applicable to the bad Muslim and/or Arab villain that have become more prevalent in the media content of today. These evil characters become what viewers can come to believe a true Muslim and/or Arab is all about. These characters attract viewers, but, the mass media are showing a representation of a character that is not reflective of the larger population of Muslims and Arabs. The audience may then believe they know these people, but the reality is that they only know about a small subgroup of the population that does not reflect a much larger population of distinct individuals. According to Zillman and Brosius,

the finite number of exemplars that can be feasibly included in news stories, as well as reporters’ tendencies to include sensational examples to enliven what might otherwise be bland information, lead to numerous situations in which examples can lead to distorted perceptions (Zillman & Brosius as cited in Oliver, Ramasubramanian, and Kim, 2007, p. 277).

The exemplars shown by the mass media may lead to the creation of misinformation that may in turn lead to a lot of misunderstandings in the audience’s perceptions. Muslims and Arabs may be thought of as being made up of only negative characteristics in the minds of the viewer. The most significant representation being that Muslims and Arabs are violent terrorists and/or criminals that are associated with a violent religion as they are seen praying and quoting the Qur’an before committing the atrocities
they commit. These representations make for interesting stories, but, this leads to the viewers’ not truly understanding the people that are shown in the mass media.

The minorities shown in the mass media are shown in highly exaggerated representations. The representations of minorities usually show them as violent and/or prone to partaking in crime. This representation leads to minorities being seen as something (terrorists and/or criminals) that the majority of the real-life minority groups are not. The mass media abuse minorities by showing them in only negative representations. The minorities represented in the mass media do not have any way to rebuke these representations. According to Hafez and Richter, “Not only does the mass media play a role in the construction of reality; in the case of minority issues, coverage in the media is often the only source for the formation of audience opinions” (Hafez & Richter as cited in Shooman and Spielhaus, 2010, p. 202). The mass media condemn minorities as evil by showing them over and over again in negative representations, such as violent criminals committing violent crimes. These representations of violent and therefore, dangerous characters can become the reality in the minds of viewers. According to Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, and Rosko-Ewoldsen (2007),

Berkowitz hypothesized that depictions of violence in the media activate hostility- and aggression-related concepts in memory and that the activation of these concepts in memory makes it more likely that other’s behavior will be interpreted as aggressive and hostile (p. 58).

The media representations that continually show minorities as violent and dangerous create misrepresentations in the audience’s mind. The media content of violent characters could be misconstrued to be interpretive of real-life individuals’ behaviors that look similar to those individuals shown in TV and/or film. These misrepresentations could possibly create racist thoughts in audience members considering they are primarily being shown the negative representations of certain minority groups.

The minority group that is receiving the most media attention in the post-9/11 world are Muslims and Arabs. The mass media continually prefer to show these individuals in battle with the good guys on
television, film, and news programs. The good guys primarily being white individuals that are agents of the American government trying to stop these “terroristic” individuals. These representations will likely lead to viewers enjoying that these individuals are punished by being tortured and/or killed. Disposition Theory suggests that individuals report high levels of enjoyment when characters that are “liked” are portrayed as winning or succeeding, and when characters whom are “disliked” are portrayed as losing or suffering (Raney, Zillman, and Bryant as cited in Oliver, Ramasubramanian, and Kim, 2007, p. 282).

The possibility of racist thoughts being created or complimenting already pre-existing racist thoughts in viewers are possible as the images of Muslims and Arabs are almost always of a negative nature. The mass media dictate that viewers should dislike these individuals because of the many negative characteristics that Muslims and Arabs allegedly possess. According to Oliver and Armstrong, “programs containing frequent depictions of racial minorities as punished or as “losing” (e.g., black criminal suspects being arrested) should hold particular appeal among viewers who harbor racist attitudes” (Oliver and Armstrong as cited in Oliver, Ramasubramanian, and Kim, 2007, p. 282). The mass media will continue to show Muslims and Arabs “losing” to Americans as it is relevant to the political situation that faces the United States as the U.S. deals with international terrorism. The likelihood is that viewers may create racist thoughts towards Muslims and Arabs as the mass media show them as a dangerous threat to the U.S.

The Muslim and Arab characters shown on TV shows and film are primarily shown to have negative characteristics. According to Kozlovic (2009),

Arab-Muslims are typically depicted as one of the three “Bs,” namely, billionaires, belly dancers or bombers who, as the prototypical Other (as perceived by the Judeo-Christian West and within colonial discourses) are characterized as heathen, evil, uncivilized, anti-modern, unreasoning, cruel, antagonistic, obsessive, rascally, barbaric, punitive, blood-thirsty, villainous, dissolute, hot-tempered, money grabbers, lustful, polygamous, patriarchal or bumbling buffoons (p. 218).

The reason for this is that the United States is in a decade long conflict with the Middle-East. This then inspires mass media creators to portray Americans as the good guys and the Middle-Easterners as the
bad guys who threaten American security. This is true as the U.S. has had conflicts with other countries and its media content has reflected these conflicts. During the height of the Soviet Union, the U.S. created films that reflected that the U.S. was the good guy and the Russians were the bad guys. Thus, attempting to influence viewers that the U.S. was good and the Russians were bad. The same could be said for the situation with the Middle-East and its people. Muslims and Arabs are made to look bad as real life events are being recycled into fictitious and non-fictitious media content. Islam is thrown into the equation by the associations that the mass media make with terrorism and the religion. According to Jackson (2010), “the visual representation of Islam in the mass media since 9/11 undoubtedly contributes to a public demonstrating high awareness of Muslims wishing it harm, and of radical elements unaligned with the majority of Muslims, over the points of view of Islam” (p. 13). Thus, we relate Muslims and Islam with terrorism as terroristic individuals claim their faith is what is driving them to take these abhorred actions. Also, the mass media emphasize words like Muslim extremists, rather than calling these individuals terrorists. So, Islam and its followers become related to terrorism as that is what is primarily being shown of these individuals.

The mass media’s negative representation of minorities educates viewers on how to act towards people that are different than themselves. According to Tan (1981), “Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant to mass communication because many of the behaviors we learn through modeling are first observed in the mass media” (p. 204). The masses are taught that certain people have negative characteristics and there are appropriate behaviors as it pertains to how the viewers should interact with them. The viewers are taught the appropriate behavior that reflects how people on TV and film interact with Muslims and Arabs. This would include suspecting Muslims and Arabs of committing or planning to commit violent acts of terrorism because their real-life behaviors reflect fictitious characters behaviors. The representations of the mass media could according to Cultivation Theory create the impression that the real world is reflective of the fictitious world of the mass media. This could create a
situation where Muslims and Arabs are feared, suspected of being terrorists, or just plain hated because the Muslims and Arabs shown in the mass media are reprehensible characters. According to Bakalian and Bozorgmehr (2009), “The mainstream media play a significant role in transmitting the discourse of fear and hatred, assessing evaluations of risk before passing them on to the masses, and using their power to magnify a crisis” (p. 150). The media distort the representations of Muslims, Arabs, and the religion of Islam by showing exaggerated representations of these individuals, and showing the religion as being overly violent. The viewer then according to Cultivation Theory should see these individuals suspiciously as the mass media have educated them to be suspicious of all these people and their religious beliefs. The viewer could ultimately believe that the stereotypical representation shown by the mass media are the “true” representations of the people shown.

The representation of violent individuals is complimented by showing that the world is a dangerous place. The most prevalent representation that the mass media shows is violence to the extreme degree. A prime example of this is the film The Siege (1998), in which Muslims proceed to blow up a bus full of civilians in New York City in front of the FBI, civilians, and the news media. This kind of violent representation can lead to heavy media viewers believing that the world is more dangerous than it truly is. Also, that the groups represented in the film are likely as dangerous as those fictitious characters shown in the film. According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli,

Yet, we have found that long-term exposure to television, in which frequent violence is virtually inescapable, tends to cultivate the image of a relatively mean and dangerous world. Responses of heavier compared to matching groups of lighter viewers suggest the conception of reality which greatest protection is needed, most people “cannot be trusted,” and most people are “looking out for themselves” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli as cited in Evra, 2001, p. 9).

The mass media perpetuate the representation of a “mean world” by only showing excessive amounts of violence and showing minorities in violent situations. This negative representation by the mass media may influence what viewers will accept in the treatment of those minorities shown. According to Signorielli (2001), “cultivation theory suggests that heavy television watching makes people feel that the
world is an unsafe place. Fearful people might welcome repression if it helps to reduce their anxieties” (Signorielli as cited in Severin and Tankard, p. 268). The continuous negative representation of Islam related with an Arab identity has led some to fear these individuals. This in turn could lead to individuals supporting laws that oppress the rights of others. The most famous case of this being true was the fast passing of the Patriot Act soon after the 9/11 attacks. The coverage of terrorism for hours upon hours led to American citizens not protesting the passing of this law. This law led to many Muslims and Arabs being rounded up illegally for questioning even though there was no proof of their involvement in terrorism. The mass media had done this before during World War II as it pertains to Japanese and Japanese-Americans. The mass media created content that showed anyone that was Japanese was a potential threat to the U.S. and an ally to Japan. This led to Japanese individuals being placed in internment camps referred to as “War Relocation Camps”. While Muslims and Arabs have not been interred in camps like the Japanese, the mass media have created an environment through their media content where their mistreatment as it pertains to losing rights has been deemed acceptable.

The mass media in only covering the negative aspects of Muslims and Arabs has continued the thought process that the West is superior to the East. This mentality that the East, in this case the Middle-East is inferior in many ways to the West is named “Orientalism”, which is a theory created by Edward Said. According to Said (1979), “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”” (p. 2). The differences were emphasized by the artists of the time to make the East look never changing and ultimately, weak in comparison to the West. According to Said (1979),

So Orientalism aided and was aided by general cultural pressures that tended to make more rigid the sense of difference between the European and Asiatic parts of the world. My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness (p. 204).

The weakness of the East was emphasized to support the imperialistic intentions of the European countries over Asia. This was done by the creation of books and the arts to make the Orient seem
backwards and never changing in comparison to the developed West. This Orientalism has been transferred to the new mass media’s that are available to the U.S. The representations of the mass media towards the Middle-East, Muslims, and Arabs show them as being unchanging, uneducated, angry, and overly aggressive. The Middle-East is primarily shown as being without modernization in terms of technological advancement and represented as lawless. Also, the Muslims and Arabs are represented as using turbans, bearded, brown, wearing clothing of the Middle-East, and using weapons that usually militaries only use. According to Said, “the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe’, but it is especially ‘one of the deepest and most recurring images of the Other’” (Said as cited in Farris, 2010, p. 266). The Othering of Muslims and Arabs is evident by their representations in the mass media. According to Sisler (2008), “When speaking of the “Other” we may refer to somebody like ourselves, whom we identify as ‘one of us’, a stranger (‘one of them’) or even the unknowable Other” (p. 208). Sisler’s point is true that the Other could be interpreted differently to different people. Of course in this case the Other is usually related to how the mass media show Muslims and Arabs. The Othering process of Muslims and Arabs has them being represented as not one of us as they are usually related with terrorism and crime according to the media content shown. A Muslim and/or Arab character is never usually boring where a viewer could relate to them. Instead, they are almost always an exaggerated character like a terrorist or other violent individual who the audience wants to see receive their comeuppance. According to Said (1981), as it pertains to the Orientalism dealing with the Middle-East,

Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, apprehended either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those whose profession it is to report on the Islamic world (p. 26).

The representation that is described by Said of the Muslims and Arabs being shown as being different is complemented by the showing of Islam as a violent religion. According to Said (1981),

Much of what one reads and sees in the media about Islam represents aggression as coming from Islam because that is what “Islam” is. Local and concrete circumstances are thus obliterated. In
other words, covering Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what “we” do, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their flawed nature are (p. xxii).

The mass media successfully on many occasions through their representations have created the impression like Said emphasized that Muslims and Arabs are different and violent. This differentness is shown by the representations that show Muslims and Arabs committing negative actions towards innocent individuals. The characters shown in the mass media are usually brown, turbaned, use Ak-47s, condemn non-Muslims, and live in areas where lawlessness is rampant. If that is not enough to condemn Muslims and Arabs, the representation of the religion of Islam is also made to look bad by association by having terrorists praying before a terrorist attack. This representation in the media content creates the impression that Islam is a violent religion that approves of the use of terrorist attacks by its followers. Orientalism could still be said to be alive and well because the mass media continually show differences between the allegedly undeveloped Middle-East and the modern West.

The mass media have taken the Orientalist thought worldwide by the representations that they are able to decimate to a worldwide audience. This could influence viewers’ memories and their belief of what reality is. The coverage of the 9/11 attacks educated viewers of the hierarchy of alleged Muslim and Arab “leadership”. According to Nurullah (2010), “Osama Bin Laden has been associated as the sole representative of Muslims all around the world by labeling Muslims as terrorists, whereas there are about 1.3 billion Muslims in the world” (p. 1028). The media had given Bin Laden a worldwide audience to educate them as to what it meant to be a Muslim. The media in giving Bin Laden and other terrorists time in the news to express themselves, made it seem that they were representing, and were somewhat leading Muslims. Bin Laden constantly stated that it was every Muslim’s responsibility to fight against the imperialist country that was the United States. These representations make it seem that Muslims are led by dangerous individuals such as Bin Laden. According to Shrum,

Because the dependent variables used to assess cultivation effects pertain to constructs portrayed often on television than occur in real life, heavy viewers by definition should encounter those
constructs more often and thus have more relevant memories available for retrieval and evaluation (Shrum as cited in Roskos-Ewoldsen & Monahan, 2007, p. 251).

The constant viewing of terrorist individuals could lead to having negative memories of individuals that are Muslim and/or Arab. Bin Laden and other terrorists expressing themselves could create a correlation with innocent Muslims and Arabs in the minds of the viewers. The primary memory that viewers are shown are that Muslims and Arabs are terrorists and a threat to the average American. According to Powell (2011),

Islam entered the contemporary U.S. news cycle initially because of connections to oil, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and terrorism; thus, all of the major stories, and what the audiences in the West know about Islam and Muslims, is connected to control of the resource of oil, war, and terrorism (p. 92).

These negative representations by the mass media create the memories that audience members will reference in thinking about individuals that are different than themselves. The mass media in creating the visuals that the audience sees creates the reality of what audience members will think about and what they may believe is true.

The mass media being at times the sole educator of viewers educates viewers on a consistent basis of what are the norms of cultures and their people. The norm that became more prevalent according to the media’s representations is that all Muslims and Arabs are violent terrorists. The reason that this was given some credence is that the majority of individuals shown in the mass media were angry, violent, and murderous Middle-Eastern terrorists. Bin Laden became the “voice” so to speak of Muslims and Arabs as he was given exclusive access to the world media to spout out his beliefs. The news in doing this bestowed upon this one individual credibility in the minds of viewers as he was shown as being some kind of religious figure that represented Muslims and Arabs. According to Nacos (2007),

Wittingly or not, the news bestows a certain status on terrorist leaders simply by interviewing them. The mere fact that the terrorist is interviewed by respected media representatives and treated like a news source that is worthy of being part of serious public discourse elevates the person to the level of a legitimate political actor (p. 22).
The mass media made terrorists into infamous celebrities that were allowed to express their violent beliefs. This in turn gave Muslims and Arabs a bad name as Bin Laden would state what their “responsibilities” were as a Muslim. The responsibility of every Muslim and Arab according to Bin Laden was to fight against the U.S., to force the U.S. out of the Middle-East, and to eventually convert the U.S. to Islam. The news media in allowing Bin Laden to express himself has condemned Muslims and Arabs to be thought of as evil and dangerous by association as Bin Laden himself was both an Arab and a Muslim. Bin Laden was also represented as a Muslim religious figure by being shown ordering “Fatwas”. Fatwas are religious orders that can only be given by Muslim religious leaders, which Bin Laden never was. Audience members seeing these representations can come to believe that Muslims and Arabs are a part of a violent movement aimed towards the U.S. According to Amiri (2012), “As Cultivation Theory suggests, exposing the public to recurrent negative images about Muslims resulted in convincing Americans the threat of Muslims is real” (p. 10). The repeated representations of violent Muslim and Arab terrorists will likely convince certain viewers that the U.S. is being invaded by a Muslim movement. According to Jackson (2010),

the proliferation of images and information about Bin Laden that real life terrorism contributes substantially to the commonality of associating Muslims with terrorism in the US mass media, but that it is, nonetheless, a highly imbalanced representation of the group, focusing on the very narrowest margin of Muslim people and experiences, owing to the news’ focus on the exceptional over the ordinary (p. 7).

The media in not differentiating between extremist and regular law-abiding Muslims and Arabs will continue to create the impression that all Muslims and Arabs are violent and led by individuals like Bin Laden. The Muslims and Arabs will be judged negatively as negative representations are a majority of what the mass media will allow viewers to see.

The mass media in terms of the news has become one way that viewers learn of foreign peoples as the news media stories are based on “reality”. The heavy viewer that sees a lot of the news stories could come to believe that all representations are reality, as the news media stories are considered to be
based on reality. According to Potter (2009), “The media are also a major source of information, and for many people, the media have attained the status of an authority source, so the people accept the meanings presented there” (p. 29). The news media being seen as a trustworthy figure in the lives of its viewers’ is able to influence what they think about. The reason that the news media and other media go unquestioned is that viewers do not have many other references at times but what they see in the mass media. According to Tehranian (2009), “The average American has little direct contact with the Middle-East or even with Middle-Easterners. Instead, popular perceptions are driven by indirect contact through the mediating force of mass communications” (p. 784). The perceptions that are derived from the news media are based on stereotypical representations of Muslims and Arabs being bad and dangerous as this is what attracts the most viewers. The Muslims and/or Arabs shown in the mass media are primarily terrorists or terrorist suspects. The news media being powerful is able to define individuals and thus influence how viewers will think of people that are different than the audience. Muslims and Arabs are seen as terrorists primarily because the news media portray them as such and provide few positive representations of these people.

The mass media emphasize the differences to a larger degree by emphasizing the differences between the “Christian” world and the “Islamic” world. The Christian world being championed by the United States is shown in never ending conflict with violent Islam. According to Powell (2011), “By associating victims with Islam, media groups Muslims as a threat to Christians in America. Once again the dichotomy of good versus evil arises as Christianity represents “good” and Islam represents “evil”” (p. 105). The mass media have successfully made Islam seem like a violent religion, and thus, Muslims, which are represented as brown-skinned individuals become guilty by association. An entire population of people is grouped to be of one mind (violent), even though every person in the world is unique. According to Muscati (2002), “The Arab world consists of hundreds of millions of people, encompassing various societies, religions, traditions, languages, and experiences, all of which influence
politics as they would in any other part of the world” (p. 134). The mass media with their representations
create a homogenous group that has the same beliefs, violent beliefs. The reality is that everyone in the
Middle-East is unique and not all of their citizens believe that violence is the way to attain their goals.
The mass media do a great disservice to individuals that are law abiding individuals by grouping them
with the violent extremist individuals that are either Muslim and/or Arab.

The mass media create negative impressions of a people that are primarily peaceful. A majority
of Muslims and Arabs are not related to a small band of terrorists that make up a very small part of the
population. The primarily negative representations do have an effect of how viewers perceive Muslims
and Arabs, and how they want them to be treated. According to a Cornell study (2004), it shows that the
media do have an influence on how viewers perceive Muslims and Arabs,

1) 32% of people believe that all Muslim Americans should be required to register their
whereabouts, 2) 27% of people believe that U.S. government agencies should profile citizens
based on being a Muslim, and 3) 36% of people believe that Muslim civic and volunteer
organizations should be infiltrated (Cornell study as cited in Nisbet and Shanan, p. 7).

This study shows that the repetitive negative representations shown by the mass media do have the
effect of molding viewers’ opinions of the individuals shown. The fact that the individuals that took the
Cornell survey wanted to limit Muslims rights, and wanted to have them placed under surveillance
shows that the mass media can create negative thoughts in viewers’ minds. Research from a cultivation
perspective generally suggests that long term, cumulative viewing of television content can lead to
distorted perceptions of social reality that mirror the patterns or portrayals featured in television content
(Gerbner as cited in Oliver, Ramasubramanian, and Kim, 2007, p. 274). The distorted perception that is
shown in the Cornell study is that viewers have come to believe that Muslims and Arabs are a threat and
therefore, have to be dealt with in one way or another. The mass media’s bias towards minorities is
exempted for the coverage of white individuals.

The mass media coverage of individuals that are white is completely different than individuals
from minority groups. The most recent example of this was the most devastating terrorist attack on
American soil prior to the 9/11 attacks, which was the truck bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Timothy McVeigh ultimately was found to be responsible for this devastating attack that left 168 people dead. The news media immediately after the attack proceeded to blame Muslims for the terrorist attack. This could be somewhat understandable as Muslim terrorists had committed terrorist attacks before. The Munich massacre at the 1972 summer Olympic Games where 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team were taken hostage and killed was an act perpetrated by Muslim extremists. Also, the first World Trade Towers bombing was done by Muslim extremists. Even though the mass media had these kinds of examples to blame Muslims, it was irresponsible to blame Muslims without verifying their information before reporting the information to the masses. In the end the news media had to recant what they had said as it was found that a white American was responsible for the attack. The media immediately changed the word terrorist to lone-wolf individual who was mad at the government when they found out that a white man had committed this attack. According to Volpp (2002), “We do not think of his (McVeigh’s) actions as representative of an entire racial group. This is part of how racial subordination functions, to understand nonwhites as directed by group-based determinism but whites as individuals” (p. 1585). The mass media did not condemn all white people because the attacker was white as Muslims and Arabs have been condemned for being the same color and religion as the 9/11 attackers. The mass media give a “pass” to white people because they are treated as individuals and not representative of an entire group of people. According to Tehranian (2009), “The white American of European descent who fights for Al-Qaeda is just “misguided”. The darker skinned man who fight for Al-Qaeda is a terrorist and an embodiment of the anti-American hostility ubiquitous throughout the Middle-East” (pp. 798-99). The mass media create an environment of misunderstanding as they show Muslims and Arabs as being representative of a huge population, but emphasize that a white “terrorist” is only representative of himself. According to Nacos (2007),

The media in the United States and in other Western countries report on “Islamic” or “Muslim” terrorists and terrorism and not on “Christian” terrorists and terrorism, for instance in the context
of Northern Ireland or anti-abortion violence in the United States committed under the banner of the Christian “Army of God” (p. 106).

The mass media condemn Muslims and Arabs by showing that they are representative of millions to billions of people who are considered to be related to the religion of Islam. Whites though are treated differently to show that they are representative of only themselves and not of an entire race. The media in covering Muslims and Arabs this way create stereotypical and racist representations that condemn billions of individuals to have a violent identity that does not reflect the billions of unique people that are Muslim and/or Arab.

The mass media do have the ability to influence how viewers will perceive their world and the individuals that dwell in it. The reason being is that the mass media present the masses with representations of exotic locales and exotic peoples. These representations then become one of the only points of reference that viewers have as it pertains to how they view individuals that are different than themselves. The mass media repeatedly show minorities as negative characters such as criminals and/or terrorists. These representations could lead to viewers believing that the media’s representation of the people shown show the true characteristics of these people. The mass media with their immense influence have given Muslims and Arabs a violent identity. The showing in media content of terrorists that are Muslim and Arab has likely solidified the identity of a violent people and religion in the minds of some viewers. The result is that Muslims and Arabs are seen negatively as the mass media show few positive representations of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs. The mass media rarely show that individuals are unique and that not all Muslims and Arabs are terrorists, or support terrorism. The media does though exclude white individuals from the group dynamic. Timothy McVeigh who was a terrorist was not described as such and was not presented as he reflected all white people. The mass media though give the impression that all Muslims and Arabs are terrorists and Anti-American on top of that. The mass media with its immense influence will likely continue to condemn minorities by presenting them in a negative light and rarely presenting them as unique and positive individuals.
Chapter 3: Research Design

The methodological approach to collecting data in this study will be based on using qualitative strategies (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010). The primary means of collecting data will be based on using textual-analysis. According to McKee (2003) textual-analysis is, “When we perform textual-analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text” (p. 1). The question then becomes what is considered a text? According to McKee (2003), “whenever we produce an interpretation of something’s meaning – a book, television programme, film, magazine, T-shirt or kilt, piece of furniture or ornament – we treat it as a text. A text is something that we make meaning from” (p. 4). The textual analysis for this study will be the study of the mass media. The mass media for the purpose of this study will be news programs, television shows, and lastly, Hollywood films. The textual-analysis of this study will be based on interpreting the media content that the author has chosen as relevant as it pertains to the subject. The media content will be viewed multiple times in order to see themes that may have been missed on the first viewing.

The textual-analysis of the popular culture texts will be used to support Cultivation Theory. Cultivation Theory is usually related with quantitative methods rather than qualitative methods. This study will use this theory though as this study is looking for the hypothetical effects of heavy media viewing rather than statistical data. Cultivation Theory states that a person that watches a heavy amount of media content will likely believe that the world they live in reflects the world that is shown on TV and films. This creates a situation where the mass media have the ability to define people in the media content they create. The representation that the viewers are presented with as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs is that they primarily possess negative characteristics. According to Cultivation Theory, heavy television viewers who spend much of their lives watching stereotypical and distorted presentations of minorities in the media will come to accept such portrayals as reality (Weimann as cited in Tsfati, 2007, p. 633). What Weimann says can easily be applied to the Muslim and Arab individuals shown in the
The Muslims and Arabs shown in media content are shown in stereotyped and distorted presentations. The most predominant stereotype is that Muslims and Arabs are violent and have terroristic tendencies. This being one of the only representations that viewers see as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs will likely have an effect on how viewers perceive these people. Cultivation Theory can be used to show that the mass media can create the impression of a violent and dangerous people in the minds of the viewers through repeated showing of negative representations.

The textual-Analysis of this study will be based on the interpretation of three different mass media contents. The mass media content that will be studied will be news programs, television shows, and Hollywood films. The textual-analysis will be the interpretation of how the mass media studied represents Muslims and Arabs. What will also be studied is how the Middle-East and the religion of Islam are represented in different media contents. All of these representations will be studied to collect data as to how Muslims and Arabs are represented and described in the mass media.

The first mass media to be studied is the only one that is based on “reality”, this being the news media. The reason that certain news stories were studied is that they were based on historical incidents that affected the American psyche. Also, the stories were easily available on YouTube where other historical incidents were not found. The stories that were chosen were the Iranian hostage crisis and the oil embargo of the 1970s. Also, news stories that were related with the September 11th attacks as that is one of the most recent incidents that Muslims and Arabs are mentioned. These stories were chosen also because the news media show that these individuals have an Arab and/or Muslim identity. The news media being based on facts is for some viewers the only credible educator they have. The representations shown by the news media likely become fact for some viewers as they have no first-hand experience with the foreign peoples shown. The news media being the exclusive educator of some viewers is able to define the people and the religions that exist in the world. The news media are also the most plentiful as the news media stories are always being updated and do not require scriptwriters to
create the content. The data that will be collected will be from news broadcasts as to how Muslims and Arabs are presented and described in the news stories. The will involve seeing the person’s skin color, and the events that these people are doing while being shown in the news stories. Also, study how the news media describes Muslims, whether the commentator describes the individuals praying and/or committing terrorist attacks. The other parts of the study of the news media stories are to see how “experts” define Muslims and Arabs as they allegedly know these people and their culture. The representations in the news media will be studied for themes that are used by the news media to define Muslims and Arabs on a consistent basis.

The news media content that will be studied will be news stories and the commentaries made by “experts”. The first media content that will be studied is a newscast that occurred on November 11, 1979 on *ABC Nightly News*. The reason this newscast was studied is that it was one of the first experiences viewers had with the Middle-East and Arabs. The representations were the first to show that the Middle-East and its people were aggressive. The other news program that will be studied aired on October 17, 1973 on *NBC Nightly News*. This story was chosen as it dealt with the news media portraying that the Middle-East was affecting the U.S. and its people by the oil embargo they (Middle-Eastern countries with oil) placed on the U.S. Also, the study of how the news media gave Muslims and Arabs terrorist “leaders” through the coverage of Muslims extremists after the 9/11 attacks. The reason that this was chosen to study is that the news media allow terrorists to make comments that make it seem that all Muslims are terrorists through the terrorists’ commentaries. Also, study a news story that showed Palestinians celebrating the 9/11 attacks. This will be studied to show how the news media make Arabs look barbaric and terrorist. Lastly, the study of supposed “expert” commentaries such as Ann Coulter’s which were made in relation to Muslims and Arabs in the news media. This will be studied to see how people like Coulter try to define Muslims and Arabs as violent and dangerous individuals.
The second media content that will be studied are American television shows. American television shows are very influential in molding viewers’ perceptions as they are available worldwide. The television shows shown are very exciting as you can see a terrorist attack happen in real time on the TV show. The TV shows define the individuals on these shows in many distinct ways. The “good” guys are usually Americans that are fighting against “evil-doers” who are Muslim and/or Arab for the defense of this country. The Americans are relatable characters who the average viewer can relate to. The “bad” guys in this case, being Muslims and Arabs are individuals that have negative and un-relatable characteristics. The characteristics usually being negative in nature as these individuals are shown killing innocent people. The individuals also spout out religious sayings such as “Allah Akbar” (God is great in Arabic). This creates a correlation between Islam, Muslims, and terrorism. To top this off the creators of these shows give these individuals an Arab identity by showing these individuals with brown skin and speaking Arabic. The end result is that viewers can have misconceptions as it pertains to Islam, Muslims, and Arabs.

The TV show that will be studied is one of the most recent shows to feature Muslim and/or an Arab characters is called 24. This TV show ran for eight seasons and had a huge following. The show featured Muslim-Arab characters as the villains in season 2, season 4, and season 6. The reason that this show was selected and no others is that 24 was revolutionary in many ways. First, it takes place in 24 hours as the protagonist Jack Bauer has to stop a terrorist attack in those 24 hours. Also, it gave the villain almost equal screen time as the protagonist. This is the reason that this show was chosen for study. The study will see how Muslims and Arabs are represented through their actions and their sayings. In many instances they are shown to be Arab by their skin color and that they speak Arabic. In other instances they are shown to be Muslim by praying at a mosque or saying things like “Allah Akbar” and other generic religious sayings. The show will be studied to see how the creators of 24 show Muslims and Arabs in terms of their personalities and also, their actions.
The Hollywood films that will be studied will be films that pre-and-post-date the September 11th attacks. The reason that these films were chosen is that they distinctly show that one or more of the main characters are Muslim and/or Arab. The films that have been chosen for textual analysis are as follows 1) The Sheik (1921), 2) The Son of the Sheik (1926), 3) Blood Feast (1963), 4) The Siege (1998), 5) The War Within (2005), 6) Unthinkable (2010), 7) Five Minarets in New York, released in theaters as Acts of Vengeance (2010), and 8) Taken (2009). The reason that these films were chosen is that they feature Muslim and/or Arab characters in roles that show their characteristics. The Sheik for example features a Muslim and Arab protagonist who vies for the love of a white woman. We get to know the main protagonist and see his characteristics. In each one of these films you get to see who these people are and what drives them. Thus, the films studied will allow the researcher to see how Hollywood represents individuals that are Muslim and/or Arab.

The methodology of textual-analysis will be used to find the recurring themes in the mass media content as it pertains to how Muslims and Arabs are represented. The media content that will be shown are the visual elements (what the person looks like), the oral elements (what the person says), and the actions that the person is shown doing. This will require seeing the media content over and over in order to correctly see themes that perhaps a passing viewer would not notice. The news programs will be studied to see how Muslims and Arabs are shown. Also, how “experts” describe these people and the characteristics they possess. The TV show 24 will be studied to see how Muslim and Arab characters are shown and what they are shown doing. Also, study how the show 24 identifies the characters to be either or both Muslim and Arab. Lastly, study how Hollywood movies represent Muslims and Arabs in the content that they present. Study how these individuals are shown to be either or both Muslim and Arab. These media content representations will be categorized to show the themes that relate to Muslims and/or Arabs. This will either support or negate the argument that the mass media does or does not victimize Muslims and Arabs by the representations that are shown.
This study had a few limitations to deal with as it pertains to the news media. The problem with this section is that it was difficult to find news stories of the sixties and seventies. Although, YouTube and the internet search engines are useful, they are limited. YouTube is limited by what its users upload and there were very few videos from those decades. When I attempted to find news footage of the Six-Day War between Israel and the Arab nations, I found a lot of documentaries. They would have been useful, however, this study is based on studying literal news stories and not the interpretation of a documentary filmmaker. Also, the internet with its vast search engines returned unrelated videos and edited videos trying to make the Israelis or the Arabs look bad. The study was also limited by the time constraints as this research was limited to two graduate level classes and a thorough study would have required a lot more time.
Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

4.1 The News Media

The news media are the most credible educator of viewers as the representations that are shown in this mass media are based on reality. The news media show places and people from around the world that the audience have likely never and will never get to experience first-hand. The news media thus has a special place in people’s lives as it educates them to foreign peoples and foreign cultures. The news media having this credibility to educate viewers is able to define the characteristics that make up people and their cultures. The way the news media does this is by repeatedly showing only certain characteristics, primarily negative characteristics of the people they are reporting on. The representations have become very formulaic as to what the mass media will show about certain groups, individuals, and religions. The news media have begun to show certain themes as it pertains to the coverage of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs. These themes are negative in nature that continue to create the impression that these people are violent, their religion is violent, and that they are “out” to get innocent Americans and Christians. The Middle-East though was shown to emphasize that the Middle-East has been a consistent threat to Christendom and thus, the West.

*Middle-East as Historical Threat to the West*

The first theme in the news media coverage is that the Middle-East has and is a threat to Western civilization. The Crusades were the first time that Islam became relevant to Christianity as both came into conflict over the Holy Lands of Jerusalem. These conflicts became fodder for authors and artists who created content that showed Muslims, Arabs, and the Middle-East in a negative fashion. Muslims, Arabs, and the Middle-East were shown as backwards in terms of cultural advancement, technological advancement and were shown as a danger to the “brave” European crusaders who were only trying to take back the lands that allegedly belonged to Christianity. According to Muscati (2002),
The perception of Islam as not only an historical but a continuing threat to Christendom is attributable to stereotypes that suggest that the Arab/Muslim exists in a manner devoid of space, time, and history; that he/she is effectively dehistorized, and unchanging and without progress (p. 135).

The supposed threat by Islam to Christianity was magnified to a larger degree as real life events began to occur in the 20th and 21st century. The representations shown in the news media today are based on showing that the Middle-East was and still is a threat to the Western civilization.

The first event that was jumped upon by the news media to show the threat by the Middle-East was the Iranian Hostage Crisis that occurred on November 4, 1979 through January 20, 1981. Fifty-two Americans were held hostage during this time by Iranian students who had taken over the American embassy. The American coverage of the incident was sympathetic to the American hostages and even to the former Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran. The Iranians were made to look as if they were committing this act to be vindictive for the U.S. admitting the former Shah for medical treatment.

*ABC Nightly News: November 11, 1979*

This news report dealt with the coverage of the Iranian Hostage Crisis directly as a lot of footage was shot in Iran. Bob Dyke was a reporter that had been covering the crisis since its inception. Dyke narrated over video that showed themes that have become the norm in the coverage of the Middle-East.

Bob Dyke (1979) narrated,

This picture tells it all. This flag was apparently taken from someone’s office inside the United States embassy. It was burned Tuesday evening outside the embassies gates. To the Iranian demonstrators who set fire to it, this was a symbol of victory. Two days earlier several hundred young people mainly students at Tehran University have taken over the embassy. We are not occupiers they said, we have thrown out the occupiers. But instead of chasing all the Americans out of the compound, the Iranians imprisoned them in a building somewhere on these grounds. They have been hostages ever since. This morning for the first time since the hostages were put under lock and key, one of the captives blindfolded was brought out into the open. He is Harry Rosen, the embassies press attaché. He was turned to face reporters and cameramen and several hundred Iranian demonstrators outside the embassies’ gates. “Yankee go home” they cried. But they made no attempt to harm him. Eventually he was led back to join the other captives that have been kept out of sight (“Iran Hostage Crisis”).

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The themes in this story have become cliché in terms of how the news media cover the Middle-East and its people. The first part of the story shows the Iranian crowd outside the embassy burning an American flag. Thus, the news media show that because there is a big crowd taking this action that all Arabs want the destruction of the U.S. The brown individuals in the crowd also in the story are shown chanting, “Yankee go home” repeatedly. This representation makes it seem that all individuals were anti-American as only these Iranians were shown who were clearly against the U.S. The showing of the one American hostage also shows that Arabs are aggressive and use force to try to get what they want, which in this case was the return of the former Shah of Iran to Iran. The news media did not show why the return of the Shah was so important to the Iranians. The reason being is that Iranians wanted to take him to trial for crimes (torture and executions) against his own people that were assisted by his secret police squad (called SAVAK). Instead, the news media chose to only show the negative representations of the Iranians. The themes shown in this one story is that the Middle-Easterners are aggressive, dangerous, and anti-American.

*NBC Nightly News: October 17, 1973*

The news report dealt with the oil crisis of the 1970s in which the Middle-Eastern countries of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) declared an embargo, where they reduced the amount of oil they sent to the United States. This was punishment for the U.S. supporting Israel (by providing weapons and money) in the Yom Kippur War. This news report was narrated by John Chancellor on October 17, 1973. John Chancellor (1973) narrated,

> Good evening. The Middle-East war produced developments all over the world today. The oil producing countries of the Arab world decided to use their oil as a political weapon. They will reduce oil production by five-percent a month until the Israelis withdraw from occupied territories. If the Arab countries keep that pledge it would reduce their production by almost fifty-percent in one year. There were diplomatic maneuvers at the United Nations, in Washington, and in Cairo. And there is a savage and possibly decisive tank battle raging in the Sinai desert. The Decision to cut back on oil production as a weapon against Israel was taken at a meeting in Kuwait. Which was attended by the Syrians and the Egyptians as well (“OPEC Oil Embargo”).

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The theme to this story is that the Arabs threaten the American way of life in terms of threatening the economy, the military preparedness, and the general comfort of the average American who drove a vehicle. The first part of the narration is just seeing Mr. Chancellor speaking in a pretty authoritative voice. The visuals eventually come in as they show the meeting where the Arab leaders decided to place an oil embargo on the U.S. and other countries that supported Israel. The theme becomes that the Arabs in placing this embargo on the U.S. are threatening American lives and their way of life. The embargo threatened the U.S. economy and threatened to cripple the American military as oil is necessary to fuel many of the military’s vehicles. The Middle-East threat theme showed that the U.S. could be hurt by these individuals as oil is vital to the economy and for the defense of the country. The visual also showed that these Arab leaders were smiling as they were making this decision to place an oil embargo on the U.S. Thus, the representation is that Arabs are petty sore-losers who want revenge for their defeat against Israel. The last visual shown were Americans in their cars waiting in huge lines, either paying too much for gas or not getting any gas at all. This showed that the Middle-East was trying to change Americans way of life in a negative fashion. No longer could Americans buy huge muscle cars because they wasted a lot of gas and gas was no longer cheap. Thus, the themes became that Arabs threatened Americans way of life, the economy, and the countries security as everything was affected by oil. Also, the theme is that Arabs are sore-losers who will get revenge one way or another for their defeats in battle.

The Middle-East as a threat to the U.S. in these stories is played up to show that the aggression is coming from the Middle-East and its people. The Iranians in the story of the hostage crisis came off as overly aggressive as they desired to influence American policy. The symbol became that the Arab is a barbaric thug who used kidnapping to get what he desired. The 1970s oil crisis story continued the theme that Arabs are a threat to America and its people. This time though the affect was felt more than the Iranian Hostage Crisis as this was happening in America rather than just in the Middle-East. The
U.S. and its people were having the life blood of the economy, the military, and its people cut off. This affected everything in life as there is really nothing that does not require oil. The Arab nations were shown as aggressively interfering in the life of Americans. Thus, the aggressiveness of Arabs was emphasized to a large extent as these individuals’ actions had the effect of affecting American lives. The news media successfully made it seem that Arabs were a threat to the American homeland and to the citizens of this country. The Muslim and Arab individuals have evolved in the news though to have terroristic tendencies as shown in news stories.

*Arabs = Muslims = Terrorists*

The Iranian Hostage Crisis and the Oil Embargo of the 1970s were some of the first introductions that Americans had to the Middle-East. The representations shown were that the Middle-Easterners were aggressive and dangerous to the U.S. This representation was taken to a whole new level as the September 11th attacks unfolded on that Tuesday morning. The 9/11 attacks were different than the hostage crisis and the oil embargo because this one event led to the deaths of thousands of individuals. The initial coverage was the showing of the World Trade Towers being crashed into by two commercial jetliners. The aftermath was that Muslims and Arabs began to be shown and labeled as those responsible for these attacks. The 9/11 hijackers began to be labeled in ways that the Arab individuals were not labeled in the 1970s. The 9/11 hijackers were not called Arab as in the Iranian hostage crisis, or oil embargo. The 9/11 hijackers were labeled as Muslim and/or Muslim terrorists.

The stories that proceeded the 9/11 attacks were once again blaming the Muslims for committing this atrocious attack. The biggest difference post 9/11 news coverage is that individuals were labeled both terrorist and Muslim. This did not occur in the stories of the 1970s as they were only labeled as being Arab, and were not referred to as terrorists. The poster boy for the Islamic terrorists was the Arab named Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden was shown to be the mastermind behind these attacks that left thousands dead and left Americans scared for their safety. According to Bin Laden (1998),
The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim ("Al Qaeda's Second Fatwa,").

The fatwa was done before 9/11 but it is representative that Bin Laden was given credibility by the news media even before the attacks. These fatwas and other threats by Bin Laden were not taken seriously until the September 11th attacks occurred. Then Bin Laden was given the ability to define what it is to be a Muslim and their responsibilities. According to Bin Laden, expressing the responsibility of Muslims, "jihad is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries" (Bin Laden as cited in Nacos, 2003, p. 12). Bin Laden through these kinds of comments has created the impression that all Muslims and Arabs are potential terrorist Jihadis that can cause massive amounts of deaths and destruction. The mass media though has not dispelled this myth as they do not allow many positive Muslim and/or Arab people to express that not all Muslims and Arabs are terrorists.

The other representations also shown on 9/11 news coverage created the impression of a barbaric people that kill innocent people. The coverage of the September 11th attacks was more dramatic as the vision of the carnage was shown live to the world. The aftermath of the planes hitting the towers was the news media’s decision to continue to show innocent individuals jumping to their deaths by jumping from the highest floors of the World Trade Towers. This representation of death was complimented by showing that some countries and people in the Middle-East were celebrating the terrorist attacks. A news report shown on Fox News showed that Palestinians were celebrating the deaths of thousands of Americans. Brit Hume (2001) narrated,

There was unquestionably a celebratory atmosphere. The v-sign for victory being displayed in East Jerusalem today among jubilant Palestinians that the United States had been subject of this attack. Look at this, we are seeing people applauding, clapping, smiling, happy to know that thousands of Americans have died in this sneak attack. And there you see a v for victory sign held up to the camera ("Terrorism Hits America").
The images of Arabs celebrating the deaths of Americans showed them as barbaric in nature as a normal person does not usually celebrate the misfortune of others. The smiling adults, children, and even a grandmother celebrating make them look as if they are truly evil. The news media succeeded in making it seem that Arabs are different than other people as most countries immediately were shocked and even remorseful towards the U.S. and its people. The themes shown as it pertained to Muslims and Arabs was that they are evil, vindictive (happy that the U.S. was attacked because they support Israel), and enjoy the suffering of others. The news media played this to an extreme degree as they showed the Americans as victims and the Arabs as violent aggressors that wish to impose their way of life to the world. The news media made this worse by implying that all terrorists are Muslim and that their religious doctrine orders them to commit terrorist attacks against non-Muslims. The news media with its influence on viewers have created characteristics that Muslims and Arabs allegedly possess.

*News Defined Characteristics*

The news media through the visualization was able to define the characteristics that make up Arabs and Muslims. The visuals showed that Muslims and Arabs are violent and prone to hurt innocent individuals. This was done by the news media showing the visuals over and over again to the audience. Thus, allowing the viewers to come to the conclusion that Muslims and Arabs are evil. The news media took it up a notch as they allowed individuals (supposed experts) to define Muslims and Arabs in their news programs. The most famous individual that was allowed to speak and define Muslims and Arabs was Ann Coulter. Ann Coulter who is an American conservative social and political commentator was given free rein to say what she pleased. According to Coulter (2001), a day after the September 11th attacks, “Not all Muslims may be terrorists, but all terrorists are Muslims—at least all terrorists capable of assembling a murderous plot against America that leaves 7,000 people dead in under two hours” (“Future Widows of America: Write Your Congressman”). Though this commentary was in written form, Coulter has been allowed to make equally racist commentaries on news programs. Three days
after the September 11 attacks, she was allowed to make an even dumber comment. Coulter (2001) also stated that, “We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We weren't punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That's war. And this is war” (“This is War”). Instead of being reprimanded somehow for her racist and outright psychotic comments she has stayed popular and even been allowed to speak about the Boston Marathon Bombings. According to Coulter (2013),

As I have mentioned before Teddy Kennedy’s 1965 immigration act was specifically designed to bring in mostly third-world immigrants and to block immigrants from the countries that we have traditionally taken immigrants from with a made up America I.E. Europe. Heavily Europe. And, so I went through recent mass murders committed by immigrants who come here and can’t make it in this country. They are angry at the country and lash out at Americans. They are about a dozen of them just in 2010, 2011, 2012 committed by immigrants who were not doing the jobs Americans wouldn’t do. They were here like suspect 1 and suspect 2, which by the way have become the popular way to identify them because no one can pronounce their names. They are here, the families are on welfare, the suspects are on welfare, meanwhile they are talking about how they hate America (“Boston Marathon Bombing”).

Coulter is able to spout out her “facts” that never seemed to get questioned on the shows that she decides to go on. She has given the Muslim community a terrorist identity that does not really show the true nature of the community that she speaks of. She spouts out incendiary comments to kill individuals that may not and likely did not have anything to do with events like the September 11th attack. The interview about the Boston Marathon bombing gave Coulter the ability to spout more unsubstantiated facts. This commentary she made makes all immigrants seem like potential terrorist bombers who will go off if they do not succeed in this country. The commentary goes beyond attacking just these two brothers (Tamerian and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev), it attacks all immigrants. Coulter succeeds in spouting hate and making immigrants seem like potential Jihadis, who can go off at any moment. Coulter and the news media give immigrants a violent identity that can go beyond judging just Muslims and Arabs as immigrants come from many countries and reflect many religions. Coulter though has defined Muslims as violent individuals that need to be converted by force to Christianity. Coulter and people like her in the news may influence individuals to mistrust and fear individuals that are Muslim and/or Arab.
Although, the more educated will likely judge individuals by the content of their character rather than what an individual like Coulter says.

**Conclusion**

The news media have taken it upon itself to define the characteristics that the Muslims and Arabs supposedly possess. The news media have first and foremost shown that the Middle-East (related with Islam) has been a historical threat to the West (related with Christianity). This became more “real” as real life events occurred to show that the Middle-East and Arabs were a threat. The news media defined the individuals’ pre-9/11 in their stories as Arab. Following the 9/11 attacks the individuals became labeled Muslim terrorists. The representations showed by the news media were that Arabs were Muslims and Muslims were terrorists. The visual representations and stories showed that Muslims were violent because they are descended from a violent religion. The visuals of innocent individuals dying on September 11th solidified this in the minds of some viewers. The visuals of Arabs celebrating in the Middle-East made these individuals seem barbaric as they took joy in the misery of others. On occasion the news media may show a positive story or two regarding Muslims and Arabs. The only problem with this is that the majority of the representations are negative in nature. Muslims and Arabs are not shown to be friendly neighbors that are as American as apple pie. The news media may be understood to show individuals in the most negative fashion as they have to attract viewers. These viewers in turn bring in revenue to the network that is needed to continue operations. This may or may not be done vindictively towards Muslims and Arabs, but it definitely is done. Muslims and Arabs are shown as dangerous, anti-American, and lastly, sadistic as they are represented to enjoy the misfortune of others.

**4.2 Television Shows**

The television shows of the past and present are based on fantasy, but still can stimulate what audience members think about. The fact that American TV shows are disseminated worldwide gives them the ability to influence more than just American citizens. The TV shows that have showed Muslim
and Arab characters have decided to show them as having only certain characteristics and goals. The characteristics that Muslims and Arabs are purported to have are anger issues, resentment issues, and violent spurs that ultimately lead to violence against Americans. The goals that Muslims and Arabs are shown to have on TV shows are that they want to destroy America, its people, and the democracy that this country has. The violent Muslim and Arab characters shown are never mentioned to be from a specific country, but do ultimately represent the Middle-East as they are shown as Arab (by color) and Muslim (shown praying). The Muslims and Arabs are shown on TV programs as villains who must be stopped before they can successfully hurt this country.

**24**

The most famous program that showed Muslims and Arabs as violent and terroristic individuals was the TV show *24*. The series revolves around a character named Jack Bauer (played by Kiefer Sutherland) who works at the fictitious Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU). Bauer every season becomes involved in having to stop groups that are attempting to commit terrorist attacks against the American homeland, such as launching nuclear weapons or launching viruses. In order to do this Bauer has to break many laws in order to get information from the “bad” guys. Bauer is an ends justify the means kind of character because many of his actions that he takes are considered morality wrong and legally wrong. Bauer’s most atrocious action is the torture of individuals in order to get the information he needs. This makes the show very exciting and allows for the show to stay within the time frame of 24-hours which the show is named after. There are three seasons (season 2, season 4, and season 6) of this show that deal with Arab and Muslim characters trying to commit terrorist attacks against the United States. The characters are villains who show Arabs and Muslims are dangerous to the very existence of the United States.
24 Season 2 (8:00 AM to 8:00 AM)

This season deals with Jack and his people having to stop a nuclear device that is going to be detonated in the next 24 hours in Los Angeles, California. The group that is attempting to blow up a nuclear weapon in Los Angeles is called Second Wave. The group is led by Syed Ali, who is a militant Islamic extremist who believes he will be rewarded in the afterlife for his actions. Bauer through the whole show has to deal with extremist individuals like this to get the nuclear bomb. The end result is that Bauer is able to find the bomb and proceeds to have to detonate it over an American desert. Jack being the hero that he is has his men load the bomb onto a small plane and will suicide bomb it in the desert. Later, Bauer’s boss who was earlier contaminated with nuclear material comes out of hiding in the back seat and tells Jack he will do the suicide mission. Jack agrees and gets out in time to see the mushroom cloud from the explosion of the nuclear bomb. Jack’s successful detonation of the nuclear bomb showed the heroism of the Americans, but completely buried the Muslims and Arabs of this season. The characteristics of these individuals were visible as you saw Jack’s point of view and the Muslim-Arab point of view. The show 24 shows that Muslims and Arabs are a legitimate threat to the U.S.’s national security.

_Muslims and Arabs as Legitimate Threat_

The legitimacy of Muslims and Arabs as a true threat to the U.S. is seen in Episode 1. The President in this episode is told that depending on the nuclear weapon (dirty bomb or stolen nuclear warhead) that is used by the terrorists will determine the number of fatalities. If it is a dirty bomb the number of deaths estimated would be 14,000 or more. If it is a stolen nuclear warhead the deaths would be as high as 2,500,000 deaths and would affect approximately 100 square miles. The fact that the death toll would be so high makes these fictitious Muslim terrorists seem like they are legitimately dangerous as these two potential death tolls would dwarf real life terrorist attack deaths. During this conference as the President is being informed about the potential terrorist attack there are small screens in the area
showing videos of real life extremist Muslim training videos. Although you are never told what countries these terrorists are from, you are told that they originate from Middle-Eastern countries. Sayed Ali and his people are shown as being a legitimate threat as they were educated enough to activate a real nuclear weapon, and had the will to try to detonate the bomb in Los Angeles. The show with its interesting visuals and interesting story has magnified the impression that Muslims and Arabs are dangerous to the countries they immigrate to. The fact that the bomb does eventually go off does show that these Muslim-Arab individuals were a legitimate threat that could be worried about by heavy media viewers. The Muslims and Arabs of 24 are shown as being dangerous and cold hearted to their fellow human being as they will likely attempt to kill non-Muslims.

*Dehumanized Muslims and Arabs*

The representation of Muslims and Arabs in 24 shows them as being very cold and calculating. In episode 8 (3:00 PM to 4:00 PM) the terrorists are taking the nuclear bomb in a delivery truck to a predetermined location when one of them has a change of heart. In this scene there are three terrorists in the truck. The terrorist that is driving is having some kind of emotional breakdown. The scene’s lines show the coldness of the Arab characters:

First terrorist: “I don’t want to do this. I don’t want to kill anyone.”
Second terrorist: “Just do your job.”
First terrorist: “No.”

The second terrorist takes out a gun and proceeds to shoot the first terrorist three times. The third terrorist that was standing behind both the first and second terrorist reprimands the second terrorist for shooting the first terrorist in Arabic. The second terrorist goes to remove the slumped over supposedly dead first terrorist from the steering wheel. As the second terrorist reaches to grab the first terrorist’s body, the first terrorist slides a gun towards the second terrorists stomach and shoots. This ends up being the death of both of these individuals as both have been shot mortally. The third terrorist is traumatized by what he has seen but he leaves both their bodies and takes the truck and its cargo. This representation
shows that Arabs are cold-blooded murderers who will easily turn on one another when they refuse to go along with the plan to murder innocent people. This was shown as the both terrorist individuals did not hesitate in killing one another. To be fair, the first terrorist did kill the second in retaliation for him shooting him. The Muslims and Arabs are shown as being animalistic in terms of having no guilt in killing innocent people for their political goals.

*Muslims and Arabs as Barbarians*

The leader of the fictitious terrorist group called Second Wave is Syed Ali, whom is the embodiment of barbarianism. In Episode 11 (6:00 PM to 7:00 PM) Jack and his people trace Syed Ali to a Muslim mosque that is having a service. After he is identified by a witness, Jack and his extremely armed backup enter the mosque in order to retrieve Ali. As they enter it is believed that Ali has taken his own life by setting himself on fire as a person is seen engulfed in flames. Jack notices that the clothes are too small for the man and orders his people to secure the exits. Ali is a barbarian who in order to escape murdered an innocent Muslim in order to continue his mission to launch a nuclear bomb in Los Angeles. Ali is eventually caught by Bauer and brought back to be questioned at the mosque. Jack immediately resorts to the use of torture in order to get Ali to confess the location of the nuclear bomb.

The torture of Ali ends up showing how devoted he is to Muslim extremism as he spouts out lines that real life terrorists say. Bauer and Ali have this conversation as Bauer is torturing him:

Jack: “I know who you are. I know everything that you’ve done. Where is the bomb?”
-Syed groans in pain. Jack punches him in the stomach and in the face two times.
Jack: “Where is the bomb!?”
-Syed spits blood. Jack breathes hard as he is exhausted torturing Syed.
Jack: “You’re the one wasting my time. When is the bomb going to detonate?”
Syed: “You’re the one wasting time. I woke up today knowing I would die.”
Jack: “I can make you die with more pain then you ever imagined.”
-Jack breaks four fingers of one Syed’s hands. Syed screams in pain.
Syed: “Then I will have that much more pleasure in paradise.”
Jack: “Right.”

Syed refuses to reveal the location as it would be expected from an individual that is willing to die for his cause. Jack has to himself go even more barbaric as the torture inflicted upon Syed has not given him
any leads. Jack proceeds to turn on a closed circuit television that shows masked individuals with Syed’s family. Syed is made to look even more barbaric as he is affecting his family in a negative way.

Jack shows Syed a live feed of his family being dragged into a room from his country of origin. Jack: “These men will kill your family if you don’t tell me where the bomb is now.”
-His wife and children are tied to chairs. Syed looks concerned.
-Jack: “I despise you for making me do this. They’re waiting for my order. This is your last chance. Where’s the bomb?”
-Syd becomes visibly angry.
Jack: “Your wife’s been writing you letters every day. She doesn’t know where to send them. Your son, Asad, wants to grow up and be just like you. He turns 12 next week. I don’t think he’s gonna make it.”
-Syed is seeing these masked individuals pointing guns at his family.
Jack: “I know what it’s like to lose someone. To watch them get killed right in front of you. I don’t want to hurt your family…but I will order these men to pull the trigger…if you don’t give me the information that I need.”
Syed: “I am—I am doing Allah’s work.”
Jack: “No. You’re going to kill millions of people. That’s what you’re doing.”
-President calls Jack and forbids him from killing anyone in Syed’s family. After the President hangs up Jack makes it seem like the President is for the plan that Jack is implementing.
Jack: “I can’t wait any longer. Tell me where the bomb is, or I will kill Asad. Ali, I know you think what you’re doing is right…but it’s my job to not let it happen. Please don’t make me do this. Asad is just a boy. Tell me where the bomb is!”
-Asad shakes his head no.
Jack: “Tell me where the bomb is! Fine! Kill Him!”
-Asad’s is pushed down on the floor and is shot 2 times.
Syed: “No! No!”
Jack: “Tell me where the bomb is! Tell me where the bomb is and I’ll spare the rest of your family.”
Syed: “I will not tell you!”
Jack: “Asad is dead. There’s nothing I can do to change that. You still have a chance to save Fareed’s life.”
-Syed begins to scream at Jack in Arabic.
Jack: “I’m going to give you 10 seconds. Where’s the bomb? You’re running out of time! I will tell these men to kill your last son! Where is the bomb?! That’s it. Take him out.”
Syed: “No! No! No! No, I will tell you!”
Jack: “Hold it! Tell me now.”
Syed: “I will tell you. I will tell it is at Norton Airfield.”
Jack: “Why? What’s the plan?”
Syed: “We’re going to fly over downtown and detonate it. It is true. It is—it is true.”

According to Morey (2010),

Bauer gives the order for Ali’s eldest son to be shot. Only after this, with the prospect of losing his second son too, does Ali relent and give up the location of the bomb. It is only now that we discover that the assassination was staged and the child is physically unharmed. We have, however, learned that Jack effectively cares more for Ali’s family than Ali does himself. In his fanaticism, Ali is prepared to sacrifice his own flesh and blood (pp. 260-261).
As Morey states Syed is so obsessed with his jihad that his family seemed to have paid the consequences for his decisions. Syed is barbarism at its more raw as he let his own flesh and blood be murdered for his supposed mission from Allah. According to Dunn (2001), “The Western stereotype of Islamic fanaticism has included the portrayals of Muslims as mindless or dogmatic followers of faith” (p. 294). Syed’s attitude and behaviors live up to the stereotypical view of a Muslim that has no independent thought except for what the religion teaches him. Syed also condemns the religion of Islam as savage because he says that what he is doing is a mission from Allah. In Syed visiting a mosque, praying at a mosque, killing at a mosque, and telling Jack he is taking on this mission for his religion, he has made the religion look as barbaric as he is. As Syed is lead away from the interrogation room he promises that he will kill Jack in retaliation for his son’s death. Thus, Syed and his religion are made out to be savages, where Jack is seen to be a better person as he is also a savage, but with limits as was shown when he spared Syed’s son from death. The Muslims and Arabs of this season as well are shown as unintelligent and easily manipulated by outside forces.

*Muslims and Arabs as Pawns*

The Muslim and Arab characters of this season are made to look like they are one step ahead of those pursuing them. The only problem with that representation is that at different points of the season you are shown that the Muslim terrorist group has someone babysitting them the whole time. Members of the President’s cabinet have known that Syed Ali and his people have had the nuclear bomb in the U.S. for a while. The point of allowing these individuals to have this bomb is to make President David Palmer (played by Dennis Haysbert) look weak and to overthrow his presidency. Thus, American military forces under the control of individuals under Palmer’s cabinet have been providing protection to the Muslim/Arab terrorist group. Eventually those individuals realize that the military group that is protecting the terrorists has gone rogue and abandoned the mission to protect the terrorists. The
individuals plotting to destroy Palmer’s presidency realize that they have lost track of the terrorists and a nuclear attack may occur.

The individuals in Palmer’s cabinet that were trying to sabotage his presidency were trying to hurt him and not hurt the country. The other people that were using the Muslims and Arabs this season were trying to hurt the country for economic reasons. A group of individuals that control oil in the Caspian Sea planned this attack in order for the U.S. to go to war with three countries in the Middle-East. Their holdings in the oil in the area would quadruple and they would become richer. They do this by creating a fake recording with Syed Ali speaking with three leaders of three Middle-Eastern countries planning the attack on the U.S. Jack at the end proves that this was a fake recording and stops the attack on these countries. In the end you see that the nuke was provided to the terrorists by a hidden group of oil cartel members who wanted to drive up oil prices. Thus, making it seem that the Muslims and Arabs were not as smart as they seemed and were pawns-lackeys to the European individuals that wanted to instigate a war.

**24 Season 4 (7:00 AM to 7:00 AM)**

This season deals with Jack having to stop a Middle-Eastern terrorist named Habib Marwan (played by Arnold Vosloo). The difference between season 2 and season 4 is that the terrorists are living in the U.S. for many years in sleeper cells. According to Halse (2011), “Fox Network Television promoted the season (Season 4) with the slogan, “They could be next door” (p. 3). Thus, the terrorists are shown as an internal threat within as they have been shown to be living and seemingly assimilating into the American way of life. Habib Marwan is the leader of many terrorist cells that are operating in the U.S. Marwan has many terrorist attacks planned. Marwan plans many terrorist attacks that Jack attempts to thwart. Marwan in this season kidnaps the Secretary of Defense, starts a nuclear meltdown at almost all the American nuclear power plants, his people steal a stealth fighter that shoots down Air-Force One, steals the nuclear football at the downed Air-Force One, and steals a nuclear device that he
successfully launches. With Jack’s aggressive actions, the authorities are able to stop the nuclear bomb from detonating over Los Angeles. Marwan purposely falls to his death even though Jack was trying to save him. Marwan’s group is killed off as Jack and his people eliminated many with extreme prejudice. The season ends happy as a nuclear bomb that would have killed millions is shot down by two U.S. military jets. This leads to Jack being hailed as a hero, but him having to fake his death as the Chinese demand his extradition because he went into their consulate to get a man illegally that assisted Marwan and the Chinese Consul was killed by friendly fire. After faking his death, Jack walks into the sunset as the show concludes the season.

Muslims and Arabs as a Dangerous Neighbor

The terrorists of this season are different than the terrorists of season 2 in many aspects. The first difference being is that the season 4 terrorists can pass for white as compared to the darker individuals that played the terrorists in season 2. This fits into season 4 as the terrorists are individuals that have seemingly become part of the U.S., and are not people that would arouse suspicion of being part of a terrorist group. According to Yin (2011), “many of the new programs introduce a sinister new type of terrorist: the “sleeper”. This new archetype is a seemingly normal Arab-American who insidiously plots to carry out terrorist attacks from inside the country” (p. 104). The individuals of this season do live up to what Yin describes as they do look normal, are a part of terrorist cell, and ultimately, they desire to commit terrorist attacks in this country.

Although, the most important character besides Jack Bauer is Habib Marwan the majority of the season follows the Araz family. The family is made up of Navi Araz (father, played by Nestor Serrano), Dina Araz (mother, played by Shohreh Aghdashloo), and Behrooz Araz (son, played by Jonathan Ahdout). This family comes off as a normal American family of Middle-Eastern descent. This representation immediately becomes invalidated as you see that the whole family is shown to be Islamic extremists. The family is presented to be normal as they have become U.S. citizens and seem to be very
successful. The reality is that they have been in the U.S. for years in order to implement the terrorist attacks that will occur this day. These “normal” individuals on 24 make it seem that anybody of Arab-Muslim descent is a potential terrorist even if they have been in the country for years.

Habib Marwan himself is an example of a Muslim-Arab who seemed normal on the outside but was an extremist. Marwan’s character is an engineer who was able to pass as a white individual named Harris Barnes. Harris Barnes was able to start working for McLennan-Forester, the company that created the Dobsen-type Override device that allowed the terrorists to begin the meltdown of 104 nuclear power plant facilities. The fact that they do manage to melt at least one nuclear power plant in this season shows that these “sleeper” cell individuals do pose a threat to the country as they caused hundreds of thousands of deaths. As this season’s motto is that anyone can be a terrorist it could create the impression that even your neighbor can be an extremist. The Araz family and Habib Marwan are a dangerous example for viewers as viewers may have individuals that reflect these fictitious characters as neighbors. The likelihood is that if viewers have no real life experience with Middle-Eastern people, viewers may believe that real life Muslims and Arabs may be a part of a sleeper cell. The Muslims and Arabs of this season were also represented as dangerous as they killed innocent people with no remorse.

**Muslims and Arabs as Cold-Blooded Murderers**

This season the Muslim and Arab characters are represented as cold blooded murderers who do not value life. The primary example in this season is the Araz family made up of Navi, Dina, and Behrooz Araz. This family is a sleeper cell that has been living in the United States for many years preparing for this days terrorist attack. The son Behrooz becomes very Americanized according to his parents as he is dating a white teenage girl. His parents forbid him from seeing the girl as she is white, non-Muslim, and they are in the U.S. to commit a terrorist attack and not fraternize with the locals. Behrooz being a knowing accomplice to his parent’s plans does obey his parents. This though leads to these individuals taking actions that show them as cold-blooded killers.
Behrooz obeys his parents and attempts to ignore the young lady named Debbie Pendleton (played by Leighton Meester). Debbie at one point follows Behrooz to a terrorist compound as he is making a delivery. Debbie talks to Behrooz after he finishes and asks why he is ignoring her. Behrooz makes up with her and his romantic life seems to get better. One of the terrorists spots Debbie and tells Behrooz’s father about her. Navi tells Dina that Behrooz has to kill Debbie as he is putting at risk the terrorist’s cells plans. Dina invites Debbie so they can talk about her relationship with her son. As Behrooz has a conscious, his mother is the one that poisons Debbie, which kills her. Behrooz reprimands his mother for what she has done as he was in love with her. Behrooz though does not attempt to turn in his mother to the police or kill her. The representation is that Muslims and Arabs do not value innocent lives like they did not value Debbie’s. They also are shown to be a legitimate threat to the country as they kill innocent people, take down Air Force-One, and lastly, they almost blow up Los Angeles with a nuclear bomb.

**Muslims and Arabs as a Legitimate Threat**

Season 4 of *24* showed that Muslims and Arabs are a legitimate threat to his country by the actions they took. The first action that showed Muslims-Arabs as a threat to the U.S. was the derailment of a train in order to retrieve the Dobsen-Type Override. Then the terrorists kidnap a politician (Secretary of State, James Heller, played by William Devane), and his daughter (Audrey Raines, played by Kim Raver), who Jack is dating. They place Secretary Heller on trial on the internet in order to distract everyone to their real plans of using the internet to take control of the nuclear power plants. They take control of the power plants and proceed to begin a nuclear meltdown. Even though they only melt one, the terrorists do create havoc in killing hundreds of thousands of people in the vicinity of the nuclear power plant. If that was not enough they infiltrate the military by having a white man enter a military base and steal a stealth bomber. This allows him the ability to come into the air and shoot down Air Force One which injures the President, but does not kill him. The downing of Air Force One allows
the terrorists to get the nuclear football, which allows them to get the codes to America’s nuclear arsenal. This in turn leads to the terrorists stealing an American nuclear weapon and placing its warhead on a stealth missile. Jack eventually gets to Marwan and is able to track the missile in order to stop it, which they do.

The writers of 24 went overboard in showing that the Muslims and Arabs of this season were very dangerous. They showed them as unsympathetic individuals that killed with a sense of enjoyment that would terrify any normal law abiding individual. The worse element of this season is that the extremist Muslims and Arabs are seen as already being a part of the United States. This completely disregards the fact that real “sleeper” cells are more theory than fact as extremist Muslims and Arabs that commit terrorist attacks in the U.S. are usually “lone wolf” terrorists. This meaning that these individuals have no support from real terrorist groups and take it upon themselves to commit a terrorist attack. The recent Boston Marathon bombing on April 15, 2013 were done by two self-radicalized Muslims (brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev) who had no terrorist affiliations. The terrorists of season 4 of 24 came from a highly organized, but unnamed terrorist group. The Tsarnaev brothers were just two individuals who became radicalized and used two pressure cookers bombs to commit this terrorist attack. The TV show 24 does not do any favors to normal law abiding Muslims and Arabs as they only show Muslims and Arabs that are terrorists and dangerous. 24 also showed that extremist Muslims and Arabs are dangerous and can infiltrate all aspects of American society, even areas that affect our national security. The reality though is that attacking American internally or externally for terrorists has become more difficult. This can be seen from the fact that no large scale 9/11-type attacks have occurred since the 9-11 attacks. So, shows like 24 make it seem that Muslims and Arabs are a hidden threat that will eventually attack the U.S. The reality is that all the things the Muslims and Arabs of this season did are way more difficult than they seem.
This season sees Jack trying to stop a terrorist group led by Abu Fayed (played by Adoni Maropis) who attempts to detonate five suitcase nuclear weapons at different targets. Eleven weeks before this day begins Fayed had planned and successfully committed ten different suicide bombings in ten different American citizens. These attacks have left over nine-hundred people dead in the weeks before season 6 even began. The first event that we see this season is an Arab man blowing himself up in a bus, killing everybody within it. The points of these minor terrorist attacks are for Abu Fayed to frame Hamri Al-Assad (played by Alexander Siddig). Al-Assad was the former leader of the terrorist group now led by Fayed. Al-Assad was planning to renounce terrorism and seek peace. Fayed did not like this and attempted to have Al-Assad killed by the U.S. government. Fayed gives his location in exchange for Jack and twenty-five million dollars. The American officials agree without the knowledge that Al-Assad had renounced terrorism, and Fayed is the true mastermind of the terrorist attacks of the last eleven weeks. Jack eventually escapes from Fayed and his people and helps to secure the nuclear weapons and kill all the terrorists with extreme prejudice. Jack kills Fayed with extremely cruelty as they engage in a fight and Jack wraps a hydraulic chain around Fayed’s neck. Jack then whispers in Fayed’s ear, “Say hello to your brother”, then presses a button and Fayed is dragged into the air and is hung to death. Fayed showed the representation of a Muslim-Arab that holds a grudge that will lead to death, in this case his.

Muslims and Arabs are Vindictive

Abu Fayed is the primary terrorist of this season that Jack and his people have to stop. At the beginning of the season you find that Fayed and Jack have a history. Jack tortured to death Fayed’s younger brother because he was a terrorist that killed people, and Jack was trying to extract the names of other individuals involved in his terrorist group. Fayed developed a hatred for Jack as he blames him exclusively for the death of his brother. In order to get Jack, Fayed’s group commits dozens of suicide
bombings that leaves a few thousand Americas dead to scare the American public. The fact that the American public becomes scared of Arab individuals allows Fayed to get what he wants, which is Jack Bauer. The vindictiveness can be seen in Episode 1 (6:00 AM to 7:00 AM) when Fayed attempts to torture Jack to death as Jack had done to his brother.

Fayed: “I won’t let you die until I’m ready. The Chinese didn’t leave much for me to work with. But before you die, you’re going to feel what my brother felt. I saw his body. I know how he died. I know what you did to him.”

The representation of Fayed being obsessed with torturing Jack to death lives up to the stereotype of the vindictive Muslim-Arab character. This character will do anything to try to avenge an atrocity that they feel they are a victim of. In this situation, Fayed kills thousands of Americans in order to scare the government to turn Jack over to him. His vindictiveness leads to the impression that Muslims-Arabs will do anything to get retaliation for a perceived wronging against them. This leads to the conclusion that Muslims and Arabs are savages who would use any means to get revenge.

Muslims and Arabs as Savage

The original leader of the terrorist group that Fayed now leads was Hamri Al-Assad. Al-Assad has decided that he wants to renounce terrorism and mainstream his organization into the political world. Al-Assad has decided to strive for peace in the world and renounce his violence ways. Fayed confesses to Jack as he is trying to torture him that Al-Assad has come to the U.S. to try to stop him. Fayed becomes infuriated that Al-Assad is renouncing the strategies that they have always used. Fayed shows how savage he is by having his terrorist group committing dozens of suicide attacks that leave thousands of Americans dead. The purpose of these attacks was not just to get the government to turn over Jack, the attacks were also meant to frame Al-Assad. These attacks work as President Wayne Palmer (played by David Bryan Woodside) sends two Bell AH-1 Cobra helicopters to bomb a house where Al-Assad is located. The only reason he lives is that Jack decides that Al-Assad is a good ally against Fayed and saves him.
Fayed is the symbol of the savage Muslim and Arab as he would kill thousands in order to fulfill his personal vendetta. He goes after Jack because of what he did to his brother and goes after Al-Assad because he sees him as a traitor for trying to negotiate for peace. Fayed is shown as a very animalistic in nature as he seems to take personal enjoyment in hurting others. This is shown in his plot to explode five Soviet Union era suitcase nuclear bombs in the U.S. Unlike the other Muslim and Arab terrorists of the other seasons, Fayed actually succeeds in exploding one suitcase bomb. In episode 5 (10:00 AM to 11:00 AM), CTU has found where the terrorists have the nuclear weapons. As the CTU agents enter they engage the terrorists in a firefight that leaves a large amount of the terrorists dead. One terrorist (the engineer that made the bomb active) though takes the opportunity to set off the nuclear bomb with a sadistic smile knowing thousands will be killed. The bomb goes off in Valencia, California, which immediately kills over 12,000 innocent individuals. Fayed and his people are as savage as they come because they are cold blooded murderers who never justify why they take the actions that they do. In the previous seasons the terrorists explained that they were taking the actions they took for Allah and to retaliate for the United States interference in Middle-Eastern countries affairs. Fayed never really explains why he has such a desire to kill thousands to millions of individuals. The only conclusion that comes from this individual is that Muslims and Arabs enjoy death and destruction. Thus, Muslims and Arabs are presented as savages who do not need any reason to be violent towards innocent individuals. They are also presented as patsies being used for the benefit of another foreign power.

Muslims and Arabs as Pawns

In season 2, the Muslims and Arabs were represented as the pawns of oil cartel individuals. The same could be said for season 6 as Fayed and his people are being used by foreign individuals. The main individual that is using Fayed and his people is Dmitri Gredenko, a former Soviet general, who was responsible for releasing the five suitcase nuclear devices for decommissioning in the U.S. Gredenko assists Fayed in many ways to try to detonate the nuclear bombs in the U.S. Gredenko’s plan is to let
Fayed and his group take all the credit, which would spur a military conflict between the U.S. and the Middle-East. Gredenko as an ultranationalist hopes that this military conflict will destroy both the U.S. and the Middle-East. The point would be to re-introduce Russia once again as the only lone superpower.

Fayed is seen as a pawn in Gredenko’s plan as Gredenko exposes his plan and treats Fayed with lots of disdain. In episode 11 (4:00 PM to 5:00 PM) you see how he looks down on Arabs and how he plans to use them for his goals.

As Fayed is headed to the airfield where Gredenko is, Fayed calls Gredenko:  
Gredenko: “Go ahead.”  
Fayed: “We’re on our way to the rendezvous.”  
Gredenko: “Good. We’ve arrived.”  
Fayed: “Is the shipment there from Nevada?”  
Gredenko: “No. They are behind schedule. But they’ll be here any moment.”  
Fayed: “How soon can you deploy once we arrive?”  
Gredenko: “It’ll take us two hours to assemble the delivery system and run diagnostics. Another hour to secure the payload.”  
Fayed: “That’s longer than I’d hoped.”  
Gredenko: “Listen, we are working with advanced technology. It can’t be rushed. Just remember without us, you’d be delivering your payload in weeks instead of hours.”  
Fayed: “I haven’t forgotten.”  
Gredenko: “It seems necessary to remind you now and then.”

-Gredenko hangs up on Fayed and talks to one of his men.  
Gredenko: “I’ll be glad when we no longer have to deal with these people. They’re living in the dark ages and they act like they own the world.”  
Guard: “I’d much rather be fighting them.”  
Gredenko: “If we succeed today we’ll never have to. The Arabs and the West can destroy each other.”

Fayed in this one scene is talked down to by Gredenko and he pouts like a child being reprimanded by a parent. This goes against his character being a tough individual who does not take any nonsense from anyone. Gredenko shows that he immensely dislikes Arabs and feels their culture is backwards and can be used to accomplish his goals. The representations of Muslims and Arabs as patsies is taken to extreme because this Russian individual wants to basically start World War III in order to regain his countries past glory. As Fayed is so bloodthirsty to hurt the U.S. he does not think that maybe this individual is using him. This completely disregards that Fayed has been shown to be very intelligent in thinking about his plans. This episode makes him seem childish and not as intelligent as he seemed in
the beginning episodes of this season. This premise makes it seem that Muslims and Arabs are likely easily manipulated for the benefit of foreign individuals.

**Conclusion**

TV shows show one of the most negative representations as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs. The Muslims and Arabs shown in TV shows are primarily based on exaggerated representations. The exaggerated representations are based on showing them as terrorists that mean to harm the U.S. These representations are exaggerated as they show terrorists that know how to arm nuclear bombs and are willing to use them. This representation is complimented by the visual representation of fictional terrorists successfully committing terrorist attacks. The Muslims and Arabs on top of that state that they want to destroy the country in retaliation for what the U.S. has done to the people in the Middle-East. As the terrorists’ origin is kept ambiguous, it could be assumed that they are likely from any country in the Middle-East. Thus, the correlation is that any terrorist could be from any country in the Middle-East as the characters’ origin is never exposed. Also, the religion of Islam is guilty by association as the fictitious terrorists’ state that Allah is with them. TV shows condemn Muslims and Arabs as they primarily show negative and quite exaggerated representations of these people.

### 4.3 Hollywood Films

The Hollywood films released today are the most influential mass media in the world. The reason being is that Hollywood films are released worldwide and show the world the American point of view of events. The films pre-and-post 9/11 show Muslims and Arabs in the most negative light. The most prominent representation is that Muslims and Arabs are a dangerous threat to the U.S. and the rest of the “civilized” world of the West. This representation is complimented by the “bad guys” that are Arab and/or Muslim that are prominently featured in film after film that Hollywood has created. The representations are based on longstanding stereotypes that have existed even before the creation of film. These stereotypical representations show that Muslims and Arabs are dangerous, are descended from a
primitive culture, are Anti-American, and anti-democratic. The films that have these stereotypes discredit Islam, Muslims, and Arabs as they primarily show negative characteristics that these individuals allegedly possess. The Hollywood film have created characteristics of Muslims and Arabs that have become cliché and have become the reality of what viewers know about these people.

**The Sheik (1921)**

*The Sheik* is a romantic silent film that deals with an Arab protagonist from the Middle-East. The main protagonist is Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan (played by Rudolph Valentino) who is an important ruler in the area. The story revolves around Hassan’s attempted conquest of a white woman named Lady Diana Mayo (played by Agnes Ayres). Lady Mayo is a headstrong woman who refuses to marry as she believes it will be the end of her independence. Instead, she desires to go on a month long trip in the desert escorted by local natives of the area. Hassan becomes infatuated with her as she is white, beautiful, and is not impressed with his position. The Sheik eventually kidnaps her in an attempt to get her to fall in love with him. The Sheik proceeds to dominate her by having her wear Arab female clothes and ordering her around. Eventually Hassan is reprimanded for his behavior by an old schoolmate (Dr. Raoul de St. Hubert, played by Adolphe Menjou) he met while he was studying in Paris. Hubert’s reprimand leads to Hassan treating Lady Mayo with more respect. This treatment leads to Lady Mayo falling in love with Hassan. Eventually, Lady Mayo is kidnapped by a bandit named Omair (played by Walter Long) who wants to make Lady Mayo his next concubine. Hassan and his men attack the compound where Omair is holding Lady Mayo. This leads to Hassan killing Omair and liberating Lady Mayo who at this point is in love with Hassan. Hassan is injured in the battle with Omair, leading to him being in a coma. At this point Lady Mayo finds out that Hassan is not really Arab as he was adopted by an Arab when his parents died in the desert. Thus, a white woman is able to settle down with the white man that is Hassan in a happily ever after ending.
**Muslims and Arabs Descended from Backwards Society**

The film shows that Muslims and Arabs are from societies that are never changing and never modernizing. The entire film is set in the desert wasteland where the closest semblance to a modern society is individuals living in tents and individuals riding camels. The film begins by showing that modernity has passed the Middle-East and its people. At the 1:18 mark an English inter-title reads after showing kids playing in the desert, “Where the children of Arabs dwell in happy ignorance that civilization has passed them by.” The impression given that Muslims and Arabs are living in the past and not necessarily open to change. This backwardness of society is complimented by other scenes in the film. At the 1:32 mark of the film you see women being sold for brides. The inter-title reads, “Maidens chosen for the marriage market – An ancient custom by which wives are secured for the wealthy sons of Allah.” These representations show that Muslims and Arabs are descended from backwards societies that refuse to modernize in terms of building modern cities, and of creating technological innovations. Also, the representation is that Muslims and Arabs hold onto old misogynist traditions such as the selling of brides. This makes them seem backwards and different than the viewer who likely lives in a modernized society and does not hold onto old outdated traditions.

**Muslims and Arabs Represented as Misogynist Pigs**

The Arab individuals shown in *The Sheik* are shown to be misogynist individuals that mistreat women. At the 12:39 mark the inter-title reads, “Like a page from the Arabian Nights – The marriage gamble where brides are won on the turn of the wheel”. The scene shows men gambling for women who are on display as if they are some kind of prize and not a human being. The women dance around showing the men what they will win if they win at the gambling table. This misogynist attitude of women as a possession continues when the Sheik becomes interested in Lady Mayo. Sheik Hassan finds out that Lady Mayo will go into the desert, and proceeds to take out the bullets of her pistol. Later, when she is out in the desert Hassan and his men come to kidnap Lady Mayo. At the 24:28 mark, Hassan tells
the struggling Lady Mayo, “Lie still, you little fool!” This leads to Hassan dominating and intimidating Lady Mayo in many situations in order to get her to love him. This domination is explained when he speaks to his old time friend Dr. Hubert. At the 47:21 mark, Hassan says, “When an Arab sees a woman that he wants, he takes her!” Thus, the impression becomes that Muslims and Arabs are sexist and mistreat women for their gratification at the expense of what the women want. This is complimented by showing that the Middle-East is without laws as well.

*Muslims and Arabs Live in Lawless Land*

Lady Mayo eventually falls in love with Sheik Hassan as he eventually starts treating her with more trust and respect. Lady Mayo is taken into the desert to ride her horse and see the sights. A bandit named Omair, who is light brown and has a short beard, has his men kill her bodyguards and take her to him. This leads to Hassan and his men infiltrating the compound to try to retrieve Lady Mayo. This leads to Sheik Hassan and Omair getting into a battle of swords. The culmination of the battle is that Hassan takes control and strangles Omair to death. These representations show that the Middle-East is a lawless land and anarchy rules. Hassan himself is guilty of kidnapping as he took Lady Mayo by force. Omair is guilty of murder and kidnapping as his men had to kill a few of Hassan’s men to get Lady Mayo. Lastly, Hassan murders Omair by strangulation after he dominates Omair in their fight. This representation of the Middle-East as an anarchist state leads to the wrong impression that there is no law and the people commit crimes without any repercussions.

*The Son of the Sheik (1926)*

*The Son of the Sheik* is a sequel to the 1921 film *The Sheik* which featured Rudolph Valentino as the protagonist. In this film Rudolph Valentino plays both the Sheik (Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan) and the son of the Sheik (Ahmed). In this film Ahmed falls in love with a dancing girl named Yasmin (played by Vilma Bánky) who uses her winnings to support her father Andre and his troupe. Andre (played by George Fawcett) is described a renegade Frenchman, leader of a vagrant troupe, who are entertainers by
profession, thieves by preference. Ghabab (played by Mantagu Love) is Andre’s Arab lackey who does his bidding and is the villain of the film. Ahmed becomes romantically interested in Yasmin after seeing her dance and speaking to her. Ahmed meets Yasmin at some ruins that have become their area to meet for their romantic trysts. Andre and his thugs come to where they are at, assault Ahmed, and ultimately want to hold Ahmed for ransom. Ghabab being interested in Yasmin romantically tells Ahmed that Yasmin was a part of this operation to kidnap him and hold him for ransom. Eventually, Ahmed’s guards come and rescue him from his captors. Ahmed later in the film kidnaps Yamin and punishes her for what has happened to him at the hands of her fathers’ group. Ahmed eventually frees her as his father the Sheik reprimands him for his actions. Andre and his people eventually take Yasmin into their possession as Ghabab wants to force her to be his. Ahmed finds out that Yasmin was not a part of the kidnapping and proceeds to rescue her. Like The Sheik, Ahmed like his father the Sheik kills the “bad guy” by strangling him to death. Ahmed and Yasmin ride off in a horse kissing and riding off into the sunset.

Muslims and Arabs as Vindictive Individuals

The character of Ahmed is very nice person in comparison to his father the Sheik. His father the Sheik took his woman Lady Mayo by force, while Ahmed does it by trying to woo Yasmin. Ahmed is truly in love Yasmin and she with him as they are both smitten with each other. This changes though as Ahmed is made to believe that Yasmin was a willing participant in his kidnapping. Ahmed eventually gets Yasmin in his possession and proceeds to show how vindictive an Arab can be. At the 33:22 mark Ahmed says, “An eye for an eye – a hate for a hate – that is the law of my father!” Yasmin explains that she had nothing to do with what happened, but it falls on deaf ears as Ahmed refuses to listen. After forcing himself on Yasmin, at the 35:06 mark, Ahmed says, “Your gang will not collect from me this time. For once your kisses are free!” The camera then shows Ahmed coming towards Yasmin as she goes towards the bedroom. The insinuation being that the punishment he gave her was that he raped her.
for her role in the kidnapping. The representation becomes that Arabs hold grudges, and overreact in retaliation to the actions taken towards them. Also, that they are overly sexual as it pertains to how they see women and how they attempt to have sex with them.

Muslims and Arabs as Perverts

The character of Ghabah personifies the perverted Arab that hungers for the white woman. The brown colored (done with makeup) Ghabab lusts after Yasmin the whole film as he perversely looks at her and eventually kidnaps her. At the 8:18 to 8:41 mark, Ghabah is watching Yasmin putting make-up on. At the 17:44 mark, Ghabab enters Yasmin’s tent with a sadistic smile as he attempts to force himself upon her. These examples of perversity eventually lead to a battle where good (Ahmed) battles evil (Ghabah), and evil is punished with death. Ahmed himself can be seen as a pervert himself as it is insinuated that Ahmed raped Yasmin. The representation becomes that Arabs are perverted individuals that lust after white women and will give into their carnal sexual needs.

Blood Feast (1963)

Blood Feast is one of the first ever slasher pictures in the genre in which a killer hunts and kills his victims with extreme aggression. The protagonist of the film is an Arab named Fuad Ramses (played by Mal Arnold) who kills women for their body parts. The reason for Ramses taking these women’s body parts is to include them in a blood feast. The blood feast is a soup made up of the body parts of the women that Ramses has massacred. The point of this blood feast is to resurrect an evil Egyptian deity named Ishtar. Ishtar was worshipped as part of an evil religion that required sacrifices to be fed to the masses. Thus, women were sacrificed to create the blood feast 5,000 years ago. Ramses is contracted to make a meal for a wealthy socialite named Dorothy Freemont (played by Lyn Bolton) and her dinner guests. At the dinner party he tries to get Suzette Freemont to say a prayer to Ishtar before he attempts to decapitate her as the final ingredient of his offering to Ishtar. Ms. Freemont comes in and sees what Ramses is doing and screams. Ramses escapes as the police are arriving and Ramses attempts to escape.
in the back of a garbage truck. Once Ramses enters the back of the garbage truck, the garbage truck’s blades turn on and crush him to death as he screams in agony. The movie ends with Detective Pete Thornton (played by William Kerwin) saying, “He died a fitting end, just like the garbage he was.”

**Muslims and Arabs as Satanic Worshipers**

The religion of Ishtar is shown to be very satanic in nature as human sacrifice is required. The only present day religion that requires these types of sacrifices is the worship of Satan. Therefore, without even trying the Arab character of Ramses becomes a satanic worshipping type of individual. The religion of his is evil as it derived from an evil deity who requires the shedding of blood from its followers. As Ramses is an Arab, and Arabs are shown as Muslims in the mass media, it can be derived that Islam is satanic in itself as Muslims in real life have killed innocent individuals for their jihad. Ramses slaughter of women is to revive the goddess Ishtar, and extremist Muslims mission is to cause mass casualties to create fear in people. Thus, the fictitious religion of Ramses can be derived to be representative of the real life religion of Islam. As both religions are shown as violent, a correlation can be made that Ramses religion is based on the religion of Islam. Also, that Muslims and Arabs are savages that take their religious practices too far.

**Muslims and Arabs as Savages**

The character of Ramses is the personification of a savage as he takes extreme measures to resurrect his goddess. At the beginning of the film a woman places her Bible by shower and gets in. The woman lets out a scream as Ramses appears and stabs her directly in the eye. The woman falls in the shower dead and Ramses proceeds to chop off one of her legs. The woman is left in a bloody mess as she is bleeding from her eye and the leg wound. Ramses laughs as he sadistically takes pleasure in slaughtering this woman. At the 12:21 mark, a couple is on the beach talking and kissing. Ramses proceeds to knock out the man and kill the woman by stabbing her next to her knocked out boyfriend. Ramses then cuts out the top part of the young woman’s skull and takes out parts of her brain. Scene
after scene, Ramses slaughters one woman after another in order to kill them and cut off their body parts. The impression becomes that Arabs are savages who worship violent religions and hold onto dangerous traditions that can be deadly.

**The Siege (1998)**

*The Siege* is an American thriller that deals with terrorist cells committing terrorist attacks in New York City. The film revolves around FBI Special Agent Anthony Hubbard (played by Denzel Washington) and his partner Frank Haddad (played by Tony Shalhoub) trying to stop more terrorist attacks from occurring. In the process of their investigation they are introduced to a CIA agent named Sharon Bridger (played by Annette Bening) who hides what she is doing there. During this time, the president declares martial law and allows the military to seal off Brooklyn in an effort to find the remaining terrorist cells. The military is led by Major General William Devereaux (played by Bruce Willis), who decides that the best way to track the terrorists is to round up all Arab men into Yankee Stadium. This brings protests by New Yorkers who feel that what the military was doing to Arabs was wrong. Devereaux is shown to be the villain as he tortures and kills an Arab individual in the process of trying to get information on the terrorist cells. Eventually, Bridger confesses that the terrorists were trained by the U.S. to depose Saddam Hussein. The U.S. cut off their funding, but Bridger took pity on some and brought them to the U.S. This leads to the present situation where the terrorists are angry at being abandoned by the U.S. The last cell of the movie is not a group, but an individual named Samir. Samir is the last cell who plans to blow himself up in a crowd of New Yorkers protesting the internment of the Arabs. Hubbard and his partner go to a bathhouse where Samir and Bridger are at. Samir holds Bridger hostage, she attempts to stop him and is shot by Samir. Hubbard shoots Samir dead before he can commit his suicide attack. Bridger dies as she and he are praying the Lord’s Prayer and she concludes before dying, “Insha’Alla” (God Willing). Hubbard goes onto arrest Deveraux for his actions against Arabs, and the military is forced to leave the city.
A Good Arab-Muslim Denies his Identity

*The Siege* is a film that unlike the films mentioned before shows good guys and bad guys that are both Arab and Muslim. The obvious “bad guys” are the terrorists that have killed innocent New Yorkers. The “good guy” is Frank Haddad, who is a detective that is trying to stop the terrorists. The character is a positive representation of Muslims and Arabs as he is a law enforcement agent who passionately attempts to impede future terrorist attacks. The problem with Haddad is that other than his last name there is no inkling that he is Arab and/or Muslim. Haddad’s character is an Americanized character as he drinks alcohol, cusses, and is never shown to be praying. The “bad guys” though are shown to be praying before committing their terrorist attacks. The point of the film seems to be that a good Arab-Muslim individual is one that denies his identity and assimilates to the American way of life. The bad Muslims-Arab impression becomes that these individuals are dangerous and to be protected against as they are dangerous and will kill without thinking twice.

*Muslims and Arabs as Savages*

The terrorists of the film are cold-blooded murders that kill innocent people. The terrorists of this film take actions that kill people that had nothing to do with their situation. The terrorists are trying to get revenge on the U.S. for the U.S. abandoning them in their struggle against the dictator Saddam Hussein. The victims though are innocent individuals that had no control over what their country had done to these individuals. In one of the first scenes of the film, the terrorists blow up a bus as elderly hostages were being released. Also, a crowded theatre is bombed, and the FBI’s New York city field office is bombed that results in 600 casualties. The representation of Muslims and Arabs becomes that they are easily prone to terrorism, and are cold-blooded murderers that will kill anyone out of anger and revenge, regardless of innocence.
The War Within (2005)

The War Within is a story of Hassan (played by Ayad Akhtar), a Pakistani engineering student studying in Paris. American intelligence apprehends Hassan for suspected terrorist involvement as his brother was a terrorist. Hassan is taken to Pakistan for interrogation by individuals of the Pakistani government. Hassan is tortured in various ways (plastic bag over his face, beatings, and burnings of flesh with a blow torch) that leads to Hassan becoming a Muslim Extremist. Hassan enters the U.S. three years later in a shipping crate after his torture in Pakistan. Upon entering the U.S., Hassan joins a terrorist cell in New York City that will allow him to commit terrorist attacks. The cell provides him an apartment and financial support as he stays in New York. The day he is to commit a suicide bombing the entire cell is arrested. Having little options, Hassan appears at a house of a childhood friend named Sayeed (played by Firdous Bamji). Once in his home he tries to build an explosive device to commit a suicide bombing. At one point Hassan is discovered by Sayeed’s sister and Sayeed calls the police. Hassan goes to Grand Central Station and before blowing himself up says, “God is great”. Hassan kills himself and seriously injures twenty-three individuals at the station.

Arabs and Muslims as Bigots

The character of Hassan shows an outright disdain for anyone that is not Muslim. This can be seen in a conversation that Hassan has with his childhood friend. When Hassan is speaking to Sayeed and his family:

Sayeed: “It’s a beautiful country, nice people.”
Hassan: “They are o.k. for Jahiliyyah.”
Sayeed: “Jahiliyyah? That is a word I haven’t heard in a while.”
Sayeed’s son (Ali): “What does it mean?”
Hassan: “It means people who don’t believe in Allah and the Prophet Mohammed.”

Hassan’s religious bigotry is shown as he terms non-Muslims as Jahiliyyah. Jahiliyyah as it is used by Hassad is used in a derogatory way towards non-Muslims. According to Amros and Pocházka (2004), “The root of the term jahiliyyah is the I-form verb jahala “to be ignorant or stupid, to act stupidly”
Haddad sees his religion of Islam as the only religion that is worth worshipping. This attitude is shown in many instances to be in conflict with his friend, Sayeed, who is a peaceful Muslim individual, who respects others religious beliefs. Haddad in being a bigoted character creates a negative impression of Muslims and Arabs. The impression being that these individuals judge people that are not of their religion and try to impose their bigoted point of view in the countries they inhabit. The films impression becomes that by having a bigoted attitude, certain individuals cannot be trusted as they can be conspiring against non-Muslims.

**Arabs and Muslims are Untrustworthy**

The character of Haddad is exemplified as an untrustworthy individual that does not deserve to be trusted. Sayeed immediately shows an affection and love for Haddad as they have known each other for a long time. As such, Sayeed trusts him to stay at his home and interact with his family. The reaction from Hassad is to teach Sayeed’s son that being a Muslim is being a violent terrorist. Also, Hassad builds explosive devices that had the capability to kill Sayeed and his family. In the end, Sayeed discovers that his friend has become a terrorist who he really does not know. The trust that Sayeed has towards Hassad is rewarded by Sayeed being detained by authorities when he calls the police on Hassad. Also, Sayeed loses his sister as she is killed when she tries to keep Hassad from committing his suicide bombing. The impression then becomes that Arabs and Muslims cannot be trusted as even friends cannot really know Muslims. Sayeed was a longtime friend of Hassad and even he did not know what he was capable of. The film gives the impression that to bestow trust on Muslims and/or Arabs can eventually allow them to hurt people. The religion of Islam is also made to look violent as its followers in these representations say they are taking their actions for Allah.

**Islam is a Violent Religion**

Hassad creates the impression that Islam and violence are intertwined as he mentions his religion on a consistent basis. At the beginning of the film Hassad hugs his friend Khalid and says, “God be with
you” as both are supposed to die as suicide bombers. Hassad writes a letter to his friend Sayeed as to why he would commit these terrorist actions. As he is heading to his area he is to die he is narrating what he has written in the letter. In the letter he states,

Now this moment has arrived. I am not scared. I am relieved. Something has become very clear. What I am doing, I am doing for Allah. What I am about to do is what I am. This life we are now living is but a drop in the ocean compared to the life hereafter. I will soon be in Jannah and I hope to find you there one day. Hassan.

This does not happen as almost the entire terrorist cell is arrested by the FBI. Hassad changes plans and decides to lay low for a while in Sayeed’s home. During his time there he teaches Sayeed’s son his misguided view of being a Muslim. At nighttime, Hassan speaks to Ali:

Hassan: “Ali, what are the names of the people who live next door?”
Ali: “Coleman.”
Hassan: “What if the Colemans came to your house one day and they said, “Get out of this house. We’re taking this house. Now you have to live in the backyard.”
Ali: “They wouldn’t. My dad wouldn’t let them.”
Hassan: “But they come with the police. And with guns. What would you do?”
Ali: “But they already have a house.”
Hassan: “Doesn’t matter. They want this one. And then one day, they come and they say, “You can’t live in the yard anymore. We found oil under the ground, and it’s very valuable and we need it”. What would you do?”
Ali: “I don’t understand. Somebody would stop them.”
Hassan: “The Colemans are now the mayor, and the mayor wrote a law that said that they could do what they wanted. What would you do?”
Ali: “I fight them.”
Hassan: “Exactly. This is what they are doing to our brothers and sisters across the world. To little boys like you. To families like this family.”
Ali: “Did somebody take your house?”
Hassan: “When you’re a Muslim, a real Muslim, a good Muslim, what happens to your brother, it happens to you. This is a rule of Islam, in the world, I suffer also.”

As Hassad has made it clear that he is a Muslim, and a violent Muslim at that he creates the impression that the religion is a violent one. This representation continues as Hassad eventually does commit a suicide bombing as he says before dying, “God is great”. The correlation from this film then becomes that Islam and its followers have a violent nature that can lead to death and destruction of innocent people.
Unthinkable (2010)

*Unthinkable* revolves around a white American Muslim named Yusuf Atta Mohamed (played by Michael Sheen), formerly known as Steven Arthur Younger. Atta was a former Delta Force Operator who has placed three nuclear bombs in three different American cities. The bombs are set to go off on Friday the 21\textsuperscript{st} at noon Pacific Time. Mohamed allows himself to be captured by the authorities and is taken to a black site under military command. As time is scarce, the military brings in a special interrogator named Henry Harold Humphries (played by Samuel L. Jackson), who is referred to as “H”. H immediately shows that if Mohamed does not give him information, H will punish him immediately. H takes a hatches and cuts off of one of Mohamed’s fingers when he refuses to give him information. The torture continues as Mohamed refuses to tell H where the three nuclear bombs are located. When torture does not work, H threatens to mutilate Mohamed’s wife. At this point the people of H’s side are disgusted by this idea and start to lead Mohamed’s wife away. Out of desperation, H slashes the woman’s throat and she bleeds to death in front of Mohamed. When this does not work, H has Mohamed’s children taken to the area where he was torturing Mohamed. Mohamed breaks at this point and discloses where the bombs are located (in New York, Los Angeles, and Dallas). H though believes that Mohamed had enough nuclear material to build a forth nuclear bomb and probably did just in case he broke and revealed the three nuclear bombs locations. H eventually cuts Mohamed free as a majority of the people in that facility do not want to allow H to torture Mohamed’s kids to find out where the fourth nuclear bomb was. Mohamed gets free, gets a gun, and proceeds to kill himself. An FBI agent takes the kids out and the film ends that way. In the extended version of the film the FBI bomb disposal unit disables all the bombs. In a nearby crate though the fourth bomb counts down to zero and it goes to black. The impression being that one of the four bombs did eventually go off and kill people.
The Violent Religion of Islam Infiltrates America

*Unthinkable* gives the impression that Islam will infiltrate the United States. This infiltration deals with changing the values that individuals in the U.S. hold dear. In this film, Mohammed, a white individual has adopted Islam as his religion. Mohammed interprets that his responsibility as a Muslim is to attack the U.S. that mistreats Muslims and is occupying the Holy Lands of the Middle-East. Mohammed’s conversion to Islam in this film shows that Islam has the capability to influence the masses. People do not normally assume that Muslims are anything other than Arabs. The reality that the film shows is that anyone can be a Muslim as a religion is a choice and not a characteristic you are born with. The religion of Islam is slandered by showing a violent individual committing violent actions in the name of his religion. Thus, the impression becomes that a violent religion is making headway in terms of entering the U.S. and influencing individuals into committing terrorist acts for their religious beliefs.

*Five Minarets in New York, Released in Theaters as Act of Vengeance (2010)*

*Five Minarets in New York* revolves around two Turkish anti-terror officers named Firat (played by Mahsun Kirmizigül) and Acar (Mustafa Sandal). Firat and Acar are sent to New York from Istanbul to retrieve a Turkish religious leader named Hadji (played by Haluk Bilginer) to have him stand trial in Turkey for his involvement in terrorism. Firat alleges after using torture on a terrorist suspect that the individual told him that Hadji Gumus is Dejjal (Arabic for Anti-Christ), and that he was responsible for terrorist attacks in Turkey. Dejjal is a codename for a dangerous Islamic leader who is related with terrorism. Firat is shown to have disdain towards Hadji, mistrusting him and wanting Hadji to confess to him his crimes. The reason for this obsession is that Firat believes that Hahji was the person that murdered his father. In reality, Hadji was forced to take the blame as his older brother was the one that killed Firat’s father. Hadji was a child at the time and was blamed for the death and this is why he left to live in New York. Firat joined the police department to try to track down Hadji and extract his revenge.
for his father’s death. Firat gets to know Hadji, and realizes that he is a good man that was not responsible for his father’s death. Firat’s grandfather though murders Hadji by shooting him, and the grandfather is himself killed by Acar. Thus, giving the impression that revenge will lead to the ultimate death of those that seek this practice.

**Muslims and Arabs Demand Blood for Their Perverted Justice**

Firat spends a majority of his adult life trying to find the man that he believes murdered his father. The thirst for vengeance takes him to commit many immoral actions such as torturing people and fraudulently accusing an innocent man (Hadji) of being a terrorist to get him back to Turkey. The result of this is that Firat gets to know Hadji, Hadji ends up showing him that he is a good man. Firat realizes that this man was not responsible for the death of his father and even becomes fond of him. Firat at one point explains to his grandfather that Hadji is innocent:

Grandfather: “My boy. You brought that scum…back where he killed your father. When his blood is on the flag on the roof…your father will rest in peace.”
Firat: “Grandfather, he’s not a killer.”
Grandfather: “What are you talking about? Do you hear what you’re saying? He killed your father!”
Firat: “I know a killer when I see one. Hadji told me everything. He’s a good man.”
Grandfather: “A good man?”
-Grandfather slaps Firat.
Grandfather: “I’ve been a mother and father to you! It’s your duty to avenge your father. Get out of my sight! You’re not my grandson anymore!”
Firat: “I’ve wasted my life to avenge my father. I hunted down an innocent man for years. I swear to God and the Koran, Hadji is innocent.”
-Grandfather looks at Firat for a few seconds.
Grandfather: “Is this true, son?”
Firat: “He was your son, but he was my father. Hadji is the best person I’ve ever met.”
Grandfather: “You know better. I’m sorry I hit you.”
Firat: “I’ve got to get back to them. I won’t be late tonight.”
Grandfather: “Come home as soon as you can. We have a lot to talk about.”

As Firat comes to Hadji’s mothers house, Hadji is about to introduce Firat and Acar to his mother. Firat’s grandfather suddenly appears and proceeds to shoot Hadji in the chest. Acar takes out his weapon and fires upon the old man wounding him fatally. Hadji tells Firat that he knew that he was the murdered man’s son. Firat asks for Hadji’s forgiveness for what he has gone through. Hadji responds, “Don’t be
upset, my son. It’s God’s will. I fled from ignorance…and now I die from ignorance.” Hadji dies from the bullet wound and is mourned by his mother, wife, Firat, and Acar. Firat burns the flag that was supposed to be covered in Hadjis’ blood in order for his father to rest. The representation becomes that once a Muslim-Arab individuals accuses you of wronging them, the only acceptable justice is your death. This representation makes the Muslim and Arab characters seem barbaric and bloodthirsty in the name of a perverted form of “justice”.

**Taken (2009)**

The film revolves around former CIA operative named Bryan Mills (played by Liam Neeson), who ended his career to have a closer relationship to his daughter Kim (played by Maggie Grace). His ex-wife and Kim convince Bryan to sign a consent form to allow her to travel by herself with her friend to Paris. Bryan hesitantly signs the consent form with the condition that she calls him every day. Once in Paris, Kim and her friend are kidnapped by an Albanian human trafficking ring that abducts female tourists. Bryan travels to France in order to try to get his daughter back from the Albanians. Bryan proceeds to kill many individuals, destroy property, and torture people to get to his daughter. Bryant is told she will be auctioned off to rich individuals as she is worth more as she is a virgin. Kim is sold at auction to a Middle-Eastern Sheik who spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on her. Bryan enters a ship that is carrying Kim and proceeds to kill everyone including the Sheik. At the end, Bryan has a better relationship with his daughter as she knows her dad truly loves her as he has gone through hell to retrieve her.

*Arabs as Abusers of Women*

The Arabs of this film are shown as abusers of women who kidnap them and abuse them. The women that Bryan comes across in the film have horrible lives as they are prostituted out to men. To keep these women compliant with this lifestyle they are kept drugged with illegal narcotics. Bryan comes close to finding Kim, but instead, finds her friend dead of an obvious drug overdose. The Arab
individuals in this film are shown as misogynists who take pleasure in dominating and having sex with women who are semi-conscious. The representation becomes that Arabs do not respect women and take great pleasure in abusing them for their sexual gratification. As such they are worthy of the same mistreatment according to this film.

*Arabs Deserving of Torture*

The Arabs in this film are presented as individuals that arrogantly pimp and sell women. As they are abusive towards women, Bryan is presented as the Arabs comeuppance. The best example of Arabs being worthy of torture is when Bryan catches one of the men that kidnapped his daughter. The man that he captures is named Marko (played by Arben Bajraktaraj), who refuses to let him know where Kim is. Bryan has two nails and Bryan proceeds to stab it in each one of Marko’s legs. Then he attaches jumper cables to the nails that will make them electric. As Bryan asks Marko where his daughter is, Marko proceeds to spit in his face. Bryan proceeds to start the electricity and starts to electrocute Marko. Marko eventually relents and lets him know that they sold her to a man named Saint-Clair. Bryan turns on the electricity and leaves, leaving Marko to die. This film represents that Arabs are deserving of torture because they cannot be dealt with in a civilized manner.

*Conclusion*

The Hollywood films of today and yesteryear represent Muslims and Arabs in the most negative light. The most prevalent representation shown in films is that Muslims and Arabs are violent individuals. These violent individuals are shown to subscribe to the “violent religion” of Islam. This impression is created as these individuals state that the actions they take are done in the name of Allah. The individuals stating that their religion requests violence creates the impression that the violence is a religious order. The characters condemn the religion as few positive “good guy” characters state the positive and peaceful elements of Islam. The Arabs too are condemned as terrorists as the actors they play them are brown. This creates the impression that terrorists are Arab and Muslim as both
characteristics of these people are shown. Hollywood films give Arabs a Muslim identity and Muslims are given an Arab identity. This creates misconceptions that all Arabs and Muslims are the same thing, and that they are all violent and therefore, dangerous.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The mass media being a worldwide influencer of audiences is able to teach viewers about their world. This power allows the mass media conglomerates to influence viewers perceptions and attitudes towards the individuals shown in their media content. The likelihood is that what viewers learn in watching media content is not all that truthful as the mass media embellishes stories to attract viewers. According to Cohen and Weimann (2000),

According to cultivation theory, massive exposure to television's reconstructed realities can result in perceptions of reality very different from what they might be if viewers watched less television. In other words, the highly stylized, stereotyped, and repetitive images portrayed on television have been regarded as an important source of socialization and everyday information (p. 99).

Thus, viewers are learning about a distorted view about individuals that are different than themselves. The jihadist Muslim and/or Arab terrorist has become a normal representation that viewers have come to see on a consistent basis. This representation likely becomes the reality for some viewers as the media is their only access to these people. According to Severin and Tankard (2000), they explain how the media set the agenda (agenda-setting theory) in the media, “the media’s capability, through repeated news coverage, of raising the importance of an issue in the mind of the people” (p. 219). The mass media gives importance to showing that Muslims and Arabs are primarily negative individuals to be looked out for.

The danger of this representation is that they educate viewers of what they are supposed to be afraid of. According to Bakalian and Bozorgmehr (2009), “The mainstream media play a significant role in transmitting the discourse of fear and hatred, assessing evaluations of risk before passing them on to the masses, and using their power to magnify a crisis” (p. 150). The mass media educate the people that they should fear them because of real life events like 9-11. The real life events of 9-11 are complimented by TV shows and Hollywood films that continue to show Muslims and Arabs as dangerous terroristic
individuals. This could potentially lead to hatred towards the individuals that are represented in the mass media, and the belief that stereotypes are the true representations. According to Balibar,

The term “cultural racism” specifies the production of pejorative ideas and images about “counter-cultures,” as does racism with the construction of races. “Cultural racism” operates with a concept of cultures that supposes them to be homogenous, static, unchangeable, and clearly defined (Balibar as cited in Shooman & Spielhaus, 2010, P. 203).

This can be seen as true as the 9-11 attacks occurred individuals that were neither Muslim and/or Arab were targeted by hate mongers in retaliation for the attacks. The news media coverage of the attacks got a rise out of people. Non-Muslims were seen as Muslims because they fit the stereotype of characters that were seen on TV shows and/or films. A turbaned individual named Balbir Singh was shot dead in retaliation for the September 11th attacks in Arizona. The mass media in its representations had shown that Muslims can be turbaned, which in reality is not true as using turbans is related to the religion of Sikhism. So, the mass media could be said to have an effect on viewers as the man that killed Singh was not in New York and saw all the terrorist attacks on television.

The fear and hatred that the mass media bestowed upon Muslims and Arabs is historically how the West has viewed the East. Edward Said’s Orientalism explained that the West with its superior military and cultural superiority showed individuals of the East as backwards in comparison to the West. This continues to happen as the mass media conglomerates continue to show the Middle-East and its people as backwards and holding onto old world values and practices. Orientalism produced a false description of Islamic cultures, including a belief that it is possible to unconditionally define the essential qualities of a whole Islamic culture and the people within it (Said as cited in Nurullah, 2010, p. 1023). The mass media continue this Orientalist practice by showing that Muslims and Arabs are a homogenous group with no distinguishable differences. This completely disregards the fact that there are billions of individuals that may be Muslim and/or Arab but are distinct in terms of their belief systems. Orientalism is continued with the mass media as the mass media seems to be attempting to create a homogenous group (all individuals of the Middle-East are Muslim and all are brown Arabs). The mass
The American mass media content that audience members get to see on a consistent basis is truly
demonizing Muslims and Arabs. This demonization is based on the presentation of falsities that the mass
media persistently present as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs. The mass media get to define these
individuals’ culture and get to define the characteristics that they allegedly possess. The biggest problem
with the mass media defining individuals’ characteristics is that they give them primarily negative
features. This is done by bashing the religion of Islam as a fraudulent and violent copy of Christianity.
On top of the representation of a violent religion, the worshipers (Muslims) are shown as violent as they
are supposedly ordered to be such because of their religious dogma. The individuals that are considered
Muslim are also shown as being Arab because of their skin color, which is primarily brown, and they are
shown speaking Arabic. These representations created by the mass media have the power to influence
viewers as viewers will not have experiences with cultures and peoples different than their own. The
mass media demonize Islam, Muslims, and Arabs by condemning their religion, stealing their humanity,
and making it seem that they are barbaric thugs that kill innocent people.

The mass media have created a violent identity that revolves around individuals that are Muslim
and/or Arab. The worst exemplar that the mass media show on a consistent basis is that Muslims and
Arabs threaten America, American values, and the people that live there. The exaggerated
representations of Muslims and Arabs as a threat are taken to an extreme level on TV shows and
Hollywood films. Unlike the news media, TV shows and Hollywood films can go into the psyche of the
terrorist to show what drives the individual. This can show that the person is just psychotic, resentful, or
a bigot that hates America and non-Muslims. These consistently shown representations become the
reality for some viewers as they have no first-hand experience with the individuals shown. The terrorists
on TV shows and Hollywood films can be shown to be violent for the sake of violence, or for the sake of
their religion, or for some other perverse goal. The terrorists on TV shows and films are individuals that spout catchphrases such as “Allah Akbar!” (God is great) and “Praise be Allah” before committing terrorist attacks. The representations of individuals stating religious credo publicly creates a correlation that Islam and its followers Muslims are violent and dangerous. These representations create misunderstandings in viewers as they only know them in the most negative of representations. This is how Mexican-Americans are represented as “Ese” saying cholos, African-Americans represented as violent gangsters or G’s, and lower class whites represented as inbred rednecks. The mass media have gone to an extreme as it pertains to Muslims and Arabs as they are represented as a threat to the countries’ national security.

The mass media have an immense power to influence viewer’s perceptions of people that are foreign to them. This power to influence is derived from the fact that viewers do not have first-hand experience with individuals shown. The mass media have over the years defined what it means to be a Muslim-Arab individual. The news media, TV shows, and Hollywood films show Islam as a violent religion, and Muslims as violent mindless automatons that obey their allegedly violent religions’ doctrine. To top this off the Muslims are shown as brown individuals that are represented as Arab. This does not take into consideration that not all Muslims are Arabs and not all Arabs are Muslims. The representations created by the media though are of violent brown individuals that worship an evil deity (Allah) that allegedly requires violence against non-believers. The September 11th attacks solidified the impression of a dangerous people as the deaths and destructions of this one attack were astronomically higher than the many years of accumulated terrorist attacks around the world. The mass media went on a campaign to disparage Muslims and Arabs in their media representations. Real life terrorists were allowed to speak on the news as if they were authority figures. These real life terrorists gave Islam and Muslims a violent identity that could not be contradicted as few positive Muslim and/or Arab individuals were presented in the news media. TV shows and Hollywood films continue this
condemnation by showing only violent Muslim and Arab characters that commit terrorist attacks against innocent American citizens. The media very rarely show a positive representation of individuals that are Muslim and/or Arab to contradict the negative representations shown. The mass media thus has demonized and continues to demonize Muslims and Arabs by primarily showing negative representations that can affect viewer’s perceptions. The only way that this will change is if viewers educate themselves and are not be too dependent on the mass media. The mass media though will likely continue to victimize these people as they are relevant in the world news.

*What This Study Adds to Cultivation Theory*

This study adds to Cultivation Theory in a few ways. The first is that Cultivation Theory can be applied to more than just television as Gerbner and his colleagues have stated. With today’s technologies such as the internet, high definition tablets, telephones with internet connectivity, and high definition theaters (IMAX for example) the masses have access to more than just television viewing. Thus, viewers have many options to see many different media content that were not always available. As such Cultivation Theory is applicable to more than just television viewing as these new technologies allow the viewing of so many different media contents from this country and from around the world. Also, this study adds to Cultivation Theory by showing that this theory is applicable to the study of race issues. In this instance Cultivation Theory was applied to Muslims and Arabs, but the theory could be applied to other races and religions as it pertains to their representation in the mass media. Lastly, it adds to the study of Cultivation Theory by showing that mass media content viewing can lead to such things as hate and hate crimes as was mentioned in the paper. Cultivation Theory is a theory that lends itself to many instances of media content study.

*Potential for Future Studies*

This study has the possibility to be continued by researchers in the future. The study could amass more information on other kinds of non-traditional media’s that are studied less as it pertains to the
representation of minorities. The study of video games is a possibility as games are made that reflect regions and people of the world. At the time of this writing there were video games that represented the Middle-East and the people that resided there. The study of social networks (Myspace and Facebook) could be studied to see how individuals represent individuals of different races and religions. This could be studied by seeing the posts and pictures that they put on their homepage. This could be studied to see how individuals see people that are different than themselves. Lastly, see videos on the internet to see how minorities are represented, whether it is positive or negative representations. This recommendation is reflective of the technologies that exist at the moment. New technologies will change the research possibilities that studies in the future will have.
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Vita

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