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MASS MEDIA'S CULTIVATION EFFECT ON ISLAMIC, MUSLIM,
AND QUR'ANIC PREJUDICE

Shanna J. Carlson

97 Pages

This thesis explores the power of the mass media's ability to cultivate reality in terms of the threat of Islam. A rhetorical analysis of the messages portrayed by the mass media is then compared to the findings of the study. While the study did not find any significant correlation between consumption of media and fear of Muslims, the Qur'an, or Islam, it did find a strong negative correlation between intergroup contact and salience of stereotypes.

KEYWORDS: Muslim, Islam, Rhetoric, Cultivation Effect, Agenda Setting, Mass Media

MASS MEDIA'S CULTIVATION EFFECT ON ISLAMIC, MUSLIM,
AND QUR'ANIC PREJUDICE

SHANNA J. CARLSON

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Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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MASS MEDIA'S CULTIVATION EFFECT ON ISLAMIC, MUSLIM,
AND QUR'ANIC PREJUDICE

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S. J. C.

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
CONTENTS	iii
TABLES	vi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
Western Construction of Islam	10
Ideology	11
Hegemony	11
Collective memory	13
Rhetoric	16
Rhetoric and ideology	17
Political rhetoric	18
Ideographs	21
Media Effects	24
Agenda Setting	24
Priming the audience and framing the problem	28
Cultivating Reality	30
Cultivation theory	30
Cultivating stereotypes	34
Cultivation and threat construction	35
Media Depiction of Arabs in Western Thought	41

Beginnings of Islamic Threat Construction	41
Threat Construction after the Cold War	44
Threat Construction During the Second Bush Administration	46
Continued Coverage of Islam	51
Hypotheses and Research Questions	53
Conclusion	56
CHAPTER III: METHODS	57
Participants and Procedures	57
Survey	58
Demographics	58
Islamophobia Scale	58
Intergroup Contact	59
Cultural Sensitivity Presentation Bias	59
Stereotypes	60
Media Usage	60
Procedure	61
Data Analysis	61
Conclusion	62
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS	63
Hypothesis 1	63
Hypothesis 2 and 3	66
Research Question 1	68
Conclusion	68

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION	69
Summary of Findings	69
Hypothesis 1	70
Hypothesis 2 and 3	72
Research Question 1	73
Conclusion	74
Limitations	74
Implications for Practice	76
REFERENCES	80
APPENDIX A: COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS	95

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Source of News: Percentages	65
2. Independent-Samples Test	66
3. Pearson Correlation	67

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Muslims and Middle Easterners have constituted the West's and Christianity's number one nemesis for close to ten centuries. A diverse and large area of the world has been reduced to a single identity: the barbaric, hate-driven Muslim Arab. Shaheen (2003) explains that the term "Arab" is used to "refer to the 265 million people who reside in and the many more millions around the world who are from the 22 Arab states" (p. 173). The Muslim population has surged to 1.6 billion and is considered "the fastest growing religion...[and]...if current demographic trends continue, the number of Muslims is expected to exceed the number of Christians by the end of this century" (Lipka, 2016, "How many Muslims," para. 1). Lipka explains that the majority of the world's Muslim population is not centered in the Middle East or Northern Africa. Indonesia is currently the home to the largest concentration of Muslims, but India is expected to replace Indonesia by 2050 with a projected Muslim population of 300 million (Lipka, 2015). This dispersion of Islam is being fueled by global climate change and violent wars raging across the East.

Muslims and non-Muslims are interacting more and more frequently. The growing global climate and immigration trends are only going to increase interaction between the groups. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2016) explains that since January 1, 2016, the numbers of refugees from Northern Africa and the Middle East are steadily increasing. Some of these refugees may be due to climate change. Frangoul (2016) reports that a German study predicted that "by the middle of the century temperatures in these areas [Middle East and North Africa] would not drop lower than 30 degrees Celsius at night during the warmest periods, with temperatures potentially hitting 46 degrees Celsius during the day" (para 6); climate change anticipates migration out of these areas to cooler climates. However, the

UNHCR reports that “the vast majority of those attempting this dangerous crossing are in need of international protection, fleeing war, violence, and persecution in their country of origin” (np). The growing Muslim population around the world and the forced increased interaction among cultures highlights the need to explore the media’s ability to cultivate and maintain a fear of an entire religion and region of the world.

Al Dawlah al-Islameyah fi Iraq wal-Sham (daesh), which translates into the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), is carrying out bombings around the world, security lines at airports are growing longer, fear of the next terror attack is high, and the media are capitalizing on these situations. Mass media outlets are constantly reporting on the latest bombing or feared threat all over the world. Islamophobia has become so pervasive that anything can cause a scare if it is seen as being Arab, Islamic, or *daesh*. *Agence France-Presse* (2015) reports that a global charity group, The Bearded Villains, were reported to Swedish police as suspected *daesh* members. In an interview with *Agence France-Presse*, the group’s spokesman, Andre Fransson, said that he acknowledges “that the club’s flag – two crossed sabers on a black background – could easily be confused with that of the militant group” (para. 5). While it may be true that the club’s flag does resemble *daesh*’s, that is not grounds for the need for a police presence. The men are part of an international organization that does charity work around the world, yet they suffer at the hands of Islamophobia simply for the colors on their flag.

Europe is witnessing a vast influx of Middle Eastern and Muslim refugees due to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Hjelmgaard (2016) explains that anti-immigration/anti-Muslim groups and demonstrations are quickly growing. “Germany’s Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident, or PEGIDA” (para. 2) held a demonstration in Dresden that drew thousands of participants. PEGIDA, and other groups across Europe, have organized multiple

demonstrations denouncing the acceptance of Muslim refugees. The protests are not always peaceful either; Hjelmgard states that “riot police clashed with protesters at several of the rallies including in Calais, France, where police used tear gas to disperse crowds” (para. 7).

The United States has seen its share of rejection of Syrian refugees as well. Fantz and Brumfield (2015) report that “states protesting the admission of refugees range from Alabama and Georgia, to Texas and Arizona, to Michigan and Illinois, to Main and New Hampshire. Among these 31 states, all but one have Republican governors” (para. 2). The United States Federal Government has the final say on where refugees are sent; 31 states opposed any Syrian refugee because they feared all of the refugees would be members of *daesh* (Fantz & Brumfield). The 2016 Republican nominee, Donald Trump, has gone so far as to suggest a moratorium on all Muslim immigrants. Since this suggestion in early 2016, he and his Vice-Presidential candidate, Michael Pence, have changed the proposal to be all immigrants from regions with ties to terrorism against the United States and its allies, possibly including Christians and non-Muslim’s in their proposal (Parker, 2016). The blatant threat construction regarding Islam and Muslims needs to be addressed.

The mainstream stereotype that Muslims are *daesh* terrorists sneaking into America disguised as refugees is not the only discrimination Muslims and Arabs face. The fear of another attack on the level of September 11, 2001, against the U.S. is very real for many. Such fear resulted in the delay of an American Airlines flight when a female passenger accused an individual next to her of being a terrorist based on his writing (Guardian staff, 2016). *The Guardian* reports that University of Pennsylvania economics professor Guido Menzio “was solving a differential equation, but said he was told the woman thought he might be a terrorist because of what he was writing” (para. 3). While Menzio told *The Guardian* that he was treated

with the upmost respect from the FBI agents, his experience, and the experiences of others, highlight the lack of education regarding Islam, Muslims, and the Middle East. False accusations regarding “Islamic terrorists” affect more people every day.

Discrimination based on religion has compounded racial oppression for centuries. California high school student Bayan Zehlif unfortunately was a victim of this discrimination because she is dark skinned and wears a hijab. Her high school yearbook identified her as “Isis Phillips,” and her school is claiming it is an honest mistake (Begley, 2016). In response to her school’s attempted apology, Zehlif told Begley that the school had “the audacity to say this was a typo. I beg to differ, let’s be real” (para. 2). The school maintains that Zehlif was mistaken for a student at the school who is named Isis; nonetheless, Begley reports that many individuals have reacted on social media claiming the move was driven by Islamophobia and have called for Zehlif to take action. Sadly, high school students are not the only ones that are targets of Islamophobia.

Anyone that has dark skin and hair is at risk of being identified as a member of Al Qaeda, even Miss USA 2014, Nina Davuluri (Abad-Santos, 2013). Following her crowning, Davuluri, who is an Indian-American, was subjected to numerous anti-Muslim outcries (Abad-Santos). Abad-Santos explains that “she was born in Syracuse” and lived her life in America (“Racism Fail,” para. 1). Furthermore, “the part of India where Davuluri’s parents hail from, Andhra Pradesh, is not predominantly Muslim...it’s 88.8 percent Hindu.” Individuals took to social media to lash out at Davuluri. Many called her “an Al Qaeda plant” and went as far as linking her “coronation with 9/11, suggesting that the choice of a brown woman was in some way disrespectful and unpatriotic, given the fact that the pageant was held four days after the 12th anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center” (Hafiz, 2013, np). However, Miss USA

2010, Rima Fakih, was a Muslim. She was also emigrated from Lebanon to Las Vegas (Sacirbey, 2010). In an interview with Sacirbey, Fakih is open about her religion and being seen as an ambassador for other Muslims. While she did receive some racial backlash when she won, the outcries were not as vehement as the ones endured by Davuluri. Hafiz (2013) explains that “the authors of the anti-Muslim tweets appear to have forgotten that...the winner of the 2010 Miss USA pageant, Rima Fakih, actually is [Muslim]. And the sky didn’t fall” (np). When and who is targeted by Islamophobia is uncertain, but what is certain is that Islamophobia is deeply engrained in individuals around the world.

Villains exist in our movies, fictional stories, and news broadcasts. Film adaptations of books and short stories often take cultural liberties in characterization and scene settings. The iconic James Bond movies would change the nationality of the villains Fleming created or inflate the original threat in an effort to match real world political fears to Hollywood’s created reality. Bennett and Woollacot (1987) explain that “in the novel, Goldfinger’s aim is to seize the American gold reserves. . . [but] in the film, Goldfinger’s conspiracy takes the form of a nuclear threat. An atomic device, provided by Red China” (p. 155). China had recently tested its first successful nuclear weapon and fear of a nuclear attack against the United States was high (Bennett & Woollacot). While Fleming wrote for a different political situation than when the films were created, this did not stop Hollywood’s adaptation of his work to the current political atmosphere. Black (2001) contends that “the difference in politics between the books and the films is true both of method and of content” (p. 92). Contemporary mass media often rely on the Arab villain, such as *Syriana*, the television series *Homeland*, and many others. Altering characters continues in the 21st century, this time with the villain being changed to Muslim and/or Arab.

More recently, comic books have been re-popularized and are being manipulated to fit current political conditions. *Iron Man* and *Iron Man 3* are two movies that uniquely target the “deplorable” Muslim terrorist. In 2008 *Iron Man* graced the silver screen. Full of action and new high-tech weapons, Tony Stark makes millions through his ever more powerful and efficient weapons of mass destruction used to fight the terrorists. Tony Stark was captured by an Islamic group and only escapes through the aid of a Christian Arab who is also held captive. Toward the end of the movie, Tony Stark retaliates against the cell by returning to the area he was held captive and bombing it with abandon, ensuring that every member of the terrorist cell is incinerated. *Iron Man 3*'s main villain was named “Mandarin” and in the comics was depicted as a villain of Chinese descent; however, Marvel Studios Kevin Feige told Breznican (2012) that the production team decided “to blur the background” of the Mandarin for the film (para. 13). However, despite the team's greatest efforts, the Mandarin was depicted primarily as a stereotypical Arab villain, complete with a “bin Laden-esque beard” and AK-47 kept at his side (para. 13). Marvel Studios may have been trying to blur the character's background, but instead their efforts resulted in just reframing the villain's ethnicity to the most recent perceived international threat.

The mass media have managed to silence Arabia and Islam's contributions to the entire world. Arabic and Islamic contributions to society, especially Western society, go unappreciated. Leonardo di Vinci found his inspiration in Arab and Persian physicians and scientists, the concept of absolute zero and algebra was invented by Arabs, Western scholars were able to create an advanced educational system based on Arab intellectuals, and many English words have Arabic roots – “algebra, chemistry, coffee, and others” (Shaheen, 2003, p. 173). Shaheen also explicates how:

in astronomy, Arabs used astrolabes for navigation, star maps, celestial globes, and the concept of the center of gravity. In geography, they pioneered the use of latitude and longitude. They invented the water clock; their architecture inspired the Gothic style in Europe. In agriculture, they introduced oranges, dates, sugar, and cotton, and pioneered water works and irrigation. (p. 173)

However, Americans are rarely, if ever, educated on these advancements. American students are taught that Newton discovered gravity, Galileo discovered that the earth was round, and that the Greeks and Romans pioneered agricultural irrigation. Attributing these discoveries to more Westernized individuals continues to cultivate the idea that nothing good has or will come out of Islam or the Middle East.

Additionally, the Arab world has been known to aid the West in wars with itself. Shaheen (2003) illustrates how “Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian soldiers...fought alongside French troops in North Africa, Italy, and France. Also, Jordanian and Libyan troops assisted members of the British armed services. And, late in the conflict, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq declared war on Germany” (p. 182) during WWII. While these countries feared a hostile takeover if Germany were to win, they easily could have refused to join a side, but instead volunteered soldiers to fight and die *for* the West, not against it. Currently, the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) is a group of nations allied together in the fight against *daesh* in Iraq and Syria. Among the members are the United States, the Kingdom of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (“U.S., Coalition Strikes,” 2016). Coalition members help not only with airstrikes against *daesh*, but also contribute other humanitarian aid that is needed for the area (“Operation Inherent Resolve,” n.d.). Middle Eastern support of Western led military campaigns continues to be an integral part of U.S. military strategy around the world.

There are also non-violent Islamic movements around the world. One such movement, *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (The Party of Islamic Liberation), refuses to engage in violence. *Hizb ut-Tahrir* “is an international Islamic movement, which calls for the unification of all Muslim countries into a single state” (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, p. 316). However, unlike the forces in Syria and Iraq, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* refuses to use force or violence to create the single Muslim state. Karagiannis and McCauley conducted field research and concluded “that there are around 30,000 members and many more sympathizers” (p. 316). When new members join, leaders of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* mandates that they take a course that explains the group’s ideology and hierarchy. Karagiannis and McCauley state that “there is a range of disciplinary measures for members who break the rules, with expulsion being the most severe penalty” (p. 317). When the leaders of the organization deal with members that do not fully adhere to their teachings, they resist physical violence. This organization has existed for 50 years with very few alterations to its structure or religious doctrine. Karagiannis and McCauley attribute this continued structure to the group’s “dogmatic and consistent implementation of its ideology, which envisions a peaceful overthrow of the existing regimes in Muslim countries” (p. 318). *Hizb ut-Tahrir* has adopted the use of evolving technology to spread its ideology, but refuses to adopt a violent effort to command control of Muslim states. However, the Western media refuses to focus on this growing group in favor of focusing on those institutions that favor the use of violence and claim to do so in the name of Islam.

Fear of Muslims and Islam is potent in a lot of news stories and movies. Individuals and groups are being misidentified as members of terrorist organizations and the stories surrounding these occurrences provides insight into what is being deemed important. We are taught to fear

and hate things through our socialization process, we are not born with prejudice. However, family and friend groups may not be the only influential individuals in our acquired prejudice.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to analyze the relationship between exposure to media consumption and the most common held beliefs about Arabs, Muslims, and Islam. The media's ability to cultivate an enemy for a nation must be explored and understood. The next chapter will explore how the United States and the mass media work together to fuel the Industrial War Machine through century old tropes.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Many aspects of the mass media regularly advance the notion that all Muslims are terrorists and that all terrorists are Muslims through news stories and movies. Anti-Islamic sentiment has grown so strong that Muslim children are afraid to go out in public, and individuals who even appear to be from the Middle East are labeled as terrorists. However, this notion is not one that is unique to the media or the present political climate.

The Middle Eastern Islamic terrorist is a long standing trope. Many American politicians have successfully maintained the mental connection between “Muslim” and “terrorist” through ideological and social construction approaches. The group with the most power in a given culture, the hegemon, chooses the ideological stance it determines to be superior and then reinforces this ideology through social mechanisms such as mass media. These approaches are deeply rooted in Western constructions of Islam and the Middle East and remain consistent in the United States throughout the history of media representation. As the tropes are pervasive in American media, it seems likely that frequent exposure to them will, according to cultivation theory (Gerbner, 2002), lead viewers to espouse anti-Islamic attitudes.

Western Construction of Islam

The West, specifically the United States, has used the cultural realm as a playground for advancing its own agenda, sometimes at the expense of people from other nations. Winning the hearts and of minds of a populace is a common war tactic, and the West continues to utilize this tactic in its efforts to maintain support for its war machine. The West does not appear ready to alter course in its continued targeting of the Middle East and Muslims. This continued campaign is fueled through ideology, American hegemony, the collective memory, and rhetorical tactics.

Ideology

Ideologies are used to explain that which occurs around us. Hall (1986), who derives a lot of his notions on ideology from Gramsci, defines ideology as “the mental frameworks – the language, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (p. 29). Scholars agree that ideology involves power dynamics, hegemony, and world views, such that reality is constructed through those in power and that the masses are unaware of what is truly occurring because they are only privy to part of the information (Gramsci, 2012; Hall, 1972; McGee, 1980).

Hegemony. Who controls power and who is controlled by power is constantly shifting in society. Hegemons utilize ideologies to maintain power and to order society. Understanding how power flows through different social groups and societies is important in understanding how media promote the hegemon’s values and ideals. Gramsci (1971) views power as gelatinous in that there is generally a main hegemon, but within each society there are smaller groups and smaller hegemons that reinforce or challenge the main hegemon. Zompetti (2012) explains that those that possess the most wealth and influence are often those that achieve and maintain power to become the hegemons. He contends that this occurs through the process of “alienation and commodification,” in which individuals are separated from social issues through the hegemon’s emphasis on valuing possessions and accumulating wealth (p. 4).

While power can be shared, Gramsci (1971) recognizes that there are individuals on the fringes of society who seem to have almost no power at all and refers to these groups as the subaltern. These individuals are the ones that societies tend to ignore and silence. “Common sense” encourages the subaltern to adhere to the policies of the hegemon, not to challenge their

position in society, and embrace the hegemonic cultural values and norms. Gramsci defines “common sense” as “the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in any given epoch” (p. 322). The hegemon deters resistance from the subaltern because the subaltern are taught that how things are is how they have always been and will always be, and that changing would cause more harm than good. The subaltern do not often contest their position in society because they have accepted that they are where they are because of things outside of their control. The subaltern embraces common sense because it creates the false belief that the hegemonic ideals and values are good for them.

Culture is constantly shaped by that which society experiences on a daily basis. Daily experiences reinforce the culture the hegemon has deemed to be appropriate, and it occurs through many different avenues. George (1994) explains that “discourse... generates the categories of meaning by which reality can be understood and explained” (p. 25). If discourse did not exist, individuals would not be able to communicate with each other to establish norms and practices. However, George does not reduce discourse to *just* language; he believes, rather, that it is “a broader matrix of social practices that gives meaning to the way that people understand themselves and their behavior” (p. 25). In this sense, discourse is what allows those in power to dictate how those with less power should think about the world around them. It is through discourse that the hegemon is able to utilize common sense to its advantage.

Gramsci (1971) furthers the notion of discourse’s role in creating common sense with his discussion of the individual. Gramsci argues that “man does not enter into relations with the natural world just by being himself part of the natural world, but actively, by means of work and technique. . . these relations. . . are active and conscious” (p. 352). Individuals consciously examined the location in which they are placed and then choose a way to respond to the

environment. Through common sense, individuals are given cognitive shortcuts to use, which aid them to quickly make decisions. The individual is not an object that is told what to do, but rather a subject that is offered many forms of discourse from which to choose; but most, if not all, of these discourses encourage the individual to adhere to the hegemon. In an attempt to pacify the subaltern, the hegemon utilizes a multitude of discourses and encourages the subaltern to use cognitive shortcuts based on common sense. Often, these discourses become “naturalized,” so that it seems that the place of the subaltern is “naturally” marginal to the hegemon; certain relations between the hegemon and the subaltern become taken for granted. At this point others produce and reproduce the marginalizing discourses even without intent, as they become part of collective memory and common sense.

Collective memory. Mumby (1989) also pulls from Gramsci’s notions of ideology, and contends that “meaning is...contingent not only on intersubjective understanding within a community, but also on the process by which certain dominant groups are able to frame the interests of competing groups within their own particular world-view” (p. 293). Hegemons use ideology to create shared meaning so that they can dictate to the masses what *they* want them to understand and remember. The deliberate explanation and organization of ideas creates a societal collective memory and view of certain situations and events. The collective memory is comprised of opinions and thoughts that social groups agree upon as being true because it is what has always been known or stated. This collective memory directly aids the hegemon because it provides a history that is articulated in such a way to emphasize acceptance of the hegemon as common sense (Durkheim, 1915; Tileaga, 2012; Zandberg, 2014).

A group’s collective memory is always influenced by the hegemon. Common sense and the collective memory work together to create a history that benefits the hegemon and its values.

Zandberg (2014) argues that the collective memories of a group also help to “mark its boundaries” (p.4). The collective memory of a group creates the belief that the group truly knows what has happened in the past. Althusser (2008) argues that ideologies “do not correspond to reality, i.e. that they constitute an illusion” (p. 36). It is through this illusion, which culminates in the collective memory, that a hegemon is able to reinforce common sense and elicit compliance. It must be noted that no society operates through a singular ideology because “ideology is always pluralistic”: Ideologies build upon each other and compete with each other at the same time (Berlin, 1988, p. 479). The competition between ideologies allows the hegemon to ensure that “the overall effect of these permutations tends to support the hegemony of the dominant class” (Berlin, 1988, p. 479). Without the competition, the hegemon has nothing to position itself against and risks the rise of a new hegemon. This competition also aids the hegemon in interpolating individuals into its ideology. Althusser (2008) explains that “ideology. . . ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals, . . . or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects. . . by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing” (p. 48, emphasis in original). Interpellation is similar to someone calling to another to get their attention and bring them over to join a group or a conversation. It occurs more easily when the hegemon utilizes common sense and the collective memory to encourage new members of a society to join the dominant ideology.

However, common sense and the collective memory are not always historically accurate. Hasain and Frank (1999) caution that, while history and the collective memory are complementary, they are not the same. Histories are what are accepted by the majority of the academic community to be accurate portrayals of past events while “*collective memories*, on the other hand, are the public acceptances or ratifications of this histories on the part of broader

audiences” (p. 98). While history and the collective memory provide two different services, they both aid in understanding community identities and how ideologies come to be accepted and/or rejected (Hasain & Frank).

Often the hegemon utilizes the media to reinforce the collective memory of a group. Edy (1999) explains that the collective memory is essential to society because it is “home to critical aspects of political culture, community tradition, and social identity” (p. 71). The media play a large role in the production and reproduction of the collective memory because of their ability to reach large and varied audiences at one time. Academic and political elites no longer reserve the right to “narrate the past” because “nowadays, major historical events gain their public meanings not only through academic and state-sponsored interpretations but also through the media” (Zandberg, 2014, p. 4). Despite increased access to historical information, societies are beginning to view the media as “the authoritative tellers of past and the shapers of public memory” (p. 4). Edy (1999) discusses how the media take a more tempestuous approach to history than to education, while the classroom is viewed to be more of an objective history. When the media cover history, they depict it as the “responsibility of individuals, rather than social forces” (p. 72). The classroom is supposed to teach historical events in broad terms, while the mass media tend to focus on individuals they characterize as heroes or villains. The larger societal, environmental, and political circumstances are not always thoroughly explored by the mass media; rather, a microscopic view of the situation is passed off as the sole cause of cataclysmic events. Those in power decide how history is reported, either the hegemon will be covered as a hero or will be completely excluded in hopes of minimizing any questions about wrongdoing that occurred under their watch (Edy). When a cultural or national trauma occurs, societies must find a way to understand it and generally turn to public discourse for this

understanding (Zandberg, 2014). Zandberg further explains that “the media play a decisive role in representing cultural trauma and in recuperating from it, providing the symbolic means for a community to narratively reconnect past and present” (p. 12). The mass media play a unique role in the narrative that allows for public agreement to be reached regarding traumatic events because of its large audience base and ability to bring many voices together in one place. The media’s involvement with the hegemon and its role in collective memory make it a unique area for rhetorical analysis.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric involves all words and images that are meant to influence either an individual’s perception of the world or situation or to persuade an individual to do something. Aristotle’s writings on rhetoric are one of the the oldest still in existence (Campbell & Huxmann, 2009). Aristotle introduced the rhetorical proofs of *logos* (logic), *pathos* (emotion), and *ethos* (credibility). The situation in which speakers found themselves would determine how these proofs should be combined together. Furthermore, rhetoric’s purpose was to supplant violence and coercion: It was meant to bring about collaboration and further understanding. Campbell and Huxmann (2009) explain that “Aristotle considered rhetoric an offshoot of logic, and a rhetorical perspective is characterized not only by an emphasis on social truths but also by an emphasis on reason-giving or justification in place of coercion or violence” (p. 4). However, rhetoric's involvement in the creation of meaning has evolved to incorporate more than just the words of the message creator. Campbell and Huxmann expand rhetoric’s definition by stating that rhetoric includes “the study of all the processes by which people influence each other through symbols, regardless of the intent of the source” (p. 7). This broader definition of rhetoric allows for the examination of the arts as forms of rhetoric, but retains the ability to apply

Aristotle's proofs in examination of how a certain form of rhetoric persuades an audience. Also, Campbell and Huxmann's definition provides the basis for an examination of a receiver's perception of a message, allowing for the exploration of persuasion's potential even when a sender did not intend for a message to be persuasive.

While Aristotle focuses on the sender and the written word, Campbell and Huxman (2009) expand the definition of rhetoric to include visual rhetoric, allowing scholars to explore all aspects of a message. They encourage the examination of messages that were never intended to be persuasive because of the possible persuasive nature of rhetoric that otherwise appears innocuous. Understanding the persuasive nature of informational messages and their persuasive capabilities allows researchers to study seemingly neutral forms of communication and their possible hidden persuasion. The notions of Campbell and Huxman allow the exploration of rhetoric utilized by the mass media, not only for news programming, but also the visual rhetoric of images on screens and in advertisements.

Rhetoric and ideology. Ideology cannot function or survive without rhetoric. Rhetoric aids in the dissemination of the thoughts and ideas of individuals regarding how the world should be ordered and understood. Berlin (1988) argues that, "instead of rhetoric acting as the transcendental recorder or arbiter of competing ideological claims, rhetoric is regarded as always ideological" (p. 477). Rhetoric does not simply record history; it perpetuates ideas and thoughts, manipulating history and circumstances to be what the hegemon desires. Ideology is always rhetorical because its very nature is designed to convince individuals of a particular world view: Ideology cannot exist without rhetoric.

While each individual word is not always consciously chosen by a rhetor in every rhetorical act, all rhetorical acts are rooted in an ideological perspective. Campbell and Huxman

(2009) define a rhetorical act as “an intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the challenges in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end” (p. 7). Every rhetorical act is unique because no audience or situation is exactly the same. Also, “ideological formulations remain largely unconscious to both their speaker and their receivers,” making it is impossible to always know what ideology is guiding a rhetor at any given moment (Makus, 1990, p. 500).

While rhetoric is occasionally used without an awareness of purpose, there are times when certain phrases are chosen with deliberate intent. When crafting a rhetorical act for a specific purpose, the rhetor must employ some ideology to order their thoughts. Berlin (1988) explains that “ideology provides the language to define the subject (the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relation of all of these to each other” (p. 479). It is organized and formulated ideology that allows for a rhetor to explain a situation and to make sense of the world for a target audience. This means that a rhetor can never escape reinforcing or using an ideology because the ideology is “inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience” (Berlin, 1988, p. 479). Ideology dictates the way in which individuals construct their thoughts and phrases because the State utilizes ideology to order the world for its citizen to ensure that power remains with the State. Those groups that do not find themselves to be part of the central group in power utilize ideology as well. The groups found to be part of the subaltern often function through their own ideologies and employ those ideologies as a means to confront the hegemon (Gramsci, 1972).

Political rhetoric. States compete with other states, and hegemons within each state also compete with each other, often using the force of words. Franck and Weisband (1971) examined for example, how the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States

challenged each other through rhetoric. Their research finds that the rhetoric of public figures, whether politicians or celebrities, influenced state actions. Therefore, realists are incorrect in their assumption that actions hold more weight in the international realm than words do. Realists fail to recognize that rhetorical acts have the capacity to be equivalent to physical acts and hold just as much legitimacy in certain circumstances. Franck and Weisband note that “verbal weapons are as ‘real’ in their strategic potential as missiles and submarines” (p. 118). States are no longer only intimidated through the use of weapons; words can strike fear in the hearts of leaders. States position each other through the rhetoric they use when speaking about the so-called “Other.” Rhetorical messages are perceived to possess the same seriousness as physical acts now because “signals, messages, [and] communications in bargaining situations” are regarded with high importance (pp. 118-119). The counterbalance of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction creates a political atmosphere where differences must be settled through the use of words rather than weapons because the risk to human life is too great. States can now turn to rhetorical weapons before they are forced to resort to physical weapons to intimidate each other. Even though the Cold War has ended, the threat of a nuclear exchange still looms, and countries are constantly on high alert. An example of this is the current possibility of Iran nuclearizing and Russia’s recent seizure of Crimea (Vasovic & Baczynska, 2014).

Military strategy is not solely composed of when to send troops and how to position them, but it considers all public rhetorical statements as well. States now understand that allies are more important than ever. The world has become so integrated that a country must not only defend itself but must also ensure that those countries that it is economically and politically tied to are also protected. This acquisition of allies occurs through verbal posturing between

superpowers (or hegemons) who seek to establish superiority over the other in the minds of smaller countries. Cox (1983) contends that “the hegemonic concept of world order is founded not only upon the regulation of inter-state conflict but also upon a globally-conceived civil society” (p. 171). Focusing on a nation’s own problems is no longer sufficient, states must look abroad and ensure that their national image is viewed favorably. Cox furthers that “the economic and social institutions, the culture, the technology associated with national hegemony become patterns for emulation abroad” (p. 171). A superpower is able to widen their influence quicker when their institutions, culture, and technology are emulated abroad.

However, not only the state leaders but also individuals that are recognized as representatives of the state must carefully craft their messages. Franck and Weisband (1971) explain that “the official speaking for the state is expected to mean what he says – not simply whatever he thinks he means but what to the reasonable listener will be the logical concomitant of the words” (p. 121). This is because other states look to officials as representatives and interpret that when a state’s representative speaks they are speaking on behalf of their country, and their words are as definite as policy actions. Gramsci (1971) believes that social classes could be the site of hegemonic power struggles, and Cox (1983) argues that “the working class, which might be considered to be international in an abstract sense, nationalises itself in the process of building its hegemony” (p. 169). When a new group or leader emerges on the national stage it is likely that they will have an impact internationally because of the interconnectedness of the world.

Additionally, the future must always be considered when verbal statements are being prepared. This is because when a state makes an official announcement, other states often interpret this to mean that this new path will guide all future actions in similar situations. Franck

and Weisband (1971) warn that when “a superpower like the United States speaks, its words affect not only those specific events to which they are addressed, but also the international system as a whole, and thus the options available in a subsequent crisis” (p. 122). Also, states will take cues on how to act in a crisis from the superpowers, meaning that the superpower must understand that the way it acts may encourage reciprocal action from other states during similar situations. Superpowers must ensure that every time their representatives publicly speak, their words are carefully chosen. Superpowers have the unique capacity to reinforce and transform current political patterns with a single rhetorical act, but they must always remember that “words define state action” (p. 128). When a superpower designates a response to a certain situation as acceptable it must remember that it is not only designating the response acceptable for themselves, but for the entire world.

Ideographs. The way in which reality is created and individuals are brought into believing they are a part of a community involves an intricate weaving of rhetoric and ideology. McGee (1980a) set out to understand how ideology, myth, and rhetoric worked together to trick the public’s minds so that we are deluded “into believing that we ‘think’ with/through/for a society to which we ‘belong’” (p. 4). McGee coined the term “ideographs” as “the political language which manifests ideology. . . characterized by slogans, a vocabulary. . . easily mistaken for technical terminology of political philosophy” (p. 5). Ideographs simultaneously exist on a synchronic (occurring at a single point in time) and a diachronic (developing through time) level of interpretation. Reality is created through language, and the human brain prefers shortcuts when processing information; this is where ideographs are extremely helpful. McGee clarifies that “the concept ‘ideograph’ is meant to be purely descriptive of an essentially social human condition. . . . Attention is called to the social, rather than rational or ethical, functions of

a particular vocabulary” (p. 8). Ideographs are not based on rational thought, rather they inscribe the emotional and social reaction to a single word. Furthermore, McGee explains that ideographs are not created through pure observation, rather “they come to be as a part of the real lives of the people whose motives they articulate” (p. 7). These single words are able to evoke more meaning than a claim or full argument can ever hope to achieve (McGee, 1980b). McGee explains that, “like Chinese symbols, they signify and ‘contain’ a unique ideological commitment” (pp. 74).

While McGee (1980a, 1980b) focused on the ideograph through a political lens, scholars have expanded to include other parts of society’s rhetoric (Bennett-Carpenter & McCallion, 2012; Cloud, 2004; Lingarajan, 2011). Bennett-Carpenter and McCallion (2012) define ideographs as operating “as a totem. . . across societies, providing a symbolic reference point for the agendas, practices, and identities of all those involved” (p. 2). No longer does the scholar need to confine their research into how only politicians use words to wield power, but also how other groups within societies use ideographs as a way to gather support or insight dissent. Bennett-Carpenter and McCallion explicitly state that “the use of ideographs need not be exclusive to politics” (p. 3). They distinguish between first- and second-order ideographs. First-order ideographs are those words that bring large groups together, words such as <freedom>, <liberty>, <death>, and <success>; while second-order ideographs operate “on a micro level” and are used within smaller specialized groups (p. 5). Second-order ideographs can use first-order ideographs, but the meaning can change between groups, such as the Roman Catholic Church using <new evangelization> as a descriptor of the way it proselytizes (Bennet-Carpenter & McCallion). Cloud (2004) also explores how the ideograph can extend beyond the political.

When exploring the power of a visual ideograph, one must look into how an iconic image is diachronically used to invoke a response. Cloud (2004) explains that “visual ideographs are more than recurring iconic images that shift in meaning depending on context; they also index verbal ideographic slogans, making abstractions. . . concrete” (p. 287). Mass media consistently replay images in an effort to quickly evoke a response from the viewer, such as <pride>, <nationalism>, or <patriotism>. This is especially true during times of war or strife. The creation of an in and out-group is wordlessly created through images in newscasts and other forms of mass media (Cloud). Visual ideographs occur during times of conflict because “this binary construction strengthens national identification, entailing rigid disidentification with and scapegoating of the Other” (p. 290). Cloud explores visual ideographs through the way that Afghan women were portrayed during the American invasion of Afghanistan after September 11, 2001. The images of women suffering and the violent pictures of Afghani men resulted in images that “do not state the ideograph <clash of civilizations> as much as they *become the clash* in visual condensations of the meanings of ‘American’ and ‘Other’” (p. 291). Images of a bearded ‘middle-Eastern-looking’ man wearing a black cloak and turban can trigger an entire series of images of a fanatical religious movement, of airplane hijackings, of Western hostages held helpless in dungeons, of truck bombs illing hundreds of innocent people, of cruel punishments sanctioned by ‘Islamic law’ and of the suppression of human rights – in sum, of intellectual and moral regression. (Karim, 2006, p. 118)

In the era of easily accessible visual mass media there is no longer the need to rely on language to convey an ideograph; images are now able to do work of words.

Media Effects

Althusser (2008) argues that hegemony uses not only repressive means to maintain their control, but also “ideological state apparatuses” (p. 17), such as the education system, religion, and the media. Thus, while the West uses politicians to advance its anti-Islamic sentiments, it also utilizes the mass media. Political speeches and official announcements typically reach only those individuals who specifically follow politics or politicians. However, the mass media provide a venue where a wider range of individuals can be influenced through repeated portrayals of a threat without their knowledge. The mass media provide a unique theatre for political messages to be disseminated without consumers actively knowing the message is political. To establish the role of the media, we must first consider how the media frame Islam and the Middle East (within the notion of agenda setting) and then consider whether such framing has specific effects on audiences, cultivating for them an anti-Islamic mindset.

Agenda Setting

McCombs and Shaw (1972) first explored the idea of agenda-setting in regards to political communication in the 1970s. They conducted a study in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to discover what issues individuals focused on during the 1972 presidential election and whether the issues they found to be the most important to the public were the issues most commonly covered by the media. While their findings were not confirmed, they did find a strong correlation between the media’s prominent issues and on the public’s issues of focus (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to agenda-setting theory, the public is likely to focus on the issues that are covered the most by the media because the media are generally the only source of political information easily available to the public. Shaw and Martin (1992) define agenda-setting as “a matching of issue patterns by collections of people in a social system” (p. 906).

Further research into agenda-setting has uncovered that the way an issue is treated does not affect how important an issue is; the amount of coverage is the only thing that matters (Borah, 2011).

The news agenda is co-created by the media and the public and results in the public holding the same “five to seven issues” to be important, and, due to “widely shared values, the agenda across media does not greatly differ from day to day” (Shaw & Martin, 1992, p. 905). The public is complicit in their participation of matching interests because it has given the media the power to choose the stories. Shaw and Martin describe the full process of agenda-setting as beginning with the understanding that:

Events are not issues, although some events may lead to issues. Journalists deal with these every day as individuals also do when they come in contact with them in their own lives. Individuals take cues from journalists (and also from other media content, such as entertainment programs), from other agenda setting institutions (schools, churches, work) and from reference groups such as those suggested by one’s gender, race, age or social or economic class...The end result of the total agenda-setting process is an influence on either our cognitive or actual observable behavior. (p. 917)

The conclusion Shaw and Martin draw is that, at the very least, agenda-setting influences the way the public organizes information, and, at the most, it spotlights public issues and draws the public closer to a consensus on what these issues are.

The media set the agenda in different ways. Newspapers set the agenda through “the size of the headline, the length of the story, and the page on which the story appears,” and television does it through the “position of an item in the newscast and the length of the story” (McCombs & Bell, 1996, p. 95). Agenda-setting provides the mechanism through which media control the

issues on which the public focuses and is informed. One of the first blatant uses of agenda-setting was the sudden public concern regarding illegal drug use. McCombs and Bell (1996) highlight how the “public concern about drugs began to build after *The New York Times* ‘discovered’ the drug problem in 1985” (p. 104). The placement of stories about the threat that cocaine and other illicit drugs posed society first appeared in *The Times* and the “problem” was reinforced when the next year Len Bias and Don Rogers, two professional sports players, died in drug-related deaths. Media exploited the few occurrences that surrounded illegal drug use as a way to fuel the narrative about the justification for the War on Drugs.

Utilizing the media as a way to direct public attention often benefits the hegemon and allows for easier misdirection. Shaw and Martin (1992) found that, as readership of newspapers increases, there is an increase in agreement with the media agenda and an increase in agreement between men and women. However, Shaw and Martin do not argue that this is an agreement where the solution to an issue is provided, just an agreement as to whether the issue is important or not. Shaw and Martin conducted a second study into the agenda put forth by television news and found similar results: “Data from both newspapers and television...influence us toward a common agenda of public issues and...away from the agenda perhaps associated with our unique historic reference groups if we read/view enough” (p. 917).

Agenda-setting reinforces the collective memory narrative of the hegemon. It is through media that discord is silenced to the best of the hegemon’s ability and the agenda of the hegemon is highlighted. While journalism classes often teach that the presentation of a diversity of agendas is ideal, media corporations discourage the coverage of too many different agendas because of the possible chaos that could ensue. Those that control the agenda for the media focus on the creation of “a set of agreed-upon news agenda values,” which precludes diversity or

challenging those in power (Shaw & Martin, 1992, p. 906). The “day-to-day rule is the watchdog theory,” which states that journalists will focus on those that are already in power and will criticize those marginal groups that attempt to challenge those in power (pp. 906-907).

Agenda-setting is what allows for the hegemon to co-opt issues of the periphery and reinforce the collective memory which reinforces the hegemon’s role and position in society.

In addition to the public and news agenda, there is the policy agenda. Dearing and Roger (1996) explain that “the policy agenda is of key importance because it represents an outcome of activity and influence on the media agenda and on the public agenda” (p. 72). The public and news agenda highlight issues in society, but do not provide a solution to the problem. The policy agenda seeks to explain what should and/or will be done in response to a problem. The news and public agenda fuel the political agenda because “policymakers pay close attention to and are often forced to respond to media coverage” (p. 74). The policy agenda is what can be found in court dockets, town-hall agendas, and in legislation (Dearing & Roger). While the news reporter is often in search of the timeliest story, politicians will often track the news agenda over a period of time before making a decision on what to focus. The politicians’ response will not always be covered by the news media, but the policy agenda will almost always be influenced by the news and public agenda.

Agenda-setting encourages salience to transfer from media to the public (McCombs, 2005). Salience occurs when “elements prominent in the media agenda become prominent over time on the public agenda” (p. 546). This transfer of salience occurs in the first two levels of agenda-setting; the first level identifies which general issues are deemed important and the second level focuses on specific aspects of the chosen issues (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

McCombs (2005) created a third level of agenda-setting which involves accounting for the

amount of effort required by the audience in staying informed on the issue when setting the agenda. The fourth level of agenda-setting begins with the question “If the press sets the public agenda, who sets the media agenda?” (p. 548). McCombs posits that journalists are constantly looking for affirmation that the story they are covering is, in fact, the correct story to be covering, which has led to reports that stories are all very similar across news media.

Furthermore, during television reports, stations will invite journalists from other sources to discuss issues which can artificially legitimize issue choice. The latter stages of agenda-setting identify three consequences for which media outlets must be prepared: “forming an opinion, priming opinions about public figures through an emphasis on particular issues, and shaping an opinion through an emphasis on particular attributes” (p. 549). The mass media must be prepared to defend their agenda and the consequences of that agenda. While agenda-setting examined how a message is formed, framing and priming, which constitute some of the higher levels of agenda-setting, explore the way the issue is discussed and whether an impact is predetermined for the audience through that discussion.

Priming the audience and framing the problem. Priming theory explains how the media have influential power over audience members’ emotions towards a story or idea. Although priming and agenda-setting occur at the same time, they are separate acts. Lee (2005) explains that priming aids the audience in knowing “how to think about” an issue, while agenda-setting aids the audience in knowing “what to think about” (pp. 7-8). In politics, media provide moral compasses and benchmarks for the public to utilize when rating the effectiveness of a governmental entity. Through providing the framework for evaluation, the media can predetermine the impact or decision for their audience.

Framing theory explores the ways in which media producers portray messages through mass news media. Borah (2011) explains that framing focuses on the way an issue is presented, not the frequency of the issue's discussion. That is, while the frequency of an issue's occurrence can impact the public's opinion, framing is only concerned with the formation of the story. Goffman (1974) hypothesizes that framing allows media to utilize fabrication, which he defines as "the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about it is that is going on" (p. 83). Framing allows the media to create a false truth that is accepted by the public. Generally, this false truth is readily accepted because common sense has taught the public that the news media provide only true information (Landy, 1994). Framing also enables viewers to process information more quickly. Pan and Kosicki (1993) explain that "we may conceive a news media frame as a cognitive device used in information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving" (p. 57). Frames allow for the viewer's brain to quickly catalogue information and orient "information in a unique context so that certain elements of the issue get a greater allocation of an individual's cognitive resources" (p. 57). Frames also utilize rhetorical structures to provide cognitive shortcuts. Rhetorical structures are also used by journalists "to invoke images, increase salience of a point, and increase vividness of a report," all in the effort to establish their story as a fact of reality (p. 62). Frames and rhetorical structures aid the journalist to be seen as reporting reality and an authority in the community (p. 62). Without these journalistic practices, frames would have a harder time creating salience and resonating with their audience (Pan & Kosicki).

Benford and Snow (2000) further the idea that false belief can be derived through frames when they explain that information "must be believable to some segment of prospective or actual adherents" (p. 620), but not all of a viewing audience must agree. As long as some subset of a

population will agree with the frame, then the framers will be successful. In regards to social movement frames, Benford and Snow argue that “hypothetically, the more central or salient the espoused beliefs, ideas, and values of a movement to the targets of mobilization, the greater the probability of their mobilization” (p. 621). The involvement of social movements in the issue’s frame is important because it impacts whether the hegemon or the movement persuade more individuals (Benford & Snow). Connecting different frames also helps pull individuals together and increases action regarding an issue. Benford and Snow explain that “frame bridging refers to the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames” (p. 624) and that that bridging is key to securing more individuals involved in a movement. However, hegemon can also use bridging as a way to subvert social change. The combination of agenda-setting, framing, and priming aids the media’s ability to cultivate the reality the hegemon wants accepted.

Cultivating Reality

Cultivation began with a focus on perceptions of violence due to television viewing. Study after study indicates that individuals who watch an increased amount of television are more likely to perceive the world to be full of crime, despite the fact that crime rates are dropping in the U.S. (Northup, 2010). The belief in a “scary world” for heavy viewers has led cultivation scholars to present another possible impact that media could have on viewers--the creation of a sense of what the world is like. However, the theory has also been applied to stereotypes in the media.

Cultivation theory. Cultivation theory emerged in mass communication research during the 1960s through the work of George Gerbner. In Gerbner’s 1972 seminal work, he (2002) explains that cultivation analysis is a multi-step process that “begins with the insights of the

study of institutions and the message systems they produce” and ends with “the contributions that these systems and their symbolic functions make to the cultivation of assumptions about life and the world” (p. 186). Gerbner believes that agreement or disagreement with the subject or aspect of life being discussed does not affect whether or not a group would see the representation as a reflection of real life. Gerbner explains that “in the general process of image formation and cultivation both ‘fact’ and ‘fable’ play significant and interrelated roles” (pp. 186-187). Since Gerbner first proposed cultivation theory “over 500 studies directly relevant to cultivation have been published” (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010, p. 337). Bailey and Park (2006) expanded upon Gerbner’s work and now define cultivation theory as “the theory that long-term television viewing has effects on audiences’ perception of social reality” (p. 3). Morgan and Shanahan (2010) further refine the definition of the *cultivation hypothesis* as the proposition that “those who spend more time watching television are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common and recurrent messages of the world of fictional television” (p. 337). While original hypotheses focus on the general effects of overall viewing, assuming all media are consistent in their depiction of certain realities, recent cultivation scholars have focused on fictional television and news programming specifically (Morgan & Shanahan).

Bailey and Park (2006) explain that cultivation studies use “surveys and statistical content analysis” in an effort to “test and validate theoretical (and critical) insights and commitments” so that the “difference in perceptions of aspects of social reality between light and heavy television viewers” can hopefully be explained while accounting for moderating variables (pp. 11-12). Content analyses and surveys represent the multi-stage approach that Gerbner’s cultural indicator analysis uses. There are three unique stages in cultivation theory research. Bailey and Park outline these stages as:

1) institutional analysis investigating how media messages are selected, produced, and distributed, 2) message system analysis addressing the recurrent images in media content, and 3) cultivation analysis which studies how exposure to television messages contributes to viewers' perceptions of social reality. (p. 13)

Each stage functions together, but separately each stage is a different form of analysis. While all steps provide unique analysis for media studies, using all three together provides the clearest explanation of the media's influence on viewers' perception of the real world.

The concepts of mainstreaming and resonance function in cultivation theory only through the combination of the above three frameworks. The concept of mainstreaming refers to how “heavy viewing of television may absorb or override differences in perspectives and behavior which ordinarily arose from other influences” (Bailey & Park, 2006, p. 14). The dominant group utilizes mainstreaming to promote its ideology. As it applies to ethnic stereotypes, mainstreaming helps to ensure that portrayals of ethnicities in mass media will become common sense and believed more easily by—or become more salient to—those that consume higher amounts of mass media. However, scholars believe that resonance may combat mainstreaming (Gerbner et al., 1980; Shrum & Bischak, 2001, Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks, 2015). Shrum and Bischak (2001) explain that “resonance predicts an interaction between television viewing and life experience that is essentially opposite of mainstreaming” (p. 191). Individuals that experience something in their lives are likely to interpret events from media as reality, even when they consume little media. Those that have direct or indirect experience with Islamic or Muslim terrorism will likely interpret all representations of terrorism through the media through an Islamic or Middle Eastern lens. Inversely, individuals that have experienced positive interactions with Muslims or Middle Easterners will be less likely to accept depictions of

terrorism as being caused by Middle Easterners and/or Muslims. Nacos and Torres-Reyna (2007) report that “less than a year after 9/11. . . . Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the public thought that Americans were more fearful of Muslims rather than felt sympathy for them” (p. 56). Cultivation studies are concerned with analyzing how the symbolic world of television permeates reality.

Middle Easterners and Muslims face a large amount of stereotyping in the media. Brinson (2011) explains that in relation to Muslims and Middle Easterners “media stereotypes. . . have been magnified and exacerbated over the last two decades” (p. 3). Adventure and role playing games involving the Middle East and Muslims are generally portrayed through a quasi-historic lens; while, first-person shooter games portray Muslims and the Middle East as in constant conflicts and perpetual enemies of the West (Naji & Iwar, 2013). News stories tend to “stick to. . . the image of Muslims as unclean, social deviants and security threats” (p. 124). Naji and Iwar (2013) believe that Western video games “probably have been influenced by news media” and argue that “what exists here is a complete cycle of ignorance reproducing false representation” (p. 125). It is a rare exception when a news story involving Muslims is one of a positive nature. Even when there is a positive story regarding “scientific breakthroughs, innovations in socio-economic development or cultural performance. . . the terms ‘Islam’, ‘Islamic’ or ‘Muslim’ are usually not mentioned” (Karim, 2006, p. 116). Furthermore, despite the stories “that address the considerable differences in views held by Muslims on terrorism and relations with the West,” the media overwhelmingly depict “most followers of Islam as a threat” (p. 117).

Cultivating stereotypes. Gerbner, Morgan, and Signorielli (2002) explain that “television has become the primary common source of socialization and everyday information” (p. 193). Television permeates life from infancy through death, ranging from information on politics to providing entertainment. However, viewing only one program is not enough; rather Gerbner et al. stress that “what is most likely to cultivate stable and common conceptions of reality is...the overall pattern of programming to which total communities are regularly exposed over long periods of time” (p. 195). The more media are consumed by a viewer, the more likely that viewer is to conflate reality with that which is portrayed by mass media.

It is this cultivation aspect of television that has made it a lead creator and/or reinforcer of culture. Culture is cultivated through exposure to “roles of gender, age, class, vocation”; it also is seen in “modes of conformity and targets for rebellion” (Gerbner et al., 2002, p. 215). Furthermore, culture establishes the “range of personalities, temperaments, mentalities” deemed acceptable and provides the basis for “selfless acts of courage and sacrifice; and makes us accept (and perpetrate) repression and slaughter of unknown people assigned to the appropriate categories of barbarians and enemies” (p. 215). Mass media portray everything involved in creating a culture, making them a key area of analysis in the study of stereotypes. These stereotypes are represented so often that it becomes common sense to viewers that certain tropes are just inherently true.

Common sense is key to the acceptance of stereotypes, which makes all stereotypes inherently culture based. Bratanova and Kashima (2014) define a cultural stereotype as “representations of a social group shared in a community” (p. 157). The repetition of these representations is necessary for them to become common sense within a society and mass media is a great way to do that quickly. Many studies have been conducted surrounding

communication and stereotypes (Hughes & Baldwin, 2002; Vergeer, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2000; Weiman, 2000; Zhang, 2010). Weiman (2000) highlights how some groups of individuals are only introduced to others through mass media. Hughes and Baldwin (2002) contend that there is no such thing as a positive stereotype: All stereotypes are negative because “first, holders of these stereotypes negatively bias individual thought process...And second, their negative impact is found largely because they form a cognitively simplistic impression of the person” (p. 114). Stereotypes not only impact the way individuals act with members of the stereotyped group, but also risk negatively affecting the self-esteem of the stereotyped and hindering communication (Hughes & Baldwin).

Cultivation and threat construction. News programs are integral to the creation of the threat, in particular the Muslim threat, because the news media are often viewed to be unbiased in their coverage of international events. International relations are generally not well understood by the public because of the public’s limited direct contact with foreigners and lack of international relations focus in schools, making the news media the public’s primary exposure to individuals outside of their home country. Furthermore, fabricating facts allows the State to ensure that the Other is portrayed in a manner in line with framing it as a threat to the individuals that rely on the State’s protection. Priming and framing allow the State to utilize the common sense belief that mass news media only tells an unbiased truth about the world to spread lies among the public.

The State can only successfully construct an enemy when it is able to successfully portray the nation’s security as actively threatened. During such a time, the State uses the portrayed enemy as a way to reinforce the hegemon’s values and to elicit the public’s active participation in ensuring the continuation of those values (Merskin, 2009). The enemy the State decides to use

must not only be seen as something outside of its society, but also a significant threat. Therefore, the enemy is constructed as a deviant and is then:

contrasted with an ‘innocent’ or ‘helpless’ victim population who bear the brunt of the newly found social evil. The more innocents perceived as being affected by the social problem, the greater the likelihood of public attention and support for the creation of policy targeting unpopular groups. (Kappeler & Kappeler, 2004, p. 178)

The creation of the enemy usually takes place through the use of inflammatory rhetoric from politicians and reporters. News agencies and politicians rely on graphic images to prime their audience to fear the Other. States must not only find the perfect balance between creating a significant threat and ensuring that the threat can be solved by the State.

How an enemy is chosen by a state varies each time. Enemies are born out of “difference in age, race, religion, culture, or appearance” (Merskin, 2009, p. 159). The ability to isolate a specific feature or characteristic that denotes who is and who is not a threat provides the necessary rhetorical weapons to persuade the populace that the State is correct. It is through this enemy that the State can “distract attention and divert aggression and energy toward a common threat” (p. 159). When a State needs to justify an action, or distract the citizens from a mishap, it often turns to an enemy as a scapegoat. Movies, news programs, and platform speeches from those in power all serve to ensure that the Other is successfully constructed and not forgotten. Due to the proliferation of political rhetoric in movies and fictional television shows, political speeches and news reports are no longer the only places States look for information regarding popular political beliefs. Hollywood and news reporters are now seen as valid sources regarding official governmental policies.

Stereotypes aid in the construction of enemies, because when a group of individuals is framed in one way it is easier to discriminate against them all. As Merskin (2009) states, “Once an individual is constructed as an outsider it is no longer thought of as having humanity” (p. 161). The need to identify our enemies as being devoid of humanity promotes a lack of empathy or remorse for the actions taken against them, even if the actions result in mass death. Spillman and Spillman outline the steps involved in the creation and dehumanization of an enemy:

- *Negative Anticipation.* All acts of the enemy, in the past, present, and future become attributed to destructive intentions toward one’s own group. Whatever the enemy undertakes is meant to harm us.
- *Putting Blame on the Enemy.* The enemy is thought to be the source of any stress on a group. They are guilty of causing the existing strain and current negative conditions.
- *Identification with Evil.* The values of the enemy represent the negation of one’s own value system, and the enemy is intent on destroying the dominant value system as well. The enemy embodies the opposite of that which we are and strive for; the enemy wishes to destroy our highest values and must therefore be destroyed.
- *Zero-Sum Thinking.* What is good for the enemy is bad for us and vice versa.
- *Stereotyping and De-Individualization.* Anyone who belongs to the enemy group is *ipso facto* our enemy.
- *Refusal to Show Empathy.* Consideration for anyone in the enemy group is repressed due to perceived threat and feelings of opposition. There is nothing in common and no way to alter that perception. (emphasis in original, as quoted by Merskin, 2009, p. 160)

If any of these essential components is missing, it is unlikely that a group will be successfully labeled as an enemy due to the fact that the humanity of its members will not be completely

nullified. Every level that Spillman and Spillman discuss is essential to the successful dehumanization of the Other. If any significant portion of the populace is allowed to see humanity in an enemy and then spread the belief that the group identified as the Other has been wrongly portrayed, the State risks failing in its attempt to construct the enemy as a threat. This is why, when religion is used as a marker for an enemy, the State works very hard to silence all discourse that attempts to highlight those that are different and possibly good (Merskin, 2009).

Due to the usefulness of having an enemy, the State often ensures one exists, meaning that when an original enemy's threat significantly decreases in magnitude, a new one is created to take its place. When the USSR collapsed, the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) had to identify a new threat to sustain its existence. NATO justified its continued existence through the argument that the newly formed states needed assistance in transitioning into capitalist states to ensure that Russia would not rise again. This continuing redefinition of the threat occurs because, as Huysmans (1998) posits, "The threat construction – the externalization of fear – also moderates the level of uncertainty, the fact that one does not know whom to fear and whom not to fear" (p. 235). When the community is uncertain of whom to fear and whom to accept, they are left without a clear understanding of the need of the state. This is why "it becomes necessary to create ever more menacing threats to reestablish difference," because the State is constantly in need of an existing entity that is different from its subjects (Lipschutz, 1995, p. 9). The enemy does not have to be genuine: As long as the State is able to convince the masses that a threat exists and must be quelled, the masses are likely to believe the State. The State values security because, when it is able to establish security for its populace, it is less likely to have its power internally challenged. Its power can grow through victories against the Other, which further entrenches the value of the State in the collective memory of the populace. Der Derian (1995)

explains how “the security of the sovereign...and state comes at the cost of ambiguity, uncertainty, paradox – all that makes a free life worthwhile” (p. 36). The State creates this belief that the “free life” it provides is the best and that it must be protected at all costs.

As an example of this process, during WWII the United States employed the media to encourage everyone to support the war effort, no matter the cost. One month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, “coast newspapers, and particularly those owned by William Randolph Hearst, took up the cry” to forcibly remove Japanese individuals from the West Coast (Rostow, 1945, p. 497). The fear of another attack these stories created resulted in Executive Order No. 9066 being issued on February 19, 1942, and gave the military the power to designate “military areas” around the country, areas where Japanese individuals could be interned indefinitely, without charge (p. 497). The government won approval for these internment camps through the media attempts to “depict the Japanese as sinister and untrustworthy” (Fujitani, White, & Yoneyama, 2001, p. 39). Okihiro and Sly (1983) explain how daily the newspapers would allege “espionage and sabotage by the Japanese in America” in order to increase racial tensions (p. 67). The threat of another attack on U.S. soil by the Japanese was inflated to convince the public to allow the government to deny rights to thousands of individuals.

Threat inflation enables the State to persuade its constituents more easily that a threat requires immediate action. Kaufmann (2004) explains that threat inflation involves:

(1) claims that go beyond the range of ambiguity that disinterested experts would credit as plausible; (2) a consistent pattern of worst-case assertions over a range of factual issues that are logically unrelated or only weakly related...;(3) use of double standards in evaluating intelligence in a way that favors worst-case threat assessments; or (4) claims based on circular logic. (p. 9)

While median voters possess “strong incentives to scrutinize expansionist arguments,” and should therefore quickly dismiss threat inflation, they often do not (p. 33). The median voter willingly accepts the threat of the Other, especially the international Other, due to a lack of personal interaction with them and because of the common sense belief that news media do not lie about international affairs (Kaufman). It is this failing of the marketplace of ideas regarding international threats that continues to perpetuate the success of threat construction. In 1987, *US News and World Report* ran reports on “Islamic fundamentalism” in response to Khomeini’s takeover of Iran. Reports explained that the Sunni youth were following the lead of the Iranian Shah in using martyrdom to fight for that which they believed. However, as Said (1997) explains, “No one bothers to ask...how verifiable is the statement that martyrdom is spreading among Sunni youth, all several hundred million of them...and, if it is, what sort of evidence it is likely to be in the first place” (p. xix). There was no discussion; it was just reported and accepted that the reports were correct. The blatant acceptance by media audiences or everyday citizens of such claims without pressing for full arguments is one way the State uses rhetoric to quickly create a threat. While debates over domestic issues seem to demand high levels of analysis, issues regarding Islam and foreign affairs are accepted as Truth when just glossed over by news reports.

In the United States, the Department of Defense (DOD) plays a significant role in the creation of threats. President Eisenhower coined the idea of “the military industrial complex” during his presidency. Eland (2008) explains how the DOD is in charge of the majority of efforts directed towards identifying possible threats to the safety of the U.S. and uses these possible threats as a means to justify an ever increasing budget (para 1). The military industrial complex and the possibility of a threat is how threats are constructed, even during times of peace.

The negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims has deep roots in Western European culture, with a trajectory of the creation of threat construction of Muslims clearly developing in recent U.S. American media.

Media Depiction of Arabs in Western Thought

Arabs tend to be the main threat constructed by Western media. Weimann (2000) contends that “one of the most unsympathetic and derogatory portrayals of ethnic or religious groups in Western media is that of Arabs” (p. 222). Arab men and women are consistently depicted negatively, resulting in the images now being considered “part of the folklore” (p. 224). All of these stereotypes seem to be engrained in Western culture as a brief survey of the representation of Arabs in Western thought will illustrate.

Beginnings of Islamic Threat Construction

Shaheen (2003) quotes the Arabic proverb “*Al tikrar biallem il hmar* (By repetition even the donkey learns)” to discuss how the continuous portrayal of Islam as a major threat to all civilization has established it as a consistent evil (p. 171). The Crusades mark the first time the West targeted Islam and acted in an effort to combat its spread. Chevedden’s (2008) account of the Crusades references how 11th century “legal scholar and preacher at the Great Mosque of Damascus, ‘Ali ibn Tahrir al-Sulami . . . presents the crusades as a Christian *jihad* against Islam” (p. 184). Chevedden believes that Western scholars see the Islamic view of the Crusades “as ‘extraordinarily far-sighted and illuminating,’ abounding in ‘penetrating insights’ and offering ‘a wider view of historical processes,’” but refuse to recognize its information as academically valid (p. 187). This degrading view of Islam persists despite the writings being verified as “historically accurate descriptions of crusading...that can be corroborated by papal documents” (p. 187). The dismissal of Islamic history allows for many in the West to continue

believing that the crusades were ordained by God and conducted purely to protect Christians and the holy land. However, this is not wholly true; one of the main factors contributing to the crusades was the ongoing conflict between the Latin West and Islamic East over land. Islamic groups conquered large swaths of Christian land, which upset the Catholic Church. Therefore, when the Latin West believed these groups could be successfully challenged, the Latin West seized the opportunity.

Europeans in the 17th and 18th centuries also painted Islam as the Other and something to be feared. Hammerbeck (2003) explains that, during this time, “Neoclassical and Enlightenment thought tended to discredit Islam, if not condemn it outright” (para. 3). Islam has been characterized as attacking Christianity and Judaism, rather than as being just another religious option. Muhammad has been demonized and constructed as a blood-thirsty devil who wants to destroy the world. Bassoulini (2007) explains that the violent nature of Islam is purely contrived because the Qur’an prohibits “violence directed toward women, children, the elderly, the sick and wounded, clerics, and places of worship of Christianity and Judaism” (p. 135). Wars that were waged in conquest and expansion were quite rare. Bassoulini describes how, prior to 630 CE, jihads were generally waged in self-defense. However, in 630 CE “the Prophet attacked Makkah. . . to take control of the *Kaaba*” and this was the war of conquest that other wars have used as their justification for jihad in the name of expansion (pp. 129-130). These wars of conquest and expansion, generally declared *jihads*, occurred “during Islam’s post-Prophet period and until the end of the Ottoman Empire after WWI” (p. 130) when they sharply declined in use. Despite knowing of this decline, thinkers in the West still considered Islam to be a direct challenge to the Christian way of life, and therefore the West’s power. While the Ottoman Empire did expand into European territories and perpetrate many bloody massacres, it also

allowed the practice of other Abrahamic religions to continue as long as a tax was routinely paid (Bassoulini, 2007). The Ottoman Empire did not desire to end Judaism or Christianity, just to expand its land and therefore possible economic and geographical power. However, it must be noted that the Ottoman Empire was not one of pure goodness, it instilled fear in people around Europe because of its vicious actions when conquering new territory.

Cinema also utilizes repetition as a teaching tool. According to Shaheen (2003), “For more than a century Hollywood...had used repetition as a teaching tool, tutoring movie audiences by repeating over and over...insidious images of the Arab people” (p. 172). Negative portrayals of Islam did not suddenly emerge after September 11, 2001, but rather they began in 1896 (Shaheen). Shaheen highlights that “filmmakers have collectively indicted all Arabs as Public Enemy #1 – brutal, heartless, uncivilized religious fanatics and money-mad cultural ‘Others’ bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners, especially Christians and Jews” (p. 172). The way in which Muslims have been portrayed can be likened to the way Native Americans in the United States were portrayed as savages, full of desire to rape the White woman and murder the White man. In U.S. media, anyone from the Middle East is *de facto* a Muslim, and every Muslim is against everyone else, especially Christians. This is especially true of Palestine, which has a stable, if not growing, Christian population. The media portrays all inhabitants of Palestine as Muslim, but Felson and Schlesinger (2012) report that as of 2007 there were 51,710 Christians in Palestine, or roughly 1.37% of the total population in Palestine was Christian (p. 9). Shaheen (2003) discusses how Hollywood has portrayed Arabs as “brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women” (p. 172). Movies over the last century have shown sheiks laying around with harems of women, robbing other countries of their wealth through the sale of their country’s oil. It would be easy to place the blame of these

images solely on Hollywood, to argue that Hollywood is, and has been, unregulated. However, Hollywood is not allowed to run rampant and produce any movie it sees fit. The U.S. Federal Government plays a role in approving and censoring movies. Shaheen describes how:

The government has a history of playing a role in what movies do and don't get made. As early as 1917, the federal government not only acknowledged the power of film to influence political thought, it took on the wrongful role of censor. As soon as the United States declared war on Germany, the government declared that no Hollywood movie could arouse prejudice against friendly nations. (p. 190)

The movie *The Spirit of '76*, filmed in 1917, features "British soldiers committing acts of atrocity," and it was brought in front a judge who ruled that, because England was a U.S. ally in the war and the film portrayed British soldiers negatively, it was obviously displaying "potent German propaganda" (p. 190). As a result of the ruling, the director, Robert Goldstein, was imprisoned (Shaheen). While the U.S. government has protected certain groups, Muslims and Arabs remain open for any depiction. The DOD spoke out in the 1950s during the filming of *The Bridge over the River Kwai* (1957) and warned filmmakers to ensure not to unjustly portray Japanese villainy.

Threat Construction after the Cold War

Merskin (2009) notes that "after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, America needed a new enemy, a global bad guy" (p. 165). This new enemy became Islam. Said (1997) describes how media and politicians equated *all* Arabs as Muslims and *all* Muslims as terrorists: "Fundamentalism equals Islam equals everything-we-must-now-fight-against, as we did with communism during the Cold War" (p. xix). The 1993 World Trade Center bombing created the necessary catalyst for increased media coverage of the "threat." Said

documents how, after the bombing, “newspapers, magazines, and an occasional film . . . tried to inform the public about ‘the world of Islam’” as one full of hatred for the West (p. 16). The State now had all it needed to clearly portray Islam as a threat to national security, and a threat that must be consistently monitored to ensure that American citizens remained safe. This coverage continued through 1996, when “the Sunday *New York Times* ‘Week in Review’ headlined its January 21, 1996, issue with: ‘The Red Menace is Gone. But Here’s Islam.’” (p. xix). This demonstrates how Islam had become “one of the hottest, nastiest debates in academic circles” of the time, the “green menace,” was portrayed similar to the way the “Communist menace” had been portrayed (pp. xix-xx). In three years Islam went from Hollywood screen villain to everyone’s nightmare. The media assisted the State in inflating Islam’s threat through its coverage and inflammatory rhetoric.

Not only was Islam demonized, it was also reduced to a singular entity. Said (1997) discusses how depictions of “‘Islam’ seems to engulf all aspects of the diverse Muslim world, reducing them all to a special malevolent and unthinking essence” (p. 8). If an individual lives in what is perceived to be the Middle East, they are immediately assumed to be Arab, Muslim, and a terrorist. Said (1997) contends, “What we have...is a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way...to make that world vulnerable to military aggression” (p. 28). While it is irrational to believe that reporters will spend their days ensuring that absolutely every fact they report is 100% true, the reductionist attitude toward Islam is a glaring problem. Jahedi (2012) explains that “the U.S. media in particular tends to misrepresent the events happening in the world and marginalize dissent so as to allow the dominant interests to get their messages across to the public” (p. 60). Much like Christianity, Islam is not one unified belief system; there are many different versions, sects, and

denominations that all claim to be Islamic. Attempting to reduce Islam down to a singular definition in the U.S. media marginalizes all voices of difference within Islam. Threat construction is not unique to American media, but it is more pronounced in American media than in other countries.

The marginalization of dissent to the possible Islamic threat has aided the U.S. in waging seventeen military missions in the Middle East between 1980 and 1995, “all of them directed against Muslims” (Huntington, 1996, p. 217). The United States maintains a list of foreign states believed to be a threat to U.S. security. In 1996, five of the seven states identified as terrorist states were located in the Middle East: Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan (Huntington, 1996). Recently, the U.S. Department of State (2016) reduced the number to three total states: Iran, Sudan, and Syria. The West and Islam have been in constant turmoil. However, it is not just the U.S. versus Islam. Huntington (1996) explains that “50 percent of wars involving pairs of states of different religions between 1820 and 1929 were wars between Muslims and Christians” (p. 210). Taking action based on a perceived threat from Islam is not new; rather, this threat has been constructed and reinforced for centuries.

Threat Construction During the Second Bush Administration

In the case of the invasion of Iraq, the 2001 Bush administration “introduced the new issue of potential direct Iraqi attack on the United States” (Kauffman, 2004, p. 36) to undermine the belief that Iraq could easily be contained. George H. W. Bush primed the American public to view Iraq as a threat through his war on Iraq to “save” Kuwait. Winkler (1991) explores how during the Reagan administration Bush served as the head of the Task Force on Combatting Terrorism and notes Bush’s differentiation between a freedom fighter and terrorist (pp. 121-122). Bush depicts terrorists as individuals who “deliberately target non-combatants for their own

cynical purposes” while the freedom fighter seeks “to adhere to international law and civilized standards of conduct. They attack military targets, not defenseless civilians” (p. 122). Bush’s distinctions allowed for him to easily paint Iraq as a country of terrorists that were preying on the civilians of Kuwait (Winkler, 1991). He (1991) called the world to action claiming that “in the more than 5 months since August 2d, Iraqi troops have carried out a systemic campaign of terror on the people of Kuwait” (para. 3). Bush’s priming of the Iraq terrorists combined with a lack of coverage regarding Iraq since the conclusion of the Persian Gulf War allowed the media and State to easily manipulate information because voters were not very knowledgeable of the issues.

Kauffman posits that the Bush administration was easily able to manipulate the issue of Iraq “in part because the ordinary human tendency toward patriotism makes it too hard to publicly defend the proposition that foreign opponents may not have hostile intentions or may be justified in some of their actions” (p. 36). In a country that had just lost thousands of individuals to a sudden and horrific attack, the public was easily convinced of the possibility that their enemies were hiding in multiple locations. The case of Iraq was also manipulated very easily because the Democrats were split, some supporting containment and others supporting the idea of invasion. The faction that supported containment, however, was not strong enough to carry the rest of the party and oppose the war efforts. Thus, the attacks on September 11, 2001, provided the catalyst necessary to change the dialogue around Iraq from containment to countering terrorism.

The Bush administration used its ability to classify information to aid the shaping of public opinion. Restricted access to information regarding wars began with the Reagan administration’s invasion of Grenada. Campbell (1989) states that “the government had deliberately made no plans for the media to be on hand to report the Grenada invasion” and that

when originally submitted “it called for the exclusion of the press during the invasion and initial fighting” (p. 1). What was attempted to be explained away as the White House looking out for the safety of the journalists and desiring complete surprise in the invasion was quickly questioned by journalists and the public. Campbell explains that even journalists who attempted to access the island on private boats or take pictures from neighboring Barbados were harassed or detained for days to avoid their information reaching Stateside. However, much of the public outcry ceased as soon as the journalists were allowed onto the island after the initial invasion was completed (Campbell, 1989). While there is no formal legislation or ruling that prohibits journalists from knowing about military or governmental action, Campbell highlights that “media organizations are reluctant to pursue the issue through the courts. They reason that if the court does not rule in the media’s favor, the decision could set a harmful precedent in future cases concerning access to government activities” (p. 61). Despite the lack of legal precedent that allows the White House to regulate correspondence with and through the mass media, Reagan set the stage to highly restrict information regarding military activities and subsequent presidents have taken advantage of this. Following the fall of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, “the government was soon able to establish the frames and the agendas according to which the unfolding story was generally reported. . . . Most media, stunned by the events of the day, seemed all too willing to accept the government’s lead” (Karim, 2006, p. 125). Government influence over the Islamic threat quickly took hold on September 11 and continues to shape the frames today.

The construction of the 2002 Iraqi threat was accomplished “through selective release—or suppression—of analyses and information” (Kaufman, 2004, p. 37). The Bush administration classified any information that was contradictory to their claims, while simultaneously

publicizing all of the information that supported their claims. News channels, willingly or unwillingly, favored individuals that supported inflated claims about the threat that Iraq truly posed. Kauffman conducted a study of 393 television news programs that covered the Iraq war during a two-week period from January to February 2003 and uncovered that more than half of those quoted were U.S. officials and that “only 17 percent of sources quoted expressed skepticism about administration policy...Only 4 percent were skeptical expressions by Americans, and only half of these had any affiliation to advocacy or expert organizations” (p. 44). While a few individuals attempted to speak out against the administration, they were quickly buried under all of the other voices that were clamoring for a spot on the air or in print to support Bush’s efforts to protect Americans. This is also compounded by Kauffman’s findings that “during the war, many journalists signed agreements allowing the military to vet their stories” (p. 45). Furthermore, news surrounding the War on Terror completely disregards “the violence committed by the USA” and “excludes the terrorism carried out by various groups in countries such as Ireland, Spain, and Sri Lanka” (Karim, 2006, p. 126). While the impacts of the attempted censorship on the content reported cannot be verified, it is unlikely that anything that was highly critical of efforts war was not allowed through to the general public.

The movie *Rules of Engagement*, released in 2000, was the first movie that showed U.S. marines opening fire on civilians. Shaheen (2003) explains that, except in a few cases, “no Hollywood WWI, WWII, or Korean War movie has ever shown America’s fighting forces slaughtering children. Yet,...U.S. marines open fire on the Yemenis, shooting 83 men, women, and children. During the scene, viewers rose to their feet, clapped and cheered” (p. 177). Shaheen’s analysis does not include films such as *Platoon*, but the depiction of the violent Muslim continues into the 21st century. Arabs, including those that are defenseless, have been

painted as an opponent that must be vanquished. The fact that individuals rose to their feet to applaud this fictitious war crime outlines how clearly cemented the threat of Islam is in the populace's collective consciousness.

In addition to the slaughter scene, the credits for *Rules of Engagement* thank the DOD and the U.S. Marines Corp for their assistance in making the film possible. However, *Rules of Engagement* is not the only film that thanks the armed services and the DOD for their contributions. Shaheen (2003) states that “more than fourteen feature films, all of which show Americans killing Arabs, credit the DOD for providing needed equipment, personnel, and technical assistance” (p. 177). By continuing to provide support for films that incorporate the military in some aspect, the DOD attempts to control the portrayal of the U.S. military, thus ensuring that the perception of an Islamic threat continues through their assistance to Hollywood.

Film and television do not operate in a vacuum; single-text readings often fail to produce an understanding of the global nature of media (Landy, 1994). Landy explains that “media are part of a global network that constantly and often arbitrarily constructs conceptions of the local and international, the center and margin” (p. 11). Media texts should not be described as singularly “utopian or dystopian” because that tends to ignore the way in which the texts, “like common sense, [are] comprised of numerous sediments that appear to fuse the local and national, national and international, private and public, and past and present” (p. 11). The media provide the medium through which the hegemon can reproduce “itself through the institutions and through the attitudes and behavior of individuals and social groups” (p. 25). Subaltern consent is acquired through many avenues, the mass media being one of the driving forces of it.

Hollywood is not the only reinforcer of this threat. Rosas-Moreno, Harp, and Bachmann (2013) examined the covers of *Time* magazine during the War with Iraq and discovered that, “in

line with past research on war news, the cover texts favored a dichotomous discourse that clearly opposed ‘us’ from ‘them’” and that “it was ‘they’ with their religious sectarianism who sowed terror in the country” (p. 11). American soldiers were highlighted as liberators of a country that was mired in terror and lacked a rule of law. Additionally, Iraqi citizens were not portrayed as innocent civilians, but rather as a group of Muslims only interested in destroying the United States. Had the U.S. delayed action, or not taken any action, there was a representation of a clear threat that these “blood thirsty” individuals would have attacked U.S. civilians. When *Time* did feature Iraqis on the cover it was not as “victims of an armed conflict,” but rather they were portrayed as “angry radical Muslims” (p. 11). The women and children that lost access to clean water and food and that were suddenly subjected to a war zone were hidden from the cover of the magazine in favor of showing the men and portraying them as anti-American. *Time* magazine only portrayed the Iraqi population as “secretive and dangerous – ‘the hidden enemy’ – and conjured up notions of terrorism” and encouraged the American public that “‘we’ should beware of such people” (p. 11). *Time* magazine perpetuated the idea that all Muslims and Arabs were against the United States and that all action necessary must be taken in order to secure U.S. territory.

Continued Coverage of Islam

Constructing Islam as a threat continues today. Nightly news programs regularly cover the threat Islam poses to Americans. Hundreds of journal articles and books have been written about the Islamic threat, and many pieces of legislation, such as The Patriot Act, have been passed in response to this “threat.” Trevino, Kanso, and Nelson (2010) suggest that “media exposure is essential to the existence of terrorism” (p. 6). Islam is essentialized into a single monstrous and violent entity, instead of being recognized as diverse as any other religion. Some

media outlets have even resorted to labeling Islam as “radical” in an effort to set it apart from other Abrahamic religions. Ann Coulter (2016), famous conservative, has gone as far as to equate all Muslims as terrorists when she proclaimed that “Muslims keep blowing things up and shooting people” (para 1). Western media has not seen a decrease in vicious language aimed at otherizing Islam, rather only a continuation of what has been.

Brigitte Gabriel is founder of the conservative group American Israel Political Affairs Committee, formerly ACT! For America, and speaks about the threat from “radical Islam” (Belt, 2016). At the Intelligence Summit in Washington, D.C., Gabriel (2006) pronounced that “America and the West are doomed to failure in this war unless they stand up and identify the real enemy. Islam” (para. 6). Throughout her condemnation of Islam and pleas for the U.S. to increase efforts against *all* Muslims she often referred to the “vile” nature of Muslims, warning that “the radical Islamists’ deeds have been as vile as their words” (para. 10). Gabriel is convinced that there is no such thing as a “good Muslim” and believes that the U.S. should be doing everything in its power to eradicate the religion and its followers. Gabriel is not alone; during the 2010 midterm elections Newt Gingrich “produced a film with his wife on the existential threat of Islamization, *America at Risk: The War With No Name*” (Belt, 2016, p. 217). Throughout the film, Gingrich warns viewers of the dangerous, “radical Islamists” that are plotting against America. Conservative media, from radio talk-shows to print news, consistently advances the narrative that Islam is out to take over the world and Muslims are actively conspiring to implement *Sharia* law in the U.S. (Belt, 2016). Belt (2016) highlights that thousands of articles and broadcast media with conservative tendencies all continue to tout the claim that America is unsafe, fueling the hegemonic perspective that military action to keep

America safe is the only option. A common way to further the notion of the radical Muslim is to target countries that are considered to be predominantly Muslim.

Iran's history and involvement with attacks against non-Muslim countries has been consistently inflated by the U.S. media. Jahedi (2012) explains that, "although it was not proven conclusively that Iran aimed to make nuclear weapons, . . . attempts were made to portray Iran as a nuclear threat" (p. 63). Additionally, Iran has been declared a sponsor of terror by U.S. news media and U.S. government through headlines that alleged Iran supported Osama bin-Laden and Shia insurgents during the 21st century Iraq War (Jahedi). The active threat inflation of Iran is clearly explained by Jahedi when he states that "the role of the U.S. press in particular has done little to assuage American fears; on the contrary, it probably served to (re)produce those very fears in the construction of Iran as the evil, recalcitrant Other" (p. 64). There is no sign that this message is changing, or that many are even concerned about the possible repercussions to the continuing casting of Islam as the ultimate threat to the West.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The media set the agenda, frame the story, and prime the audience to feel a specific way. Understanding the extent to which the media are able to create a reality is vital to uncovering how involved the hegemon is in creating the reality that best suits them. Theorists have begun to apply cultivation theory to stereotypes of individuals perceived to be from other countries and the life of the foreigner (Hughes & Baldwin, 2002; Vergeer, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2000; Weiman, 2000; Zhang, 2010). Based on the general principles of cultivation theory above, it is expected that heavy viewers of television news will be related to an increase in stereotypes, due both to the mainstreaming effect of media bringing viewers to a homogenized media reality and to the resonance of recent coverage of news events in the Middle East. Agreement to statements

from the Qur'an and from Muslim individuals about their faith will be negatively related to amount of mass media consumed. The first hypothesis examined stereotypes of Islam, Muslims, and the Qur'an together and then H1a-H1c looks at each case individually. Thus, the first hypothesis is:

H1: The salience of an individual's stereotypes of Islam, Muslims, and the Qur'an will be greater for heavy users of media than for light users of media.

H1a: The salience of an individual's stereotypes of Islam will be greater for heavy users of media than for light users of media.

H1b: The salience of an individual's stereotypes of Muslims will be greater for heavy users of media than for light users of media.

H1c: The salience of an individual's stereotypes of the Qur'an will be greater for heavy users of media than for light users of media.

Hetsroni (2010) argues that "questions about a foreign land yield a stronger cultivation effect compared to questions about the home country" (p. 442). A lack of contact with foreign lands results in individuals having little knowledge base to which they can compare information they have gathered on their own and information they gather from mass news media. Hetsroni suggests that this may be because,

when the questions pertain to a distant culture about which they [audience members] have no first hand acquaintance, they undergo experiential remoteness, which facilitates the activation of cognitive shortcuts, the retrieval of media exemplars without reference to their source, and eventually a stronger cultivation effect. (p. 442)

Hetsroni explains that when media consumers are less knowledgeable on a subject, the individuals are more likely to accept the news' portrayal as accurate on-face. H3 examined the

Qur'an and Muslim statements together and H3a-H3b examined each individual case. Hetsroni's line of analysis informs the hypotheses that:

H2: Personal exposure to Muslims will be negatively related to the acceptance of positive statements of Islam, Muslims, and the Qur'an portrayed in mass media.

H3: Personal exposure to Muslims will be positively related to agreement with statements from both the Qur'an and from Muslims.

H3a: Personal exposure to Muslims will be positively related to agreement with statements from the Qur'an.

H3b: Personal exposure to Muslims will be positively related to agreement with statements from Muslims.

Hetsroni also discovered that frequency is more important than recency. Hetsroni concluded that recency will not override frequency if there is a sudden shift instead of a gradual shift.

Frequency's ability to override recency provides insight into why the occasional change in story will not eliminate the negative notions already held by viewers. Recency is not enough to replace the cognitive shortcuts that have been cultivated in a viewer over an extended period of time; repetition of the new story will take a long time to override long held beliefs. The idea that recency and frequency are important in the creation of personal perceptions informs the research question:

RQ1: Is contact with Muslims a better predictor of levels of salience of stereotypes than the level of media consumption?

Furthermore, Hetsroni believes that attempts to quickly change the image of a nation, group, or country are even more difficult, especially if the group is not well known. Specific to the present

study, positive portrayals of Muslims will not likely resonate with heavy news media consumers since changing narratives about the Other does not occur easily.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how those in power utilize that power to ensure their hegemonic position. Additionally, the rhetoric endorsed by the hegemon ultimately makes its way into the media and aids in creating a cohesive message to be disseminated through various different media. The media's explicit, or implicit, approval of the hegemon's message has led to an entire region of the world and major religion being blamed for major atrocities. Exploration into how salient the message of the Islamic threat is with the public is essential in understanding the media's ability to set the public perception of domestic and foreign policy. Thus, this chapter built an argument for an analysis of the cultivating effect of media exposure on audience's perceptions of Islam and Muslims. The next chapter will explain the method used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

The previous chapters explore the problem with Islamophobia and the history of how Islam and the Middle East have been vilified for over two centuries. The stereotype of the greedy scoundrel that lives off of oil sales to the West and is surrounded by a harem of women is one that has been cultivated through all of mass media. The ever increasing numbers of Middle Eastern refugees indicates how the West and the East are bound to become more intertwined. This chapter will explain the methods through which data was collected and analyzed. While the cultivation effect does not alone establish direct causal links between Islamophobia and media consumption, it could provide a strong correlative link. Combining different types of media consumption to create a clearer media profile of respondents could aid in creating a stronger link between media consumption and Islamophobia. Accounting for personal exposure to Muslims will also assist in establishing the strength of the media in creating beliefs that are contradictory to texts and teachings of societies that are not well known to a certain group.

Participants and Procedures

One hundred twelve participants from around the world volunteered to take the online survey. The participants had a variety of ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Participants were recruited from a data collection website associated with the department of communication at a midsized U.S. university, as well as from students from the university at large who have agreed to take surveys, from my personal Facebook account, and from Reddit. The study also generated participants through snowball recruitment.

After logging in to the survey, participants were presented with an informed consent statement and, after agreeing to participate and verifying they are 18 years of age or older, proceeded to the first page of the survey. Participants remained anonymous, as IP addresses

were not collected, nor was any question asked that could distinguish participants from one another.

Survey

Each survey consisted of basic demographic questions, a measure of presentation bias, a measure of acceptance of cultural differences, and a measure of feelings toward Muslims, Islam, and the Qur'an. Presentation bias was measured using a Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The measures for the acceptance of cultural differences and feelings toward Islam, Muslims, and the Qur'an utilized a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Demographics

Participants were asked to report the gender with which they identify, their age in years, nationality, and highest level of achieved education. The participants were comprised of 66 females (59%), 45 males (40%), and 1 participant reported as omni-gendered (1%). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 75 years of age with a mean of 32 years of age. The backgrounds reported were 98 North American (88%), 1 Canadian (1%), 4 Western European (4%), 2 Asian (2%), 1 African/Sub-Saharan (1%), 2 Middle Eastern (2%), and 4 Other (4%). The highest educational level achieved ranged from grade school to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), with the mean of a Bachelor's degree.

Islamophobia Scale

Lee et al. (2009) created the Islamophobia scale by creating "a pool of 41 items [that] was generated based on fear and literature on Islamophobic sentiment" (p. 96). These 41 items were then combined with items from Gonzalez et al.'s (2008) symbolic threat measurement, responses from a previous study conducted by the present researcher that explored how Muslims interpreted their own religion, themes from the *Qur'an*, and statements from interviews

conducted by Moezzi (2007) exploring the stories of Muslims with many different backgrounds. These items will be evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). Gonzalez et al. (2008) report that Cronbach’s α for the symbolic threat measurement was .89. There are no reliabilities reported for the other measures that constitute this scale. Thirteen items were reverse scored before a sum of all the items was made. Then, the full Islamophobia scale was broken into three separate measures to look specifically at fear of Islam, Muslims, and the Quran and divided by the total number of items per variable. The fear of Muslims measure was reliable with a Cronbach’s α of .87. The fear of the Qur’an measure approached reliability with a Cronbach’s α of .78. The fear of Islam measure was reliable with a Cronbach’s α of .93.

Intergroup Contact

Intergroup contact was measured through three items: “How often do you have contact with those you perceive to be Muslims at work or school?”; “How often do you have contact with those you perceive to be Muslims in your neighborhood?” and “How often do you have contact with those you perceive to be Muslims somewhere else, for example clubs?” The scale derives from a four-item measure from Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie, and Poppe (2008), who reported a Cronbach’s α of .70 for the original instrument. The three items will be evaluated on a 5-point scale, ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (5), such that a higher score indicates increased contact with Muslims.

Cultural Sensitivity Presentation Bias

Lee, Gibbons, Thompson, and Timani (2009) developed the cultural sensitivity presentation bias scale to evaluate “the extent to which a person engages in culturally sensitive behaviors that cannot truthfully be adhered to at all times” (p. 96). Lee et al. argue that there is a

tendency for individuals to falsely report that they are more culturally sensitive than they really are so as to give the impression they are extremely aware and responsive to minority issues. However, they believe that “an extreme affinity for minority issues is rare in the context of U.S. racial relations” (p. 96). This study utilized the cultural sensitivity bias scale to attempt to account for respondents reporting more favorable views of Islam and/or Muslims than may be actually true. Cultural sensitivity presentation bias is related to Strahan and Gerbasi’s (1971) social desirability scale, but remains unique because of its focus on race relations. For example, the statement “I never made fun of the way people from other countries lived” is unlikely to be true at all times because there is no such absolute consistency in an individual’s entire life. For the purpose of this study, the scale has been changed from a forced answer true or false to a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The scale consists of ten statements that have been altered from Lee et al.’s (2009) study. Lee et al. explain that “high scores on the CS indicate high presentation bias tendencies in the domain of cultural sensitivity” (p. 96). Seven items were reverse scored before a sum for all items was created.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes were measured using a semantic differential. Seventeen trait adjectives were rated on a 7-point scale, ranging from a positive adjective (1) to a negative adjective (7). A higher score indicated more negative stereotypes for Muslims. Six items were reversed scored before a sum of all items was created.

Media Usage

Participants indicated the total hours of media consumed weekly, total hours of television media by category, total hours of music videos by category, and total hours of films by category. Exposure to music videos (in total hours) by category was analyzed because of the rising number

of Muslim music artists producing music videos. Each category of media was broken up into quartiles for total hours to represent light (1) and heavy (4) viewers. Total media's 1st quartile was 0 to 14 hours and the 4th quartile was greater than or equal to 40 hours. Total television media's 1st quartile was 0 to 7 hours and the 4th quartile was greater than or equal to 24 hours. Total film media's 1st quartile was 0 to .99 hours and the 4th quartile was greater than or equal to 10 hours. Total music video's 1st quartile was 0-.19 hours and the 4th quartile was greater than or equal to 1.07 hours. Participants also answered whether they obtained their news from nine different television and social media sources, such as Fox News, MSNBC, or Facebook. The answer to each source was a forced Yes or No.

Procedure

Each participant logged into the online survey located on Select Survey, an online survey-delivery software program supported by the researcher's university. After participants consented to participating and being 18 years or older they proceeded to the survey. The participants proceeded through the survey, which took 10 to 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

To evaluate the internal validity of each variable Cronbach's α were conducted. Following that, the items were added together to create single scores for perceptions of Islam, Muslims, and the Qur'an. T-tests evaluated H1a through H1c. A correlation analysis was used to test H2 and H3. These tests allow for a correlation between Islamophobia and media consumption to be clearly established. Breaking media consumption into different categories allows for t-tests to evaluate to what degree certain media influences Islamophobia. The correlation analysis will also allow for an examination of the degree to which personal exposure mediates the media's influence on Islamophobia.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained how data were gathered and analyzed in an attempt to establish a strong correlation between negative media portrayals and personal levels of Islamophobia. Analysis of multiple forms of mass media and perceptions of Islam and the Middle East could provide the insights into the power the mass media wields over public understanding. The next chapter will report the results of the responses.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The previous chapters explored the problem of how the mass media stereotype Muslims as a great threat. There are a lot of groups acting together, such as politicians and news media, in order to create a unified image of a group that is focused on causing as much pain and chaos as possible. The process for gathering data was also explained. Participants were recruited through various means and asked to rank a series of statements on a Likert-type scale in an attempt to establish a link between amount of mass media consumed and levels of acceptance of stereotypes of Islam, Muslims, and/or the Qur'an. This chapter reports and interprets the findings of the study.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that agreement with negative sentiment would be higher for heavy viewers than for light viewers. The stereotypes measure reported reliability with a Cronbach's α of .93. The mean score for stereotypes was 3.05 (SD= .98, range 2.57 to 3.55), indicating that participants mostly agreed with the positive descriptors of traits provided. The mean for prejudice of Muslims was 2.34 (SD= .76), indicating general disagreement with negative statements regarding Muslims and general agreement with positive statements regarding Muslims. The mean for prejudice towards the Qur'an was 3.33 (SD= 1.12), indicating a general disagreement with negative statements regarding the Qur'an and agreement with positive statements. The mean for prejudice of Islam was 2.90 (SD= 1.23), indicating a general disagreement with negative statements about Islam and agreement with positive statements.

The participants reported a mean of 30.25 hours of total media consumed during an average week (SD= 24.11). The range was 113 hours/week, with a minimum of 2 hours and a maximum of 115 hours. There were 25 participants that were low consumers of media and 31

participants that were high consumers of media. The sub-group of total television media watched on an average week had a mean of 17.90 hours (SD= 14.88). The range for total hours of television was 70 hours, with a minimum of 0 hours and a maximum of 70 hours/week. The sub-group of total film watched on an average week had a mean of 6.59 hours (SD= 7.16). Film-viewing totals ranged from 0 to 45 hours. The sub-group of total hours of music videos watched during an average week had a mean of 3.54 hours (SD= 9.54). The range for total hours of music videos watched was 60 hours, with a minimum of 0 hours and a maximum of 60 hours.

Participants answered Yes or No to a list of possible news sources. These nine sources were chosen because they are perceived to be the major news networks and most common social media outlets. The results are reported in Table 1, based on the number of respondents per item.

Table 1

Source of News: Percentages

News Source	Yes	No
Fox News	20	80
MSNBC	40	60
CNN	51	50
Local News Station	65	35
Tumblr	8	92
Instagram	8	92
Reddit	33	67
Twitter	35	65
Facebook	64	36

Total media consumed did not significantly correlate to prejudice of Muslims, the Qur'an, or Islam. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between participants' average total weekly media consumption and fear of Muslims, the Qur'an, and Islam independently. A weak correlation that was not significant was found for Muslims ($r(96) = .02, p > .05$). A weak correlation that was not significant was found for the Qur'an ($r(107) = -.09, p > .05$). A weak correlation that was not significant was also found for Islam ($r(104) = -.04, p > .05$). There was a strong correlation between all the stereotypes, the higher acceptance for one positively correlated to a higher acceptance for another category. The results for the correlations are reported in Table 3 below.

Independent-samples *t* tests were run comparing the mean scores of heavy and light viewers and levels of fear of Muslims, the Qur'an, and Islam. No significant difference between the mean scores of heavy and light viewers was found for any of the pairs. The results for all independent-samples *t* tests are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Independent-Samples Test

		m (sd)	t	df
Muslim prejudice	1	2.49 (.78)	.473	47
	4	2.37 (.94)		
Qur'an prejudice	1	3.71 (.88)	1.83	53
	4	3.21 (1.12)		
Islamic prejudice	1	3.29 (1.19)	1.59	52
	4	2.77 (1.23)		

Note: 1 = light viewers (range 0 to 7 hours of TV/week); 4 = heavy viewers (≥ 25 hours of TV/week)

Hypothesis 2 and 3

Hypothesis 2 predicted that personal exposure to Muslims would reduce agreement with negative sentiments. Hypothesis 3 predicted that personal exposure to Muslims would increase agreement with positive sentiments. Intergroup contact was reliable with a Cronbach's α of .80. The intergroup contact mean was 7.6 (SD= 2.86). The results indicate that the majority of

respondents have contact with an individual they perceive to be Muslim. A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between participants' intergroup contact and salience of stereotypes. A negative correlation was found ($r(101) = -.18, p < .05$), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. The more contact a participant had with those they perceive to be Muslim, the less salient negative statements of Muslims, Islam, and the Qur'an were for the participant. The results for the correlation analysis is reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation

	Muslim prejudice	Qur'an prejudice	Islamic prejudice	Intergroup Contact
Intergroup Contact	-.131	-.185*	-.232**	1
Muslim prejudice	1	.498**	.740**	-.131
Qur'an prejudice	.498**	1	.831**	-.185*
Islamic prejudice	.740**	.831**	1	-.232**

Note: * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed) and ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asks if intergroup contact is a better predictor of prejudice than consumption of media. It was found that intergroup contact did result in a negative correlation with agreement of negative perceptions. To examine further, a multiple linear regression was conducted to evaluate respondents' Islamic prejudice based on their intergroup contact and presentation bias. A significant regression equation was found ($F(2, 100) = 17.40, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .26. Respondents predicted level of Islamic prejudice is equal to $1.00 - .07(\text{Intergroup contact}) + .11(\text{Presentation bias})$. Presentation bias was a significant predictor for the multiple linear regression while intergroup contact was not a significant predictor.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the results of the study. The results show that there is no significant relationship between the hours of media consumed and levels of fear of Islam, Muslims, or the Qur'an. There was a significant negative correlative relationship between higher intergroup contact and levels of fear of Islam. The following chapter will discuss the findings and the implications they could hold for future research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter provides the results from the study. While no significant correlation between media consumption and levels of fear was found, the results still provide insights into the relationship between media, politics, and threat construction. Future research could also build off of this study and expand upon the theories of cultivation and limited effects.

Summary of Findings

Overall the results of this study failed to establish a strong correlation between an increased consumption of media and fear of Muslims, the Qur'an, and Islam. However, there was a strong negative correlation between intergroup contact and salience of stereotypes. This chapter will explore the possible implications the results offer. While there is no strong correlative link between increased media consumption and fears, there are unique implications regarding the cultivation effect and general Islamophobia.

While there was no strong correlation found between consumption of media and the level of salience of stereotypes and general Islamophobia, the amount of rhetoric that is in the mass media creating the Islamic threat cannot be denied. Various entities have been promoting the fear of Muslims and Islam for centuries (Weimann, 2000; Shaheen, 2003; Brinson, 2011; Naji & Iwar, 2013). Presidents have been nurturing an American fear of the Other for decades, and, since the 1990s, Islam has been the target of political ire (Said, 1997; Karim, 2006). While the participants did not report a high affinity for negative statements about Muslims, the Qur'an, or Islam, the responses indicate acceptance of positive statements and a rejection of negative statements. While it cannot be concluded that the mass media have any impact on the cultivation of Islamophobia, it also cannot be completely dismissed.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one predicted that the salience of stereotypes would be greater for heavy viewers of media than it would for light viewers of media. Contrary to what was expected, media consumption did not have any significant effect on the participants' fear of Islam, Muslims, or the Qur'an. While these findings are inconsistent with the theory of cultivation, it is consistent with the critiques of cultivation. Potter (2014) explains that while the cultivation effect has been applied to research since the 1970s, examination of those writings for "completeness and relevance" leaves cultivation critics desiring a more comprehensive review of the literature (p. 1024). This study attempted to complete a more comprehensive examination of the cultivation effect, the results did not support the hypothesis. Potter believes there are gaps in the cultivation literature regarding such things as the type of media studied or possible mediating variables between media usage and cultivation effects. Potter also argues that "reviews are largely descriptive inventories of a growing list of *topics*, rather than a careful sorting through the findings to identify *meanings*" (emphasis in original, p. 1025). This study examined a number of types of mass media in an attempt to account for various different effects, but the results only further support the critics of cultivation rather than providing a clearer defense of cultivation's effect.

Specifically, this study attempted to look at the relationship between mass media consumption and agreement with negative statements about Muslims, the Qur'an, and Islam, but the results were not significant. The aggregate total of all media consumed during an average week did not approach significance in correlation to any of these variables, thus suggesting no link between media usage and general Islamophobia. As discussed earlier, previous studies have measured levels of Islamophobia in differing publics and the amount of coverage in the mass

media of the “Islamic threat.” However, no study attempting to link the mass media to Islamophobia through the cultivation effect has been attempted.

Other critiques of media-effects research revolve around the use of self-reporting. Valkenburg and Peter (2013) believe that “self-reported media exposure is inherently threatened to be inaccurate due to *cognitive reasons*, shortcomings in information processing have led to imprecise reporting” and “differences in people’s motivations to report about, or engage in, a particular topic lead to differential reporting about exposure to the topic” (p. 200). When individuals are aware of the purpose of a study, there is a chance that presentation bias will interfere with accurate reporting. The multiple linear regression ran for RQ1 shows that presentation bias is significantly related to levels of acceptance of statements, which may positively skew the results. While it cannot be concluded that participants reported more favorably about themselves in all instances, presentation bias did affect responses. Presentation bias does not support the conclusion that the mass media affects perceptions of Islam, Muslims, or the Qur’an; but complete rejection of the hypothesis would be unwise. The extent of the negative images infiltrating most forms of the mass media does have some effect on a society’s collective memory and common sense. The American government is clearly attempting to persuade its citizens, and citizens of the world, that military actions taken by the U.S. military are just and only conducted to maintain security of civilians (Merskin, 2009). American politicians and mass media conglomerates understand the power that they can wield over the publics and are not going to reduce their efforts any time soon, even if studies do not fully confirm that their efforts are fruitful.

Hypothesis 2 and 3

Hypothesis 2 predicted that personal exposure to Muslims would be negatively related to the salience of stereotypes portrayed in the mass media and H3 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between an increased intergroup contact and positive perceptions. As expected, as intergroup contact with perceived Muslims increased acceptance of negative statements decreased. While there are critiques of intergroup contact, Hewstone (2015) explains that “contact. . . affects prejudice on a macro-level, whereby people are influenced by the behavior of others in their social context” (p. 431). Contact is not the only predictor of reduced acceptance of prejudice, the diversity of an individual’s living space also affects acceptance of prejudice (Hewstone). The findings of this study support both conclusions; the more interaction in an individual’s neighborhood and daily life the less agreement with negative statements were accepted and increase in agreement with positive statements. These findings are also consistent with Gonzalez et al.’s (2008) findings and reinforce their findings that intergroup contact is a predictor of acceptance of stereotypes. At the same time, it is important to remember that this study does not establish a causal link, but rather just a correlative one.

Past research has also established that the more varied and continued exposure to a different group the increased likelihood of success in reducing acceptance of stereotypes (Pettigrew, 1998). The results of this study support Pettigrew’s findings, since the survey asked for the respondent to report on their daily interaction with those they perceive to be Muslim. Rather than just asking for overall interaction, this study asked for daily interaction to provide further evidence that the duration of interaction with another group is also important in reducing prejudice. Tawagi and Mak (2015) explain that the quality of contact and the context is important for increasing positive sentiments towards a group. Duration and location are not the

only impacts on intergroup acceptance. This study did not ask for how positive or negative interactions with perceived Muslims were; addition of this question in future studies could further intergroup contact research.

Research Question 1

Research question one asked if contact with Muslims was a better predictor of salience of stereotypes than the level of an individual's media consumption. Findings suggest that the answer to this is yes. Intergroup contact was significantly negatively related to the acceptance of stereotypes, whereas, media consumption had no significant effect. The findings fail to support the tenets of cultivation theory, but the findings do support the idea that salience of stereotypes is correlated to our personal contact with other groups. As the questions asked for individuals to self-report based on a perception that another was Muslim, the findings still provide the basis for further studies into acceptance or rejection of stereotypes in relation to personal exposure.

Prior research found there to be a high level of Islamophobia amongst respondents; however, this study found there to be a low acceptance of negative stereotypes of Muslims, the Qur'an, or Islam. All means were below a 4 on a 7-point Likert scale, indicating disagreement with negative statements and agreement with positive statements; at the same time, there were a few outliers that did fall higher on the scale. The standard deviations were not high either, indicating a cluster of responses around the mean. While there were outliers, the low standard deviation contradicts previous findings (Gonzalez et al., 2008, Boscarino et al., 2006). Boscarino et al.'s (2006) respondents reported a high level of fear of a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) attack; however, the study took place two years after a terrorist attack in New York City which could explain for the high levels of fear. Given the current amount and duration of negative coverage in the mass media, it is interesting to see the results of this study.

There could be a higher level of Islamophobia abroad as there is a higher level of refugee and immigration numbers in Europe and Australia. However, neither of the previous studies examined media consumption in connection with levels of fear; rather, they looked at levels of fear in combination with other variables.

Conclusion

The previous chapter explored the findings from the study. The mass media continue to perpetuate the myth of the Islamic terrorist, but the findings of the present study suggest that the efforts are proving to be for naught. When intergroup contact is factored in, the effect of the media is further diluted.

Limitations

There are limitations to the study. The research was only concerned with consumers of U.S. mass media. The research also relied on self-reported data and correlative analysis. The sample was a convenience sample with limited snow-ball sampling, making generalization difficult. The data collection method through Facebook, Reddit, and the university student populace likely limited the diversity in responses. The majority of the respondents were Northern American and had at least a Bachelor's degree, meaning that the participant pool is not reflective of the entire United States' population. Ryan and Bauman (2016) report that "in 2015, the majority (88%) of adults were at least high school graduates, and more than half (59%) had completed some college" (p. 1). More participants that had only some college or less would have made the results more representative of the U.S. average educational level. Also, it is possible that as education attainment increases the more presentation bias could affect results.

The study relied on a recall of overall hours of media watched during an average week. Analysis on how viewing an image would immediately effect a participant's level of fear of

Muslims, the Qur'an, or Islam was not evaluated. The nature of the study, being done online and through self-reporting, could have also resulted in the participant taking time to reflect on their answer rather than just responding on their initial thoughts. The ability to reflect on a response rather than just responding based on their initial response to a question could have allowed the respondents to adjust their responses to be more positive than is true. While all scales were reliable, it cannot be confirmed that the respondents did not take time to ensure that they were answering in a way that was more positive than their true opinions.

There was no analysis of implicit and explicit bias in relation to Islam and Muslims that was measured. There is the chance that the participants report positive perceptions of Islam when they consciously think about their answer, but when faced with quick decisions they fall into the pattern of stereotyping an individual that appears to be Muslim as the Other to be feared. Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis (2002) state that "implicit measures were designed for use in situations in which explicit measures were unlikely to tap bias, correspondence tends to be weaker for socially sensitive issues" (p. 578). Researchers have argued that while it can be difficult to identify implicit biases, attempting to account for them can provide valuable insight into prejudices held by groups (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Hewstone et al., 2002). Future research could look into measuring implicit and explicit bias and comparing those answers to answers that are provided through similar scales to see if there are any significant differences between reports.

The snowball sampling for this study resulted in a limited range of demographics. The lack of diversity in age and education attainment could have resulted in a skewed sample that already had more positive opinions of Islam, Muslims, and the Qur'an. A more diverse sample in terms of age and attained education could provide a stronger analysis of cultivation's effect on higher consumers of mass media. This study also did not ask for participants to report the

religion to which they adhere. It is possible that there were a number of Muslim respondents and this would have skewed results to the more positive end of the spectrum. Future studies should ensure to ask for a participant's religious identification so as to accommodate for this mediating variable.

The sources of media were limited only to television, movies, and music videos. Past analysis of the mass media included newspapers and news magazines. This study did not utilize print media, but analysis of current print media could provide a different result. Newspapers and news magazines have been routine, but this study focused on mass media that often involves moving images.

Future research could also utilize other forms of analysis of the mass media in order to further refine mass-media effects research. Rhetorical analyses of specific texts—from speeches to media texts—can uncover potentially anti-Islamic messages within them. A discourse analysis, looking at naturally occurring conversation in different contexts, could overcome the problems of presentation bias and create a clearer analysis of the effects of messages. An experiment that utilizes pre- and post-tests and exposes participants to certain messages could also be used to measure the change in perception before and after exposure. Focus groups could be used to discuss multiple interpretations of messages and how individuals respond individually and collectively to messages.

Implications for Practice

The findings are helpful in creating an understanding that the media may not be as influential in our daily perceptions of reality as once thought. Advertising companies, the government, and other sectors of society spend billions of dollars a year investing in the mass media. However, is all of that really producing the results desired? Groups should not abandon

their use of the mass media due to the results of this study, but should evaluate the results they are finding with their efforts. Social media do offer an avenue for positive engagement with society. Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin (2011) explain that “social media usage is beneficial for nonprofit organizations for several reasons” (p. 38). Briones et al. found that nonprofit organizations have found many ways to engage various individuals and groups to streamline many of their functions, increase abilities to create effective relationship building programs, and distribute their message to more individuals. Responsible and effective use of the mass media, and specifically social media, can provide a new avenue through which to quickly organize groups and distribute information. Groups could also utilize social media as a way to break down stereotypes and promote media literacy programs.

The results also show that increased contact with groups that are different from ourselves is a predictor of reduced acceptance of negative stereotypes of others. Ensuring that children are introduced to as wide an array of cultures and individuals as possible could help reduce stereotypes of and prejudice towards certain groups and, thus, violence that is based on differences between groups. Current events suggest that the United States is mired in a struggle between ethnicities, whether the individual is Middle Eastern, Black, or Caucasian, tensions are running high. Mapping Police Violence, a research collaborative, (2016) reports that “police are killing black people at persistently high rates” (np). The 2016 presidential election is also seeing a large focus on racial tension. Milligan (2016) explains that “Obama’s election, far from making Americans more comfortable with minority leadership, in some ways exacerbated those fears” and that “the growth of the Latino population has added to the national angst as well” (para 7-8). The findings indicate that the more varied and positive our contact is with other cultures the higher the probability for tensions to decrease between groups. Programs that are

attempting to decrease Islamophobia, and other ethnic divides, could be informed about the study and use it as a way to further their goals. However, just increasing contact will not be enough. Programs looking to build more positive relationships between groups should pay attention to the conditions outlined in much of the contact theory literature (Pettigrew, 1998; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Tawagi & Mak, 2014; Hewstone, 2015) Developing programs that aim to increase multi-cultural understanding and intergroup contact could help mitigate unreported levels of Islamophobia, as well as other ethnic relation issues.

The study shows that consumption of some media is not the best predictor of a level of acceptance of statements about others in a participant. This means that there is something else, or multiple things, that could be the cause of acceptance of stereotypes. Further research that focuses on the United States could compare regions of the United States to see if there are differences in geographical regions in regards to levels of fear. Also, further research could compare American and non-American results to see if there is a difference in the cultivation effect between countries, and, if there is, what other possible mediating might be. However, this study should not be used to completely discredit cultivation theory. Today's media landscape is much more diverse than that of 1970, when Gerbner wrote on cultivation. Individuals consume a wider variety of mass media, many of which could not have been predicted by Gerbner, meaning that the theory needs alterations and not just abandonment.

In conclusion, while this study does have limitations, the results suggest that the mass media's ability to cultivate reality may not be as strong as Gerbner (2002) predicted. Previous research points to the cultivation effect being strong in relation to crime and fear of Black Americans, but there is no correlation for Islamophobia. There is plenty of ground for future research to continue exploring Islamophobia. Delving further into intergroup contact's ability to

counter negative stereotypes could provide needed research on how to continue to mitigate negative messages about perceived outgroups. Programs that work to increase intergroup connectedness could use this study to aid in creating initiatives that are focused on raising awareness of various cultures and encouraging interconnectedness amongst multiple different cultures.

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Gibbons, John M. Thompson, et
al

Publication: International Journal for the
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