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UNDERSTANDING ISLAM IN THE WEST THROUGH CRITICAL MEDIA
CONTENT AND DISCOURSE ANALYSES

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ABSTRACT

Events throughout history have constantly reconstructed the images of Islam in the West in a derogatory manner, debilitating the positions of Muslims and Islam in Western culture. Media has, undoubtedly, played an essential role in accelerating this process. Debbie Schlüssel's articles exemplify how propaganda is used in media to create negative representations of a society based on its creed. For the purposes of this essay, two articles were indiscriminately chosen for critical media content and discourse analyses, and the results obtained from the analyses were then used to explicate how misinformation conveyed to audience through intertextuality, voice of authority, conversationalization, and metaphors in media can create negative attitudes towards Muslims.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter 1 Oriental Origins of the Images of Islam	1
Purpose and Scope	1
Images of Islam-A Historical Perspective.....	2
Chapter 2 Role of Media as a Mediator between Islam and the West	6
Effects of Media on Public Perceptions	6
Islam as a Media Event	8
The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict –early 19 th century-present	9
The Arab Oil Embargo -1973.....	9
The Iranian Revolution -1977-1979	10
The 9/11/2001 Attacks	10
Media as a Source of Information	11
Chapter 3 Methodology	13
Research Question.....	13
Data Collection	13
Analytical Framework.....	14
Results.....	15
Discourse.....	16
Metaphors.....	17
Conversationalization.....	17
Position as an Authority through Intertextuality	18
Chapter 4 Discussion	19
Appendix A Articles	24
Appendix B Discourse Analyses Data	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY	35

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Chapter 1

Oriental Origins of the Images of Islam

Purpose and Scope

The goal of this research is to provide an explanation for the current images of Islam and Muslims in the Western society through critical media content and discourse analyses. Portrayals of Islam have historically been derogatory and its representations were consolidated in the discipline of Orientalism created by the European colonists during the 19th and 20th centuries. Orientalism is the depiction of the East through Western art and literature (Said, 1978). It was a product of the Western imagination and was conflated with biases against the “Orient,” which included Islam and Muslims as well.

The Orientalist works were replete with insubstantial ideas about Islam that may have formed since the West first came in contact with the Islamic world around the 7th century (Progler, n.d.). Since that time, depictions of the Orientalized Islam have appeared in Western society, and media has been the chief purveyor of these negative images in Western culture through books, movies, television, newspaper, and blogs. Today media producers, who might not even be knowledgeable in the tenets of Islam, can use popular media to exert an authoritative voice that continues this well-established Orientalization. The purpose of this paper is to uncover some rhetorical strategies used in this process.

Images of Islam-A Historical Perspective

For most monotheistic religions, especially for the descendants of the Abrahamic tradition, religion can be defined as, for all practical purposes, a way of life followed by a particular group of people under a moderately stringent set of beliefs in order to seek salvation in the afterlife. This basic definition is the dogma of the three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Of the three Abrahamic religions, Islam appears to be one of the most, if not *the* most, misunderstood religions in the world (“Islam 'most misunderstood' religion in world: Hina Rabbani Khar,” 2012). Given the fact that the Muslim world population in 2012 was approximately 29.7% (“World Muslim Population,” n.d.), it is still surprising how misconceived it is. This project is an earnest attempt at comprehending how negative images of Islam have come in existence and how these adverse images are reshaped and remodeled as time progresses. Research on the history of the Western images of Islam reveals that the existence and prolonged presence of the unfavorable images of Islam, as an extremist and anti-modern religion, in the Western society may have originated from two processes. The first relates to the foundational aspect of these images; how the negative portrayals came into existence. The second (which will be brought into light in chapter 2 of the paper), extends from the first one; it is about how these depictions have become perhaps more complicated and solidified with the passage of time.

The foundational aspect of the negative images has arisen from as far back as 15th century European encounters with the Muslim world (Varisco, 2011) and has been further elaborated by the discipline of Orientalism, which is the representation of the Eastern culture by Western artists or writers. The European encounters with the Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa, during the Renaissance and Reformation, were the beginning steps that led to the formation of

boundaries between the Western self, the “Occident,” and the Eastern non-self, the “Orient;” latter was ascribed with traits such as fanaticism, despotism, and hostility to modernity (Progler, n.d.). The basis of this division was founded by the perceived threat of the Ottoman Empire and religious differences between Christians and Muslims (Makdisi, 2005). According to the works of mid-15th-century Italian humanists, classification of Turks as barbarians, the re-analysis of the First Crusade which was seen as a European struggle to protect Europe against the barbarians, and the shift of the political and moral responsibility to Europe in anti-Turkish war discourse, contributed to the self-created European image of superiority over the Turks. The word “Turks” became synonymous with “Muslims” (Konrad, 2011).

Since Europeans already had opinions of what the Orient or the “other” might be, when Europeans arrived in the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries, the unfounded images of Islam became further entangled with religious and political affairs at the time (Bryce, 2013). European colonists’ ideas about Islam and Muslims seemed to be rooted in the Greek concept of barbarians, which were relayed through the Reconquista and Inquisition, elevated during European colonization, and further molded by Orientalists in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Progler, n.d.). This theoretical apparatus of Orientalism employed by Europeans, which was highly romanticized and was a product of the Western imagination, hemmed in Islam through dichotomies that were drawn by the Europeans to define their own civilization; these opposing notions included, but were not limited to, the rule of law vs. despotism, progress vs. stagnation, and order vs. chaos (Konrad, 2011).

The concept of Orient vs. Occident, East vs. West, and ours vs. theirs laid the groundwork for the discipline of Orientalism defined previously. This division between us and them is apparent in *Orientalism* by Edward Said. Said (1978) discussed the faux boundaries created by the Europeans to justify their imperialistic motives in the East. Broadly speaking, Europeans characterized themselves as being civilized and superior in comparison to the Orient, a

term used indiscriminately to define all Asian civilizations encountered by the Europeans in their journey to the East, and felt that they should participate in civilizing the uncivilized Orient.

Problems arose when the Europeans started incorporating their works of imagination about the Orient in their culture through literature, travelers' anecdotes, novels, paintings, music, and other media.

When Orientalists tried to understand Islam, they inaccurately linked Christianity to Islam. For instance, the word Muhammadanism was derived from Muhammad, whom Muslims recognized as the last messenger of God and regarded as their role model. Europeans inappropriately compared Muhammad to Christ; since Christ and Muhammad founded Christianity and Islam, respectively, Europeans conceived that Muhammad must also be the son of God and The God of Muslims, which is incorrect (Khalid, n.d.). Thus, the views about Islam were blemished since its early conceptualization by European thinkers.

According to Bryce (2013) and Said (1978), the constantly changing field of Orientalism viewed Islam in two ways. One view supported the notion that Islam had "borrowed" from its ancestral Judeo-Christian religions and was essentially a rough imitation of Christianity. The second view envisioned Muslims as a threat to Western civilization; this latter view originated from the first one and from the conflicts that occurred between the Western Christians and Eastern Muslims in the 15th century and later developed, as time progressed, into stereotypes which described Muslims as radicals, fanatics, and fundamentalists.

The initial view of Muslims as violence-prone extremists was the consequence of European confrontations with the Muslims in the 15th century. The success of Arab conquests in the 7th century to the ascendancy of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century posed a menacing threat to the Christian world. The Islamic empires (Arabic, Ottoman, and those in Spain and North Africa), did conquer the Christian world for a short time (Bryce, 2013). These images of Islam as a violent and radical religion were just the beginning of the distorted views of Islam that

were altered for every generation thereafter through Western media, and eventually led to the creation of Islamophobia-defined as fear/hatred of Muslims (Conway, 2012). The first English use of the word Islamophobia, in print, was in an article by Edward Said (1985) in which he argued that Islamophobia and anti-Semitism went hand in hand and were nourished in the same stream (Richardson, n.d.).

During and after the 19th and 20th centuries, many previously mentioned stereotypes continued to materialize and re-generate and re-form the images of Islam and Muslims. In addition to the aforementioned stereotypes, a few others stereotypes ascribed to Islam included its incapability of separating religion from state, oppression of women, and inability to pursue a social and state order (Saif, 2008). Muslims were also thought of as being lazy, irrational, uncivilized, dull, and clumsy individuals who needed Europe's fatherly support in assisting their pitiful conditions (Khalid, n.d.). It was believed that Muslims could amend their situation by adopting European ideas and standards (and become "Westernized"). It was also thought that Islam was responsible for its own inferiority in politics, military, economics, and society (Badawi, n.d.).

The element of reality present in the previously stated stereotypes is obviously debatable, but what these stereotypes do indicate is the Europeans' practice of essentialism, the notion of regarding human traits as having an intrinsic existence and universal validity as opposed to being an ideological construct (Said, 1978). By defining Muslims as the "other," Westerners identify themselves as being different from the other; whatever the other is, they are not. Today, in the age of mass media, these images created long ago are restructured and reconstructed into a more abrogating form and are utilized by media professionals to bolster propaganda against Muslims.

Chapter 2

Role of Media as a Mediator between Islam and the West

It would be a daunting task to try to elucidate whether a particular conflict between any two or more ethnicities, races, or countries has any religious origins or not, without being well-informed of the social atmosphere at the particular time of the strife. Without being aware of the historical background and the true origins of tensions between two or more confronting groups, it would be unfair to categorize a conflict as a purely religious or social one.

Nonetheless, it appears that over the past few decades and even presently, most of the conflicts that occur between the Eastern/Islamic and Western/Christian nations are attributed primarily to religious causes. Now, whether religion is the actual cause of these international conflicts or merely a conveniently cited explanation by media informants to explain a complicated issue in a matter of few seconds, will probably remain unsolved. However, the ultimate goal of this research is to establish some credibility to the latter idea by using critical media content and discourse analyses as mechanisms of analyzing the state of Islam in Western culture.

Effects of Media on Public Perceptions

This paper will address the misunderstandings that have arisen and may arise in the future because of various stereotypes associated with Islam. Stereotypes that assert Islam as being intrinsically over-conservative, with Muslims being narrow-minded, extremists, terrorists, and

downright antithetic to the more modernized Western society (Hunt, 2009), have resulted in some common misunderstandings. Some prevalent misconceptions about Islam and Muslims include the belief that all Muslims believe in Muhammadanism; all Muslims are Arabs and terrorists; women and children are given no rights; and Islam was spread by the sword (Abdalla & Rane, n.d.). These misconceptions are continually bolstered by media professionals today and can have huge and lasting impacts on the public mind.

The main purpose of the media is first to make financial profits, to entertain, then to persuade and subsequently educate the audience (Mustazza, 2013). Just like in any other business, profits in media are measured by the response of its consumers to what it has offered them (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2012b.). According to Gerbner (Jhally, 2002), media can cultivate attitudes by presenting repeated images and stereotypes of race, social class, gender, and violence. Gerbner believes that media is a cultural story teller that can cause people to fear and be suspicious of certain groups, places, or events. By doing so, media basically works towards shaping people's attitudes and beliefs about the present. This involves mental and emotional manipulation of the audience by reflecting on people, events, and situations. In fact, the work of many media scholars focuses on media images and representations and their potential effect on viewers' attitudes about issues, including race, gender, social class, and religion.

For instance, when non-native speakers of American English are portrayed on famous television shows as helpless and socially disadvantaged individuals, like in *That 70s Show* and *The Big Bang Theory*, it illustrates that the audience approves these characteristic manifestations and is comfortable with the status given to these individuals in culture and society (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2012a). *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, a documentary film directed by Sut Jhally and produced by Media Education Foundation in 2006, gives examples of films that dehumanize Arabs by making them appear as sinister, radical, and violent people obsessed with world domination and overthrow of the U.S. Actually, two Israeli producers released at least

thirty films between 1983-1998 (Curtiss & Hanley, 2001) in the U.S., including the famous *Delta Force* (1986), that functioned as consummate propaganda in eternalizing negative depictions of Arabs, Palestinians in particular.

In accordance with the above media descriptions of Muslims, reflections on Islam and Muslims in media are tainted with biases originating from as early as the 14th century (Varisco, 2011), and are amalgamated with events occurring roughly as early as a decade ago- the September 11, 2001 attacks on the East coast of the U.S. Despite the fact that these prejudices have taken new forms and conformed to the national mood during a particular crisis with an Islamic country, dispositions about Islam and Muslims are inherently flawed. This does not suggest that all these opinions are purely fictional works of media. Of course, there are horrifying occurrences of violent and unjust acts in the Islamic world, but these acts are equally likely to occur in any other part of the world. Hence, the one-sided picture of Islam portrayed in media should not be mistaken for the full view. Essentially media is like a window which does not necessarily distort reality, but exposes only a part of it which limits the scope of view.

Islam as a Media Event

A number of events in the recent history such as the Palestinian-Israeli war (end of the 19th century to present), Arab Oil Embargo (1973), the Iranian Revolution (1977-1979), and 9/11/2001 attacks on The Twin Towers, can serve to provide a plausible platform to begin a discussion of how changes in global circumstances weighed into the changes in media descriptions of the Muslims and Islamic world (especially after 9/11), albeit detrimentally (Brown, n.d.).

Detailed explanations and interpretations of these significant events in the Islamic history are beyond the scope of this research project, but the intended outcome here is to show how these

non-religious events have been ultimately “Islamized,” for the lack of a better term. Although most of the worldly conflicts perhaps originate from a mix of sociopolitical and religious affairs, Islam seemingly is more exploited than other religions. This exploitation could be a continuation of perceptions generated about Islam centuries ago. Few examples from the past century might offer a better view of the perpetuation of the misrepresented images of Islam and Muslims:

- *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict- early 19th century-present*

The conflict dates back to as early as the late 19th century and is about a territorial dispute between Israel and Palestine; Jews believe that the land’s acquisition is their birthright, while Muslims seek for it out of self-determination (“Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” 2012). This conflict is known as the “World’s Longest Refugee Crisis” (“Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” 2012). It is less of a conflict between two countries, than it is of between two creeds, Jews and Muslims (Stunich, 2007). Those who view this conflict from Israel’s perspective tend to view it as a ploy perpetuated by Hamas (a group that supposedly follows the fundamentals of Islam), Fatah, and others (Eid, n.d.). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict was believed to fuel Islamophobia, creating a negative influence on both the Jewish and Muslim societies of Europe (Abdullah & Chehata, 2011).

- *The Arab Oil Embargo- 1973*

The Oil Crisis of 1973 occurred when members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced their decision to boycott oil supply to the U.S. due to the U.S.’s involvement with Israel against Syria and Egypt during the ongoing

Yom Kippur War (“1973-74 Oil Crisis,” n.d.). This crisis had several negative impacts on the U.S. economy; it led to “stagflation”- a period defined by slow economic growth and high unemployment (“1973-74 Oil Crisis,” n.d.). Following the embargo, Muslims’ portrayals in media shifted from, less oppressive and cruel to more oppressive and tyrannical (Esposito & Kalin, 2011).

- *The Iranian Revolution- 1977-1979*

Revolution was a series of conflicts that overthrew the regime of the Shah of Iran in 1979 and resulted in the establishment of an Islamic Republic by Ayatollah Khomeini (Mustazza, 2013). This revolution became a symbol of resistance to the Western forces and also caused the U.S. to shift its regional policy on security and oil flow through the Gulf (Sepheri, 2000). This conflict challenged the hegemony of Western ideas (Benson, 1989) as it marked the emergence of militant Islam (“Iran’s ‘Islamic Revolution’,” n.d.). The aggressive religious rhetoric of a few radical leaders of the conflict dominated Western media at the time, which misrepresented Islam and Muslims significantly; the chasm separating ours vs. theirs, as defined in chapter 1, became even more profound (Saha, 2004).

- *The 9/11/2001 Attacks*

Nineteen members of the terrorist group called al-Qaeda, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, hijacked four U.S. aircrafts and attacked various states on the East coast of the U.S. killing about 3000 people. Two of the planes hit The Twin Towers in Manhattan, New York City; one flew into the Pentagon at Arlington, VA, killing 189

people, and another crashed in rural Pennsylvania after a physical confrontation between the hijackers and passengers, killing 44 (Pressler, 2011). This was one of the most infamous events in the 21st century U.S. history due to the high casualties and the vulnerability it instilled among American citizens. Due to the intensity of the attack, it increased American fear towards Muslims and also led to increased security measures, particularly at government buildings and airports.

Part of the reason media coverage of the above four events framed Islamophobic dispositions and indifference towards Muslims, is due to the fact that perpetrators of violence and extremism in the name of Islam, have indirectly established a connection between the above events and a religion. This connection is a result of their misinterpretations of Islamic teachings in the Qur'an. The anachronistic interpretations of the ancient Qur'anic texts by the perpetrators of extremism have immensely contributed to the misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in Western culture. The blurred theology of the perpetrators regarding *jihad*, an Arabic word for struggle, is a result of misinterpretations of Qur'anic verses (Rodgers-Melnick, 2001). Extremists disregard the social and historical context of the Qur'anic verses and condone violence to gain sociopolitical ends (Rodgers-Melnick, 2001). Since these acts of extremism monopolize media attention and because many non-Muslims are not familiar with the Qur'an, Islam gets misrepresented as a violence-endorsing religion and these misrepresentations are rarely challenged by non-Muslims.

Media as a Source of Information

In all of the above mentioned events, the key role of various media like books, newspapers, televisions, and the internet in promoting these images can be easily noticed.

Presently, internet is commonly used for browsing information due to its accessibility and has become one of the main sources of information for most purposes (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010). This paper will attempt to show how online media professionals can astutely manipulate attitudes and beliefs through a lop-sided representation of facts (about Islam in this case).

More than 7 trillion internet users (“World Internet Usage And Population Statistics,” 2012) across the globe have access to information posted in countless online forums, columns, journals, articles, and other websites. In this research project, the main focus will be on how articles posted on the internet about Islam can tap into public feelings and fabricate biases in public minds. Since Islam is quite misunderstood due to its presumed rigidity (Williams, n.d.), this project is an attempt to explain how rhetorical devices such as word choice, metaphor, register, as well as misinformation and primitive knowledge of a subject as sensitive as religion, are utilized as tools to misguide people and cause them to acquire biases.

According to “The Pew Foundation,” approximately 51% of the internet users living in the continental United States in 2011 said that when they initially went to search for news, on a specific story or topic, they went to websites that presented links to stories from many news organizations (“Press Widely Criticized, But Trusted More than Other Information Sources,” 2011). This piece of data shows that roughly more than half the people, who were interviewed from the given sample size of 999 interviewees, went to a website with many links to get the information they wanted.

If internet usage trends continue to rise, it is absolutely imperative that the internet news sources provide users with a more balanced view of the sociopolitical and religious issues.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Question

Given that the images of Muslims, objectified during the Orientalist works of the 19th and 20th centuries, depicted Muslims as lazy, irrational and violent people and that the media today extend these ideas by representing Muslims as fanatics, extremists, radicals and fundamentalists, I wanted to understand how rhetorical devices are used to reorient and restructure these representations and generate misconceptions in the public mind. How does a columnist, with perhaps minimal understanding of the tenets of Islam, use rhetoric to perpetuate these images about Islam and Muslims?

Data Collection

Two recent articles were chosen for content and discourse analyses from a total of ten original articles that were initially selected from the archive of Debbie Schlusel, a conservative political commentator, *New York Post* and *Jerusalem Post* columnist, and a radio talk show host who frequently writes against radical Islam on her website: <http://www.debbieschlusel.com> ("About Debbie," n.d.). Most of the articles on her website are about the extreme and radical nature of Islam. She tries to persuade her readers of the threatening presence of Muslims in America and urges her audience to take action against it. Her works were chosen for analyses because of their popularity; her online fan club is second only to that of political commentator

Ann Coulter (“About Debbie,” n.d.). She has also been frequently quoted in mainstream news publications like the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and many others.

All of the articles that she writes against Islam involve themes of Islamic radicalism, terrorism, and extremism practiced by Muslims. The two articles chosen from her archives are appropriate examples of these themes and the language used to communicate these ideas to her readers. The two articles were written relatively recently and reflect themes that were prevalent in her writings about Islam and Muslims. Article A was posted online on August 19, 2010 and Article B was posted on January 27, 2011 (see Appendix A).

Analytical Framework

A two-step hybrid approach was used to analyze both articles. This hybrid approach is based on work in critical media literacy that recognizes the value of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to media analysis (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2012a, 2012b; Scharrer, 2007).

The first step in the analysis is comprised of performing a content analysis, which is related to examining results from a quantitative viewpoint. It is a research technique employed to calibrate themes in a popular media form (Berger, 1998) in order to either understand the intent of the communicator (Zito, 1975) or influence of the content delivered on the receiver. By measuring the amount of a particular element present in a media source, content analysis can allow us to examine emergence of new thought and behavioral patterns in a society (Berger, 1998). Four categories emerged during the analysis and were used to classify the components of the two articles. The categories, identified by the researcher, were also validated by a faculty member with experience in content analysis and media studies.

The second part of the analysis focuses on the discourse and the several ways in which the discourse relates to the social and political aspects of the world; various discourses are different perspectives of the world that are a consequence of the social relationships people establish with each other and the world, their social and political identities, and their position in the society (Fairclough, 2003). This critical discourse analysis is based on the work of Norman Fairclough (2003). My analysis specifically looks at the use of conversationalization, intertextuality, metaphors, and voices of authority, all characteristics of discourse used in critical discourse analyses (Fairclough, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Results

The results of the content analysis of articles A and B are described first, followed by the results of the discourse analysis. Themes that emerged from the content analysis of Schlüssel's two articles stressed:

1. Rise in Muslim population around the world, its negative impact on non-Muslims in the West, and the need for action to reduce population; article B highlights these themes:
 - a. Schlüssel presented her readers with numerous statistical data on global increase in Muslim population and rise in the Muslim population in Western countries, particularly in the U.S., France, and Great Britain.
 - b. Later in the article, she used a few examples of the perceived dangers that could result as a consequence of inaction on population increase.
2. The outstanding presence of Islam in the West by highlighting the religious affiliation of the U.S. President Barack Obama. In article A, she provides support for her arguments by:
 - a. Making references to the Islamic Law, known as Sharia in Arabic, in her article.

- b. Using pieces of information from President Obama's early and political life as evidence to establish his religious affiliation.
- c. Citing the "Islamic world" to show support for her claims.
- d. Berating other media who did not support her claim.

Discourse

Conversationalization is a style of discourse that is used to engage in public discussion through media (Fairclough, 1995). By placing themselves alongside general public or other cultural identities, media professionals interact with the public in an informal or chatty manner (Matheson, 2005) to collaborate on a particular topic (religion, politics, culture, etc.). According to Matheson (2005), this position as a conversationalist is acquired by making assumptions about public opinions or what the media professional perceives to be the voice of the public. Schlüssel makes use of this methodology in both of her articles in order to highlight the dangers of Muslim presence in the U.S. and the potential risk of Islam taking over the U.S., which, according to her, has already begun with the election of Barack Obama as the president.

Schüssel also meshes facts with opinions through use of metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and intertextual components in her articles, obscuring the reality even further for her readers. Intertextuality is the presence of other texts such as reported speech, writing or thought, within a text, which may or may not be attributed (Fairclough, 2003). In her articles, Schlüssel accomplishes this by making references to research studies conducted by reputable organizations like "The Pew Foundation" and misstating and exaggerating their data to establish her position as an authority.

Here is an incomplete list, from both articles, of metaphors, conversationalized sentences, and instances when she establishes herself as an authority on the subject matter through intertextuality. (See Appendix B for a comprehensive list)

- *Metaphors*

1. Muslims as illegal aliens
2. Dominant strain; extremism as the dominant strain of Islam
3. Foreign cancer; Islam as a foreign cancer
4. Metastasized; Islam as a cancer that has metastasized
5. Baby machines; Muslim women as baby producing machines
6. Dearbornistan; -istan added to Dearborn, a city in Michigan with high Muslim population
7. Invade; Muslims as invaders
8. Full-ninja face-veil; Muslim women as ninjas in naqab (face-cover)
9. Cheered the 9/11 attacks; Muslims as cheerleaders for terrorist acts
10. Idolize; Muslims as idolizers of bin Laden

- *Conversationalization*

1. If you don't think...
2. ...you have your head buried in the sand.
3. When will we deal with it?
4. You will not see these things...
5. ...your grandchildren...

6. As we all know...
7. We know that you'd be...
8. We have every reason...
9. ...our borders...
10. If you are not bothered...

- *Position as an Authority through Intertextuality*

1. ...poll after poll shows most of the Islamic world believes Barack Obama to be Muslim...
2. ...under Islamic law, he is.
3. ...also under Islamic law, it's once a Muslim, always a Muslim.
4. ...TIME Magazine.....shows 25% of Americans believe Barack Obama is a Muslim.
5. ...100% of the Islamic world believes he is.
6. He's proved that in every stage of his political life.
7. ...in his own words...born a Muslim.
8. He studied at Islamic schools in Indonesia and identified as a Muslim on school records.
9. He identifies with their point of view to the point of claiming America is a Muslim nation.
10. ...but it's not what he says is his religion.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Although I only chose two articles for in-depth analyses, the results obtained from these articles are a good illustration of how various tools used by media professionals can legitimize representations through the established hegemony, which is defined by Gramsci (1971) as a process of exerting dominance through consent rather than coercion (Fairclough 1995; Mastroianni 2002). Media broadcasting authorizes news for its viewer because the viewer trusts media as an authority for current news, entertainment, and education (Curtis, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to know how media professionals work to relay information to their audience.

When information about any issue is represented in media, it does not mirror reality as it is, but is a product of the producer's interests, objectives, and social status (Fairclough, 1995). In the two articles analyzed, Schlüssel uses her social status as a renowned news and radio personality, conversationalization, and intertextuality as tools to convince her readers of the dominance of Islam in the U.S. She does this by making references to, President Obama's religious affiliation, the rise in Muslim population and the risks it carries for the Americans.

As established earlier in the paper, Islamophobia emerged from Orientalism and the anti-Islam sentiment was present in the public sphere pre-9/11; it reached new heights post-9/11 events. Schlüssel benefitted from the feelings of suspicion and insecurity in the Western imagination, which have been a part of the Western thought since the 14th century and continue to persist today, to invoke action against Islam and Muslims in the U.S. through different angles; for instance, sometimes she picked out a few outliers in the Muslim society and pinpointed their misdeeds and at other times, she targeted the rise in Muslim population and its potential threats

for the Americans. With no discernible credibility in Islamic studies, Schluskel constantly makes derogatory remarks on Islam and Muslims in her articles.

In order to establish credibility on the subject of Islam and Muslims and convince her readers, Schluskel engages in the use of intertextual elements in her writing at several occasions. For instance, in article B, Schluskel wrote:

Pew is the same organization that found that at least a third of American Muslims—particularly younger and immigrant Muslims—support violent jihad, including homicide bombing attacks on innocent civilians. We have every reason to believe that the majority of Muslims—as more are born here and more are allowed to invade our borders—will be every bit as extremist, if not more so. That’s just Islam, plain and simple. To say otherwise is to be in denial.

In the above scenario, Schluskel states the results she obtained from a study performed by a notable research organization, “The Pew Foundation.” The link provided by the article for the Pew data does not direct the reader to the source of information, which, is misleading and diminishes the author’s position as a trusted informant. Also, Schluskel did not use the term “jihad” in a context that would correctly portray its true meaning; the way it is used in the text connotes violence. The literal meaning of *jihad* in Arabic is struggle, a spiritual struggle with oneself or struggle against the transgressors; the transgressors maybe Muslims or non-Muslims. Qur’an clearly specifies the circumstances under which Muslims are permitted to engage in physical combat, a form of jihad (Qur’an 60:10); nonetheless, those who treat Muslims fairly are to be treated with respect and kindness in return (Qur’an 60:9). However, the form of jihad that involves physical combat has received the bulk of global attention today and is often the one that is proffered in media.

Schluskel uses jihad as an example to promote negativity about Islam and Muslims; by providing her readers with statistical evidence to display authority in her voice, in the sentence

that follows, Schluskel draws illogical conclusions about the *majority* of Muslims. Furthermore, the data she intended to present through the misleading hyperlink are not supported by several studies conducted about American-Muslims by “The Pew Foundation.” One of such studies is titled *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream*, and it states:

For example, 13% of those who think of themselves primarily as Muslims believe that suicide bombing to defend Islam from its enemies can be often or sometimes justified, compared with 4% of those who say they are American first. Still, overwhelming majorities of both groups reject suicide bombing as a strategy, including 85% of those who identify primarily as Americans and 79% who consider themselves Muslims first. (p. 32).

These data are certainly not in line with Schluskel’s evidence; the word “jihad” was not used once and 13% of the Muslims, who did believe that suicide bombing to defend Islam from its enemies could be often or sometimes justified, did not specify their beliefs about bombing innocent civilians. Regardless of these data, uninformed people seem to accept Schluskel’s implausible conclusions drawn from incorrect facts, as depicted by the comments that followed her articles. With minimal expertise in the area of Islam or Muslim life style due to lack of education in Islamic studies and no apparent evidence of interactions with Muslims on a regular basis (“About Debbie,” n.d.), Schluskel makes false allegations about Muslims and Islam that uninformed individuals will believe due to the pseudo-credibility she establishes by misrepresenting data from a reliable source. She maintains her position as an authority on Islam and Muslims by virtue of her popularity as a political columnist and an attorney, use of statistical data published by reputable organizations, and references to famous news websites like *The Huffington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* (“About Debbie,” n.d.).

Additionally, the statements made by Schluskel are dialogically closed (Fairclough, 2003); that is, they leave no room for discussion or other possibilities for her readers to explore.

This is accomplished by making assumptions about Muslims and Islam that cannot be validated (Fairclough, 2003), which reinforce the audience's fears. There were several examples of this technique throughout her works. In fact, the title of her article A (see Appendix A) stated "...Technically Obama IS a Muslim," which was later followed by her assertion that under Islamic law, "it's once a Muslim, always a Muslim." Schlüssel did not make reference to the Islamic law under which President Obama would be called a Muslim. In article A all the claims she made about President Obama are merely designative of his religious affiliation; those claims are not supported by definitive evidence.

Above were just a few brief examples to show how intertextuality in a conversationalist manner (Fairclough, 2003) could attract an audience by manipulating a few facts and presenting them in an authoritative manner. Schlüssel took real stories, contorted those, and misrepresented pieces of evidence from reliable sources to establish credibility in front of her readers. Nevertheless, she was unable to prove many of the negative remarks she made about Islam or Muslims with authentic Islamic sources. In both articles A and B, not once did she make use of the Qur'an (the most authentic source to study Islam) or even works of respectable Muslim scholars, like Zakir Naik, to support her arguments.

Less conspicuous is Schlüssel's use of various metaphors to describe Islam and Muslims. For instance, she refers to Muslims as foreigners, Muslim women as baby producing machines, Islam as a disease, and ascribes several other metaphors to Muslims and Islam (see Appendix B). Such metaphors participate in constructing thoughts in subtle and non-trivial ways. According to scholar James A. Berlin, language is "never innocent." There is little to no objectivity in language and it constantly acts to frame our ideologies and views on worldly issues ("Rhetorica," n.d.).

Extremists, fundamentalists, and terrorists are only a few metaphors that are ascribed to Muslims today. Post-9/11 events, Islam and Muslims have received a disproportionate volume of disparaging media coverage (Rane, 2000; Abdalla & Rane, n.d.). Media is a profit-making

business and does not provide an impartial view of global issues (Mustazza, 2013). Given the presence of pejorative sentiments towards Islam and Muslims in the West since 7th century and the continuation of these sentiments, it appears that media will be unable to accurately differentiate between Islam as a faith practiced by more than one-fifth of the world's Muslim population and the violent version of Islam emulated by less than one percent of the Muslim population. The ratio of Muslims who practice violence in the name of Islam to those who live in harmony with non-Muslims in different parts of the world and practice Islam peacefully, is extremely low, yet the former group receives much greater media coverage. The metaphors associated with Islam and Muslims in the Western media do not provide an accurate description of the faith practiced by approximately one-third of the world's population.

Appendix A

Articles

ARTICLE A

August 19, 2010, - 12:49 pm

Uh, Sorry, TIME, Technically Obama IS a Muslim

By [Debbie Schlusel](#)

Back in 2006, I was the first to write about Barack Hussein Obama's Muslim family and note that technically, under Islamic law, he is a Muslim. In the piece, "[Barack Hussein Obama: Once a Muslim, Always a Muslim](#)," I also noted that the Arab street and the Islamic world see him as a Muslim, even if he does not. And I said that psychologically he felt the need to please the father—the Muslim father who abandoned him—and would kowtow to the Islamic world as President for that reason alone, in addition to the others that make up his far-left ethos.

I was ahead of my time, and the sheep on all sides of the spectrum didn't like that. For saying those things, I was vehemently attacked as an "extremist" by the entire left-wing blogosphere and media . . . and those on the RIGHT, including the ignorant morons at Michelle Fraudkin's Hot Airheads, who thought Obama's speech to the Muslim world was "surprisingly good" (that's the ignoramus Ed Morrissey and the equally ignorant coward who goes by a fictional name, "Allahpundit"). McCain illegal alien amnesty lover, Baba Streisand buddy, and faux-conservative Michael Medved called me "despicable" for a 1/2 hour to the two listeners of his irrelevant national radio show. Yup, the unHot Airheads and Medfraud were on the same side as George Soros/Nazi-funded Media Matters. "How dare Debbie Schlusel say Barack Obama has Muslim heritage and is a Muslim in Islamic eyes?!"

But, per usual, I was right, and they were wrong. Obama did, in fact, do everything I said he would. And he bragged and embraced the Islamic part of his family, going overboard. And poll after poll shows most of the Islamic world believes Barack Obama to be Muslim because, under Islamic law, he is. And, also under Islamic law, it's once a Muslim, always a Muslim. Thus the headline of my much-ridiculed piece.



Now, [TIME Magazine is up in arms about a poll that shows 25% of Americans believe Barack Obama is a Muslim](#). Um, 100% of the Islamic world believes he is. So, why isn't TIME up in arms about that, rather than ridiculing the 25% of Americans who get it? It makes no difference whether Barack Obama openly believes he's Christian. His heart and mind is with the Islamic world. He's proved that in every stage of his political life. TIME is upset that a quarter of Americans actually do their homework instead of absorbing the fertilizer that the now-irrelevant TIME pimps on them.

Sorry, but Barack Hussein Obama was—in his own words—born a Muslim. He [studied at Islamic schools in Indonesia and identified as a Muslim on school records](#). He identifies with their point of view to the point of claiming America is a Muslim nation. He can go to any church—headed by “former” Muslim, pro-HAMAS Rev. Jeremiah Wright or not—but it's not what he says is his religion.

It's where Barack Hussein Obama's heart and mind are. And they are in a Kenyan mosque with the ghost of his father.

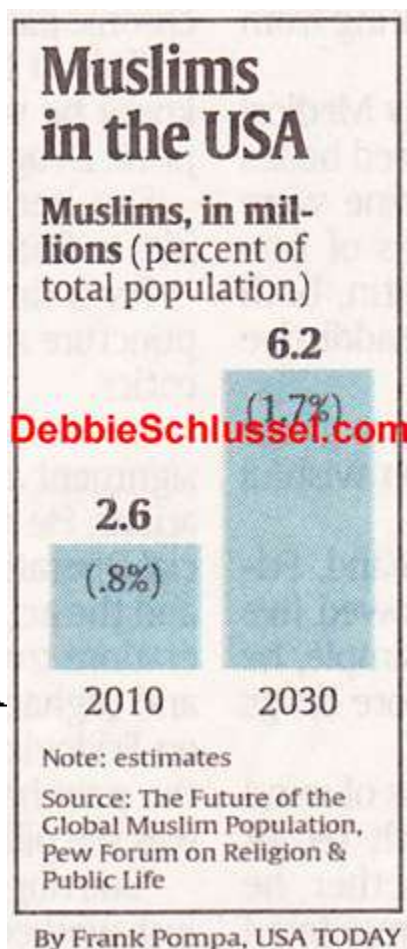
ARTICLE B

January 27, 2011, - 12:29 pm

“Number of US Muslims to More Than Double”: Warned Ya

By [Debbie Schlusel](#)

For more than a decade—well before 9/11—I’ve warned that because we do nothing and because authorities like Bush and Obama increased Muslim immigration to America, their numbers would increase through immigration and the fact that their women have the single purpose of high-birthrate mass production baby machines. And, as I’ve always said, it makes no difference that our soldiers are fighting pointless fights over there while they slowly but surely take over here. When Barack Obama lectured America in the State of the Union that “American Muslims are part of the American family,” the real truth is that they are a foreign cancer that has invaded America. Their cells are not only multiplying faster and faster, but Islam in America has metastasized. It is only a matter of slowing it down. Now, the [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life finds](#) that—IF Islamic immigration (legal and illegal) and high birthrates continue (and that’s a pretty good bet, based on our inaction on these issues)—[Muslims in America will more than double their numbers by 2030](#).



We already see how—as a tiny, vocal minority—they've imposed their intolerance and backward ways on this country. Just imagine how much worse it will get when their numbers double and their critical mass is that much closer.

Muslims will be more than one-quarter of the Earth's population by 2030, according to a study released today.

The number of U.S. Muslims will more than double, so you are as likely to know a Muslim here in 20 years as you are to know someone Jewish or Episcopalian today.



Those are among key findings in [“The Future of the Global Muslim Population,”](#) the first comprehensive examination of Muslims, whose numbers have been growing at a faster rate than all other groups combined. “We’re not surprised. Our mosques and schools are already overflowing,” says Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, outreach director of a mosque in Falls Church, Va.

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life analyzed statistics from United Nations data and census material from more than 200 countries and studies by 50 international demographers.

If immigration patterns and Muslims’ comparatively higher birth rates continue, Pew projects:

- U.S. Muslims will go from a tiny minority now, less than 1% of the nation, to 1.7%. That’s a jump from 2.6 million people in 2010 to 6.2 million.

•Muslim immigration to the USA and Muslims’ share of all new legal permanent residents will continue to rise. Most of the immigrants will arrive from South Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

- Though 64.5% of U.S. Muslims today were born abroad, that percentage will fall to 55% as the number of native-born Muslims rises.

- Worldwide, Muslims will climb from 23.4% to 26.4% of the population, going from 1.6 billion people in 2010 to 2.2 billion in 2030, concentrated in Muslim-majority countries. . . .

In several northern and eastern European nations, the percentage of Muslims will near or pass 10%, raising their political and cultural clout, particularly in urban areas.

Alan Cooperman, Pew Forum associate director of research, says the Muslim rate is “growing but slowing” and political and economic uncertainties can make dramatic shifts in projections.

Below is a graph of the Pew numbers of Muslims around the world and their predicted levels in 2030. I think those numbers—in many cases—are too low. In France, it’s well known that Muslims are already at least 17-20% of the country. And, in fact, the French can’t even put a solid number on it because they’ve allowed so many Muslim illegal aliens to invade their shores. The same goes for Britain. The numbers look low for a

place where Mohammed is the most popular birth name. Sorry, but I'm not buying that they are only 4.6% of the population there.



The people who did this study said they can't predict levels of extremism or religiosity in Muslims in America. But that's an irrelevant question. It's like asking how many fat people weigh less than 100 pounds. As we all know, the dominant strain of Islam around the world—whether Shi'ite or Sunni Islam—is extremist. The majority of Muslims openly support Hezbollah and HAMAS and idolize Bin Laden. They cheered the 9/11 attacks from Ramallah to Paterson, New Jersey, to Dearbornistan, Michigan. We know that you'd be hard-pressed to find a single Muslim cleric or community leader in America who will openly condemn HAMAS or Hezbollah.

Pew is the same organization that found that at least [a third of American Muslims—particularly younger and immigrant Muslims—support violent jihad, including homicide bombing attacks on innocent civilians](#). We have every reason to believe that the majority of Muslims—as more are born here and more are allowed to invade our borders—will be every bit as extremist, if not more so. That's just Islam, plain and simple. To say otherwise is to be in denial.

If you are not bothered by the projected increase in Muslims in America, then you should ask yourself: do I want cars burning and riots in the streets every year like they have in Paris? Do I want Muslims controlling elections and municipalities like they do in many locations in Europe and throughout the Middle East? Do I want to wear a niqab (full-ninja face-veil) and pay the jizya (tax on non-Muslims)? If you don't think a growing Muslim population will ultimately—in a few generations—end up with these things, then you have your head buried in the sand.

The handwriting is on the wall. When will we deal with it? It is already too late. You will not see these things, but your grandchildren and great-children and their progeny will. Is that okay with you?

Appendix B

Discourse Analyses Data

A. Uh, Sorry, TIME, Technically Obama IS a Muslim

Positioning herself as authority; intertextuality

1. ...under Islamic law, he is a Muslim.
2. ...Arab street and the Islamic world see him as a Muslim...
3. ...I was right, and they were wrong.
4. Obama...do everything I said he would.
5. ...he bragged and embraced the Islamic part of his family...
6. ...poll after poll shows most of the Islamic world believes Barack Obama to be Muslim...
7. ...under Islamic law, he is.
8. ...also under Islamic law, it's once a Muslim, always a Muslim.
9. ...TIME Magazine.....shows 25% of Americans believe Barack Obama is a Muslim.
10. ...100% of the Islamic world believes he is.
11. His heart and mind is with the Islamic world.
12. He's proved that in every stage of his political life.
13. ...in his own words...born a Muslim.
14. He studied at Islamic schools in Indonesia and identified as a Muslim on school records.
15. He identifies with their point of view to the point of claiming America is a Muslim nation.
16. ...but it's not what he says is his religion
17. ...Barack Hussein Obama's heart and mind are

Presenting herself as an American collective identity; conversationalization

Use of first person; conversationalist tone

1. Uh...
2. Um...
3. Sorry, but...
4. Yup

Metaphors*President Obama as un-American*

1. Kowtow
2. Far-left ethos
3. And they are in a Kenyan mosque with the ghost of his father.

Media as a controller of audiences' minds

4. ...TIME pimps on them
5. ...absorbing the fertilizer...

B. “Number of US Muslims to More Than Double”: Warned YaPositioning herself as authority; intertextuality

1. ...their numbers would increase through immigration and the fact that their women have the single purpose of high-birthrate mass production baby machines.
2. ...tiny, vocal minority – they’ve imposed their intolerance and backward ways on this country.
3. I think those numbers – in many cases-are too low
4. In France, it’s well known that Muslims are already at least 17-20% of the country. The same goes for Britain.
5. Mohammad is the most popular birth name
6. The dominant strain of Islam is extremist
7. Majority of Muslims openly support Hezbollah and HAMAS and idolize Bin Laden
8. Cheered the 9/11 attacks
9. You’d be hard-pressed to find a single Muslim cleric or community leader in America who will openly condemn HAMAS or Hezbollah
10. A third of American Muslims particularly younger and immigrant Muslims support violent Jihad, including homicide bombing attacks on innocent civilians
11. Muslims control elections and municipalities in many European locations
12. Jizya – tax on non-Muslims

Presenting herself as an American collective identity; conversationalization

1. ...warned ya
2. ...I've warned...
3. ...I've always said...
4. ...we do nothing...
5. ...our soldiers are fighting...
6. ...they slowly but surely take over...
7. ...they are a foreign cancer...
8. Their cells are...
9. ...based on our inaction on these issues...
10. We already see how...
11. Just imagine... (?)
12. ...you are as likely to know a Muslim...as you are...
13. ...raising their political and cultural clout...
14. I think those...
15. ...they've allowed so many Muslim illegal aliens...
16. ...I'm not buying that...
17. As we all know...
18. We know that you'd be...
19. We have every reason...
20. ...invade our borders...
21. If you are not bothered...
22. ...you should ask yourself...
23. Do I want...? (3X)
24. If you don't think...
25. ...then you have your head buried in the sand.
26. When will we deal with it?
27. You will not see these things...
28. ...your grandchildren...
29. Is that okay with you?

Metaphors

Islam as a disease

1. Dominant strain
2. Foreign cancer
3. Multiplying faster
4. Metastasized

Muslim women as machines

5. Mass production
6. Baby machines
7. Critical mass

Muslims as foreigners

8. Illegal aliens
9. Dearbornistan-original word is Dearborn

Muslims as attackers

10. Idolize Bin Laden
11. Invade our borders
12. Full-ninja face-veil.

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