



GRADUATE SCHOOL  
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

East Tennessee State University  
**Digital Commons @ East  
Tennessee State University**

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Works

---

5-2005

## **Stereotypes of Arab and Arab-Americans Presented in Hollywood Movies Released during 1994 to 2000.**

Yasmeen Elayan  
*East Tennessee State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Elayan, Yasmeen, "Stereotypes of Arab and Arab-Americans Presented in Hollywood Movies Released during 1994 to 2000." (2005). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1003. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1003>

This Thesis - unrestricted is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact [digilib@etsu.edu](mailto:digilib@etsu.edu).

Stereotypes of Arab and Arab-Americans Presented in Hollywood  
Movies Released During 1994 to 2000

---

A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Communication  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Masters in Professional Communication

---

by  
Yasmeen Elayan  
May 2005

---

Dr. Dan Brown, Chair  
Dr. Larry Miller  
Dr. Jack Mooney

Keywords: Arabs, Arab-Americans, Stereotypes, Media, Movies,  
Hollywood

## ABSTRACT

### Stereotypes of Arab and Arab-Americans Presented in Hollywood

Movies Released During 1994 to 2000

by

Yasmeen Elayan

Stereotypes routinely appear within Hollywood films. This study focuses on films released from 1994-2000 that feature Arab/Arab-American characters. A literature analysis reviewed the use of stereotypes in other portrayals of Arab/Arab-American characters. A qualitative analysis of six movies examined specific characteristics that were displayed by Arab/Arab-American characters. These characteristics included speaking with an accent, traditional/native attire, acts of hostility and aggression, affiliation with terrorism, and whether they were depicted as victimizers or victims. These films were selected in order to demonstrate the frequent existence of negative portrayals in popular films prior to 9/11. A primary coder, the author, analyzed 108 scenes, while the secondary coder analyzed 10 % of the total scenes as a reliability check. The findings suggest that negative images of Arabs/Arab-Americans appeared frequently in the popular films within this study. The conclusions suggest that stereotypes are evident in films and are detrimental to Arab/Arab-American races and cultures.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Brown, my Committee Chair, for his tireless help, assistance, and guidance throughout this study. I am also appreciative of Dr. Miller and Dr. Mooney for their invested interest in this study and their words of encouragement. Heartfelt thanks to Nicole Oaks, the secondary coder, for her relentless work and attention to detail while coding scenes from the selected films, as well as her never-ending support. Thank you to my family, friends, and teachers who always supported me and consistently encouraged me to achieve my best throughout my graduate career.

## CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	3
LIST OF TABLES.....	6
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	7
Popularity of Hollywood Movies.....	7
Stereotype's Existence and Harm.....	8
Jack Shaheen's Studies and Background on Arab Stereotypes.....	9
Explanation of Criteria for this Study.....	10
2. LITERATURE ANALYSIS.....	13
Stereotypes and Myths about Arabs and Arab-Americans.....	13
Historical, Cultural, and Religious Information about Arabs and Arab-Americans	15
Current Event Involving Arabs/Arab-Americans.....	18
Effects of Stereotypes.....	21
Plots, Reviews, and Box Office Earnings for Selected Films Within This	
Study.....	23
"True Lies".....	23
"Executive Decision".....	24
"The Siege".....	26
"The Mummy".....	28
"Three Kings".....	29
"Rules of Engagement".....	30
3. METHODOLOGY.....	34
Discussion of Literary and Movie Sources.....	34
Establishment of Qualitative Study, Coding Questions, and Coding Definitions	34
Reliability Check for Coding.....	37

4. RESULTS.....	38
“True Lies” .....	38
“Executive Decision” .....	40
“The Siege” .....	42
“The Mummy” .....	44
“Three Kings” .....	47
“Rules of Engagement” .....	49
Reliability of Coding.....	51
5. CONCLUSION.....	52
Summary of Main Points.....	52
Limitations.....	52
How the Study May Progress.....	53
Implications.....	54
Suggestions to Filmmakers.....	55
Other Suggestions.....	56
REFERENCES.....	58
APPENDIX .....	60
VITA.....	66

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “True Lies”.....	38
2. Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “True Lies”.....	39
3. Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “Executive Decision”.....	41
4. Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “Executive Decision”.....	42
5. Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “The Siege”.....	43
6. Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “The Siege”.....	44
7. Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “The Mummy”...	45
8. Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “The Mummy”.....	46
9. Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “Three Kings”...	48
10. Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “Three Kings”.....	49
11. Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “Rules of Engagement”.....	50
12. Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “Rules of Engagement”.....	51

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Popularity of Hollywood Movies

Hollywood, without a doubt, may be deemed as one of the greatest national entertainers to people of all ages, races, sexes, and ethnicities. According to the U.S. Census Abstracts, the annual box office receipts for 2002 totaled \$9,520,000,000. In turn, the movie industry depicts numerous images of a variety of races throughout its films. Interestingly, Hollywood's images may have the ability and power to allow audiences to generate thoughts, views, and opinions based on what they perceive. Therefore, plots, characters, and specific characteristics may be repeated within many films in what seems to be an all too convenient manner. Whether deemed good or bad, movies have the capacity to last forever, and with them they hold images and visuals that cannot be changed. Plato once stated in his work "Republic" that "those who tell the stories also rule society" (Shaheen, 2001, p. 5). The images that are left behind may often play a contributing role in how viewers shape their beliefs and opinions about certain countries, events, and people of various races, such as Arabs. "Hollywood films have a major influence on the American public, and millions of people have grown up believing that they know Arab and Muslim culture through what they view on the big screen" (Savage, 2002, p. 8).

The popularity of Hollywood films seems to be well-established in the United States as well as internationally. "Hollywood's motion pictures reach nearly everyone. Cinematic illusions are created, nurtured, and distributed world-wide, reaching more than 100 countries...No sooner do contemporary features leave the movie theaters than they are available in video stores..." (Shaheen, 2001, p. 5). This ongoing popularity of movies also seems to entice children and teenagers in that "...teenagers are avid moviegoers and nowadays purchase four out of ten movie tickets" (Shaheen, 2001, p. 5). Shaheen (2002), also noted that Hollywood movies and American television are very popular within 150 nations worldwide. Within these movies, many images are available to all individuals who view them. However, the meanings that these images may hold or be attributed to, may play a vital role in the formation of stereotypes. "Studies indicate that stereotypes are automatically or unconsciously generated in the mind, and that categorizing is an important part of the mental process of evaluating the world" (Paul, 1998, p. 52). Although stereotypes may be a profitable tool for Hollywood filmmakers in establishing protagonists and



antagonists, the repetitive placement of Arabs in antagonistic roles may influence individuals to recognize these images as largely true. Widespread acceptance of the stereotypical myths about Arab/Arab-Americans reaches beyond the audience to become self-perpetuating when more and more films adopt the same premises. “It is the myths about Arabs which often inspire directors, producers and screenwriters to develop a product which is then based on stereotypes” (El-Farra, 1996, pp. 4-5).

### Stereotype’s Existence and Harm

Paul (1998), states that stereotypes are invented in order to explain why things are the way they are. “A person develops stereotypes about a group...from information and disinformation, distortions, and/or opinions made available through family, friends, and the media” (Abreu, Ramirez, Kim, & Haddy, 2003, p. 693). Stereotypes, in general, may be harmful to any race or ethnicity when the negative implications about a particular group are considered to be synonymous with all individuals within that race or ethnicity. “...when one perceives an individual as a member of a particular stereotyped group, the perceiver’s mind activates the group-relevant cognitive structure and processes...judgments and attitudes within the framework of that particular stereotype” (Abreu et al., p. 693). Crocker and Major (1989) write, (as cited in Pitner, Astor, Benbenishty, Haj-Yahia, & Zeira, 2003) that research has also indicated that “holding negative beliefs about other groups is functional in that it could bolster the image and esteem of one’s own group.”

Unfortunately, while some races may be depicted in a more favorable light, others may then be portrayed in a negatively biased manner. “Several of Hollywood’s most blatant patterns of bias fall within the categories of race, ethnicity and/or national origin. Included in this group are negative and/or stereotypical portrayals of Arabs and Arab-Americans...” (Cones, 1998). Although all races may be portrayed negatively at one time or another, it seems that some races, specifically Arabs and Arab-Americans, may be recognized as being associated with a majority of negative characteristics.

Seen through Hollywood’s distorted lenses, Arabs look different and threatening. Projected along racial and religious lines, the stereotypes are deeply ingrained in American cinema. From 1896 until today, 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. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 2)

Sadly, specific events in the pre-9/11 era, such as the incorrect initial blaming of Arabs in the Oklahoma City bombing, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, may have caused or influenced the public to suspect that Arabs were most likely the master-minds behind heinous crimes of mass destruction and death.

... creators of popular culture form their opinions of a people, in part, based on what they read, hear on the radio, and see on television... they are inundated and influenced by a continuous flow of “seen one, seen ‘em all” headlines....  
(Shaheen, 2001, p. 28)

Keeping current events and headlines in mind, Hollywood and movie producers may have used such perceptions and events to their advantage when composing ideas for new films. “Each set of villains reflected headlines and anxieties of its era...with Soviet pretensions shattered and aliens from outer space passé, the new cinematic enemy is the Muslim extremist” (Goodstein, 1998).

Jack Shaheen’s Studies and Background on Arab Stereotypes. Jack Shaheen, Professor Emeritus of Mass Communications at Southern Illinois University, “is probably America’s best-known expert on how Arabs are portrayed in the media” (Levesque, 2002). Within his most recent book, “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People”, Shaheen (2001) completed an exhaustive survey of more than 900 movies that contained portrayals of Arabs. Of these, only a dozen portrayed Arabs positively, with about 50 more offering a measure of balance. Shaheen writes that Hollywood has used repetition as a dangerous teaching tool for more than a century. In using this method, Shaheen (2001) suggests that these stereotypical, repetitious images of Arabs and Arab-Americans have tutored audiences over and over in film after film.

Shaheen surveyed films released between 1896 and 2001. His extensive research process spanned two decades, and he came to discover that “Hollywood has projected Arabs as villains in more than 900 movies. The vast majority of villains are notorious sheikhs, maidens, Egyptians, and Palestinians” (Shaheen, 2001, p.13). Shaheen (2001), stated that since 1896 Hollywood has released more than 100 movies depicting Egyptians. However, “A full 95 percent of those mock and/or dehumanize Egyptians” (Shaheen, 2001). Interestingly, Shaheen (2001), noted that Arabs appeared in 250 movies that had absolutely nothing to do with Arabs or the Middle East, but the Arabs were used in cameo roles in order to establish them as the villains.

“Between 1980-2001, Hollywood released more than 120 of these cameo features” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 27).

Shaheen’s research focused on motion pictures related to Arab portraits and themes. He examined thousands of movie reviews, as well as searched for “Arab” story lines, settings, and character casts. Shaheen discovered that the majority of Arab characters fall under the five basic Arab types- Villains, Sheikhs, Maidens, Egyptians, and Palestinians. However, according to Shaheen (2001), the other “Arab” characters may be, but are not exclusive to, Algerians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Lebanese, Libyans, Moroccans, Syrians, Tunisians, and Yemeni. While some images may be labeled as more negative and offensive than others, Shaheen warns that one must also pay close attention to those Arabs and images one does not see on movie screens. “Missing from the vast majority of scenarios are images of ordinary Arab men, women and children, living ordinary lives.” (Shaheen, 2001, p.13). Perhaps, it might even be safe to say that the images one does not see may be as dangerous, if not more so, than the images one is bombarded with.

I am not saying that an Arab should never be portrayed as the villain. What I am saying is that almost all Hollywood depictions of Arabs are bad ones... for more than a century producers have tarred an entire group of people with the same sinister brush. (Shaheen, 2001, p.11)

Throughout his research, Shaheen was “driven by the need to expose an injustice: cinema’s systematic, pervasive, and unapologetic degradation and dehumanization of a people” (Shaheen, 2001, p.1).

Explanation of Criteria for this Study. Although the directors’ use of Arabs in films after 9/11 may be understandable, the consistent use of Arabs in antagonistic roles preceding this tragic event may have helped to establish the prominent existence of negative stereotypes and misrepresent the Arab world. Paulson (2001) wrote that according to the testimony submitted to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights by the Arab American Institute, that there were 326 hate crimes committed against Arabs and Arab-Americans in 38 states in the first month after the terrorist attacks, including seven deaths, 90 physical assaults, and 85 incidents of vandalism. Although Shaheen conducted an extensive study of movies for two decades, this study focused on the depictions of Arabs and Arab-Americans throughout the seven-year-period of 1994 to 2000.

Shaheen's research indicated that stereotypes of Arabs and Arab-Americans have been a prevalent part of Hollywood movie making, and to test this premise, a smaller selection of movies were used within this study to evaluate the stereotypes that were portrayed in films released during a period of years prior to 9/11. The movies that were viewed for this study were limited to release dates within this time period in order to establish the prominent existence of stereotypes during the recent years preceding 9/11. This strategy permitted for an in-depth analysis of the movies, as well as the ability to cite specific characteristics and stereotypes presented within each of the films. Even though this study focuses on a specific time period, it does not mean that the stereotypes that were evaluated were only established during this time period.

In fact, Shaheen (2001) indicated that during the early 1900s filmmakers used dancing harem maidens, Arab men who killed one another and others, rode camels, and were depicted as ugly. Shaheen (2001) states that from 1930 to 1934, Hollywood released more than 40 fiction films featuring negative depictions of Arabs, and that more than 100 films released during the fifties featured Arab caricatures. Shaheen (2001) indicates that the early movies from 1930 to 1950 established several firsts in depicting Arabs, including, the first Arab skyjacker in 1936, Arab immigrants as criminals threatening America in 1937, and the first Arab woman terrorist appeared in 1948. Gahreeb (1983) writes, (as cited in El-Farra, 1996),

In a study that measured American perceptions of Arabs, it was found that Arabs were so dehumanized that Americans were inured against the miseries and concerns of the Arabs or any segment of the Arab world; it is as if the fear of Islam and Muslims were justification for the negative Arab image in the West.

The characteristics that were analyzed throughout all the movie selections were speech, traditional/native attire, use of violence against others, hostility, affiliation with terrorism, and whether the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) were portrayed as the victimizer or the victim. Not only will this study hopefully create awareness concerning the use of negative stereotypes about Arabs and Arab-Americans, but it will also illustrate that stereotypes, of any kind, are damaging to people of all races and ethnicities. By discussing these issues, it will also facilitate further understanding in differentiating between complete fact and fiction in movies and everyday life. From examination of these issues, perhaps understanding and cultural awareness may improve. Shaheen(1984) writes, (as cited in El-Farra, 1996), "While producers, executives and

others...deny playing a role in current stereotypes, a negative attitude toward Arabs persists due to fact, 'a conspiracy is not necessary to continue the cycle of stereotyping, a complacency is enough'." Levesque writes that Shaheen contends that, "...the key is balance. Every group has among its members a minority of a minority committing heinous acts. Yet the overwhelming majority of all people are regular, peace-loving individuals who vigorously object to violent crimes" (Levesque, 2002).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE ANALYSIS

#### Stereotypes and Myths About Arabs and Arab-Americans

“A stereotype is the creation of a biased opinion or view- an individual will take the behavior of one person and state that all people belonging to that particular group, be it an ethnic, religious or social group, behave in the same manner” (El-Farra, 1996, p.1). Although there may be some truth to stereotypes, Hollywood and other major outlets behave as if stereotypes may be the correct way to portray certain groups as “truthful.” In turn, the reinforcement of stereotypes may cause others to see certain groups in a stereotypical light, therefore, causing them to possibly believe that all people from this ethnicity behave in the same manner. Shaheen (2001) stated that many improvements have been made toward the elimination of many racial and ethnic stereotypes from movies, but Hollywood’s stereotype of Arabs have not declined. “Over the last three decades stereotypical portraits have actually increased in number and virulence” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 28). Even though these roles may be in fictitious stories for movies or TV shows, the public may become conditioned to seeing certain groups in these consistent roles and believe that these are the only jobs this group holds and that the characteristics they portray are seen in all people of their ethnic group. Therefore, these negative portrayals may cause the public to form judgmental or biased views of certain groups. “After years of virtual invisibility, Arab-Americans are finally finding prominence in Hollywood movies- as terrorists and villains. They are only the latest in a long line of ethnic groups and nationalities cast in stereotypical bad-guy roles...” (Goodstein, 1998).

Shaheen also identified four basic myths that possibly pertain to the stereotypes of Arabs and Arab-Americans. “They are all fabulously wealthy, they are barbarians and uncultured, they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery, and they revel in acts of terrorism” (El-Farra, 1996, p. 2). Unfortunately, it seems that it may often be these myths about Arabs that inspire directors, producers, and screenwriters to develop a product that is based on stereotypes. Sadly, Shaheen and others cannot explain Hollywood’s representations of Arabs, and in fact, Shaheen admits that is one of the main dilemmas. “...I can’t say the celluloid Arab has changed. That is the problem. He is what he has always been—the cultural “other.” Seen through Hollywood’s distorted lenses, Arabs look different and threatening” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 2).

Critics have also stated that stereotypes of other minorities, such as African Americans and Latinos, have been acknowledged as offensive. “History reminds us that the cinema’s hateful Arab stereotypes are reminiscent of abuses in earlier times. Not so long ago—and sometimes still—Asians, American Indians, blacks, and Jews were vilified” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 4). However, “there is no such constraint on depicting Arabs as oily and oversexed or shifty-eyed and violent” (Cones, 1998). Although Arabs and Arab-Americans may have tired of these depictions, little or nothing has been done in Hollywood to change them.

Hollywood has played a direct role in fanning the flames of suspicion and hatred towards Arabs and Arab-Americans. This has been insidiously accomplished by representing them in thousands of roles as the source of all that is evil in world culture.... (Savage, 2002, p. 7)

Unfortunately, stereotypes that may be deemed as profitable are not going to go away simply because people of a particular race may find them offensive.

Hollywood must hope that Arab viewers of propagandistic movies are reasonable and broad minded enough to perceive them as entertainment and not the vicious anti-Arab propaganda that they are. Otherwise, Hollywood has created its own time bomb with such a blatant pattern of racist or religious-based bias. (Cones, 1998)

Although there may be several reasons why the Arab stereotype has endured for such a long time—politics, profitable box offices, apathy, and the absence of Arab-Americans in the industry— “the fact remains: “You can hit an Arab free; they’re free enemies, free villains, where you couldn’t do it to a Jew or you can’t do it to a black anymore, affirms Sam Keen” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 6). Due to a heightened cultural awareness that has been progressively experienced by other minority groups, it seems that one of Hollywood’s aims may be to find a “bad-guy” that will remain consistent for a while. It may be easier to use a stereotype that has been establishing into mainstream society rather than challenge it by placing another group to play the villains. Arabs and Arab-Americans are an ethnic group that unfortunately many people in the United States may possibly know very little or nothing about. However, the areas where they may gain their so-called “knowledge” of this multi-cultural race may be the depictions they see in Hollywood movies and in the news media. To make matters worse, these supposedly “realistic” depictions may cause some people to form stereotypical views of Arabs solely by

what they hear and see in films and on television. However, convenience may be the winning factor for continuing to produce and repeat dehumanizing portrayals of Arabs and Arab-Americans.

Convenient stereotypes make everyone's job easier, writes Shaheen. Rather than having to pen a good joke, the writer inserts a stumbling, bumbling sheikh.

Looking for a villain? Toss in an Arab terrorist. We all know what they look like from watching movies and TV. No thought required. (Levesque, 2002)

The need for balance seems to be evident to some; however, the lack of action to reverse or decrease the consistent stereotypes leads one to the notion that some may not feel that this is a serious or pressing issue. However, presenting a race primarily through a fanatic fringe may only allow audiences to see "everyday" Arabs and Arab-Americans through distorted images and opinions. "Hollywood movies involving Arab characters demonstrates that the U.S. film community portrays Arabs in a stereotypical manner and that little or no effort has been made by Hollywood filmmakers to balance portrayals of Arabs with positive portrayals..." (Cones, 1998).

#### Historical, Cultural, and Religious Information about Arabs and Arab-Americans

Unfortunately, a majority of the cultural and historical information about Arabs may be misrepresented throughout the Hollywood industry. "Shaheen and other media critics agree that the association of Arabs with negative attributes, like terrorism and violence, plays a strong role in the process of demonization and dehumanization" (Savage, 2002, p. 4). The term "Arab" also seems to have two very different meanings depending on Hollywood's definition and the cultural definition.

The word Arab is used to describe an individual from the Middle East... these individuals are from different countries, with diverse cultures, beliefs and a variety of religions...The word Arabs reduces individuals and countries to a distinct target, open to stereotypes and bias. (El-Farra, 1996, p.1)

Shaheen even acknowledges that the term "Arab" of the Middle East should be 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" (Shaheen, 2001, p. 2). Interestingly, there even exists a mixed ethnicity in the Arab world that stemmed from 5000 BC to the present. "The Scots, Greeks, British, French, Romans, English, and others have occupied the area" (Shaheen, 2001, p. 3).

Unbeknownst to some, or perhaps unimportant to others, the Arabs have made many



contributions to our civilizations. However, Shaheen (2001) includes that the Arabs invented algebra and the concept of zero. He writes that many English words such as algebra, chemistry, coffee, as well as others, have Arab roots. In astronomy Arabs used astrolabes for navigation, star maps, celestial globes, as well as the concept of the center of gravity. They also invented the water clock, and their architecture inspired the Gothic style in Europe. Agriculturally, the Arabs introduced oranges, dates, sugar, cotton, as well as using water works and irrigation.

In most Arab countries today, “70 percent of the population is under age 30” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 3). Most of them also share a common language, cultural heritage, and the religion of Islam. However, one of the biggest misconceptions may be to equate Islam with Arabs and Arabs with Islam. “Though the vast majority of them are Muslims, about 15 million Arab Christians reside there as well” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 3). This same concept also holds true for the Arab-American population residing within the United States. “The majority of the United States’ Arab-American population is also Christian; about 40 percent are Muslim” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 3). Interestingly, despite all the negative media and motion picture stereotypes that may indicate that Islam is synonymous with terrorism, “Muslims are America’s fastest growing religious group, and they include immigrants from more than 60 nations, as well as African-Americans” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 4). Hollywood “Arabs” and consistent media images also seem to encourage the fallacy that all Arabs are Muslims, or at least they seem to be portrayed as such. Shaheen writes that “A majority of the world’s 1.1 billion Muslims are Indonesian, Indian, and Malaysian, but only 12 percent of the world’s Muslims are Arab. “... (M)oviemakers ignore this reality... Repeatedly, they falsely project all Arabs as Muslims and all Muslims as Arabs. As a result, viewers... tend to link the same attributes to both peoples” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 4).

Unfortunately, the religion of Islam does not go untarnished either. Due to the representations of stereotypically fanatic Arabs bent on destruction, Islam may, therefore, become a faith that is assumed to being connected and associated with acts of mass destruction and violence. “Today’s imagemakers regularly link the Islamic faith with male supremacy, holy war, and acts of terror, depicting Arab Muslims as hostile alien intruders, and as lecherous, oily sheikhs intent on using nuclear weapons” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 9). It seems that the same biased depictions of Arabs and Arab-Americans are also similar characteristics in presenting Islam to a vast majority of movie viewers. Shaheen writes (as cited in El-Farra, 1996), “In an attempt to place Islam in a category that Americans can understand, the media portrays images of Muslims

as belonging to a faith of 800 million people, consisting of strange, bearded men,... in robes and turbans...”. El-Farra writes that the distortion of Islam leads viewers to believe that it is a mysterious religion prone to acts of terrorism, violence, and fanaticism. She states that these themes are also maintained by the film industry.

Ironically, it is distressing that the majority of the mass media, as well as Hollywood, do not seem to attempt to portray that the Islamic religion is one that also preaches equality and peace.

Show only vilifying images of any group, incessantly, and after a while- 100 years in the case of the Arab stereotype- it becomes “natural” not to like certain people. In the sin of omission- we omit the humanity- and of commission- show only hateful images that make a stereotype that injures the innocent. (Shaheen, 2002)

Throughout the Arab world, people address Muslim religious leaders as sheikhs in order to show respect. “The word “sheikh” means, literally, a wise elderly person, the head of the family...” (Shaheen, 2001, p.19). However, Hollywood and moviemakers attach a completely different image and meaning to the title. “...in the 1920s he was a swarthy sheikh, wiggling his eyebrows and chasing the Western heroine around a tiled courtyard. After the 1973 oil crisis producers revitalized the image of the fabulously wealthy and slothful sheikh...” (Shaheen, 2001, p.19). Rather than presenting sheikhs as men of wisdom, screenwriters often portray them as “stooges-in-sheets, slovenly, hook-nosed potentates intent on capturing pale-faced blondes for their harems” (Shaheen, 2001, p.19). Yet, over time, the image of the “sheikh” seemed to shift to one of excessive violence. Earlier movies would depict “indolent sheikhs lounging on thrones. But, contemporary films present oily, militant, ostentatious sheikhs reclining in Rolls Royces, aspiring to buy up chunks of America” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 21). In an even less encouraging fashion, contemporary movies have shifted even further from the Arab definition of what many of them perceive a sheikh to be.

Today’s films present anti-Christian, anti-Jewish Arab potentates perched atop missile bases, armed with nuclear weapons, plenty of oil, and oodles of cash. Using Islam to justify violence, today’s reel mega-rich hedonists pose a much greater threat to the West, to Israel, and to fellow Arabs than did their predecessors. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 21)

In addition, Arab women's depictions don't seem to fare much better. In fact, it seems that Arab women may as well be virtually invisible, or are projected to seem that way. "Arab women in the Middle East are portrayed mainly as bundles of black cloth, submissive harem maidens or carrying jugs on their heads. They have no identities whatsoever. And they're always mute (Shaheen, 2002). Depending on the stereotypes that the woman perpetuates, Shaheen (2001) writes that the costume that is worn is one way that imagemakers can make personal and political statements. "By covering the reel Arab woman in black and relegating her to silence, the costumer links her to oppression. But throughout the Arab world, women wear a variety of apparel." (Shaheen, 2001, p. 23). When combined together, Shaheen (2001) writes that the Arab woman's on-screen non-behavior and black costume only result in alienating the Arab woman. Shaheen (2001) also points out that characters portraying Arab women never speak, nor are they ever presented in the work place. Unfortunately, due to these narrow-minded and grim depictions of "reality" for Arab women in Hollywood, many people may tend to associate Islam as oppressive and enforcing of submissive ideologies in its treatment of women as a whole. When Arab women are constantly portrayed in this fashion, this may not allow for very positive views of the Middle East and Islam. These representations also fail to address the fact that Arab and Arab-American women have the capability of contributing many positive aspects to their communities, and just like any other ethnic group, are very involved in the world around them.

One of the possibly most common misconceptions about Arabs is their direct involvement with the world's oil supply. The inability to separate stereotypes from reality also causes the public to perhaps assume stereotypical ideas about economic policy as well. "The world perceives OPEC as synonymous with Arabs, however, only seven of the thirteen OPEC members are Arab nations. Furthermore, of the five largest oil-producing countries, only one is an Arab nation, Saudi Arabia" (El-Farra, 1996, p. 2). However, this may not be the perception that many people believe. An editor of "The Washington Post" validated this assumption when he stated that "the world's supplies of oil and price levels are manipulated and controlled by greedy Arabs" (El-Farra, p. 2). These predisposed ideas may only help contribute to continuing negative opinions of Arabs and Arab-Americans within our society.

Current Events Involving Arabs/Arab-Americans. Numerous current events that may have passed or are still continuing may have also played an important role in the public's perception of Arabs and Arab-Americans. These highly publicized events may have also

influenced the content and depiction of Arabs in Hollywood during their respective times. One of the major continuing factors is the Arab-Israeli conflict. The American media coverage may often portray distorted images of victims and aggressors within this conflict. Kressel (1987) writes, (as cited in El-Farra, 1996),

The unbalanced coverage in the mainstream media places the Arab states in the position of violence and power, while Israel is left as a nation attempting to protect its freedom and people. This is evident in the “disproportionate number of unfavorable references to Arab states, their leaders and their actions. Similarly, bias is evident in a disproportionate number of favorable references to Israel.

Observed Mark Twain (as cited in Shaheen, 2001), “We are all ignorant, just about different things.” However, when it comes to the Middle East, “many Americans are ignorant about the history and plight of the Palestinian people” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 26). Shaheen also points out that the myth that all Palestinians are terrorists may stem from repeated negative images, as well as the exclusion of depictions that establish their lives beyond that of Hollywood’s definition.

Absent from Hollywood’s Israeli-Palestinian movies are human dramas revealing Palestinians as normal folk...Never do movies present Palestinians as innocent victims and Israelis as brutal oppressors. No movie shows Israeli soldiers and settlers uprooting olive orchards, gunning down Palestinian... No movie shows Palestinian families struggling to survive under occupation, living in refugee camps, striving to have their own country.... (Shaheen, 2001, p. 26)

When identifying Arabs with terrorism, research has indicated that this ideology also classifies them as enemies. Martin (1985), (as cited in El-Farra, 1996), specifies that the word terrorism “was used by the press in describing events and individuals they disapproved of. Yet, when describing these same acts by individuals who are not Arabs, the media was careful to appear neutral and unbiased.”

In turn, “news reports selectively and relentlessly focus on a minority of Arabs, the radical fringe. The seemingly indelible Arab-as-villain image wrongly conveys the message that the vast majority of the 265 million peace-loving Arabs are ‘bad guys’” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 28). Depictions and social ideologies about Arabs and Arab-Americans worsened in the 1990s. The two major events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which lead to the Gulf War, and the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center “lead some Americans to believe that all Arabs are terrorists

and that Arabs do not value human life as much as we do” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 29). Unfortunately, these events seem to present Arabs as America’s enemies and, therefore, seem to play a major role in affecting public opinion. Ironically, the combination of negative media coverage and the prevailing stereotypical judgments Shaheen (2001) writes serve as both a source and excuse for continual Arab-bashing by those filmmakers who have no problems exploited certain issues. To make matters worse, some filmmakers use the media images as sources of justification for their works. “In particular, the news programs are used by some producers and directors to deny they are actually engaged in stereotyping. “We’re not stereotyping,” they object. “Just look at your television set. Those are real Arabs.” (Shaheen, 2002, p. 29).

A distressing event in which media coverage presented “facts” about an event in a prejudicial manner occurred during the Oklahoma City Bombing. “In 1995, within minutes of the event, new reporters were insinuating that the bombing was an act of terrorists. Raised with unpopular stereotypes of Arabs, the American public was quick to develop images of Arab terrorists destroying American property” (El-Farra, 1996, p. 1). Government officials were also quick to point an accusatory finger at Middle Eastern terrorists.

One Arab-American spokesman, when asked why people in the U.S. were so quick to lay blame on Arabs, included in his response a short list of recent Hollywood movies that include negative portrayals of such persons. Much of our nation’s population, including political leaders and the press, have been seduced by Hollywood propaganda. (Cones, 1998)

Steven Emerson, a terrorism expert, went so far as to tell viewers “not to believe Islamic groups when they denied involvement” (El-Farra, 1996, p. 1). Within this event, it seemed impossible for the American public to attach the word terrorist to one of its own citizens. El-Farra notes that terrorism in films often refers automatically to Arabs.

During 1995, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee reported, as El-Farra (1996) cites Bazzi (1995), that “a 250% increase in hate crimes against Arabs from the previous year” (pp. 1-2). The Oklahoma Hate and Harassment Report stated that from Wednesday morning till Friday afternoon- when suspect Timothy McVeigh was arrested, all persons who appeared “Middle Eastern” instantly became suspects in the fatal bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building. (Cajee, 1995) Through their report of the affected communities, it was discovered that Muslims, Arabs, and other races of color suffered: “widespread fear and

intimidation, commonplace verbal harassment at school, in public and in the workplace, and a significant number of physical assaults and hate crimes” (Cajee). Among some of the more serious incidents of hate crimes reported (Cajee) were:

1. An Iraqi refugee in her early twenties, lost her baby after an April 20<sup>th</sup> attack on her home in Oklahoma City due to individuals who were angry about reports linking Muslims to the bombing.
2. Drive-by shootings on April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> that shattered the windows of a mosque and community center in Stillwater, Oklahoma.
3. Several occurrences of beatings and physical assaults which including an attempted knife attack in an apartment parking lot, an international student being beaten in a supermarket parking lot, and other physical assaults reported by students.
4. Local Islamic centers and Arab/Arab-American individuals reported an onslaught of hate calls.

In what seemed like such a short period of time, unjust and violent acts were irrationally taken out on Arabs, Arab-Americans, and other similar ethnicities solely based on predisposed and false allegations presented by the media and other public members. Sadly, these hasty assumptions only lead to more unjustified violence. “Though no American of Arab descent was involved, they were instantly targeted as suspects. Speculative reporting, combined with decades of harmful stereotyping, resulted in more than 300 hate crimes against them” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 7).

Effects of Stereotypes. While negative stereotypes may influence the public’s perceptions about certain races, these negative images may also affect the way stereotyped races feel about their heritage, culture, religion, and self-esteem.

Hollywood has chosen to focus on a few stock caricatures and repeat these images over and over again. These images project American Arabs, American Muslims, Arabs and Muslims as members of a lunatic fringe. We come to think “those people” are this way. We are never allowed to see... Arabs and Muslims who do what normal people do.... (Shaheen, 2002)

These acts and scenes that could easily establish some normalcy and humanity seem to be absent in Hollywood and a majority of the films that attempt to depict Arabs and Arab-Americans.

Hopefully, these ever-so-needed actions may be the key in establishing positive images and characteristics that are desperately needed. Unfortunately, many Arabs and Arab-Americans may find themselves making excuses about who they are due to their embarrassment in being associated with negative depictions of their people.

This has a profound impact even within our own community. It breeds anxiety, and a sense of helplessness, particularly in children. You hear some say, “I’m not Arab, I’m Spanish,” or “I’m Italian.” The pervasive negative images breed a death of heritage, a fear, a sort of shying away.... (Shaheen, 2002)

Monteith writes, (as cited by Paul, 1998), that by five years of age, many children have definite stereotypes about blacks, women, and other social groups.

Children don’t have a choice about accepting or rejecting these conceptions, since they’re acquired well before they have their own cognitive abilities or experiences to form their own beliefs... they must compete with all the forces that would promote and perpetuate these stereotypes: peer pressure, mass media.... (p. 58)

While it seems that our nation’s youth may be learning from Hollywood’s negative stereotypes, it may also make things more difficult for children who do possess an Arab heritage to combat those stereotypes amongst some of their peers. Shaheen (2001) states that the persistent images of “movie” Arabs plays an influential role in how young Arabs and Arab-Americans perceive themselves and how their peers perceive them to be as well. “It must be trying for young Arab-Americans to openly express pride in their heritage when they realize that their peers know only Hollywood’s Arabs- billionaires, bombers, and bellydancers- which is to say, they don’t know real Arabs at all” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 7). When a stereotype or the reinforcement of that stereotype removes the need to examine individuals based on their character, this may only help encourage misconceptions rather than attempting to present a well-researched character. El-Farra (1996) cites Morris International as writing that, “When stereotypes are perpetuated, this causes children to adopt misconceptions such as “Arabs are rich and have oil. All Arabs are named Mohammed. All Arabs are nomads” (p. 3).

Throughout several decades, many minorities have battled against excessive stereotyping and seem to have made triumphs for themselves and their communities in what seemed to be a “slowly but surely” rate. “History has taught us that when you repeatedly classify people as subhuman, many people suffer,” Shaheen writes. Savage (2002) notes that Hollywood’s constant

negative portrayals of Arabs in movies have had a profound effect on Arab and Muslim communities. It may be safe to say that nearly everyone has the need to belong, whether at work, school, their community, and even their society. However, it appears that most individuals would prefer to be affiliated with a group that is welcomed positively into a society. Paul (1998) indicates that humans need to feel that they belong to part of a group and that in today's society our identities are attached to our race and class.

We want to feel good about the group we belong to- and one way of doing so is to denigrate all those who aren't in it... while we tend to see members of our own group as individuals, we view those in out-groups as an undifferentiated—stereotyped—mass. (Paul, 1998, p. 55)

Unfortunately, these types of feelings seem to allow for the notion that one should feel superior to other groups that are not their own. Not only does this give way to societal tensions, but it may also lead some groups to feel consistently inferior to those groups that are viewed as the majority. “If one is no longer allowed to feel superior to Asians, Jews, Latinos, or blacks, at least we can feel superior to those wretched Arabs” (Shaheen, 2002, p. 30).

#### Plot, Reviews, and Box Office Earnings for Selected Films Within This Study.

“True Lies”. “True Lies” boasted a budget of more than \$110 million” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 500). According to the Box Office Mojo, the domestic lifetime gross of “True Lies” is \$146,282,411. Internationally, the film's total lifetime gross is \$232,600,000. Therefore, worldwide, it garnered \$378,882,411. During its opening weekend, it grossed \$25,869,770, and was released in 2,368 theatres nationwide. It was the fourth ranked movie nationwide in 1994, it remained in the top 10 for 91 consecutive weeks, and was the third ranked movie internationally in 1994 (Box Office Mojo, 2002).

“True Lies,” which was released July 15, 1994 by Fox, was listed on Shaheen's “Worst List” for its negative depictions of Palestinian terrorists. “Cameron's ‘True Lies’ is a slick film perpetuating sick images of Palestinians as dirty, demonic, and despicable people” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 500). Director James Cameron presents Palestinian Muslims as fanatical terrorists who plant nuclear bombs as well as detonate an atomic bomb in the Florida Keys. “Not only were the Arabs in the film religious fanatics bent on destroying the world, they were also sexist, racist and idiotic... they were unable to complete their mission because of errors which even a five-year-



old could have avoided” (El-Farra, 1996, p. 4). Ironically, Cameron labels the Palestinian terrorist group, “Crimson Jihad.” Yet, Cameron misuses the word “jihad,” wrongly implying that jihad means violence” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 501). Arnold Schwarzenegger stars in the film as a US special agent named Harry “who kills at least 64 Palestinians within the movie”. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 502). Sadly, the Palestinians don’t fare well at all. “Arabs function as mad murdering machines and as blundering dunces, nothing much in between” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 501). When the movie was released, “the Arab community felt that the negative portrayals of Arabs, namely as terrorists, encouraged existing stereotypical views” (El-Farra, 1996, p. 4). As it turns out, Harry and his partners triumph over the terrorists and many audiences and film critics enjoyed the film.

Schwarzenegger stated on “CBS: This Morning”, “So many people were excited about it...and what makes me really happy with the film were the reviews, that the critics were one hundred percent behind this movie...Many critics gave “True Lies” a thumbs up.” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 502). CBS-TV’s Gene Siskel stated (as cited by Shaheen, 2001), “The terrorists are totally boring. He [Schwarzenegger] just might as well be working in a carnival, knocking off stuff with a BB gun!” (p. 502). However, not all critics felt the same. Columnist Russell Baker wrote, “Schwarzenegger slaughters multitudes for laughs...the murdered villains are Arabs, apparently the last people except Episcopalians whom Hollywood feels free to offend en masse. Watching two hours of that kind of violence is vulgar, immoral and disgusting” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 503). Cameron (as cited by Shaheen, 2001) also denies that his movie stereotypes Arabs. “I just needed some convenient villain. It could have been anybody. I could have picked Irish terrorists” (p. 504). However, the majority of “True Lies” was centered within the United States, and none of the foreign destinations within the film were Arab locales. Therefore, the need to depict Arabs as terrorists was not truly necessary for the plot of the film to succeed. As Cameron stated (as cited by Shaheen, 2001), the terrorists could have been anybody, but they weren’t. They were Arabs.

“Executive Decision”. According to Box Office Mojo (2002), “Executive Decision’s” domestic lifetime gross is \$56,569,216, and its international lifetime gross is \$65,400,000. Therefore, worldwide, “Executive Decision” garnered approximately \$121,969,216. During its opening weekend, it grossed \$12,069,780 and was released in 2,232 theatres nationwide. However, at the time of its widest release, it reached 2,289 theatres. It was also ranked the 26th

movie nationwide in 1996, and was ranked 25th in earnings internationally that same year (Box Office Mojo).

“Executive Decision” was released on March 15, 1996, by Warner Brothers. Within the movie, eight Palestinian terrorists hijack a Boeing 747 en route to Washington, DC. “There are 406 passengers onboard, and the Palestinians beat and kill innocents, including a US Senator. The maniacal Muslims intend to unload enough DZ-5 nerve gas to kill nearly everyone on the Eastern seaboard- 40 million people” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 187). Kurt Russell and Halle Berry star in the film, and Russell plays one of an elite US anti-terrorist unit, Major Grant, who sneaks on the plane to destroy the terrorists. Throughout the movie, Islamic practices are equated with terror.

Implying the Holy Koran encourages the killing of innocents, the camera reveals a Muslim terrorist’s ring displaying the word, “Allah.” When asked whether mistreating people has anything to do with his “cause,” Nagi says, “It says here in the Koran.” Before and after killing passengers, Nagi prays. (Shaheen, 2002, pp. 187-188)

However, in the end, Russell and his team wipe out the terrorists while managing to land the plane and allow the remaining passengers to reach safety. “Executive Decision” received both positive and negative reviews. Shaheen writes that Larry King notes in “USA Today” (April 13, 1996) that, “Executive Decision” is an edge-of-the seat, thinking person’s thriller” (p. 188). However, other critics weren’t so quick to agree. Shaheen writes that Hilton Head News’ Jim Littlejohn writes, “I have a problem these days with our new stage villains turning out to be Palestinian at every turn. When it comes to ethnic and national bogeymen, our Arabic friends get it in the neck every time” (p. 188). When “Executive Decision” debuted, “from March 17-26, it was the highest grossing film in the country” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 189). Shaheen writes that Warner Brothers also defends the movie and stereotypes portrayed within it stating that they were “portraying a make-believe situation” (p. 189). Interestingly, another executive justifies the content of the film by stating, “These are unfortunately the headlines of the moment” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 189). However, the characters hijacking a plane could have been from any ethnicity or race with a plausible motive. The events and plot of “Executive Decision” were centered around the United States and did not include any Middle Eastern locales. Therefore, it seems that it may

have not been necessary to portray the villains as Arab characters in order for the film to succeed.

“The Siege”. According to Box Office Mojo, “The Siege” had a production budget of \$70,000,000. Its total domestic lifetime gross is \$40,981,289, and its total international lifetime gross is \$75,691,623. Therefore, worldwide, “The Siege” accumulated approximately \$116,672,912. During its opening weekend, it grossed \$13,931,285 and was released in 2,541 theatres. However, during its widest release, it reached 2,582 theaters. It was ranked as the 49<sup>th</sup> movie nationwide in 1998, and it was ranked 34<sup>th</sup> internationally that same year (Box Office Mojo, 2002).

“The Siege” was released on November 6, 1998 by Fox. The movie depicted Arab Muslims and Palestinians as terrorists.

Arab immigrants along with Arab-American auto mechanics, university students, and a college teacher terrorize and kill more than 700 New Yorkers. The extremists destroy the city’s FBI building, killing scores of government agents. They blast theater-goers, detonate a bomb in a crowded bus, and try to murder school children. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 430)

Although Edward Zwick, the director, contested that his movie depicted Arab stereotypes, it was protested by Arabs and Muslims throughout its filming and release. “The groups protesting the movie argued that it stereotyped Arabs, associated Islam with terrorism, and had the potential to increase antipathy towards Muslims and people of Arabic heritage” (Hall, 2001, p. 401). The movie stars Denzel Washington as an FBI agent named Hubbard, Tony Shaloub as an Arab-American FBI agent named Frank Haddad, Annette Bening as a CIA agent named Elise, and Bruce Willis as a “megalomaniacal Army general who immediately imprisons most of the male Arab-Americans in the city after the government eventually declares martial law” (Hall, 2001, p. 401). One of the main objections to the film was that the initial villains were scripted as Muslim and Arabic. Although Shaloub’s character was perceived to be a positive representation of Arabs, many did not feel that was a big enough deterrent from the images of mass destruction caused by the Arab terrorists within the movie. Hall writes that,

The threatening, largely faceless terrorist characters can also be seen as problematic in more qualitative terms, as a representation of an established media stereotype that would seem resonant and familiar to the audience because of their

previous experience with the media. The terrorist is a common Arab character type in modern U.S. entertainment media. (Hall, 201, p. 406)

Barnes, Ghomeshi, and Kutty (1998), write (as cited in Hall, 2001), that “many also believed that ‘The Siege’ linked Islam with terrorism.” Those who objected to these insinuations indicated that “...the terrorists are shown to be carrying out the bombings in what they perceive to be a holy cause” (Hall, p. 407). Interestingly, Nichols and Schafer (2001) write, (as cited in Hall, 2001) that video rental stores “described renewed interest in the film after the September 11 attacks.” One of the ending scenes reveals the main terrorist, Samir, praying before he intends to kill peaceful American demonstrators. However, Elise, the CIA agent, tries to prevent him from doing so, but he shoots her. Agent Hubbard arrives and he shoots Samir, killing him. Elise then dies shortly thereafter.

“The Siege” was met with a barrage of positive and negative reviews. On November 4, 1998, Denzel Washington told a CNN reporter, “This is not a stereotypical view of any group of people, by any means” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 432). Two days later, on NBC’s Today show, Washington said, “unfortunately we’re imitating life.” Matt Lauer said, “[The film] does not paint all Arabs as suicide bombers” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 432). Hall writes that Fenster writes in a review in “The Arizona Republic” that:

The story begins on sure ground with the FBI battling terrorists in a tale of intrigue...but director Ed Zwick... ventures into uncharted territory, what happens when terrorists force the U.S. government to declare martial law. At this point, The Siege not only loses steam, it abandons credibility.... (Hall, 2001, p. 411)

Roger Ebert’s review that appeared in the “Chicago Sun-Times” on November 6, 1998, stated, “The prejudicial attitudes embodied in the film are insidious...and, there is a tendency to lump together ‘towelheads’ (a term used in the movie)...Given how vulnerable Arab-Americans are to defamation, was this movie really necessary” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 430)? In defending the film, Zwick discussed the realism of the plot about Arab terrorists working with within the United States. In an article for “Entertainment Weekly,” Hall writes that Zwick is quoted as saying that “I didn’t make the world. This is the reality of what radical Islamic groups do” (Hall, 2001, p. 410) An article in “The Seattle Times” reported that “The [1993 attack on the] World Trade Center was always in the back of [Zwick’s] mind while he was creating the script” (Hall, p. 410).

However, it is interesting to note that people of all cultures and races may contain a faction that commits acts of destruction and death at one time or another. Portraying Arabs and Arab-Americans as the antagonists within this film does not seem like a obligatory factor in ensuring the success of “The Siege.” It seems like any radical fringe could have replaced the Arab characters and the film’s plot could have remained intact. None of the film centered on any Arab locales; therefore, it may not have been crucial to use Arabs and Arab-Americans as terrorists determined on killing hundreds of Americans.

“The Mummy”. “Entertainment Weekly” noted that “The Mummy burst out of its tomb, grossing over the weekend [7-9 May 1999] \$44.6 million...the highest grossing non-summer opening in film history (21 May 1999)” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 334). According to Box Office Mojo (2002), “The Mummy’s” production budget was \$80,000,000 dollars. Its total domestic lifetime gross is \$155,385,488, and the total international lifetime gross is \$260,500,000. Therefore, worldwide, the film garnered approximately \$415,885,488. During its opening weekend, it accumulated \$44, 585, 000 and was released in 3,210 theatres. However, at the time of its widest release, “The Mummy” was seen in 3,411 theatres. It was ranked eighth in films released nationwide in 1999 and ranked sixth in films released internationally during that same year.

“The Mummy” was released on May 7, 1999, by Universal. The story takes place in Egypt in a fictional place labeled “The City of the Dead.” A priest named Imhotep gets caught romancing the pharaoh’s mistress and is brutally buried alive with flesh-eating scarabs. The movie then fast forwards to American adventurers who wish to uncover the City of the Dead and the treasures that it holds. However, they must battle Arabs, Bedouins, mummies, and mobs of zombie-like Egyptians.

Mummy plots are relatively simple: Revived mummies and their caretaker “priests” contest Western archaeologists. In most scenarios, the ambitious gravediggers ignore tomb curses. So of course they suffer the consequences for daring to awaken Egypt’s sleeping royals. Meanwhile, the Westerners dupe ignorant, superstitious, and two-timing Egyptians. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 25)

The movie stars Brendan Fraser as an adventurer named Rick, Rachel Weisz as the Western heroine named Evie, and John Hannah as her brother named Jonathan. “Throughout, mute Egyptian workers function as disposable, frightened props” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 334). When the Western characters finally reach the “City of the Dead,” many curses are ignored and the

mummy of Imhotep is reawakened, along with many plagues he unleashes. However, Rick and his team are able to fight off and kill the zombie-like Egyptians that have been placed under the curse of Imhotep. After Rick is able to triumph over these villains, he is then able to return Imhotep back into his sarcophagus.

Though “The Mummy” was an immense box office success, some critics criticized Universal for the movie’s stereotypes. Shaheen (2001) cites Anthony Lane (1999), a critic for “The New Yorker,” as writing:

... try replacing one Semitic group with another- Jews instead of Arabs- and THEN listen for the laugh. One could argue that the racism of The Mummy is merely period detail, or that the gags slip by so quickly that they don’t have a chance to stick. I feel, however, that they hang around while the rest of the movie fades. (p. 334)

Other critics were not that forgiving either. Shaheen (2001) cites Michael Hoffman II (1999), a former Associated Press reporter, as stating in his “Hoffman Wire” that, “The Mummy is a racist masterpiece...individual Arabs are filthy, greedy, slimy pigs. The Arab masses are mindless, murderous zombies...A more accurate name for Universal’s box office smash is The Dummy” (p. 334). Unlike some of the other movies within this study, “The Mummy’s” plot is centered in Egypt, an Arab locale. Therefore, in order to portray the era and country correctly, use of Arabs as characters within this film was necessary. However, portraying a majority of Egyptians as meaningless and/or villains was not as crucial. The Egyptians could have been the protagonists within the film while the Westerners could have been the antagonists determined on stealing the riches of Imhotep. However, they were not portrayed as such. Instead, the Westerners must fight off Egyptians in their own native country. Although it may have been difficult to replace the Arab characters with those of another race, perhaps a better compromise may have been reached if some of the Arab characters were portrayed in a positive light.

“Three Kings”. According to Box Office Mojo (2002), the production budget for “Three Kings” was \$75,000,000. Its total domestic lifetime gross is \$60,652,036, and its total international lifetime gross is \$47,100,000. Therefore, worldwide, “Three Kings” accumulated approximately \$107,752,036. During its opening weekend, it grossed \$15,847,636 and was released in 2,942 theatres. It was ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in films released nationwide during 1999 and was ranked 37<sup>th</sup> in films released internationally that same year.

“Three Kings” was released on October 1, 1999, by Warner Brothers. The movie takes place after the Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm. “Four US Army rogues set out to retrieve a fortune in Kuwaiti gold bullion stolen by Saddam Hussein. Along the way, they try to prevent Saddam’s soldiers from killing Iraqi rebels” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 485). The movie goes on to illustrate that when the decision to pull US troops was made in the film, it caused numerous deaths, and left Iraqis vulnerable to the wrath of Saddam and his army. George Clooney stars in the movie as US Major Archie Gates, Mark Wahlberg is a sergeant named Troy Barlow, Ice Cube is named Chief Elgin, and Spike Jonze is named Vig. Throughout the movie, Shaheen (2001), writes that viewers were introduced to a wide range of Iraqis including devout Muslims, children, and those fighting for freedom. However, Republican Guards belonging to Saddam’s army are the exact opposite. Throughout the movie they terrorize innocent civilians, killing on a whim, using extreme violence, intimidation, and harassment. “When a Saddam clone shoots an unarmed Iraqi woman, the GIs change their minds and free the imprisoned Iraqi rebels” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 486). As the movie progresses, the GIs and Iraqi rebels, despite their differences, come to a mutual respect for one another that was not present at the beginning of the film. Shaheen (2001) notes that the GIs who escort the Iraqi rebels to the Iranian border are no longer the selfish characters that they were initially portrayed to be. They show compassion to the Iraqis and in doing so, bond with them in the movie. Overall, many critics and even members of the Arab and Arab-American communities had positive comment to make about “Three Kings.” On February 28, 2000, Robert Ebert (as cited by Shaheen, 2001) stated on UPN-TV that, “Movies like Three Kings help us to empathize with other people so that we can see things more than our own point of view” (p. 497). The Director of Muslim Public Affairs Council (as cited by Shaheen 2001) stated, “For the first time on screen, you see the human face of the Iraqi people” (p. 487). “Three Kings” took place entirely in an Arab locale, therefore, the portrayal of Arabs within this film was essential. In order for the story to be projected, it was necessary for the Arab characters to be present and display traditions and norms of the Middle Eastern culture. The plot of the film would have changed drastically if Arab characters were not included.

“Rules of Engagement”. However, audiences flocked to “Rules of Engagement; it was number one over the opening weekend (7-9 April 200), grossing \$15 million.” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 404). According to Box Office Mojo (2002), the production budget for “Rules of Engagement” was \$60,000,000, and the estimated marketing costs for the film reached

\$29,100,000. Its total domestic lifetime gross is \$61,335,230, and its total international lifetime gross is \$10,397,073. Therefore, worldwide, the movie earned approximately \$71,397,303. During its opening weekend, “Rules of Engagement” grossed \$15,011,181 and was released in 3,155 theatres. However, when the movie was at its widest release, it reached 3,220 theatres. The film was ranked 39<sup>th</sup> nationwide during the year 2000, and it was ranked 61<sup>st</sup> internationally during the same year (Box Office Mojo, 2002).

“Rules of Engagement” was released on April 7, 2000, by Paramount and was placed on Shaheen’s Worst List due to it being “one of the most blatantly anti-Arab scenarios of all time” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 404). The movie, which is based on a story by former Secretary of the Navy James Webb, “reveals scores of violent Yemeni demonstrators outside the American Embassy in San’a, Yemen. A chanting mob of veiled women, bearded kuffiyeh-clad men with missing teeth, and unruly children toss rocks, throw bombs, and brandish anti-US banners, written in Arabic” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 404). The movie stars Samuel L. Jackson as Marine Colonel Childers, Ben Kingsley as a US Ambassador under attack in Yemen, and Tommy Lee Jones as Childer’s friend Colonel Hodges. As the movie continues, Yemeni snipers fire away at American trapped inside the embassy. Helicopters take Childers and his marines to the embassy in order to rescue the American civilians. However, three marines are fatally shot and the incessant firing from the Yemeni places the rescue mission in danger of failing. Instead, Colonel Childers orders his men to open fire. Shaheen (2001) notes that the bodies of 83 Yemeni are presented to the viewers, and they assume that the Yemeni snipers killed the marines. The viewers also assume that the angry civilians were unarmed and innocent. This scene lasts for 15 minutes.

...US Marines open fire on the Yemenis, shooting 83 men, women, and children.

During the scene, viewers rose to their feet, clapped and cheered. Boasts director Friedkin, “I’ve seen audiences stand up and applaud the film throughout the United States. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 15)

However, Shaheen writes that some audiences or audience members may be cheering not due to insensitivity but rather because these are images that they’ve become accustomed to over time.

Some viewers applaud Marines gunning down Arabs in war dramas not necessarily because of cultural insensitivity, but because for more than 100 years Hollywood has singled out the Arab as the enemy... a steady stream of bigoted



images does, in fact, tarnish our judgment of a people and their culture. (Shaheen, 2001, p. 15)

Believing that Colonel Childers acted irresponsibly by killing innocents, the Marine Corps decides to court-martial him and Colonel Hodges decides to defend him. When Hodges travels to Yemen in search of evidence, he meets many victims from the marine attack. He meets with three Yemeni who all lie, telling Hodges the crowd had no weapons. After seeing many of the injured children, Hodges thinks that Childers might actually be guilty of wounding and killing innocents. However, a flashback in the movie reveals that the crowd of protesting Yemeni was armed with weapons and shooting at the marines. “What does this flashback footage imply? First, that the Yemeni, including women and children, deserved to die; they brought it on themselves. Secondly, Childers’ actions are justified and praiseworthy” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 405). Shaheen also states that, “The effects of ethnic exploitation are especially obvious in scenes revealing egregious, false images of Yemeni children as assassins and enemies of the United States” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 15). However, at the end of the movie, Colonel Childers is found not guilty on charges of manslaughter. “The film’s message? Colonel Childers made the correct call; his order to kill 83 Yemenis is justified. The movie’s Yemeni are, after all, hateful marine-killers and anti-American terrorists” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 405).

Paramount Executive Vice President Blasie Noto denied that “Rules of Engagement” depicted stereotypical images of Arabs. He stated, “Rules of Engagement is not anti-Arabic, anti-Moroccan, or anti-Yemenite but rather anti-extremist. This film is not a negative portrait of any government or people” (Shaheen, 2001, p. 406). On the other hand, some critics weren’t so quick to agree. A movie reviewer for the “Toronto Sun” was cited by Shaheen (2001) as writing, “Little attempt is made to humanize the Yemeni. On screen...they are stock villains, human cattle ready for herding and slaughter to demonstrate the right and might of the U.S. policeman’s role” (p. 406). Interestingly, Shaheen (2001) notes that no such violence has ever been directed at American marines in a US embassy in Yemen. Although the Arabs were predominately portrayed in an Arab locale, the establishment of Arab women, men, and children as a violent, anti-American mass seemed overdone. Perhaps the traditional/native attire and speech were necessary components for the film, but the violence projected by all of the Yemeni without positive portrayals for balance only doomed the Arab characters as a whole. The film could have used only some of the Yemeni as the villains and the plot could have easily remained intact, but

using the entire angry mob of civilian demonstrators as the enemies seemed completely gratuitous.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Discussion of Literary and Movie Sources

The study consisted employed a literature analysis and a qualitative study that included the content analysis of six films released between the years of 1994 to 2000. Many of the sources that were cited in the literature analysis were found online. Through the use of InfoTrac Web: Expanded Academic, several scholarly articles that pertained to the content of the research topic were obtained. Other articles that were found online were obtained from online newspapers, magazines, journals, and excerpts from books. The Oklahoma Hate and Harassment Report (Cajee, 1995) was also an online source. The Website [www.boxofficemojo.com](http://www.boxofficemojo.com) was very helpful in terms of the detailed and specific information about the box office earnings, domestically and internationally, concerning all the movies that were included in the qualitative analysis.

#### Establishment of Qualitative Study, Coding Questions, and Coding Definitions

Using Internet search engines such as MSN, Yahoo, and Google, all of the selected films were verified based on their release dates as well as the brief synopses that were presented indicating some of the plot lines within each of the films. The movie “Executive Decision” was one of the movies that became one of the selections when information about it was placed on one of the sites for another film. In order to gather ideas about coding the movies, one of the films, “The Siege”, was viewed on DVD to help decide the unit of analysis as well as form ideas about the characteristics that were to be coded within this study. Once these decisions were finalized, the coding questions were established as well as defining the specific attributes that were consistent with the coding definitions.

The unit of analysis for this study was each scene that contained an Arab(s) and/or Arab-American(s) character(s) within the movie. Within this study, a scene is defined by the DVD version of each of the movies. Selecting options from the DVD menu reveals a choice of scene or chapter selections. A “scene” in the analysis describes any scene within the chapters according to how many scenes are contained within the film, or the selection of any scene according to how many scenes are contained within the film. If a particular scene did not have any Arab or Arab-American characters present, the scene was not considered for coding. The study focused on the actions and characteristics that were exhibited by Arabs and Arab-Americans within the scenes in which they were present.

The characteristics exhibited by Arab and/or Arab-American characters that were coded consisted of speech with an accent, use of traditional/native attire, acts of aggression and hostility, affiliation with terrorism, and whether the Arab and/or Arab-American characters were portrayed as victimizers and/or victims. Initially, the term “acts of violence” was considered as one characteristic, but it was then divided into two characteristics to better encompass the character’s actions. Acts of “aggression and hostility” are defined according to Zillmann’s definitions (Zillmann, 1979).

Seven coding questions offered two or three choices.

The coding questions were:

1. Do/Does the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) speak with a noticeable accent and/or speak broken English?  
-Yes                      -No
2. Do/Does the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) wear traditional/native attire?  
-Yes                      -No
3. Do/Does the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) commit acts of aggression against others?  
-Yes                      -No
4. Do/Does the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) commit acts of hostility against others?  
-Yes                      -No
5. Is/Are the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) affiliated with a terrorism?  
-Yes                      -No
6. Is/Are the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) portrayed as the victimizer(s)?  
-Yes                      -No                      -Both
7. Is/Are the Arab(s)/Arab-American(s) portrayed as the victim(s)?  
-Yes                      -No                      -Both

The coding definitions were:

1. Noticeable Accent: A distinct pronunciation of the English language due to the speaker's use of another native language or country. The characters are bilingual, and he or she speaks Arabic and English. Some of the characters may display a firm grasp on the English language, while others will not.
2. Traditional/Native Attire: This attire will clearly determine that the character is of Islamic and/or Arab heritage. The women will be wearing a "hijab", head scarf, and

long-sleeved clothing, such as an “abaya” (typically black, cloak-like body garment). The men will be wearing a “thoub”, which is a typically white, dress-like garment. They may also be wearing a head-covering that is white and red, or white and black. This is worn to repel heat in desert climates.

3. Acts of Aggression: These acts of aggression (one component of violence) may be against other Arabs or any other ethnic group within the movie. These acts are defined by Zillmann’s definition of aggression, which may be anything that causes injury to the tissues. (Zillmann, 1979)
4. Acts of Hostility: Hostility (the second component of violence) that is exhibited by the characters will also fall under acts of violence within this study. Hostility, using Zillmann’s definition, is the potential threat of violence that may cause damage to the tissue and is something that the entity would want to avoid. (Zillmann, 1979)  
Examples of these acts are: shooting someone, hitting, punching, torturing, stabbing, kicking, and killing.
5. Terrorism: When an act is carried out individually or among a group of characters that demonstrates the use of violence against innocent bystanders and/or violence against a group that is the cause of the perpetrators anger in order to attain goals that seem to be religiously or politically motivated. These acts usually present threats to daily living, instill fear, and are viewed as intimidating.
6. Victimizers: The Arab/Arab-American characters that are portrayed as those who commit acts of “aggression” and/or “hostility” against others throughout the movie, therefore causing the other characters to be perceived as the victims in the movie. These characters are also terrorists within the movie.
7. Arab/Arab-American Victims: The Arab/Arab-American characters that are portrayed as those who are targets of aggression and/or hostility committed by Arabs/Arab-Americans or characters of a differing race within the movie.

Preliminary viewing without coding established plot details and identified characters. During the coding process, a code book (See Appendix) guided data entry, one row per scene containing Arab and/or Arab-American characters. The answers Yes, No, and Both were signified by Arabic numbers, meaning that if the answer to a question was “Yes”, the number one was placed inside the box. Therefore, “No” was equated with the number two, and “Both”

was equated with the number three. Questions six and seven had the option of three answers because in some of the scenes, there were Arabs and/or Arab-Americans present that were portrayed as the victimizers and/or victims while others were not. It was essential to document this difference because both parties were main characters throughout the movie in question.

After all the coding was complete, all the movies were viewed again. However, this time, only the scenes that contained Arab and/or Arab-American characters were watched. This process was to ensure that the initial coding was correct and consistent. The complete number of scenes from the six movies combined totaled 108 scenes that involved Arab and/or Arab-American characters.

Reliability Check for Coding. A graduate student assistant conducted a reliability check, independently coding 11 randomly selected scenes, about 10% from the sample of 108. Prior to coding, the second coder received training from the principal investigator. The reliability coding used the same coding materials and methods used by the principal investigator.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### “True Lies”

“True Lies” (1994) contained 44 scenes, 17 of which depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters. Ten (58.8%) of those 17 portrayed the characters as speaking with an accent. However, in the remainder of the 17 scenes, the Arab and/or Arab-American characters were not speaking at all. The percentage was reached by using the total number of scenes containing Arab and/or Arab-American characters, not the total number of scenes in the movie. Therefore, all the scenes in which the Arab and/or Arab-American characters were speaking included an accent that was always present in their tone of speech.

Of the 17 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, 10 (58.8%) portrayed the characters dressed in traditional/native attire. This attire was all male-oriented because there were no female Arab/Arab-American characters depicted in “True Lies.” The male Arab/Arab-American characters were depicted as wearing this attire within a large group. The remainder of the scenes depicted the male Arab/Arab-American characters in Westernized clothing such as jeans and shirts.

Table 1 presents statistics of scenes contained in “True Lies” pertaining to the acts of aggression, hostility, and affiliation with terrorism by Arab and/or Arab-American characters.

Table 1

*Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “True Lies”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “True Lies”
Acts of Aggression	13	76.4%
Acts of Hostility	13	76.4%
Affiliation with Terrorism	14	82.3%

Of the 17 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, a vast majority, as shown in Table 1, portrayed the characters as aggressive and hostile toward others and that their acts and destruction were connected to terrorism. The Arab/Arab-American characters were aggressive and hostile toward women, men, and children within the movie. When committing these acts of aggression and hostility, the Arab/Arab-American characters used weapons such as guns, knives, bombs, and physical violence. None of the Arab/Arab-American characters were depicted in a positive light, and when seen in large groups they appeared as nameless, homogenized individuals. No other group was portrayed this way within the film, and the Arab characters were not given names within the film except for the “head terrorist”. However, he is only referred to by name twice within the film, and this is done by another Arab character. Only three of the 17 scenes that contained Arab/Arab-Americans did not affiliate them with terrorism, and only four scenes didn’t depict the characters as committing acts of aggression and hostility against others.

Table 2 presents statistics of scenes in “True Lies” pertaining to the manner in which Arabs and/or Arab-Americans were depicted, as victims or as victimizers.

Table 2

*Number and Percentage of Scenes that Arabs and/or Arab-Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “True Lies”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “True Lies”
Victimizers	16	94.1%
Victims	4	23.5%

Of the 17 scenes that depicted Arabs and/or Arab-American characters, a majority, as shown in Table 2, portrayed the characters as the victimizers, while only few scenes portrayed them as the victims. The Arabs/Arab-American characters were consistently portrayed as the victimizers in this movie due to the acts of aggression and hostility they committed against other characters.



These acts included the characters using guns, physical violence, having possession of bombs, and torture. Only when injury or death occurred were the Arab/Arab-American characters portrayed as victims. Injury and death occurred when acts of self-defense took place by characters who were being victimized by the Arab/Arab-American characters. These acts of self-defense only occurred after an act of hostility or aggression was first committed by an Arab/Arab-American character.

#### “Executive Decision”

“Executive Decision” (1996), contained 36 scenes, 23 of which depicted Arab and/or Arab-Americans characters. Among the 23 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, 19 (82.6%) portrayed them as speaking with an accent. However, in the remaining scenes, the Arab/Arab-American characters did not speak at all. The percentage was reached by using the total number of scenes with Arab/Arab-American characters, not the total number of scenes within the movie. None of the other non-Arab characters in the movie spoke with any form of accent. This characteristic may help audiences differentiate the Arabs/Arab-Americans as cultural “others.” Therefore, in all the scenes in which Arab and/or Arab-American characters were speaking, an accent was always present in their tone of speech.

Of the 23 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, only one (4.3%) portrayed the characters dressed in traditional/native attire. This scene was the first one in “Executive Decision”, and in the remainder of the 22 scenes the Arabs/Arab-Americans were dressed in Westernized clothing such as suits, jeans, pants, and shirts. The first scene was the only scene that depicted both female and male Arabs/Arab-Americans in any form of native attire, and after that the traditional attire for both male and female characters failed to appear in the remainder of the movie.

Table 3 presents statistics of scenes contained in “Executive Decision” pertaining to the acts of aggression, hostility, and affiliation with terrorism by Arab and/or Arab-American characters.

Table 3

*Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “Executive Decision”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrences within “Executive Decision”
Aggression	14	60.8%
Hostility	22	95.6%
Affiliation with Terrorism	19	82.6%

Of the 23 scenes containing Arabs/Arab-Americans, more than half of the scenes in all instances depicted the characters as being aggressive, hostile, and being affiliated with terrorism. Acts of aggression occurred on the hijacked plane when passengers were killed, hit, shot, injured, slapped, and pushed by the Arab/Arab-American characters within the scenes. The characteristic of hostility was a near constant due to the fear and intimidation that the other characters experienced while being held hostage. The Arab/Arab-American characters constantly held guns as they patrolled up and down the airplane, denied passengers food, demanded that other characters carry out orders or face the consequences, and negotiated the lives of the hostages for money with the American government. Many of the scenes also affiliated the Arab/Arab-American characters with terrorism due to their threat to kill the passengers onboard as well as unleash a gas that could possibly wipe out thousands of other lives in the United States if their demands were not met. If the scenes did not affiliate the Arabs/Arab-Americans with terrorism it was due to the brevity of the scene, the Arabs/Arab-Americans were alone and not moving within the scene, or they were speaking to each other about nothing connected to their ploys.

Table 4 presents statistics of scenes in “Executive Decision” pertaining to the manner in which Arabs and/or Arab-Americans were depicted, as victims or as victimizers.

Table 4

*Number and Percentage of Scenes Arabs and/or Arab Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “Executive Decision”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “Executive Decision”
Victimizers	22	95.6%
Victims	3	13.0%

Of the 23 scenes that contained Arab and/or Arab-American characters, a majority, as shown in Table 4, depicted Arabs and Arab-Americans as victimizers, while only a minority depicted them as victims. Due to the numerous acts of hostility and aggression committed by the Arab/Arab-American characters, they were almost consistently portrayed as the victimizers throughout the movie. Their acts of hostility and aggression included killing passengers on board the plane, physical violence, the use of guns and other weapons, and the threat of setting free nerve gas that could kill thousands of people within the United States. They were only seen as victims when injury or death was inflicted upon them by other characters in self-defense. However, the self-defense acts only occurred after the Arab/Arab-American characters had tried to inflict bodily harm or death onto the other characters first. It always appeared as if the Arabs/Arab-Americans instigated the violent acts and the other characters were only left to fend for themselves or face injury or worse.

#### “The Siege”

“The Siege” (1998) contained 30 scenes, 22 of which depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters. Of the 22 scenes depicting Arab and/or Arab-American characters, 13 (59%) portray the characters as speaking with an accent. Tony Shaloub’s character, the Arab-American FBI agent, accounted for a majority of these scenes. He consistently spoke with an accent throughout the movie. However, the other Arabs/Arab-Americans in the movie all also spoke with distinct accents. Therefore, all the scenes in which Arab and/or Arab-American characters were speaking, an accent was always present in their tone of speech.

Of the 22 scenes that contained Arab and/or Arab-American characters, six (27.2%) portrayed the Arabs/Arab-Americans in traditional/native attire. Many of these scenes occurred when there were massive numbers of Arabs/Arab-Americans being rounded up in New York City after martial law was enforced due to Arab terrorists committing acts of terrorism and could not be apprehended. Both female and male characters were present within these scenes, and traditional attire was present on both genders. However, Tony Shaloub's character, the Arab-American FBI agent, is never seen in any form of native clothing.

Table 5 presents statistics of scenes contained in "The Siege" pertaining to the acts of aggression, hostility, and affiliation with terrorism by Arab and/or Arab-American characters. Table 5

*Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in "The Siege"*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence with "The Siege"
Aggression	10	45%
Hostility	12	54.5%
Affiliation with Terrorism	10	45%

Within the 22 scenes depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, a majority depicted the Arabs/Arab-Americans committing acts of aggression and hostility as well as being affiliated with terrorism. On the other hand, Shaloub's character of an Arab-American FBI agent balances some of these scenes because he may be the only character displaying Arabic heritage within that scene. However, Shaloub's character does exhibit acts of aggression and hostility in a few instances within the movie, but his actions are not affiliated with terrorism. Arab terrorists commit acts of terrorism within New York City by blowing up a bus with passengers onboard, placing a bomb in a crowded theatre that kills and maims hundreds, shooting and killing a CIA agent, blowing up an FBI headquarters in New York City which kills hundreds, and holding children in a school as hostages. Many of these acts also coincide with acts of aggression as well

as acts of hostility. However, not all the Arabs/Arab-Americans are affiliated with these acts throughout the movie. Many who are placed under martial law are innocent civilians who are rounded up due to racial profiling in connection with their Arabic heritage.

Table 6 presents statistics of scenes in “The Siege” pertaining to the manner in which Arabs and/or Arab-Americans were depicted, as victims or as victimizers.

Table 6

*Number and Percentage of Scenes Arabs and/or Arab Americans Were Depicted as Victimiziers and/or Victims in “The Siege”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “The Siege”
Victimiziers	9	40.9%
Victims	13	59.0%

Of the 22 scenes depicting Arab/Arab-American characters, nine scenes depicted them as victimizers, while the majority depicted them as the victims. Shaloub’s character is the majority of the reason that Arab-Americans were portrayed as the victims. His 13-year-old son is placed under martial law even though he had nothing to do with the acts of terrorism that occurred during the movie. The other sequences that represent Arabs as victims is when innocent civilians are placed under martial law and held without any justification besides their ethnic heritage. However, the scenes that seem to resonant the loudest are when the acts of terrorism by Arabs/Arab-Americans cause immense harm, death, and suffering to thousands of citizens of New York City.

#### “The Mummy”

“The Mummy” (1999), contained 18 scenes, 16 of which depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters. Of the 16 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, 15 (93.7%) portrayed the characters as speaking with an accent. None of the Arab/Arab-American characters were depicted as speaking without an accent. In the remaining scene, the particular Arabic character was not speaking at all. The percentage was reached by using the total number

of scenes in which Arab and/or Arab-American characters were present, not the total number of scenes within the movie. Therefore, in all the scenes in which Arab/Arab-American characters were speaking, an accent was present in their tone of speech.

All 16 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters in traditional/native attire. The plot of the movie takes place in Egypt, which is largely a desert terrain and climate. Few Arab/Arab-American women were portrayed in the movie, and if they were seen, it was only for a short period of time within large crowds of people. The movie focused more on the male traditional/native attire and continued to do that throughout the majority of the film. Many of the Arab/Arab-American male characters were depicted as insignificant workers, possessed and angry mobs, and as warriors who attacked other Arabs/Arab-Americans and Western adventurers.

Table 7 presents statistics of scenes contained in “The Mummy” pertaining to the acts of aggression, hostility, and affiliation with terrorism by Arab and/or Arab-American characters.

Table 7

*Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “The Mummy”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “The Mummy”
Aggression	7	43.7%
Hostility	4	25%
Affiliation with Terrorism	8	50%

Of the 16 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, more acts of aggression and terrorism were committed than acts of hostility. Most of the acts of terrorism were committed by the Arab warriors who tried to prevent other Arabs/Arab-Americans and Western adventurers from finding the treasures of the City of the Dead. These acts were politically motivated because the warriors consistently tried to prevent any “common folk” or “outsiders” from entering the City of the Dead. The Arab warriors always seemed to appear when anyone

neared the city, and they then engaged in acts of aggression that involved physical violence, killing, use of weapons, fear, and intimidation. When many of the crowds of Arab/Arab-American characters were placed under the curse of Imhotep, they, too, committed acts of hostility and aggression that involved fear, physical violence, intimidation, and harassment against the Western adventurers and other Arab/Arab-American characters. If the scenes did not depict or affiliate the Arab/Arab-American characters with any of these characteristics it was due to the characters being alone in the scene and they had no set actions, they were only engaged in conversation, or the brevity of the scene.

Table 8 presents statistics of scenes in “The Mummy” pertaining to the manner in which Arabs and/or Arab-Americans were depicted, as victims or as victimizers.

Table 8

*Number and Percentage of Scenes Arabs and/or Arab Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “The Mummy”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence with “The Mummy”
Victimizers	11	68.7%
Victims	3	18.7%

Of the 16 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, a majority, as shown in Table 8, depicted them as victimizers, while only a minority depicted them as victims. The primary victimizers were the Arab warriors and the mobs of possessed Arabs and/or Arab-Americans. They were also depicted as the initiators of the aggressive and/or hostile acts. If the Arab/Arab-American characters were portrayed as the victims, it was due to self-defense motives that were implemented by the Western adventurers. Some of these self-defense motives did result in the death or injury of Arab/Arab-American characters, but these incidents occurred only after the Western adventurers wanted to prevent themselves from being injured or killed first.

### “Three Kings”

“Three Kings” (1999), contained 31 scenes, 25 of which depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters. Of the 25 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, 15 (60%) portrayed them as speaking with an accent. None of the Arab and/or Arab-American characters was depicted as speaking without an accent within the movie. However, the 10 remaining scenes contained Arab and/or Arab-American characters but they weren’t speaking within them, or their conversations were only in Arabic and no English was spoken. The percentage was reached by using the total number of scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, not the total number of scenes within the movie.

Of the 25 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters, 21 (84%) portrayed them as wearing traditional/native attire. Due to the plot being set in Iraq, which presented a desert climate and terrain, a majority of the actors who portrayed Iraqi civilians were consistently wearing traditional attire. This attire was seen on both men and women throughout the entire movie. However, the Arab characters who were portrayed as members of Saddam’s army were never depicted in traditional/native attire. There were consistently seen in camouflaged army shirts and pants. All of the women were portrayed wearing a hijab, or head covering, within the movie. Only the young girls were depicted without this garment. The four scenes that did not portray the Arab and/or Arab-American characters in traditional/native attire only consisted of members of Saddam’s army in their uniforms.

Table 9 presents statistics of scenes contained in “Three Kings” pertaining to the acts of aggression, hostility, and affiliation with terrorism by Arab and/or Arab-American characters.



Table 9

*Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “Three Kings”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “Three Kings”
Aggression	14	56%
Hostility	16	64%
Affiliation with Terrorism	14	56%

Of the 25 scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-Americans, 14 portrayed them committing acts of aggression and hostility and 16 portrayed them being affiliated with terrorism. However, only the characters who were members of Saddam’s army were portrayed as being affiliated with terrorism. These acts were primarily directed at Iraqi civilians through torture, being held against their will, physical violence, harassment, intimidation, fear, shooting that resulted in death and/or injury, and oppression. The acts of terrorism in the film were politically motivated. However, some of the acts of terrorism and aggression were also directed at members of the U.S. Army when they became involved in trying to help the Iraqi civilians reach the border of Iran. Some of these acts included torture, physical violence, bombing Army vehicles, the use of tear gas, and killing and injury through gunfire. Acts of hostility were also prevalent throughout the film because of the fear and intimidation caused by Saddam’s army. However, acts of aggression were committed against the characters portraying Saddam’s army as well. These acts were committed both by Arab and/or Arab-American characters and those portraying members of the U.S. Army. These acts of retaliation were portrayed as self-defense and were committed in order to ensure the survival of civilians and the soldiers within the U.S. Army.

Table 10 presents statistics of scenes in “Three Kings” pertaining to the manner in which Arabs and/or Arab-Americans were depicted, as victims or as victimizers.

Table 10

*Number and Percentage of Scenes Arabs and/or Arab Americans Were Depicted as Victimizers and/or Victims in “Three Kings”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “Three Kings”
Victimizers	15	60%
Victims	18	72%

Of the 25 scenes depicting Arab and/or Arab-Americans, 15 portrayed them as victimizers and 18 portrayed victims. However, 11 of the 15 scenes in which Arab and/or Arab-Americans characters were portrayed as victimizers included Arab/Arab-American characters who were being victimized. Ten of the 18 scenes in which Arab and/or Arab-American characters were portrayed as the victims also included Arab/Arab-American characters that were the victimizers. The characters who portrayed members of Saddam’s army were primarily portrayed as those who initiated the acts of aggression and hostility. When the characters who portrayed Iraqi civilians and members of the U.S. Army committed acts of aggression or hostility, they were viewed as acts of self-defense. Within some of the establishing scenes of the movie, various members of the U.S. Army were viewed as committing acts of aggression and hostility to male characters who portrayed Iraqi civilians. These acts included the shooting and killing of an innocent Iraqi man, racial and derogatory slurs and language, intimidation, physical restraint, and humiliation.

“Rules of Engagement”. “Rules of Engagement” (2000), contained 15 scenes, five of which depicted Arab and/or Arab-American characters. Of the five scenes depicting Arab and/or Arab-American characters, three (60%) portrayed the characters as speaking with an accent. The only Arab and/or Arab-American characters who had speaking roles were all male. None of the Arab/Arab-American characters were depicted without an accent throughout the film. The two remaining scenes that did not depict accents were a result of none of the Arab/Arab-American characters speaking within the scenes. The percentage was reached by using the total number of

scenes with Arab and/or Arab-American characters depicted in them, not the total number of scenes in the movie. Therefore, in all the scenes in which the Arab and/or Arab-American characters were speaking, an accent was always present in their tone of speech.

Of the five scenes depicting Arab and/or Arab-American characters, four (80%) portrayed the characters in traditional/native attire. Due to the plot taking place in Yemen, a desert climate and terrain, both the men and women were consistently depicted in their traditional/native attire. A majority of these scenes depicted the Arab and/or Arab-Americans as angry mobs or as snipers shooting at the U.S. Military. The remaining scene that did not depict an Arab/Arab-American character in this fashion occurred when a Yemeni doctor was a witness in an American court. However, the traditional/native attire was seen on the Arab and/or Arab-American men and women throughout the movie.

Table 11 presents statistics of scenes contained in “Rules of Engagement” pertaining to the acts of aggression, hostility, and affiliation with terrorism by Arab and/or Arab-American characters.

Table 11

*Number and Proportion of Scenes Portraying Acts of Aggression or Hostility or Affiliation with Terrorism by Arabs and/or Arab-Americans in “Rules of Engagement”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “Rules of Engagement”
Aggression	4	80%
Hostility	3	60%
Affiliation with Terrorism	4	80%

Of the five scenes depicting Arab and/or Arab-Americans, a majority portrayed them committing acts of aggression and hostility as well as being affiliated with terrorism. The acts of aggression and hostility all took place in Yemen at a U.S. Embassy and involved actions such as the shooting and killing of three Marines, creating fear and chaos due to the formation of angry

mobs, and targeting to kill American men, women, and children. These acts were affiliated with terrorism in both religious and political ties. Acts of hostility included intimidation, threat of bodily harm, and fear for one’s own safety. The remaining scene that did not portray Arab/Arab-American characters in connection with terrorism was the scene that depicted the Yemeni doctor testifying in an American court room.

Table 12 presents statistics of scenes in “Three Kings” pertaining to the manner in which Arabs and/or Arab-Americans were depicted, as victims or as victimizers.

Table 12

*Number and Percentage of Scenes Arabs and/or Arab Americans Were Depicted as Victimiziers and/or Victims in “Rules of Engagement”*

	Number of Scenes	Percentage of Occurrence within “Rules of Engagement”
Victimiziers	4	80%
Victims	2	40%

Of the five scenes that depicted Arab and/or Arab-Americans, a majority of those scenes depicted them as victimizers, while only a minority depicted them as victims. The Arab/Arab-Americans were depicted as victimizers toward American women, men, and children, as well as the U.S. Military. These characters never victimized other individuals of their own ethnicity within the movie. The angry mob or Yemeni civilians and snipers were the only Arab victimizers within the movie. However, members of the U.S. Military do retaliate by shooting back at the angry mob and killing 83 men, women, and children. These actions were, however, stated to be in self-defense after three marines were shot and killed. Only after the deaths of these marines was fire opened onto the crowd. Therefore, the Arabs/Arab-Americans were depicted and the initiators and instigators of the acts of aggression and hostility throughout the film.

Reliability of Coding. The percentage of agreement between the coding results of the primary coder and those of the secondary coder was 93.5%. The code books used by the primary coder and the secondary coder are located in the Appendix.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary of Main Points

The movies released during the time period of 1994 to 2000, the pre-9/11 era, do present concern in connection with persistent stereotypical images of Arabs and Arab-Americans. The majority of the content found within these films seems to fail in offering balanced viewpoints or other characters that may present more positive representations of the Arabic heritage and ethnic group as a whole. In portraying continually violent characters that seem to use Islam as a justification for their acts of mass destruction, this may cause the public to form judgmental and negative opinions of Arabs, Arab-Americans, and Islam. Sadly, this may also cause people of this ethnicity and heritage to be viewed as cultural “others.” Hollywood movies and filmmakers seem to be a major factor in the formation of stereotypes and ideologies when Arabs and Arab-Americans are concerned. This vicious cycle continues to this day and may continue to do so if it is allowed. “Things are getting bad, and getting worse. Innocent Americans are being brought into the Hollywood stereotype. ‘Worse’ isn’t a strong enough word- it’s dangerous” (Shaheen, 2002). This study presented qualitative evidence that indicated that the material within the six analyzed films did contain stereotypical portrayals of Arabs and Arab-Americans in connection with hostility, aggression, speech patterns, traditional/native dress, and victimization. However, there were a few limitations experienced within this study.

#### Limitations

Some limitations within the study occurred due to only having one primary coder and one secondary coder. Although the secondary coder’s reliability checks yielded a majority of the same results as the primary coding, not all of the responses were the same. Had there been a third coder, this would have helped to break a tie, if necessary. Certain limitations also arose during the reliability check. Due to the random selections of a smaller amount of scenes, many of the scenes that were selected were taken out of context. When watching only specific scenes, it seemed difficult at times for the secondary coder to fully understand the plot of the film and the motivations of the Arab and/or Arab-American characters within some of the scenes. However, this problem only occurred in a few instances. It was essential for the secondary coder to understand the plot because the brevity of some of the scene selections did not allow for a concise conclusion that the Arab/Arab-American characters were committing acts of violence

due to affiliation with terrorism. When this was the case, it was also difficult for the secondary coder to determine whether the acts of violence were religiously or politically motivated, therefore, causing the Arab/Arab-American character to be affiliated with terrorism, due to the briefness of the scene. However, these characteristics were established throughout other scenes within all the movies, but during some instances, the scene selections for the reliability check did not include some of these establishing plot scenes. Although certain characteristics and a specific time period were used for this study, new research and further progress can continue.

#### How the Study May Progress

Due to some of the prior studies on stereotypes, such as the works of Shaheen and El-Farra, new ideas and research may continue to grow. An extension of this study would be an analysis of films released after the 9/11 tragedy. Due to the vast impact of this event, it would be interesting to discover whether this caused an increase in the negative depictions of Arabs and Arab-Americans within Hollywood films and the mass media. These depictions, in addition to current events, as well as a lack of balance exhibited in motion pictures may lead to the conclusion that these portrayals are to be deemed as true. The importance of these studies gave rise to the notion that consistently negative stereotypes do play a vital role in the off-putting perception of specific minorities by the public, in this case, Arabs and Arab-Americans. Some pragmatic implications that may occur from this study involve the potentially heightened awareness by all people that stereotypes may be used in an excessively damaging manner. Allowing this pertinent issue to be given a greater voice will hopefully cause individuals to think twice about opinions based solely on what they see in movies, on television, or read in newspapers. Not only did this study identify these demeaning images, but it also indicated the prevalence of these images as well as the lack of balance exhibited throughout many of the films within this study. On the other hand, discussing these portrayals may educate film viewers about their inaccuracies, countering the repetition of film stereotypes about Arabs and Arab-Americans. However, many changes can take place throughout the Hollywood industry in order to prevent these negative insinuations from causing more damage. On the other hand, if this does not occur, many negative implications may continue to arise about Arabs and Arab-Americans from the public, filmmakers, and film industries.

### Implications

The film industry provides entertainment, but audiences also learn while being entertained. Barber (as cited in Shaheen, 2001) writes, “It is time to recognize that the true tutors of our children are not schoolteachers or university professors but filmmakers” (p. 5). Within Shaheen’s (2001) extensive research, he analyzed over 900 films containing Arab and Arab-American characters, and only 12 presented positive portrayals of Arabs, while 50 more offered some measure of balance. It seems that we often remember the things we see the most of. Therefore, when Arabs and Arab-Americans are consistently portrayed as uncultured, evil, terrorists, and other negative depictions, the public may begin to agree that all Arabs and Arab-Americans fall into these categories. Sadly, there also seems to be very little room for positive exceptions for Arabs and Arab-Americans to be depicted as something other than belonging to a radical fringe. William Greider writes in the foreword to Shaheen’s book (2001) that, “The malign images segregate some Americans from the whole experience of citizenship, impeding their capacity to speak and act for themselves in political life or intimidating any public leaders who dare to speak for them” (p. viii). When these harmful stereotypes continue to help dictate the manner in which a majority of the public perceives a major group of people to be, then these people, Arabs and Arab-Americans, will continue to suffer because of the stories that continue to portray them falsely.

During the Okalahoma City bombing, Arabs and Arab-Americans were quickly labeled as immediate suspects by the mass media. Although it was later discovered that no Arab or Arab-American was involved, this did not prevent them from experiencing an onslaught of hate crimes and discrimination. This event, which falsely projected Arabs as the main suspects in terrorism and mass destruction, seemed to adhere to the misconceptions about Arabs and Arab-Americans perhaps caused by steady and consistently negative depictions through the mass media and some film industries. Henry Kissinger (as cited by Shaheen, 2001), stated months after the Okalahoma City bombing that, “In an age when far more people gain their understanding from movies...than from the written word, the truth is not a responsibility filmmakers can shrug off as an incidental byproduct of creative license” (p. 7). When innocent Arabs and Arab-Americans suffer due to the public’s perception of all Arabs/Arab-Americans belonging to a fanatic fringe, then perhaps it is time for the stories of our culture to change and provide more balance. Without balance, the public may only be left with the stereotypical images and opinions they tend to believe are true.

Not only do the stereotypical portrayals of Arabs and Arab-Americans degrade millions of people, but they also offer no positive role models for children or the Arab world itself. There are no Arab and/or Arab-American heroes, and rarely are there any characters that fight off villains rather than playing one in the movies. To make matters worse, many Arabs and Arab-Americans constantly find themselves having to defend their heritage and culture to others around them due to these persistent negative images produced over and over again by the mass media and filmmakers and industries. With these feelings and misjudgments remaining present in the public's mind, tragic events such as 9/11 may have instigated further hatred of Arabs and Arab-Americans, as well as stronger beliefs in movie images seen worldwide as being completely factual. Once again, the Arab and Arab-American population find themselves having to fight off stereotypes and racial prejudice due to some of the public's beliefs that "all Arabs are terrorists, all Arabs hate the United States, and all Arabs are Muslim fanatics." Sadly, there are rarely any images of Arabs and Arab-Americans leading normal lives, like any other major ethnic group. These missing depictions may make it difficult for audiences to find any commonalities with the Arab antagonists; therefore, they become characters who are easily seen as nothing more than the characteristics that they project. They are viewed as subhuman, rarely given a name, and are all grouped together in order to carry out missions of mass destruction and killing. Not only do these images have the potential to cause film viewers to buy into these depictions, but they may also incite feelings of animosity for an ethnic group that is rarely depicted as anything but worthy of hating. "The relation is one of cause and effect. Powerful collages of hurtful images serve to deepen suspicions and hatreds" (Shaheen, 2001, p. 7). Mander (as cited by Shaheen, 2001) observes that, "...screen images can cause people to do what they might otherwise never [have] thought to do..." (p. 7). However, filmmakers and film industries also have the ability to counter these stereotypes.

#### Suggestions to Filmmakers

Although it is important to indicate that today's big budget films require a lot of money and resources, it may also be difficult for filmmakers to find the time to produce a movie without the need to use stereotypes that readily exist. Perhaps the filmmakers, in focusing on their individual projects, are unaware of the totality of the view they unwittingly endorse. Although some of these stereotypes may be used because they are profitable, save time and money, and are understood by film audiences, they fail to offer those audiences alternative portrayals of Arabs



and Arab-Americans. In order to retain positive portrayals and balance within the movie industry, filmmakers can counter consistently negative portrayals by placing Arab and/or Arab-American characters in the protagonist's role rather than solely the antagonistic role. Rather than consistently seeing an Arab/Arab-American as a terrorist, why not portray an Arab/Arab-American who fends off terrorists and helps save others. If the antagonists of the film happen to be Arab/Arab-American, is it really necessary to portray all the Arabs/Arab-Americans as villains? Movies can depict any ethnic group as villains, and still offer a measure of balance within that film to viewers and members of that ethnic group without destroying the plot. These positive characters do not have to solely appear in terrorist/action films, but can be used in presenting Arab/Arab-American characters as other positive figures such as doctors, teachers, and explorers, to name a few. In many of the films within this study, the stories that were presented were fictitious. However, many audience members may not have construed them as such or may have left believing that these incidents were indeed capable of occurring. Filmmakers may preface their films with statements indicating that the plot is fictitious in order to reveal that the storyline is for entertainment purposes.

Perhaps it is even fair to state that Arabs and Arab-Americans should be treated like everyone else, no better, but yet no worse either. However, Arab and Arab-American portrayals seem to be far from even-handed when compared to other ethnicities within Hollywood film industries. On the other hand, there will always be those who choose to shed light on these issues while there will be those who remain determined to portray stereotypes. It is perhaps understood that "time is money" in the mass media and Hollywood industries. Every second, special effects, and scene may take a considerable amount of time and money to produce. When the opportunity arises to decrease the time spent on such expenditures, one may find that it is not usually by taking the higher road. By placing an ethnic group consistently as villains, this only makes them easily identifiable to the mass public as being nothing more than what they are always portrayed as being. This may also decrease the time spent by filmmakers in establishing who the villains are, allowing them to focus on other plots within the movie. If filmmakers wish to use Arabs/Arab-Americans as the antagonists within their films, another suggestion may be to work with specialists on Arab culture and Islam. Not only does this allow for filmmakers to keep their films as factual as possible, but it also speaks volumes about their concern in dispelling stereotypes in a fair manner without compromising the ideas for their films. In doing so,

filmmakers are able to acknowledge the need to depict some characters of all races and cultures as individuals, and not just a stereotyped mass. However, countering stereotypes can also occur through other actions as well.

### Other Suggestions

Perhaps above all else, fairness is an attainable goal that many want to strive for, and throughout this study, fairness to a people and ethnicity are the underlying goals. In the same context, fairness and balance should not be limited to any particular ethnic group or religion, but in fact, should be given the same opportunity and credibility that are issued to all others. Stereotypes, of any ethnic group, are bound to cause harm in some way. However, the power of knowledge and tolerance are wonderful tools in fighting against stereotypes. On the other hand, censorship is not the answer. Bad speech, and even hate speech, must be overcome with more speech. By pretending that something does not exist or trying to prevent it from doing so, does not make it go away. By broadening the public's horizons through differing opinions, facts, and positive portrayals, this will hopefully cause individuals to form their own opinions and ideas rather than believing that which is consistently depicted for them. As Adlai Stevenson Jr. (1952) once stated, "My definition of a free society is a society where it is safe to be unpopular."

Although we are all different, perhaps it is safe to say that a majority of us strive for the same things regardless of our ethnic group or culture. We all want to be happy, receive a good education, raise a family, provide for that family, be successful, and live a decent and fulfilling life. Greider states in the foreword to Shaheen's book (2001) that, "The power to depict certain "others" as innately strange and dangerous—as foul creatures not like the rest of us—is surely as devastating as the physical force of weaponry." So, the next time you or anyone you know find yourselves watching images of Arabs and Arab-Americans being portrayed in movies, take the time to imagine how it feels, and then, imagine how it would feel if it were your ethnic group or culture instead.

## REFERENCES

- Abreu, J., Ramirez, E., Bryan, S., & Haddy C. (2003). Automatic activation of yellow peril Asian American stereotypes: Effects of social impression formation. The Journal of Social Psychology, 143, 691-716.
- Baird, S. (Director). (1996). *Executive decision* [Motion Picture]. United States, Warner Brothers.
- Box Office Mojo. (2002). Retrieved on January 31, 2005, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies>.
- Cajee, M. (1995). The Oklahoma Hate and Harassment Report. Retrieved on February 20, 2005 from <http://themodernreligion.com>.
- Cameron, J. (Writer/Director). (1994). *True lies* [Motion Picture]. United States, Fox.
- Cones, J. (1998). Patterns of Bias in Motion Picture Content. Retrieved December 13, 2004, from <http://www.homevideo.net/FIRM/race.htm>.
- El-Farra, N. (1996). Arabs and the media. Journal of Media Psychology, 1(2), 1-7.
- Friedkin, W. (Director). (2000). *Rules of engagement* [Motion Picture]. United States, Paramount.
- Goodstein, L. (2001, November). Hollywood now plays cowboys and Arabs. The New York Times. Retrieved July 21, 2004, from <http://www.library.cornell.edu>.
- Hall, A. (2001). Film reviews and the public's perceptions of stereotypes: Movie critics' discourse about the siege. Communication Quarterly, 49, 399-425.
- Levesque, J. (2002, March). Arabs suffer in the hands of Hollywood. The Seattle Post. Retrieved July 21, 2004, from [http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/tv/63118\\_tv21.shtml](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/tv/63118_tv21.shtml).
- Paul, A. (1998). Where bias begins: The truth about stereotypes. Psychology Today, 31, 52-65.
- Paulson, M. (2001, December 9). How Hollywood has terrorized Arabs, film industry has long history of stereotyping. Boston Globe. Retrieved on October 5, 2004, from <http://www.sfgate.com>.
- Pitner, R., Astor, R., Benbenishty, R., Haj-Yahia, M., & Zeira, A. (2003). The effects of group stereotypes on adolescents' reasoning about peer retribution. Child Development, 74, 413- 433.
- Russell, D. (Writer/Director). (1999). *Three kings* [Motion Picture]. United States, Warner Brothers.

- Savage, M. (2002). Shaheen, civil rights group brace for negative portrayal of Arabs in post Sept. 11 Movies. Arab American Business. Retrieved July 12, 2004, from <http://www.arabamericanbusiness.com> .
- Shaheen, J. (2002, February). Hollywood widens slur targets to Arab and Muslim Americans since Sept. 11. Retrieved July 21, 2004, from <<http://www.alternet.org/story/12535>.>
- Shaheen, J. (2001) Reel bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies a people. Brooklyn, NY: Olive Branch Press.
- Shaheen, J. (2001, May). The mummy returns continues Hollywood's stereotyping of Egyptians. The Progressive Media Project. Retrieved on February 1, 2005, from <http://www.progressive.org> .
- Sommers, S. (Writer/Director). (1999). *The mummy* [Motion Picture]. United States, Universal Studios.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2004) Statistical Abstracts for Recreational Activities. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/arts.pdf>. Accessed on March 18, 2005.
- Zillmann, D. (1979). Hostility and aggression. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Zwick, E. (Director). (1998). *The siege* [Motion Picture]. United States, Fox.

## APPENDIX

### Primary and Secondary Codebooks

#### **Primary Codebook for “True Lies”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
9	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
11	2	2	1	2	2	1	2
12	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
24	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
26	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
27	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
28	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
29	2	1	2	1	1	1	2
30	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
32	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
33	2	2	2	2	1	2	1
37	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
38	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
39	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
40	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
41	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
42	1	1	2	1	1	1	1

#### **Primary Codebook for “Executive Decision”**

	Q. 1	Q.2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
3	2	1	1	1	1	1	3
4	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
5	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
6	1	2	1	1	1	1	2

7	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
9	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
11	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
12	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
14	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
15	2	2	2	1	1	1	2
16	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
17	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
18	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
21	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
22	1	2	1	1	1	1	3
23	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
24	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
25	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
26	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
27	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
30	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
31	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
32	1	2	1	1	1	1	2

**Primary Codebook for “The Siege”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
4	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
5	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
6	1	2	1	1	1	3	2
7	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
9	1	2	1	1	2	2	1

11	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
12	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
13	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
15	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
17	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
18	2	1	2	2	2	1	1
19	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
20	1	2	2	2	2	1	1
21	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
22	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
23	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
25	1	2	2	2	2	1	1
26	1	1	2	2	2	1	1
27	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
29	2	2	2	2	2	1	1

**Primary Codebook for “Three Kings”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1
3	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
9	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
10	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
11	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
12	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
13	2	1	1	1	1	3	1
14	2	1	1	1	1	3	3
15	2	2	2	1	2	1	2
16	2	1	1	1	1	1	2

17	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
18	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
19	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
20	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
21	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
22	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
23	2	1	1	1	1	3	3
24	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
25	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
26	2	1	1	2	1	3	3
27	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
28	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
29	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
30	2	2	2	2	2	2	1

**Primary Codebook for “The Mummy”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
3	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
4	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
5	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
6	1	1	2	2	2	1	2
7	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
9	1	1	2	2	2	1	2
10	1	1	2	1	1	1	2
11	1	1	2	2	2	1	2
12	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
13	1	1	1	2	1	1	1



14	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
15	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
16	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
17	1	1	2	2	2	2	2

**Primary Codebook for “Rules of Engagement”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
9	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
11	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
12	2	1	1	2	1	1	2

**Secondary Codebook for “True Lies”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
24	1	2	1	1	1	3	2

**Secondary Codebook for “Executive Decision”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
5	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
26	1	2	1	1	2	1	2

**Secondary Codebook for “The Siege”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7
Scene #							
6	1	2	1	1	1	3	2
17	1	2	1	1	1	3	2

22	1	1	2	1	2	2	3
----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

**Secondary Codebook for “Three Kings”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q.6	Q. 7
Scene #							
9	1	1	1	1	1	3	3
16	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
28	1	1	2	2	2	2	1

**Secondary Codebook for “The Mummy”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q.6	Q. 7
Scene #							
12	1	1	1	1	2	1	1

**Secondary Codebook for “Rules of Engagement”**

	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q.6	Q. 7
Scene #							
8	1	1	1	1	1	3	3

## VITA

YASMEEN ELAYAN

Personal Data:      Date of Birth: September 20, 1980  
                         Place of Birth: Dalton, Georgia  
                         Marital Status: Single

Education:            Public Schools, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia  
                         Bahrain International School, Manama, Bahrain  
                         East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee; Mass  
                         Communications, B.A., 2003  
                         East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee; Professional  
                         Communication, M.A., 2005

Professional  
Experience:           Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, College of Arts and  
                         Sciences, 2003-2005

Honors and  
Awards:              Murvin H. Perry Creative Achievement Award  
                         Graduate Student Appreciation Award, East Tennessee State University