

U.S. PUBLIC IMAGE: A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS FROM PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM NATIONS

by

MARY KATHRYN PINKERTON

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

May 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation extends to my family for supporting me throughout the entire graduate experience. Special thanks goes to my daughter, Candice, who was my late-night, long-distance companion and sounding board during the study. Her patience, love and support – and children -- are an inspiration and never-ending source of joy.

Dr. Thomas Christie has offered calm, steady guidance and encouragement throughout the thesis process. As a former member of both the United States Air Force and the public relations profession, Dr. Christie has been an inspiration. His sage words, “public relations saves lives,” resonated throughout this study.

I was not acquainted with Dr. Andrew Clark when he joined the thesis committee. But Dr. Clark’s background in qualitative research, and his knowledge of wartime propaganda, has been invaluable. Thank you for your insights, Dr. Clark

Dr. Ivana Segvic introduced me to the world of intercultural communication. As an immigrant from Eastern Europe, she has molded her experiences into a wonderfully interesting and fruitful academic career. I appreciate her instruction and encouragement.

I am also grateful for the unique talents and generosity extended by the following professors: Dr. Earl Andresen, Dr. Tom Ingram, Dr. Charla Markham Shaw, Dr. Karin McCallum, Dr. Paul Schrodts and Dr. Alisa White. Finally, a special thanks goes to classroom friends, professional colleagues, family members and Randy Fritz for patiently listening to the newest theory, the latest headline and the grandest research discovery.

April 18, 2006

ABSTRACT

U.S. PUBLIC IMAGE: A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS FROM PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM NATIONS

Publication No. _____

Mary Kathryn Pinkerton, M.A.

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2006

Supervising Professor: Dr. Thomas B. Christie

After the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, anti-Americanism increased among predominantly Muslim nations. This qualitative study used in-depth interviews to explore the perceptions of 11 international students from predominantly Muslim nations toward the U.S. It also examines whether the students' perceptions have changed since arriving in the United States and whether perceptions could stem from propaganda. Results indicated generally positive perceptions toward America and significantly improved perceptions toward Americans. Perceptions of the U.S. government, the Bush administration and U.S. foreign policy, however, were generally negative -- primarily stemming from the war in Iraq and America's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Evidence of propaganda surfaced on topics that include Americans, U.S. foreign policy, the war in Iraq, the Bush administration, Israel and the Jewish influence in America. American and Arab world media, Hollywood, family and friends, educational institutions and religious leaders were possible sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Literature Review	2
1.1.1 Culture	3
1.1.1.1 Culture, Economics and Democracy.....	4
1.1.1.2 Cultural Typologies	6
1.1.2 Persuasion and Propaganda	8
1.1.2.1 Propaganda in the Arab World	11
1.1.2.2 Egypt	13
1.1.2.3 Iraq	17
1.1.2.4 Osama bin Laden	18
1.1.2.5 Iran	21
1.1.2.6 Propaganda Targeting the Bush Administration	23
1.1.2.7 Countering Enemy Propaganda	23
1.2 Theoretical Paradigm	26
1.2.1 Harold Lasswell's Propaganda Theory	26
1.3 Research Questions	28

2.	METHODOLOGY	30
2.1	Introduction	30
2.2	Participants	33
2.3	In-depth Interviews	33
2.4	McCracken’s Four-Step Method of Inquiry	34
2.5	Evaluating Data Results	36
3.	RESULTS	38
3.1	Perceptions	38
3.1.1	Perceptions of America/Americans	38
3.1.1.1	Positive Perceptions of America/Americans	41
3.1.1.2	Negative Perceptions of America/Americans	42
3.1.2	Perceptions of National Leaders/Opinion Leaders	44
3.1.2.1	Home Nation’s Leader	44
3.1.2.2	U.S. President George W. Bush	45
3.1.2.3	Most Respected Opinion Leader in Respondents World Region	46
3.1.3	Perceptions of Home Nation	47
3.1.4	Perceptions of U.S. Foreign Policy	49
3.1.4.1	USFP as it Relates to Respondent’s World Region	49
3.1.4.2	USFP as it Relates to Respondent’s Nation	49
3.1.4.3	USFP and Israeli/Palestinian Conflict	52
3.1.4.4	U.S.-Led Efforts to Fight Terrorism	52
3.1.4.5	U.S.-Led War in Iraq	54
3.1.5	Perceptions of Suicide Bombing and Other Forms of Violence	56

3.1.6	Perceptions of Democracy	57
3.1.6.1	Democratization of Predominantly Muslim Nations	57
3.1.6.2	U.S. Government Support of Democracy in Respondent's Home Nation	59
3.1.7	Perceptions of Media.....	60
3.1.7.1	Home Nation Media	60
3.1.7.2	American Media	61
3.1.7.3	Home Nation Media's Influence on Perceptions of America	62
3.1.7.4	American Media's Influence on Perceptions of the U.S..	64
3.1.7.5	American Media's Portrayal of Respondent's Region of the World	65
3.2	Changed Perceptions of America/Americans	67
3.3	Perceptions Stemming from Propaganda.....	68
3.3.1	Israel	69
3.3.2	George W. Bush	71
3.3.3	U.S. War in Iraq	72
3.3.4	Muslims/Christians	73
3.3.5	Imperialism	74
3.3.6	Suicide Bombing	75
3.3.7	Media	76
4.	DISCUSSION	79
4.1	Perceptions	79
4.1.1	American Culture	80
4.1.2	U.S. Government/U.S. Foreign Policy	81

4.1.3	Violence/Suicide Bombing	82
4.1.4	Democracy in Muslim Nations	82
4.1.5	Home Nation	83
4.1.6	Media	83
4.1.7	Changed Perceptions.....	84
4.1.8	Perceptions Stemming from Propaganda	84
4.2	Limitations	86
4.3	Suggestions for Future Research	87
4.4	Conclusion	89
Appendix		
A.	DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	92
B.	SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	95
C.	SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	98
REFERENCES		120
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION		129

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

After the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, anti-Americanism burgeoned worldwide, especially among citizens of predominantly Muslim nations (Pew, 2005). Negativity toward the United States and its allies, however, had been germinating for years in nations with majority Muslim populations. The hostility was exemplified by Osama bin Laden's 1998 call for a defensive *jihad*, which was justified by what he perceived as an attack against Islam by the U.S.-led Crusader Christians and Jews (Scheuer, 2004).

A 2005 Pew Global Attitudes study revealed the Muslim world's enmity toward the United States has diluted somewhat since the 2003 invasion. Survey respondents in Pakistan, for example, showed an increase in positive opinions toward the U.S. (23%) compared to 13 percent in 2003 and 10 percent in 2002. Lebanon's 27 percent approval rating in 2002 increased to 42 percent by 2005. And Jordan's 2005 approval rating (21%) significantly increased over 2003's miniscule percentage (1%). A significant increase in positive opinions toward America also occurred in Indonesia (38%) compared to a 2003 low of 15 percent. The U.S. tsunami aid effort was the main reason for Indonesia's boosted approval rating.

Even with the increase in positive opinions, however, majorities in every predominantly Muslim nation surveyed continued to express unfavorable views of the United States. Where these perceptions derive -- and whether they change once citizens from these nations are immersed in American culture -- are vitally important topics of consideration. Whether truth or myth, such perceptions could ultimately affect both American safety and security, and U.S. foreign policy.

This thesis explores the perceptions of international students from predominantly Muslim nations toward the U.S., Americans, their own nation, democracy in the Arab world, and other important issues. It examines whether the students' perceptions of America and/or Americans have changed since arriving in the United States and the reasons for any changes. Finally, the thesis looks at whether these perceptions stem from propaganda.

This thesis contributes to a body of growing literature regarding the U.S. public image among citizens of predominantly Muslim nations. Using open-ended questions, the qualitative study offers a unique, in-depth look at international students' perceptions of the United States. It contributes to scholarly inquiry by exploring the underlying reasons for stated perceptions. It also presents new ideas for propaganda research, including the role of displacement theory in mass communication.

1.1 Literature Review

This section discusses perception, its role in cultural development, and distinguishes persuasion from propaganda. It describes propaganda as it relates to both the United States and the Arab region. The review then discusses Harold Lasswell's

theory of propaganda, which was used to explore meaningful data relationships. Finally, the review introduces the research questions that guide this study.

1.1.1 Culture

Perception is both selective and learned, and is strongly influenced by an individual's culture. Samovar and Porter (2004) state that humans are born into a world without meaning; it is culture that gives meaning to most of our experiences (p. 47.)

The ingredients of perception -- beliefs and values -- contribute to what Samovar and Porter (2004) define as "cultural patterns" (p. 45, 48). Beliefs act as a perceptual link between different activities and events in a person's life (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 131). Beliefs also offer the underlying foundation for values, which then drives actions.

Values are developed early in childhood. They are manifested at both the individual and collective levels (Parsons and Shils, 1951) and are used to subjectively define what is rational. Nanda and Warms (1998) define values as "shared ideas about what is true, right and beautiful that underlie cultural patterns and guide society in response to the physical and social environment" (p. 49). Perception thus plays a key role in cultural development by contributing to its collective worldview, political and religious ideology and national prosperity.

Cultural studies focus on the generation and circulation of meanings within industrial societies. These meanings feed the perceptions associated with cognitive thought. As opposed to those social scientists who attempt to explain and predict human behavior, cultural researchers dig deeper, analyzing the underlying meanings (the "why") of behaviors that contribute to societal trends (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999).

Samovar and Porter (2004) argue that culture consists of generalized meanings and behaviors via the exposure to similar experiences (p. 46). The scholars' argument is substantiated in a paper titled "Human Development as a Theory of Social Change: a Cross-Cultural Perspective." Co-authors Chris Welzel, Ronald Inglehart and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (2003) argue that common communication systems and shared national experiences lead to the diffusion of similar intra-cultural values. Using self-expression as a variable, for example, the scholars' mean data results revealed citizens of different nations differed more in self-expression than those residing within a nation's borders.

1.1.1.1 Culture, Economics and Democracy

The Welzel, Inglehart and Klingemann (2003) study helps explain why neighboring nations and their respective cultures might differ in their collective perceptions, political ideologies and, ultimately, prosperity. Though the thesis doesn't specifically address economic progress, Stace Lindsay (2000) argues that culture shapes individuals' attitudes toward risk, reward, and opportunity. And collective attitudes that lean toward an entrepreneurial spirit ultimately lead to business success – the primary driver of human progress (p. 282). Lawrence Harrison (2006) explains the demise of cultural relativism as a dogma in the social sciences when he writes:

The doctrine that cultures can be assessed only within their own value framework--was the brainchild of anthropologist Franz Boas. It has permeated the social sciences, and largely because of it a widespread presumption today exists that all cultures and all religions must be regarded as of equal worth and are not to be the object of comparative value judgments. However, when it comes to the relationship between culture and human progress, I find compelling evidence that some cultures and some religions do better than others in promoting the goals of democratic politics, social justice and prosperity (p. 96).

For Harrison (2006), enlightenment concerning the link between culture and democracy, social justice and prosperity occurred during his 20-year (1962-82) tenure with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Like Harrison, social scientists have grown increasingly interested in the role of culture as it relates to modernization, political movements, military strategy, the behavior of ethnic groups, and the alignments and antagonism among countries (Harrison & Huntington, 2000).

In his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington (1996) argues the world is divided into eight or nine major civilizations based on enduring cultural differences. Each civilization, states Huntington, is influenced by the region's respective religious traditions. Western Christianity, the Orthodox world, Islam, Confucianism, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist, African and Latin American regions comprise the major cultural zones. Huntington (2000) theorizes our future political conflicts will occur mainly along these fault lines. Some social scientists counter the argument, stating that culture supports – rather than rules – a nation's social, political and economic behavior (p. xiv). Nevertheless, scholars in the last two decades have evidenced strong, positive correlations between culture, economics and democracy.

An improved economic landscape can lead to two types of cultural changes innately attractive to democracy, argued Ronald Inglehart. First, a transformed social structure -- including increased urbanization, mass education, growing organization networks, greater income equality and other developments -- facilitates mass political participation. Second, economic development leads to cultural changes that help stabilize a democratic infrastructure. Interpersonal trust and tolerance increases, leading to

increased self-expression and participation in across-the-board decision-making. This enhanced well-being among a nation's citizenry boomerangs to an improved perception of the regime. The government's resulting, increased legitimacy helps sustain the stability of the institution – and, thus, democracy -- during difficult times (Inglehart, 2000).

Wealth doesn't always lead to democracy, Inglehart (2000) says. "If that were true, Kuwait and Libya would be model democracies," (p. 95). Neither does democracy necessarily translate to a happy, healthy, more tolerant and trusting society, as evidenced by the Soviet Union. Thus, Inglehart (2000) argued, one might better interpret the data by saying economic development leads to a more fertile climate for democracy. Such a transformation is never easy, however. By the 1990s, researchers from Latin America to Eastern Europe to East Asia concluded cultural factors contributed to the problems they were encountering with democratization. According to Inglehart (2000), simply adopting a democratic constitution is not enough.

In summary, recent research indicates the importance of culture in the establishment of democracy. Though such an ideology can be implemented via top-down institutional changes, its continued survival depends on the foundational values and beliefs of ordinary citizens (Inglehart, 2000).

1.1.1.2 Cultural Typologies

While Harrison's (2000) cultural typologies were used as a methodological guide for questions regarding perceptions of America and Americans, other typologies could be used to study different dimensions of these issues. Anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) classified culture among five value dimensions. Dore (1990),

Grondona (2000) and Inglehart and Baker (2000) provide more recent examples of valid typologies. Hofstede's (2001) typologies could be used to examine dimensions of individualism vs. collectivism and uncertainty avoidance—aspects not explored in this thesis.

Harrison's (2000) typologies were implemented in the question design and interview process because of their specific cultural themes, including the secular category, which plays a key role in the research. Other rubrics include time orientation, work, frugality, education, merit, community, ethics, justice and fair play and authority.

Harrison's (2006) knowledge of culture is reflected in his arguments concerning the war in Iraq.

President Bush's frequent references to the democratization of Japan during the post-World War II occupation as a model for Iraq is fundamentally flawed. Our military occupations of three countries in the Caribbean basin in the early decades of the 20th century may have far greater relevance (p. 95).

At the end of World War II, Japan was a defeated, devastated society. But four years earlier, it had much of East Asia and the western Pacific under its domination, reflecting its highly developed industrial, technological and infrastructure base, as well as a unified, disciplined, educated and skilled populace. Japan had eliminated male and female illiteracy in the first decades of the 20th century. By contrast, according to World Bank statistics, more than 70 percent of Iraqi women and more than 40 percent of Iraqi men were illiterate in 2001 (p. 95).

As opposed to the thesis respondents' optimistic views regarding democracy and Islam, Harrison (2006) believes the subculture of Islam is fundamentally resistant to democratic modernization. His argument is based on the Arab world's emphasis on submissive collectivism; discouragement of dissent and initiative; undermining of innovation and social change; emphasis on family, clan and ethnic cohesion;

isolationism; and above all, clerical interpretations of the Qur'an that include 1) a fatalistic dogma, 2) the outsourcing of scientific and technological advances while undermining the cultural forces that fostered such advances, and 3) perpetuating the subordination and illiteracy of women.

Having reviewed perception and culture, the next section describes persuasion and propaganda, and propaganda's prominent role in domestic and international relations.

1.1.2 Persuasion and Propaganda

Communication researchers Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell (1999) describe persuasion as a subset of communication designed to influence others.

Audiences most readily respond to persuasive messages designed to meet specific wants or needs.

Persuasion initiates three different types of responses: 1) response shaping, which performs the role of educator; 2) response reinforcing, which cements an existing attitude and/or behavior; and 3) response changing, which is the most challenging type of persuasion (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999, p. 28-29).

Pratkanis and Aronson (1992) define propaganda as a sophisticated, subversive communication effort designed to guide targeted publics toward acceptance of specific opinions and behaviors. Such subversive power was not lost on Adolf Hitler, who masterminded the use of propaganda in World War II (Cull et al, 2003, p. xvii).

As noted in his book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler believed propaganda played a key role in Germany's World War I defeat. According to Hitler, propaganda should guide a citizen's attention toward specific facts, processes and necessities. He argued that

messages must stay simple, with as few talking points as possible, because “the receptivity of the great masses is very limited, [and] their intelligence is small” (Chapman, 2000, p. 68). Hitler’s infatuation with political propaganda was embodied by his first cabinet appointment, Joseph Goebbels, as the leader of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. During his acceptance speech, Goebbels echoed a propagandist’s foremost desire:

I cannot convince a single person of the necessity of something unless I get to know the soul of that person. Unless I understand how to pluck the string in the harp of his soul that must be made to sound (Welch, 2002, p. 26).

Though Germany lost the war on the battlefield, Hitler’s successful implementation of propaganda could still be seen years later. In the late 1950s, a sample of youth in north Germany said Hitler had done much good in abolishing unemployment, punishing sexual criminals, constructing highways, introducing inexpensive radios, establishing the Labor Service, and increasing Germany’s esteem in the eyes of the world (Kershaw, 1987, p. 266). Further, as noted by Kershaw (1987), a 1979-80 sampling of West German voters revealed 13 percent of those surveyed maintained an extreme right-wing world view, and 14 percent responded positively to the statement, “we should again have a leader who would rule Germany with a strong hand for the good of all” (p. 267).

As noted by Thomson (1977):

Hitler shares with Julius Caesar and Napoleon Bonaparte, the distinction of not only making massive use of new methods of propaganda, but also of quite consciously and deliberately basing his entire career on planned propaganda (p. 111).

Most scholars today agree that propaganda reinforces – rather than converts – the faithful (Cull et al, 2003). In other words, the most effective messages verify existing attitudes and opinions. Other commonalities in successful propaganda efforts include simultaneous messaging from the mass media, group interaction, socially contextual factors, opinion leaders, and credible sources. Persuading people to agree on one or two issues enables the propagandist to introduce – and possibly win approval of – weightier and more controversial topics advocated by the communicator. Message monopolization also boosts communication effects (Jowett & O’Donnell, 1999, p. 201-202).

America’s propaganda efforts are driven by an ideology that includes both a participatory democratic political structure and a free enterprise capitalist economic structure. These ideologies – based upon the key term, *freedom* -- tint the United States’ perspective toward other countries and cultures (Jowett & O’Donnell, 1999). U.S. foreign policy does not dictate the forced injection of democracy using military force. It does, however, evaluate the intrinsic qualities of other nations and regions using two key criteria: 1) how far a country deviates from the United States’ normative democratic ideology, and 2) how freely a nation’s citizens can express their views without fear of official retribution. The more a country differs from the perceived U.S. ideal, the more likely it will be construed as politically and culturally immature (Jowett & O’Donnell, 1999). Such perceptions guide America’s internal and external communication strategies.

Between 1992 and 1999, the now-defunct United States Information Agency (USIA) experienced a 30 percent budget cut. Both America’s covert psywar and its overt

public relations were deemed as ailing. “We’ve lost those skills,” said a veteran CIA station chief (Kaplan & Schaffer, 2001). Public diplomacy efforts were rejuvenated after September 11, 2001, however, when the Bush administration intensified and expanded programs targeting the Middle East. Post-September 11th efforts included the establishment of both *Radio Sawa* and the *Alhurra* television network, the creation of Arabic-language web sites, and the placement of U.S. government-sponsored advertisements in Middle Eastern media outlets. Results of these efforts have been mixed and further efforts continue (Battle, 2002). Today, public diplomacy plays a key role in national security, with former White House counselor Karen Hughes now leading the Bush administration’s outreach efforts.

The United States’ efforts to win the hearts and minds of the Arabic world face many challenges, including competing media outlets such as *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabiya*. Arab journalists, too, are being challenged by the influx of global forces via transnational media. The situation has caused a paradox for most Arab journalists, who must operate under the auspices of governments that resist notions of freedom of the press and freedom of expression (Amin, 1995).

Having reviewed propaganda in general, the next section summarizes propaganda efforts, past and present, which have helped to shape world events affecting the Arab world.

1.1.2.1 Propaganda in the Arab World

At the close of World War II, intelligence analysts were already discerning the seeds of today’s issues concerning the Arab world. As cited in a *FrontpageMagazine.com*

article authored by Middle East Forum director Dr. Daniel Pipes (2006), a 1946 study published by the Military Intelligence Service of the U.S. War Department outlined two “basic urges” that represented conflicting and potentially inflammatory interests in the Middle East:

The first of these urges originates within the Moslems’ own sphere. The Moslems remember the power with which once they not only ruled their own domains but also overpowered half of Europe, yet they are painfully aware of their present economic, cultural and military impoverishment. Thus a terrific internal pressure is building up in their collective thinking. The Moslems intend, by any means possible, to regain political independence and to reap the profits of their own resources, which in recent times and up to the present have been surrendered to the exploitation of foreigners who could provide capital investments. . . .

The other fundamental urge originates externally. The world’s great and near-great Powers cover the economic riches of the Moslem area and are also mindful of the strategic locations of some of the domains. Their actions are also difficult to predict, because each of these Powers sees itself in the position of the customer who wants to do his shopping in a hurry because he happens to know the store is going to be robbed (p. 24 – 26).

The bluntly worded analysis offered a sober conclusion that foretold today’s

Middle East crises:

If the Moslem states were strong and stable, their behavior would be more predictable. They are, however, weak and torn by internal stresses; furthermore, their peoples are insufficiently educated to appraise propaganda or to understand the motives of those who promise a new Heaven and a new Earth. Because of the strategic position of the Moslem world and the restlessness of its peoples, the Moslem states constitute a potential threat to world peace. There cannot be permanent world stability, when one-seventh of the earth’s population exists under the economic and political conditions that are imposed upon the Moslems (p. 33 – 34).

Opposition to both imperialism and Israel are the modern Arab world’s two central propaganda themes (Cull et al, 2003). To further understand its

influence, the next section focuses on three nations -- and a terrorist leader -- that have played significant roles in Arab world propaganda: Egypt, which gave birth to Pan-Islamism and the Arab nationalism movement; Iraq, the hotbed of America's fight on terrorism; Osama bin Laden, leader of al Qaeda and orchestrator of the September 11th attacks; and Iran, quoted by President George W. Bush as the United States' greatest world challenge.

1.1.2.2 Egypt

Egypt gave birth to Arab nationalism in the late 19th century. During that time, three schools of thought emerged: Pan-Islamism, Egyptian nationalism and Arab nationalism (Cull et al, 2003).

Egyptian nationalism was born when the British invaded Egypt in 1882. The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 offered a step toward independence but was vehemently opposed by the nation's university students, who mandated Egypt's complete divorce from any foreign infiltration. Among those students was Gamal Abdel Nasser, the future ruler of Egypt (Cull et al, 2003).

During World War II, Britain invoked Article 8 of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, enabling the nation to occupy Egypt. By war's end, Egyptians called for Britain's exodus from Egypt and insisted on its acceptance of Egypt's union with Sudan. The British refused to comply. Subsequently, the Free Officers' Organization seized control and placed General Muhammad Neguib in power. Nasser later replaced Neguib as Egypt's leader. Under his leadership, the nation's core message expanded from a call for Egyptian unity to a call for Arab nationalism (Cull et al, 2003).

By 1954, Nasser had gained a global reputation as the father of Arab nationalism. He cultivated his cult-like image via the mass media – especially the radio. According to Boyd (1999), Nasser was “interested in rapid social and economic change and saw broadcasting as a means of bypassing the print media that were primarily responsive to the literate elite who could both afford publications and read them” (p. 4). Nasser launched the *Voice of the Arabs* radio station in 1953 to “expound the viewpoints of the Arab nation, reflect the hopes and fears of the Arab countries . . . unite the Arabs and mobilize their forces to achieve Arab unity” (Cull et al, 2003). The powerful station, which was broadcast to the entire Arab region, effectively influenced and consolidated mass public opinion. Nations that had not yet developed radio services – Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates – were most vulnerable to radio propaganda from countries such as Egypt, which had political interests in deposing the Gulf ruling families (Boyd, 1999). In 1960, Nasser nationalized the Egyptian press, forcing the media organizations to surrender their ownership to the National Union. He reimposed a censored press system after a brief lifting (Amin, 2002).

Anti-imperialism was used by Nasser to divert attention away from the Egyptian regime’s weaknesses. After the state of Israel was created in 1948, for example, he blamed Egypt’s military failure on Israel’s alliance with the West. Nasser successfully leveraged radio propaganda to foster a United Arab Republic until his death in 1970 (Cull et al, 2003).

Upon the creation of Israel, Palestinian refugees were displaced from their homeland. Resentment and discontent grew among the refugees, who were forced to live

in horrible conditions. In his review of former CIA analyst Kathleen Christison's (1999) book, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy*, Husam Mohamad (2000) writes:

To many U.S. presidents, the Palestinians were nonexistent, refugees, terrorists and essentially undeserving people. Some presidents justified their attachment to Israel on the basis of biblical and emotional ties. Others were more influenced by deep guilt resulting from the tragic effects of the Holocaust on Jews, as well as by cultural ties that connect both the U.S. and Israel with a Western style of democracy (p. 111).

The Palestinians' collective displeasure led to the birth of underground Palestinian liberation groups that relied on word of mouth, pamphlets and speeches for their propaganda (Cull et al, 2003). The first official Palestinian political group was al-Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement). The group's propaganda announced that victory over Israel and its supporters necessitated guerrilla warfare and acts of terrorism. Nasser countered by sponsoring 1964's creation of the more moderate Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Yassir Arafat was selected as the PLO's leader in 1968; thereafter, the organization grew more violent. Arafat attempted to gain Western attention by boosting both guerilla warfare and terrorist attacks inside and outside Israel (Cull et al, 2003, p. 17).

Nasser's death in 1970 led to Anwar Sadat's election as the new president of Egypt. Under the Nasser regime, Egypt had been the only serious military threat to Israel. The 1973 war, however, led to Sadat's call for peace with Israel. The Egyptian president leveraged both domestic and international propaganda to establish closer ties with the West, eventually securing a peace agreement. The act served to ostracize Egypt from the rest of the Arab world (Cull et al, 2003, p. 18).

Under Nasser's iron-fisted leadership, journalists who voiced disapproval of the government were often imprisoned. Such actions are not uncommon in the Arab world. According to Boyd and Amin (1993), electronic media in the Arab world are generally monopolized by Arab state governments. Arab journalists have operated under an umbrella of censorship since the earliest days of the Arab press. By the close of WWI – which was also the end of the Ottoman era -- Arab journalism was governed by principles of obedience and respect for the political establishment (Kelidar, 1993).

Sadat attempted to dilute press restrictions. Said Sadat, “If freedom of the press is sacred, Egypt is more sacred and I am not prepared to relinquish any of her rights” (Rugh, 1979, p. 48). Still, Sadat retained government control of the media. It was President Hosni Mubarak – Sadat's successor -- who implemented both more press freedom and less restrictions (Amin & Napoli, 1997).

The United States' super-power status was important for both Egypt's and Israel's propaganda initiatives. By allowing America to act as mediator at the 1978 Camp David peace accord, the leaders of both nations would appear unwilling participants in the peace talks -- essential to the attainment of favorable domestic public opinion. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak continued to honor the Camp David peace accord after President Sadat's assassination in 1981 (Cull et al, 2003).

Section IIIb of the peace accord called for the creation of a Palestinian homeland in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This part of the accord was never deployed because Israel wouldn't relinquish the disputed territories. Lebanon therefore became the hub of Palestinian settlements and the PLO's terrorist acts against Israel. Israel countered by

invading southern Lebanon in 1982. Syria responded with an invasion of the Bekaa Valley to counterbalance the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights. The PLO was eventually recognized by the United Nations as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (Cull et al, 2003).

1.1.2.3 Iraq

Iraq's Saddam Hussein achieved support from the West for his 1980 invasion of Iran, partly by cultivating Americans' fear over Iran's growing extremist bent. He also used mass media to promote his call for modernization. Both radio and television stations were controlled by the Iraqi Broadcasting and Television Establishment, which was linked to the Ministry of Culture and Information. Newspapers were also kept strictly under government control; censorship was mandated by the Ministry of Guidance (Cull et al, 2003).

The relationship between Hussein and the United States was tenuous at best and was inexorably destroyed by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The next five months preceding the start of combat between Iraq and the United States entailed a barrage of propaganda, from both sides, aimed at winning the hearts and minds of a global audience (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999).

The United States propagated that the Hussein regime denied basic democratic freedoms to both its own citizens and the conquered Kuwaitis. Aligning with this strategy, the United States 1) appealed directly to the Iraqi people to overthrow their tyrant ruler and restore democracy and 2) emphasized the fight was with Saddam Hussein and not the Iraqi people (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999). This is a common strategy used by

democratic nations, states Jowett and O'Donnell (1999), "A strong ideological belief in democracy always emphasizes that the people are inherently good; it is the government institution that can go bad" (p. 315). America's propaganda tactics included little about the actual lack of democracy in Kuwait -- a key argument for those who opposed the Gulf War (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999).

Hussein leveraged Nasser's call for Pan-Arabic unity, and the need to abolish Western influence from the Arab region, as a foundation for his regime's propaganda. Every trick and ploy was used to capture media attention (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999). For example, Hussein first tried to justify the invasion by saying Kuwait had deliberately stolen Iraqi oil. He followed with the claim that Kuwait was, historically, part of Iraq. Finally, Hussein sought a *jihad* against the "infidel" because the American forces were foreign invaders who were tainting the holy soil of Islam by "drinking alcohol, eating pork, and practicing prostitution" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999, p. 315). A small group of Arabic countries – most notably Jordan – bought into the messages. It failed, however, to ignite the Arabic world on a larger scale.

Hussein's attempts to incite the Arab world were unsuccessful because accusations of immorality rarely inspire a people to fight and even die. By focusing on events that directly affect the Arab world, Osama bin Laden has experienced more success with his propaganda efforts.

1.1.2.4 Osama bin Laden

"How can a man in a cave outcommunicate the world's leading communications society?" asked former U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke (2001) in the wake of

September 11th. By focusing his rhetoric on specific matters of foreign policy, claims former CIA Osama bin Laden Unit Chief Dr. Michael F. Scheuer (2004):

Part of bin Laden's genius is that he recognized early on the difference between issues Muslims find offensive about America and the West, and those they find intolerable and life threatening (p. 10).

Bin Laden has propagated six core messages against the United States since 1996. America's unilateral support for Israel – a long-time propaganda message throughout the Arab world -- tops the list. U.S. leaders' pressure on Arab oil producers to maintain attractive consumer prices is another popular message. America's presence on the Arabian peninsula and its military activities in Muslim countries offer two more sources for rhetoric. Bin Laden also propagates America's support for governments viewed as oppressive toward Muslims: the Russians in Chechnya, the Chinese in Western China and the Indians in Kashmir, for example. Finally, America's support of tyrannical regimes throughout the Arab world is portrayed by the al Qaeda leader as hypocritical and imperialistic (Scheuer, 2004).

Al Qaeda's media entity targets Muslims via audio and videotapes, Internet articles and essays and statements by the group's leaders. Poetry – which is widely admired in the Arab world -- is also used to propagate the terrorist organization's agenda (Scheuer, 2004). Hoffman (2002) remarks on bin Laden's tactics below:

For someone who scorned modernity and globalization, and who took refuge in an Islamic state that banned television, bin Laden proved remarkably adept at public diplomacy. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, bin Laden turned to *Al Jazeera* to reach the two audiences that were essential to his plans -- the Western news media and the Arab masses. Uncensored and unconstrained by any of the countries where it is received, *Al Jazeera's* satellite signal delivered bin Laden's exhortations directly to some 34 million potential viewers across the Middle East,

northern Africa, and Europe. Americans watched, mesmerized, as *Al Jazeera's* exclusive access to bin Laden and the al Qaeda leadership in Afghanistan scooped the suddenly impotent Western news media. The Bush administration, not knowing quite how to react, has alternately courted and vilified the network (and even reportedly bombed its offices in Kabul) (p. 90).

The September 11, 2001 attacks resulted in a new level of propaganda. While many Middle Eastern countries condemned the attack, bin Laden's reputation reached cult status among some Arabs (Cull et al, 2003). The hijackers, who Scheuer (2004) termed "magnificent 19" were seen as hero-martyrs as evidenced by the public commentary following *Al Jazeera's* transmission of the videotaped hijackers proclaiming their last wills and testaments.

Since September 11, 2001, bin Laden has been cultivating the Muslim world to accept an attack against the United States using weapons of mass destruction. Toward that goal and in an effort to silence Muslim critics concerning the 2001 event, bin Laden has repeatedly warned Americans to expect another and more deadly al Qaeda attack on the United States. He also offered U.S. leaders and citizens the chance to convert to Islam, volunteering himself as America's teacher and guide. Finally, bin Laden appealed directly to the American people, stating U.S. citizens have the power to end the war between America and Islam. Such a statement enables bin Laden to justify subsequent attacks by saying the American people refused to respond to his protestations (Scheuer, 2004).

A well-known and respected Saudi Islamic cleric named Shaykh Nasir bin Hamid al-Fahd published a treatise in 2003 – possibly under the guidance of al Qaeda -- justifying the use of weapons of mass destruction in the United States. He said, "If the

infidels can be repelled from the Muslims only by using such weapons, their use is permissible. Even if you kill them without exception and destroy their tillage and stock” (cited in Perkovich, 2005, p. 8).

Iran, for one, is aggressively pursuing the development of the most lethal of WMD – nuclear weapons. On a March 2006 visit to Tehran, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director Mohamed ElBaradei announced that Iran was constructing a facility to enrich uranium — a key ingredient for the development of advanced nuclear weapons. Diplomatic sources, however, say the plant is much more advanced and involves "hundreds" of gas centrifuges ready to produce enriched uranium and "the parts for a thousand others ready to be assembled” (Calabresi, 2006, para. 1).

1.1.2.5 Iran

A February 7, 2006 study sponsored by the Pew Research Center revealed that Americans are growing increasingly concerned over Iran’s nuclear program. Nearly two-thirds (65%) believe that Iran's nuclear program is a major threat to the United States. Additionally, a majority of those surveyed believe Iran – armed with nuclear weapons -- would likely launch attacks on Israel (72%) and the U.S. or Europe (66%).

Iran’s nuclear tender box has been aggravated by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's "outrageous” statements, said Vice President Dick Cheney in a *PBS* on-air interview (Winslow, 2006). A week before Christmas 2005, for example, the newly elected Iranian president shocked the world by declaring the Holocaust a “myth” (Weiss, 2006, p. 1H). Ahmadinejad’s statement goes part and parcel with his call for Israel to be

wiped off the map. In a speech broadcast live on Iranian television, Ahmadinejad declared:

They have invented a myth that Jews were massacred and place this above God, religions and the prophets. If someone were to deny the existence of God ... or prophets and religion, they would not bother him. However, if someone were to deny the myth of the Jews' massacre, all the Zionist mouthpieces and the governments subservient to the Zionists scream against the person as much as they can (cited in Tait & Harding, 2005, para. 3).

The Iranian president's controversial announcement preceded the United Nation's first official commemoration of the Holocaust on January 27, 2006 – the anniversary of the Jews' liberation from Auschwitz (Weiss, 2006). Even so, Yale University visiting scholar Mohsen Sazegara (2006) surmises Ahmadinejad probably believes his own words. This counters the Iranian Revolution's founders, who would not have swallowed such rhetoric, according to the scholar. Today, Holocaust denial is being propagated throughout Iran via opinion leaders such as university professors and religious scholars.

According to Simon Wiesenthal Center Associate Dean Rabbi Abraham Cooper, many in the mainstream Arab world have embraced Holocaust denial as a form of psychological warfare on their enemies. The Los Angeles-based center invited 35 U.S.-based Iranian journalists for a day of Holocaust education as part of a massive collaboration to counter the misinformation. Some of the resulting stories bypassed governmental censors by transmitting back to the Arab countries via satellite television (Weiss, 2006).

1.1.2.6 Propaganda Targeting the Bush Administration

Propaganda offers an age-old tool for intra-national politics, as well. Since 2003, the U.S.-led war in Iraq has incited an upsurge of partisan debate with the Bush Administration. Perspectives opposing the administration were addressed by The Heritage Foundation, a conservative research and educational institute dedicated to the promotion of conservative public policies. The Heritage Foundation's James Phillips attempted to counter the rhetoric in a paper titled "Dispelling the Myths About Iraq" (2005). Phillips (2005) says many issues are presented as facts, but are in fact myths. These myths include the United States' lack of progress in defeating the insurgency; the Bush Administration exaggerating the threat of Iraqi WMD; the notion that the war in Iraq has set back the war on terrorism; the idea that the war in Iraq is another Vietnam and that the U.S. has little allied support; Iraqi women were better off under Saddam's regime than under the new constitution; and finally, the notion that Iraq's economy is worsening.

Countering intra-national rhetoric is always a challenge for an administration. Fighting enemy propaganda is even more challenging, however, because the communication often originates from unknown sources, in hostile territory, transmitting via a controlled and/or loyal media source.

1.1.2.7 Countering Enemy Propaganda

Throughout his book, Scheuer (2004) thematically argues that U.S. foreign policy is what causes Muslim fundamentalists to hate.

While important voices in the United States claim the intent of U.S. policy is misunderstood by Muslims, that Arabic satellite television channels

deliberately distort the policy, and that better public diplomacy is the remedy, they are wrong. America is hated and attacked because Muslims believe they know precisely what the United States is doing in the Islamic world (p. 240).

The Islamic world is at least partially misguided in its animosity, however. A recent study sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations reveals many are misinformed about the United States and its contributions to Arab nations. Craig Charney of Charney Research, which produced the study, said focus groups in Egypt, Morocco and Indonesia revealed little knowledge concerning the aid they receive from the United States (Hoke, 2005).

We found that there were remarkably few people who knew anything about the positive things the U.S. was doing in their countries. The low-polluting buses or the health clinics that America had provided in Egypt, the computers in the classroom or the vocational training programs in Morocco, and health projects or assistance to democratic elections in Indonesia (Hoke, 2005, para. 3).

Additionally, Charney (2005) says many Muslims believe America's Jews drive U.S. foreign policy. Participants in the focus groups, for example, thought that Jews make up anywhere from 10-80 percent of the U.S. population and the majority of the federal legislature. In reality, said Charney, about 2 percent of America's population and about 12 percent of U.S. Congress are Jewish.

Another common conspiracy theory in the Arab world concerns the CIA's and Israel's joint responsibility for the September 11th terrorists attacks, says Saul Landau, whose 2002 film "Iraq: Voices from the Streets" featured interviews with Iraqis about the then-impending U.S.-led war (Al-Arian, 2004). "Muslims have been actively misinformed about the United States," said Charney (cited in Hoke, 2005, para. 6).

The reason for the Muslim world's lack of reliable information doesn't stem from scarce media sources -- simply the reluctance to pursue them. American counter-terrorism analyst and Middle Eastern historian Dr. Daniel Pipes (2005) says the two most prominent reasons for the disinterest are a disposition to believe in conspiracy theories, and an attraction to totalitarian solutions. At best, U.S. attempts to counter such rhetoric have produced mixed results, says Pipes (2005).

Like generals fighting the last war, diplomats recall the successes of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe in providing precious information to Soviet bloc peoples and thereby helping to bring about the demise of the Soviet Union and its satellites. . . . But Muslims generally and Islamists specifically do not lack for reliable information, much less do they (as did Soviet-bloc populations) prefer Western sources of information to their own. To the contrary, many indications suggest Muslims favor tuning in or reading reports prepared by their co-religionists, trusting these more than what comes from non-Muslims (para. 3).

Pipes (2005) says a solution is for the United States to focus its communication efforts on promoting the liberal, secular and humane values that makes America great. Any communication that doesn't originate from co-religionist sources, however, may face a bulwark of resistance. *Miami Herald* columnist Leonard Pitts, Jr. (2006) addresses this phenomenon when he writes:

So extreme conservatives shun the "liberal media" and extreme liberals shun the "mainstream media." And neither seems to get the joke that they're both shunning the same media for supposedly favoring the other side. Once upon a time, we all drew upon a common pool of facts. You might interpret them differently than I, but we could have an honest disagreement because the facts themselves were not in contention. Now we have designer facts, facts that aren't facts but that gain currency because somebody wanted to believe them. The thing is, facts that really are facts, truth that really is true, doesn't always validate your beliefs. Sometimes it challenges and confounds them. That's probably the problem (Separate truths section, para. 2).

If Pitts' opinion is correct, Muslims aren't the only ones who are misinformed. Scheuer (2004) argues that U.S. political and military leaders mislead the American public by claiming we are at war with a few Muslim extremists who hate democracy and freedom. Scheuer (2004) writes, "Only in today's America could the simple statement of fact that much of Islam is fighting us, and more is leaning that way, be labeled discriminatory or racist, a label that kills thought, debate, and, ultimately, Americans" (p. 250).

In spite of Scheuer's predictions, the 2005 Pew study revealed a slightly improved attitude between the Muslim world and the United States. Factors contributing to Muslims' decreased animosity include Iraq's arduous yet tangible march toward democracy, Lebanon's demand for Syria's exodus, and America's generous relief efforts in the wake of the December 26, 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia.

1.2 Theoretical Paradigm

1.2.1 Harold Lasswell's Propaganda Theory

This thesis focuses on the use of propaganda as a component of students' perceptions. Noted communication scholar Harold Lasswell's (1927). theory of propaganda was utilized in this thesis because of its emphasis on "master symbols."

Lasswell (1927) argued that a propagandist seeks to intensify certain cultural attitudes favorable to a specific purpose while reversing hostile attitudes. He noted that propaganda had four major objectives: "To mobilize hatred against the enemy, to preserve the friendship of allies, to preserve the friendship and, if possible, to procure the cooperation of neutrals, and to demoralize the enemy" (p. 195).

Combining behaviorism with Freudianism, and rejecting the magic bullet theory, Lasswell believed the acceptance of “bad” propaganda rested on a citizenry’s vulnerable state of mind – much like the Germans in the 1930s. With the Depression and escalating political conflict, said Lasswell, Germans grew psychologically unbalanced, thus making them vulnerable to even the crudest forms of manipulation (Baran & Davis, 2003). In order to prevent such propaganda from infiltrating the masses, argued Lasswell, solutions must be developed to counter its manipulative effects. Lasswell (1927) was very specific about the role of the propagandist.

The problem of the propagandist is to intensify the attitudes favorable to his purpose, to reverse the attitudes hostile to it, and to attract the indifferent, or, at the worst, to prevent them from assuming a hostile bent” said Lasswell (p. 629).

Both Lasswell and political scientist William Albig believed the management of information was a necessary component of the democratic process (Chapman, 2000). Thus, Lasswell felt it was a democratic nation’s duty to communicate “good” propaganda to the public via sophisticated, long-term campaign strategies designed to cultivate new ideas and images (Baran & Davis, 2003). Lasswell’s and Albig’s insistence on using propaganda to facilitate democratic participation implies their belief in an intelligent, reasoning public – something that both the Nazi propagandists and, later, Soviet Russia opposed (Chapman, 2000, p. 680).

Symbols offer a key component to successful propaganda campaigns, argued Lasswell (1934). Propagating symbolic images over months and years can lead to specifically engineered responses and actions. The American flag offers a primary example of Lasswell’s “master” symbol (Baran & Davis, 2003, p. 79). Edward Bernays

(1955) also promoted the use of visual symbols to influence the masses. Bernays (1955) writes:

Collective attitudes are amendable to many modes of alteration. They may be shattered before an onslaught of violent intimidation or disintegrated by economic coercion. They may be reaffirmed in the muscular regimentation of drill. But their arrangement and rearrangement occurs principally under the impetus of significant symbols: and the technique of using significant symbols for this purpose is propaganda (p. 628).

Symbols can also be cultivated to demonize the enemy. “So great are the psychological resistances to war in modern nations,” wrote Lasswell (1927) “that every war must appear to be a war of defense against a menacing, murderous aggressor. There must be no ambiguity about who the public is to hate” (p. 206).

1.3 Research Questions

Quantitative studies – including the Pew series – have served to measure beliefs, attitudes and opinions of citizens from predominantly Muslim nations. The 2000-2001 World Values Survey includes 10 predominantly Islamic societies extending from Morocco to Indonesia (Inglehart, 2003). Geert Hofstede’s (2001) value dimensions typology offers a valid framework for studies involving business and culture. Grondona’s Cultural Typology (2000) and Weaver’s Contrast Culture Continuum (2000) are two typologies that categorize attributes among various cultural dimensions.

A dearth of research exists, however, that explores *why* perceptions exist. Thus, in order to better understand international students’ perspectives, the following research questions were used to guide this exploratory study:

R.Q. 1. What are the respondents' perceptions of the United States?

R.Q. 2. Have their perceptions changed since coming to the United States?

R.Q. 3. To what extent does propaganda play a role in perceptions?

This chapter has reviewed literature regarding persuasion, culture, perception and propaganda. Chapter 2 addresses the methodology, including participant demographics, materials and procedures used to execute the study. Results of the study are detailed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 interprets the data applying Lasswell's propaganda theory. The chapter also suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

For communication scholar Thomas R. Lindlof (1991), the term “qualitative” concerns an interest in how meaning is achieved in social interaction (p. 24). Lindlof (1991) describes the term more fully when he writes:

Probably the fundamental touchstone for the term is methodological. Qualitative research seeks to preserve the form, content, and context of social phenomena and analyze their qualities, rather than separate them from historical and institutional surroundings. What counts as context is more or less a decision of the researcher (p. 25).

Context, claims Lindlof, could entail the interview situation itself (Mishler, 1986), or the material and ideological character of a nation (Lull, 1988). Five styles of qualitative audience inquiry have emerged since the 1980s: social phenomenological, communication rules, cultural studies, reception study and feminist research (Lindlof, 1991). Throughout the last quarter century, ethnographic and other humanistic approaches to the mass audience fought for legitimacy, especially in America, where communication science gravitated toward the quantitative, predictive-control model (Lull, 1980). But during the 1980s, a succession of edited volumes, monographs and journal articles engineered excitement in the new audience studies and a favored niche for the paradigm, as Lindlof (1991) notes:

By the end of the 1980s, reception study, audience ethnography and similar categories had collectively become a thriving “site” of research activity. Although residual prejudice toward its goals and methods persists, qualitative audience research has established itself mostly by dint of a linkage with cultural studies (p. 24).

As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative studies are primarily an inductive activity; a method of research that yields nonnumeric information generated by reviewing phenomenon that cannot easily be quantified (Schwandt, 1997). The data, says Lindlof (1991), derive from social action such as speech, gesture, movements or artifacts. Further, the social action occurs within a specific social or cultural framework -- a family, for example. Some degree of investigator participation is therefore needed to successfully generate the data.

This thesis falls under the cultural study model. According to Lindlof (1991), cultural studies merge several schools of thought. Beginning in the 1950s, E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Richard Hoggart researched the implementation of dominant ideologies and class consciousness in everyday life. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony helped describe reactions to dominant ideas in capitalist society. Finally, the work of semiologists such as Roland Barthes introduced the language-like codes that underlie culture.

This thesis entailed interactions between an American researcher and students from predominantly Muslim nations. Lindlof (1991) approves of such tactics, saying “Western researchers would do well to study more diverse forms of life – to engage in intercultural research” (p. 33). Since many groups exist in repressed conditions (such as

individuals involved in this study), qualitative study may offer a means to express their views without fear of repercussion (Lindlof, 1991).

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2003), a well-designed qualitative study can give birth to new theories. Thus, researchers often begin a project without a precisely defined theory. Qualitative methods can also offer a preliminary step to a quantitative study.

For this thesis, qualitative interviews enabled the researcher to explore why respondents hold specific perspectives of the United States and Americans. The four-part McCracken process enabled the investigator to leverage her own cultural background in order to design a more comprehensive questionnaire, listen with a discerning ear and analyze data with greater sensitivity. It also enabled the researcher to self-examine any familiarities in order to sharpen her objectivity. Third, the process enabled the researcher to more easily and systematically collect, manage and analyze substantive amounts of data. Finally, the method served to enhance the professional relationship between the investigator and participant, thus increasing the chances of a successful interview (McCracken, 1988, p. 65-66).

Interviews followed a semi-standard format to enable discussion flexibility. Some deviation occurred from the question format when needed; however, the interviewer consistently trained participant's communication back to specific topics of interest. For this study, the researcher primarily played the role of "listener," probing respondents' answers for clarification purposes.

Open-ended questions were used to explore respondents' perceptions of both America and Americans, their own country of citizenship, reasons for studying in the U.S., and more. Demographic questions included sex, age, education level, academic major and citizenship.

2.2 Participants

This study entailed conducting intensive interviews with 11 international students from predominantly Muslim nations. Of these, five were Jordanian, three were Pakistani, one was Kuwaiti, one was Iranian and one was Malaysian. To ensure anonymity, students' names are not included in the study; they are instead identified by numbers one through eleven.

Respondents were recruited from two major southwestern universities on the college campus. All but one attended school on a full-time basis, and all but one were pursuing graduate-level studies. Their ages ranged from 18 to 35. Two were pursuing degrees in accounting and two in computer science. The other respondents were pursuing degrees in biology, divinity, electrical engineering, English, industrial engineering, linguistics and logistics.

Two students have lived in America for eight years; two for six years; one student each has resided in the states for five, four and three years; two have lived in the domestic U.S. for one year; and one arrived just four months before.

2.3 In-depth Interviews

Berg (2001) presents seven ways to collect qualitative data: interviewing, focus groups, ethnography, sociometry, observation, historiography, and case studies. For this study, in-depth interviews were used to gather data, gain insight into participants'

attitudes and opinions, and allow the researcher to observe physical reactions. Due to the controversial topics addressed in this study, privacy was especially important. The in-depth interview enabled participants to talk freely without fear of repercussion. Individual interviews also prevented the tendency toward groupthink.

As opposed to the deductive approach, in-depth interviews utilize an a posteriori design. The qualitative model, states Rubin and Rubin (1995), enables flexibility and continuity rather than a prepackaged, locked-in-stone question design. Insights uncovered from initial interviews are likewise used to shape questions for subsequent queries.

The semi-standardized interview design entailed a set of predetermined questions presented in a format appropriate for the individual respondent. The interview is not strictly limited to the predetermined questions but allows for the following up of thoughts and issues that emerge during the discussion (Berg, 1998). For this study, the researcher generally used the same question list for each interview, with the order varying occasionally depending on the respondents' answers. Additionally, the researcher ventured whether Islam-specific questions were relevant for the two non-Muslim respondents. On both occasions, the respondents agreed to answer the questions since they were very familiar with the religion.

2.4 McCracken's Four-Step Method of Inquiry

The interview's format was structured in accordance with McCracken's (1988) Four-Step Method of Inquiry. The first step of the four-step process included a thorough review of existing literature. As McCracken (1988) states, "The good literature review is

a critical process that makes the investigator the master, not the captive, of previous scholarship” (p. 31).

The second step entailed a review of cultural categories. Such a review had three purposes. The first was to aid in questionnaire construction, the second purpose was to prepare for the categorization of resulting data, and the third purpose was to establish distance (McCracken, 1988). Distance requires becoming self-aware of any biases that may color data analysis.

The third step of the four-step process involved questionnaire construction and discovery of cultural categories. First, a quantitative set of biographical questions was constructed. A second questionnaire included the list of open-ended questions arranged in “categories.” Choosing respondents was the final subset of this step. According to McCracken (1988), interviewees should be both few in number and strangers to the researcher. They shouldn’t have a special knowledge of the topic under study; respondents should also have as large a variety of attributes as is possible within the parameters set.

Step Four followed the interviews and entailed the discovery and development of analytical categories. The analysis process involved five stages. During Stage One, each utterance was reviewed on its own merits and specific phrases were highlighted. In the second stage, the observations were developed individually, second according to the evidence located in the transcript, and third according to the previous literature review. For the third stage, connections were examined between second-stage observations,

resulting observations were subjected to collective scrutiny via database manipulation, and a final analysis was conducted of relationship patterns and themes (McCracken, 1988).

2.5 Evaluating Data Results

Four criteria are commonly used to judge the soundness of quantitative research; internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. So far, no one has adequately explained how the operational procedures used to assess validity and reliability in quantitative research can be adequately translated into qualitative research. Credibility and confirmability were instead addressed in this study (Trochim, 2004).

Credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the research participant. The respondents are thus the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Trochim, 2004).

Confirmability refers to the degree to which data results can be confirmed by others. There are a number of strategies for enhancing confirmability. The researcher can document the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Another researcher can take a "devil's advocate" role with respect to the results, and this process can be documented. The researcher can actively search for and describe any negative instances that contradict prior observations. Finally, a data audit can examine the data collection and analysis procedures and judge whether bias or distortion occurred (Trochim, 2004).

For this study, confirmability and credibility were addressed, respectively, via 1) a comprehensive audit trail and 2) verifying observations with respondents both during and after the interviews.

Having described the method used for conducting this study, the next chapter details results of the study. Results are organized in accordance with the three research questions stated at the end of Chapter One: 1) perceptions, 2) changed perceptions, and 3) perceptions stemming from propaganda.

Underneath the heading “perceptions” are subheadings that reflect survey question categories: America/Americans, national leaders/opinion leaders, home nation, U.S. foreign policy, suicide bombing and other forms of violence, democracy, and media. (Harrison’s typologies were utilized as a methodological guide for perceptions of America and Americans.) “Changed perceptions” highlights substantive perceptual changes that occurred once respondents had moved to the United States. “Perceptions stemming from propaganda” discusses information that appear to stem from both truth and rhetoric. Topics of discussion are: Israel, George W. Bush, the U.S.-led war in Iraq, Muslims/Christians, imperialism, suicide bombing, and media.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The purpose of this research is to probe the international students' perceptions of the United States, Americans, the Arab world, democracy, terrorism, and public policy in countries with significant Muslim populations. It also examines whether the students' perceptions have changed since arriving in the United States and whether these perceptions stem from propaganda.

3.1 Perceptions

3.1.1 Perceptions of America/Americans

Students generally described Americans in a positive light – “helpful, kind, friendly and accepting” were a few of the adjectives used. The nation was also viewed in a favorable light; Student 8 described the United States as “beautiful.” Student 4 said, “it’s still the Everest – the top.” America’s government, however, was almost universally viewed with enmity -- particularly the Bush administration.

Many students were impressed by the freedoms inherent in America’s framework. Freedoms of speech, religion, and “living without being asked questions by people” were most often expressed. Many emphasized how difficult it was to prosper in their respective nations due to corruption and nepotism; thus, they saw the United States as a true land of opportunity. One student, in fact, could not understand how one could help

but prosper in the United States, especially with America's excellent educational institutions -- viewed as far advanced over anything offered in the Middle East.

Student 2: As a country it's amazing. It's diverse and it's, um, I really appreciate and I'm touched by the great heritage that it has as far as, um, the founding fathers and the reason why they came here and the struggles that they went through. And, um, freedom, justice, the freedom of religion and the freedom of expression, I think is one of the most amazing things.

Student 8: It's beautiful. It's one place you can get along with just on hard work with not having to know people; no contacts. It's, uh, I love the freedom it gives you. You don't have to worry about what people are thinking. And, uh, I think the biggest thing is if you work hard enough you will be rewarded. I've seen people back home who are very smart people, very hard working, but because they don't know anyone higher up, they don't get promoted, they don't get jobs. And too much corruption and I hate that. And, um, back when I was in Saudi Arabia, people over there are very racist, the locals over there, they, um, if you're not white or if you're not Saudi, they will look down on you automatically. I've seen that a lot. And even pay scales are different for if you're a person from Pakistan doing the same job as a person from Saudi, the Saudi person will be paid more -- about 30-40 percent more -- just because of his nationality. . . . morally they're nice people, it's just that people back home, they have this judgmental idea of how people should behave. And when they don't fit into that, they call them morally lax. And that's the only difference I see. People are more accepting of stuff over here.

Some students were impressed with America's standardized system of law.

Student 10 even liked America's tax system and the laws surrounding payment of taxes.

Student 10: I'm talking about the laws. Traffic rule, everybody obeying the traffic. In our country (Pakistan), people just drive away with the stuff. Light is right, and that's why I used to do that. But here, you have the fear of ticket, the insurance rates will get up. Your license may get suspended. One thing leads to another, so there are certain laws. That's-that's why there less accidents here. There are a lot of accidents in Pakistan, like, and all that stuff. So I like the laws here, most of them, like the traffic rules, the system division, the taxes.

Researcher: You like the taxes?

Student 10: Obviously, like if you are people are not paying taxes, what will be happen? I mean, there's a system by which if a person is getting earning, like, whatever amount of money, they can get like, they can no get that how much this person's money. In third world country, there's no way to keep track of all that . . . And as a result, the poor people suffer most.

Students who resided in the United States pre-9/11 had mixed perspectives concerning the United States. Many literally perceived “America the Beautiful” before the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center; however, these same students experienced a loss of freedom after the attack, causing disenchantment. On the flip side, several students – one who was residing in New York at the time of the attack -- were amazed by Americans' reactions.

Student 12: When 9/11 happened, I was at that time in Missouri – Columbia, small city called Columbia. Uh, (clears throat) uh, you know, there-there – we-we heard some, you know, hate crime were happening against Muslims because of, you know, what bin Laden did. So my neighbor, he's American. I mean, I-I don't – I never talked, I mean, just “Hi, how are you” when I see him. He told me, “I know that you're Muslim and Arab. I was wondering if you want to get to a grocery and you're afraid to go out. Give me a list and give me the money, I'll buy the stuff and bring it to you. You don't have to go out, and if you want to go out,” he was advising me. “Don't go out by yourself. Just go as a group out,” you know. That to me was extremely nice. I mean, they's - I mean, especially what happened from people that they claim that are Muslims. What they did to this country. And at the same day, he came and knocked my door. Told me that. That's super nice.

Researcher: Did that surprise you?

Student 12: Uh, I-I don't know it was sur-surprise. Because I know that, I mean, I have this idea about that American are very nice. But I don't know that they are this extreme very nice. And another story, the thing is, happen on Tuesday. On Friday we have our prayer, uh, in the mosque. It happened on Tuesday. And we have our prayer, like you know, Christian, they go on Sunday, we have our, uh, Friday prayer on Friday. So I saw, like, group of Americans surrounding the mosque . . . they're like circling around, you know, the mosque. So I asked, “What was guys doing there?”

They said, “They are – while we are praying inside, they just doing that to protect us against anybody’s who’s trying, you know, to do any crime.”
Where you can find such a thing?

3.1.1.1 Positive Perceptions of America/Americans

Respondents provided a variety of answers regarding the best that America has to offer. Freedom of speech, privacy and the nation’s ample opportunities to prosper topped the list. The more pragmatic participants emphasized America’s many conveniences and services, our nation’s road system and its system of law.

Student 5: Freedom of living and without being asked questions by people. Of course, the government asks all the time; FBI people ask all the time. But, uh, (clears throat) feel like you’re free. Can do whatever you want.

Student 6: Over there (Jordan), you can be a Ph.D. but you still selling, you know, gas downstairs in the convenience store. . . . You have to be more likely powerful or even, you know, with like people who, you know, you know. If I know that the guy who knows other guy, you know, who knows the other guy, you know, who own the company, I can get a job. If I don’t, I’m out. Even though I have a higher standards and higher education. But, on the other hand, here you just fill out your application, suddenly if they like you, they hire you. So that’s one more thing that’s good about here, you know? Easy to, you know, find a job. And then things get done faster here. Over there, to stamp a piece of paper, just to stamp it, it would probably take a month or two, you know? Before you can stamp it. Over here, you just submit it in and two days later they call you back, “Okay, come pick it up. It’s, it’s done.” You know? So that’s one other thing, that people tend to do their job right.

Student 7: Actually, education if you come to me, ‘cause I came for the education here. . . . It is excellent. Because, you know, funding is available. The greatest professors all over the world are here. Greatest schools are here. So, bestest schools, bestest professors, bestest students and funding.

Americans’ friendliness, openness and acceptance, honesty and respect for another’s ethnicity, religion, privacy and differing opinions were mentioned as favorite attributes.

Student 2: What I do like about them (Americans) is their honesty. They're honest people, you know. I really like that because comparison in my country (Iran) you don't get honesty. You know, people, if they don't like something about you, they don't tell you that. They go and talk behind your back, you know. But if you ask their opinion, they're like, "Oh yeah!" You know? "That's great. It's perfect." They're not honest with you. So that was so shocking to me when we came here. People are just so upright, you know. So honest and so frank and that was harsh. Because I'm used to a culture that's so conservative, you know. Everything is behind nice words, you know. You never say something that would bother someone, disturb someone or would hurt someone's feelings. But here, people are just – it, it's, it's a nice thing.

3.1.1.2 Negative Perceptions of America/Americans

The negative traits that repeatedly surfaced among five participants during the interviews were Americans' lack of closeness and family ties. Students perceived the intensely competitive American work ethic as intrusive on family and social life. Mobilization was also seen as a contributor to the lack of family unity. Symptomatic of this disunity is the high rate of divorce in America, as observed by a student who works among a team of divorced-and-looking nurses. Another stated that Americans are "a bit shallow." Possibly expressing his own angst-filled experiences, the student said, "They're like, 'You're so ugly!' People suffers, suffers."

Student 2: What I dislike about them is when they are nice, they tend to be nice, you know, but it can, but they don't form deep relationships. It's easy to have lunch with them, but it's harder, but they tend to stay away from deep relationships that demand more time or more attention. And I don't know if it's because of their schedule or lifestyle that they have or if it's something personal . . . It's as if everyone wants to stay within their own family, you know, their own familiar environment.

Student 6: The only thing I don't like is the way their social male and female together. Uh, divorce – high rate divorce. Uh, you know, I've been watching all these, you know, T.V. series, T.V. shows, you know, and several are not happy, um, couples, and, and, they cheat on each other. And this is one main thing I really wish if I can correct in this country. But

I think there's no way around it, you know? She has her own way, he has his own way; everybody tries to play around. So that's not – that's one of the things I really hate. . . . I work in a hospital . . . there is 7 out of, you know, 10 nurses are divorced, you know? And they're sitting over there looking for another, you know, husband. And that's just pretty much sad, you know? I mean, you'd sit with them, talk with them, and they'd tell you their story and then you feel they're innocent. You talk to their husband, their husband look like he's innocent, as well. So you don't know whose fault it is. That's the one thing I really hate, you know. To see those people suffering, you know.

Two students critiqued Americans' international naiveté. America's foreign policy – manifested by the war in Iraq – was another topic of condemnation. Racism was also discussed.

Student 4: They don't know what's going on outside this country. Most of them don't. And it's not their fault. It's the way the media is. But, uh, it's not something, like, I hate about them. It's something that, I, I, in a way, I kinda feel sad, you know? That, you know, 'cause you're talking to me right now? I live in the states; you ask me if I like Americans, I have no problem, I like Americans. You ask somebody who's in Iraq if he likes Americans, he's probably going to say, "No, I don't like Americans." Even though he's really not talking about Amer – he's talking about the foreign policy. So, yeah, probably that's one thing, you know, public awareness about, you know, uh, foreign policy and foreign affairs is definitely something that needs to be for the common person.

Student 5: It's either a person is very smart, very smart and very clever, or a person is super stupid. Okay, so if you, sometimes you see someone who really understands your situation as an Arab or a Muslim in the states, and other who does not, treats you as a terrorist. And, sometimes, I think people have in general a problem in geography. Uh, sometimes they ask, "Where you come from?" I say, "From Jordan." And they say, "Is this in Afghanistan?" So everything that they connect every Muslim Afghanistan or to Iraq, which is not right. And there are, I mean, the majority are clever people who would understand and try not to offend or hurt your feelings. But this is, this 25 percent I don't really like. People who don't know anything. It could be because of their education. It could be because of their religion. It could be for any reason. But they don't really understand that we are all humans and we should live in peace.

Student 12: What I hate about America, they divide people. They say, "He's African-American, he's Latin." We're all American or not? And now they think; I mean, I'm-I'm seeing thing from outside, I see like this reverse racism happening now. Black people make fun of white people; white people can't make fun from black people. Why? I hate that! Once, I was-I was-I was listening to this sporting news. And there-there-there's a basketball, uh, basketball player. He says "We beat them because we are black and they're white. They don't know how to play." I was thinking, "Oh my God!" What if the opposite happened? What if the white player said that was it. There would be riot! There would be, you know, people stealing from stores and, you know, breaking windows. So this what I hate about America. They divide people. No! I'm American. The first Latin-American to win, uh-uh, Olympic medal. So what does Latin-American mean? Is it that he's American or not? Either he's American or he's, you know, Latin. Or, Hispanic-American -- Latin-American means South America. So, I mean, to me, back home you're Kuwaiti or not. Everywhere, you're either from this country or not . . . the new emir -- his mother, she's black. He's the first emir -- black emir. But they never say that he's the first black emir to rule the country.

3.1.2 Perceptions of National Leaders/Opinion Leaders

3.1.2.1 Home Nation's Leader

Respondents were generally positive about their nation's leaders. Those who reside in Saudi Arabia while citizens of other nations, however, were mostly critical of the Al-Saud family. The three Pakistani students gave Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf accolades. He was viewed as a military hero who's trying to both extinguish rampant, long-term governmental corruption and prevent terrorism from taking root within the nation's borders.

Student 8: the Pakistani political leader (Pervez Musharraf) I respect greatly. I mean, after 50 years of corrupt democracy over there, it's been terrible. I mean, having to deal with -- I remember my parents having to deal with government officials every now and then. It was useless. Nothing would get done without a bribe - a big bribe. It would just delay work. Corruption everywhere. And then the military government comes in, the general takes over, and people are finally listening. Things are finally improving where I've been. I've seen a huge change in the past 5,

6 years. Since when the military government took over. I remember, you know, going back there when I was 12 or 13, and seeing how different things are from right now. Because he's modernized, he's trying to modernize the nation. He's trying to keep all the extremist laws out of the country. And, uh, that's just huge.

Among the Jordanian students, King Abdullah II was seen as a leader who lacked the experience of his deceased father, King Hussein. Still, the young king was lauded for his efforts to rule the land-locked, strategically located nation.

3.1.2.2 U.S. President George W. Bush

George W. Bush was viewed with disdain by almost all of the 11 participants, though two students saw him as an upright and moral man and two applauded his domestic policy. To the students, the Iraq war did nothing but stir the Al Qaeda hornet's nest. In their opinion, victory would never occur. Negativity extended to the war on terrorism, though some students applauded America's efforts to stamp out the violence.

Student 2: I think he is a good person. He's a good Christian – Bush. But I don't think he is smartest, uh, when it comes to speaking his opinion. For example, after the 9/11, when he made a comment about the Crusades. You know, that was a very, uh, I think, not suitable comment to make, you know. Because the Crusades would give you – the Crusades is the holy war. And during the Crusades, Christians murdered so many people – both Muslims and Jews. And they did so many horrible, horrible things. You know? And it's a stain on Christianity. And when you make a comment like that, in the mind, in the mind of the rest of the world, that would have the same affect as the word *jihad* would have on Christians. You know, how you get disgusted if someone says, “Oh, let's go on *jihad*.” You know? How would you feel? You know, it's a scary thing.

It's a terrifying thing. So Crusades would have that effect on them. And when the president of the most powerful country in the world would make that statement, that is not the right thing to do, I-I think. You know? But as far as a person, I like him as a person. He has very good values. And I respect that. I respect him as a person.

Student 8: I'm not a big fan of George Bush. If I could vote, I would've voted for Kerry. But, um, I think he's mishandled things pretty badly. Um, it's all right - okay, the whole war in Iraq thing. Um, if they'd just said straight up, "Okay, we want to remove a dictator from power because he's abusing his people." That was bad enough because, you know, who are you to decide what goes on somewhere else? But, it wouldn't have been lying or, you know, um, because this whole, uh, WMD thing. All this is just knocked out the credibility from this government. And now you can't really believe anything they're saying. The thing is, the Democrats are so - they don't have a strong leader anymore. They have pretty much the same policies as the Republicans do. They're not really as, um, left wing as they're supposed to be. Um, uh, there's no really other option. Kerry should have won the last election but he lost it. Bush didn't win, Kerry lost the election. He threw it away - I don't know what he was thinking. . . . He's useless in foreign policy. Uh, I don't see how a guy with a "C" average becomes president; when he has a drunk driving record, as well. You-you can't even get a job, you know, if you have a drunk driving thing on your, um, record. I don't know how he could become president. Personally, I wish Colin Powell would've stood up for election or something because he has credibility. He knows what's going on in the world, you know. So I - he would've made a much better president than Bush would've. And I think he's -- Bush is just influenced by his group of advisors, Karl Rove and all that. And, uh, I don't think he knows what he's doing, really. Not a strong - not a very strong leader.

3.1.2.3 Most Respected Opinion Leader in Respondent's World Region

Students offered a variety of answers to questions regarding the most respected opinion leader. Some mentioned their nation's leaders. Others mentioned family members, friends, professors and religious leaders.

Student 6: I look at my house family here, but I don't look at my father, you know. I mean, he's okay man, you know, he could support us. But that's - I don't look up to him. And, and leadership of the world - I'm not into it, you know. . . . I came, I was 16 and I had to have a host family to stay with them, so I kind of stayed a year then I moved on somewhere else. But, you know, he was always - he still 'til today cares for me. You know, he call me every day but, you know, kind of, two, three times a week; make sure I'm okay. I have to show him my grades at the end of the semester. You have to say, "Oh, okay, great! You did good!" You know? Uh, he gets to find me a job if I needed a job. But he's a really great man, you know. He's, um, Baptist. I've been to church since ever.

And, and, I've been thinking about converting, but that's hard to explain to my parents. But I still attend church and I attend mosque. So, kind of keep up both. . .

Student 8: Previously, I'd say it's probably religious leaders over there, such as the *ulema*. The religious ruling council of Islam. Kind of like our version of the Pope. But elected like a little parliament kind of thing. They passed laws on—not laws but interpretations of religious text. *Fatwas* are one of them, but *fatwas* are more, um, they're not binding, really. They're more like, you know, if you think you're religious enough you can pass a *fatwa*. And it doesn't really bind anyone to do anything. You know the one they had on Salmon Rushdie a while ago? That was stupid. That wasn't even binding on anyone because it didn't make any sense. But they usually stick to strictly religious topics. They have a good balance so they're not as extreme as, um, uh, some people-religious leaders they have over there, . . . The older generation paid more attention to, uh, leaders and figures and stuff. But once you move out to my generation, they don't, they don't really listen or they don't really deal with that kind of stuff. They usually stick to everyday life, like schoolwork, you know, that kind of thing.

3.1.3 Perceptions of Home Nation

Respondents offered mixed diagnoses concerning their own nation's health.

Iran's future was viewed with trepidation. Further, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was seen as “pushed too much by the West because Shaw of Iran would keep the price of oil so high.” Pakistan's future was viewed both optimistically and pessimistically. President Musharraf's strong leadership was seen as good for the formerly corrupt government, but the nation continued to suffer under a burden of economic crises, political protests and the 2005 earthquake.

Student 3: especially after that earthquake in Pakistan, I think they are in really bad shape. But even before earthquake, I feel like there was too much political, like, it feels like watching T.V. and reading news. It feels like there's too much, like, Pakistan is at very instable moment, like, if Musharraf don't control it right, and people could, it could be mass, like, 'cause there are lot of villages. People are trying to rise against him, or like they're protesting against him. And I feel like he's managing it really

well. But it could get worse if he misses one step or he mess up somewhere. But the economy is not so good over there. So it seems like in bad shape in Pakistan. In Saudi, I think it's all right. Everything is always okay over there.

Student 8: Improving greatly (Pakistan). Because of Musharraf. Because of a strong government that isn't as corrupt as the old one. Much better off. They (student's parents) loved it. They thought, you know, "Finally, someone with some backbone and who isn't as two-faced as the other leaders that we have." 'cause over there, usually, political support is usually passed down. You know, if your parents supported this political party, you're going to support this political party. You get thrown into that, you know, rabid activist stuff. And that was over the previous few years. But now the current generation is more thinking for themselves. Like, "Who do I want? Who is better for my benefit?" Not just who I'm told to support. And not-not someone who, uh, this is from my ethnic group, so I'm going to support this guy. It's more about policy now. And now a strong government; there's no more, you know, um, lazy, corrupt officials. There still are but, um, it isn't as bad as it used to be. And the military have had a very good reputation of being trustworthy to the people. Not to the-not to, you know, democratic leader like the governments 'cause the government doesn't trust them. But the military's been very good to the people.

Jordan, too, was viewed as both half-full and half-empty. King Abdullah II was applauded for bringing in new industry. On the other hand, Jordan was perceived to have lost its credibility in the eyes of the world since the 1999 death of King Hussein.

Student 7: Politically we (Jordan) are going, uh, in a good way because we don't have any problems with other neighbors. Uh, and economically, our King Abdullah II, he is bringing all new industry, all new companies. You know that many companies, international companies are opening in Jordan? Actually, I worked in Equant Jordan, which is owned by, uh, France Telecom. I got good salary there. And this is not only for me. For many Jordanians, if they-if we-if we kept a closed country like other countries like Libya, Syria; many companies wouldn't come and open in our country. Not we have many –actually, Jordan ranked this year the first in software solution products.

3.1.4 Perceptions of U.S. Foreign Policy

3.1.4.1 USFP as it Relates to Respondent's World Region

U.S. foreign policy was perceived with overwhelming negativity. The crowning reason for such animosity was the war in Iraq.

Student 5: Everyone has the right to survive. And the United States, as government, is doing what ever it can to do that. And they're the lion and we're (Jordan) a goat. Their policy is not good (clears throat). I mean, it's clear, the policy, everyone knows the policy towards the region. If we didn't have oil, we would never have all these problems with the world. And the policy there is (pause) to protect certain things in that area. Uh, and I-I'm sure that you've heard this, that we don't like the states or the policy of America is to protect Israel and ignore the rest of the area for the sake of that country. That is true; that's how I believe.

Researcher: What would you like to see regarding foreign policy?

Student 5: I would like to see, I would like to see Germany and Japan and – what do you call it – not United Nations, but, uh, what do you call it . . . Security Counsel. Yeah. I want to see Germany and Japan there so we'd get more vetoes and U.S. would not have that 100 percent power. That's- that's the real change I would like to see. Because it . . . when a, when a country in that region benefits – take Israel out – when a country of that region benefits from a, um, decision, there is a U.S. veto – okay? And the rest of the four members can't say anything. Okay? It's a veto. And when it does not concern the countries but it concerns Israel, uh, there is not veto and the other countries do not -- cannot say that veto because their relationships with the states and, uh, you know, sometimes I would say fear of the United States. I would really like to see more countries that would make a change in the region and the U.S. policy there.

Researcher: So you'd like to see a little diluted power regarding the United States?

Student 5: Yes, yes, yes.

3.1.4.2 USFP as it Relates to Respondent's Nation

Students viewed U.S. foreign policy in a mixed light when it concerned their nation. One Jordanian said the policy was good for the king but bad for the people. The

Pakistani respondents, however, viewed United States' efforts with relative optimism, especially when referring to the 2005 earthquake. The Malaysian respondent also felt the U.S. enjoyed a positive relationship with his nation.

Student 5: It is good (pause) for the government (Jordan). The king, it's- it's very good.

Researcher: What about for the people?

Student 5: No, it's not. Because we have thieves in our country, so when the U.S.A., uh, gives any financial support to Jordan, it goes to the King and – cool – follow the king. People do not see any of that. We don't see anything of that support.

Researcher: So If you were blame, if you were to point the finger -- whose fault would it be?

Student 5: It is the U.S.'s fault, for sure.

Researcher: How would you remedy that?

Student 5: I want them to support the country. Let's say I am the U.S. and I want to support Jordan, I would send-I would send, uh, employees from the states to make sure the money is distributed in the right way. Uh, I will not support the country, uh, by giving into the jets or tanks. Because we don't benefit from that as a nation. Um, if I-if the country donates, uh, let's say, \$1 billion for "X" country to build schools, well, I can – instead of sending that cash – I can give them books. Give-send contractors to build these schools. But not hand money to that person or to this government. And U.S.A. knows this fact, okay? And they give them money. And they want that to happen. They want this government to take it or the king or the president to take it to shut his mouth up. So he would shut our mouths up. Okay, so we're not getting anything. Do you, do you get my point?

Researcher: Yes. And you're not really able to speak of these to your king?

Student 5: You can't. You simply can't. You wouldn't be able to tell anyone after what happened to you. Uh, it depends on whoever you are. I mean, we can't, we don't say, we can't speak anything, because if they fire you from your work, you're over. Uh, put you in jail, you're over.

Uh (long pause), make your life miserable in other ways. It's very simple. You can't say anything. You can't say anything. So we will – I don't know -- maybe. Or coming generation may change something; we don't know.

Student 9: Malaysia-U.S. have very good relationship, as far as I know. And, uh, Southeast Asia -- other countries like Indonesia -- they-they do have Indonesia because after economy crisis, a lot of countries are forced to take loan from, uh -- what do you call that -- the International Bank?

Researcher: World Bank.

Student 9: World Bank. The deal is when they are that to the World Bank they are forced to literally sell their country. What I mean by that is all the top management would be not on the country – not running the country but all the economy top corporations will be taken over by people send by the World Bank. And uh, most of them are foreigners. So, literally, it's another way of people invade the country by economy. They conquer the economy and, uh, it's kind a – they made the condition how the economy should run and a lot of things. So-so that's-that's one thing that Mahathir avoided. He-he didn't take any loan from any other place.

Researcher: So he wouldn't have to answer to another power?

Student 9: Yeah. So what he did, he just, uh, merge a lot of big corporations (into) one corporation so they're more powerful. I mean, there more resource. I mean, he-he made a lot of changes. Like there's a, like an example, Citi Bank is a very big company. Citi Banks' annual revenue is equal to Malaysia's annual revenue. So when Citi Bank come to Malaysia, and it's kind of, uh, the corporation's revenue is equal to the country's revenue. So, I mean, there a lot of power to control the country. When Citi Bank came and a lot of other companies, banks form Malaysia. So all they did is just merge a lot of big banks together so they become bigger banks and more stable. He did a lot of things and, uh, that-that's on the Malaysia part. But, uh, I'll-I'll say that, uh, U.S. is helping Southeast Asia. They-they help when Cambodia, Philippine have very good relationship with U.S. . . . because when it's come for the Asian summit, uh, a lot of Philippine nation followed U.S. decision.

3.1.4.3 USFP and Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

Respondents overwhelmingly felt U.S. foreign policy was biased and one-sided in favor of the Israelis. None of them sided with the Israelis, though a few attempted to see both sides. Some participants saw the conflict as the core reason for Islamic terrorism and other acts of violence -- if the U.S. would become more balanced in its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, opined some students, much of the world's terrorism would disappear

Student 6: It'll never resolve, and, um, from, from a religious perspective, what we believed when we were a kid, you know. The day of judgment's gonna come. Like I said, this is when I was a child, that's what I, you know, everybody got me to believe -- even my instructors. Um, that there will be a big war between Islam nation and other nations, you know, and, uh, day of judgment _____. And it's gonna come and end in Iraq -- I-I'm sorry -- in Israel area. So -- and that's when Jewish will be defeated. Other than that, there is no way they can be defeated. Suicide bombing -- they're not doing anything.

Student 12: And, unfortunately, also the same thing about the administration -- they ignore 23 Arab countries. And I'm not talking about Muslim countries. And they only care about small country about size of Israel. Whatever Israel do is fine, but for another Arab country would do, that's prohibited. Clear example is, uh, uh, the nuclear weapons Israeli have since the '70s. But when Egypt started to develop, "No, you're not allowed to do that." Now, Iran trying to do that, "No, you're not allowed to do that." Before Iraq we're fight, "No, Middle East should be clean without any nuclear weapon." Then why Israelis always exception? So that's what make people feel mad.

3.1.4.4 U.S.-Led Efforts to Fight Terrorism

U.S.-led terrorism efforts were perceived, for the most part, in a negative light. Some of the students perceived America as losing the war on terrorism. One viewed the U.S.-led efforts with a fatalistic mindset (what good is it going to do?) Others perceived the war on terrorism as nothing more than a catalyst for Al Qaeda. Three of the students

viewed the U.S.-led efforts somewhat positively, however. As a whole, respondents' answers implied a belief that efforts to combat terrorism were founded upon America's imperialistic aspirations to control oil and gain power in the Middle East.

Student 3: I don't U.S. is doing right thing. But I think, like, it's a good idea to, I mean, but I don't think the way US is going about fighting terrorism is right way to do it; by going there and killing more people you going to create more terrorists. What I really think U.S. should have done is more like make its image better. Not act like a bully. U.S. foreign policy seem like a policy, like, okay, you got to do it this way or you're out. Like, for example, many, many, many treaties like nuclear and all those treaties where U.S. tell other nations to sign but he's not signing himself. So on war on terrorism, I think it's good thing. Especially in Pakistan, removing all those fundamentalist schools and those things is a good idea. Which is making Pakistan more moderate and T.V. shows are getting better (laugh).

Student 8: Um, I think that it's a very difficult war. Uh, I don't see a short-term solution to this. Wh-what they -- they made mistakes by going into Iraq, because they just lost most of the good will that they generated before by, um, invading Iraq and, you know, most of the world think they did it just for the oil. And they use whatever excuses they want. And, uh. . . .

Researcher: Most of the world being, are you talking about . . . ?

Student 8: Arab world and probably some of the European countries, as well. So now people, especially in Muslim countries, they're like, "Okay, all they want is to take over. Take what we have." So that's just going to push them further away from understanding. And that's just a cycle, you know? You're going to have disaffected youth here who hate the states for whatever reason. They come over here, suicide bombers. And the Americans retaliate by attacking their base countries, like Iraq, who had nothing, which had nothing to do with the terrorism aspect at all! They were not involved with Al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein have always hated each other since they had tried to work together before, and they hated each other. So Saddam had nothing to do with the war on terror. He was a terrible leader. He was cruel. But once you see some foreign country attacking one of your Muslim brotherhood countries, you don't care what the reason is. If you think that he's doing it for oil, you're going to support Saddam no matter what, no matter how bad you think he is. Because he's one of your own people. And you just see an imperialist

ideal from the states. And when you have, you know, people blindly rallying to someone like that, you're going to have the same type all over again. "They're taking over Iraq and taking our people, so we're going to go back and get them again." So I don't think this is the best option. It's just a reason to use more violence.

3.1.4.5 U.S.-Led War in Iraq

Answers were mixed regarding the Iraq war. Though the majority of the students viewed the war with derision, two supported the war and two spun positive statements into their otherwise negative critique. Most highlighted the killing of Iraqi innocents as the cause of their disenchantment. One student felt President Bush had a personal vendetta against Saddam Hussein; another admitted thinking the president a liar over Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Of the two students who supported the war, one stated, "Nobody knows what Saddam did for the people there. Even people say that America went to Iraq for liberation and for the oil. I would say the oil before America came to Iraq was only for Saddam; it was not for Iraqis."

Student 3: I always felt like Bush had personal – he was personally against Saddam. Not really what this country would want. Personal egos. . .

Researcher: Because of what?

Student 3: Uh, why . . . 'cause I was never convinced when he was making a case for war. I was never, I mean, anyone, you would search around for other news or anyone who read news. I feel like would realize it's not a strong case like, pictures they were showing or anything that's actually. There was this joke one of my friend told me. It's really funny. They think what happened Bush was late at night surfing Internet when a pop-up came over and showed a picture of Saddam with WMD. So he call up CIA and say, "Look, Internet has found WMDs in Iraq. Let's go with war!" (laugh) So, I just never felt he had a good case against the war in Iraq. So. . .

Student 6: I'm completely against that Iraq War thing, you know. Because we, we destroyed people, you know. Um, not only Iraqi nation; American nation. You know, what's the fault of a 23-year-old kid to go over there and die, you know. He has family over here, you know? And that's, that's not, I mean, you can see some Americans against same idea as well, you know. I guess I thought from the first place I was against it, you know. Then later on, I changed my mind. I was like, I guess it's okay, you know? And then now, I'm like, "Okay, well, everything is done." We got, you know, Saddam. Why can't we just go back, you know? Why are we still there, you know? I don't know what they're looking for. I mean, what, what the future plans are.

Student 8: I think it's a positive step. Um, I'm sure if they're ready for democracy, but just the fact that they're trying to do it is a big step. Depending on how secure the region becomes and how quickly the U.S. pulls out, that's going to leave a big impression on the Arab countries that surround it. If Iraq becomes a functioning, safe democracy with a half-decent economy and the people are satisfied there, it's going to be huge effect on the people around it. They're going to think, "Okay, what they did wasn't so bad after all." So it's like a testing ground. . . . But if it falls apart again, or if the Americans stay there for longer than people think they should, you know, longer than two-three years, that's when things are going to be really bad. And, uh, people are just going to be like, "Yeah, they're just another Britain again, in the modern century, you know, taking over what they want from us." . . . And another thing is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And until people over there see a more even-handed approach, like the, uh, the Arabs' respect -- which-which European country is it they respect their opinion? They respect the United Nations' opinion because, surprisingly, seem pretty even-handed dealing with the Israelis and Palestinians. Except for when U.S. vetoes any anti-Israeli stuff in the Security Council. Apart from that, they think it's very level, and they like, um, I think Britain or France's viewpoints on things and the more even-handed support they're giving. So until the U.S., um, goes through, you know, maybe softens their stance on the Palestinians, gives less support to the Israelis. Makes the Israelis feel more secure, but does not let them push the Palestinians around so much. If the people in the Arab countries see that, that's when you'll see an improvement in the war on terrorism, because when you see something happening for the better that the Americans are doing, you're not going to hate them anymore, you're not going to want to. Because the main reason people hate them over there is because they blindly support Israel and crushing our Palestinian brothers. That's the first thing that they teach you, you know, when you're young over there and the religious leaders talk about how bad America is. Because, you know, they're oppressing our Muslim brothers.

Researcher: Is this what they taught you as a little boy?

Student 8: Well, not-not me as such. But I've heard it all the time from, you know, religious leaders. I'm like, "What are you talking about?" You know. I've heard that all the time. You go to mosques in Pakistan and they-they tell you that, too, you know. "They're crushing our Muslim brothers over there. We need to support them; we need to rally behind them." Until, you know, until it's more even-handed, until the Palestinians have their own country and they're safe and the Israelis are safe, I don't know how many decades that's going to take. But until then, you're not going to see a big improvement. Because when you-when you take-when you take that and you sort that out, you're going to find a lot of the terrorist activities are going to drop. Because when you don't have a reason to be angry at anyone anymore, you can't do it. There's no-there's no justification for blowing them up anymore.

3.1.5 Perceptions of Suicide Bombing and Other Forms of Violence

Suicide bombing and other forms of violence were universally viewed with disdain when the target was innocent civilians. Students also maligned Osama bin Laden and considered him the catalyst for their post-9/11 hassles. Two students, on the other hand, viewed suicide bombing as a painted-in-the-corner option when fighting against "some government or some military" that are fighting against them.

Student 5: If I were you, I would take the word "Islam" from that question. I would take the word Islam from that question because it has nothing to do with Islam. Uh, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, he told people when they go in war not to kill women, not to cut tree, not to kill children. Those who do the suicide bombing, doing – I mean, they're

killing innocent people. So it's not a way fighting. I mean, I usually say to myself is, uh, do you, do you believe, as a person, that you are going to heaven?

Researcher: Me, personally? Through Jesus Christ.

Student 5: Okay, so if-if-if I tell you if you throw yourself from this mountain or building, you're going to go to heaven.

Researcher: Um, no (laugh).

Student 5: No, no, no. Let's say, let's say, let's say that it's true. That if you do that, if you jump from there, you go to heaven. Okay, you would jump. But why wouldn't I, myself, the one who told you that, jump myself if I wanted to go to heaven? And Osama bin Laden is doing the same. I mean he's asking people to go bomb, uh, you know (laugh), explode themselves because is an easy way to heaven. Why don't you do it yourself? Okay. So it's not really about Islam. It's not about going to heaven. I think they're going all to hell because they killed a lot of innocent people. The last two attempts were in Amman; they killed like 60 people. And the person who encourages people to do that, didn't do that himself. So it's not a way of fighting, it's not Islam, is terrorism. It's just angry minds that wants to express their delight by watching other people die. . . .

3.1.6 Perceptions of Democracy

3.1.6.1 Democratization of Predominantly Muslim Nations

Every student supported the democratization of predominantly Muslim nations; only one – Student 8 – offered a qualified answer (it depends on the culture). Views were mixed when discussing the proper role of religion and state; some espoused America's secular model, while others leaned toward Muhammad's preferred religion (Islam) coupled with state.

Student 4: Yeah, I'd say that's a very good move in the right direction, if it's done the right way.

Researcher: What's the right way?

Student 4: Don't have influence, you know? Don't be influenced by money, you know. My religion, uh, when you go to history and you read history books, it's always been the person who has been elected by consensus to be the leader. Has been a very reluctant. These are people who are pious; they are humble. They do this because they feel like they need to. But they don't necessarily want to do it. Think about even the prophets. Jesus – I'm going to call him a prophet. Moses and Muhammad – all these prophets. One way or another, they had to fulfill a message.

But none of them wanted to. None of them. Look where it took Jesus. Look where it took Moses. Look where it took Muhammad. They all had their end because of this message. But they knew they had to do it. Same thing with a leader -- why should it be any different? I mean, why should I elect this guy just because he-he spent more money on his campaign? And-and everybody in my neighborhood has these signs on their lawns. Why? You know, if I was gonna go out there and make like a American -- I mean wanted to elect somebody like as the president. Let's say it's the George Bush and -- who was the last . . .?

Researcher: Kerry.

Student 4: Kerry. I would make my decision based on what kind of character this is, you know. Definitely I'd look at the base; I'd look at political viewpoints and all that, you know. But somehow something tells me there's other things that go on behind the scenes we don't know about. You know? That's just my opinion. My humble opinion.

Researcher: . . . so you do support democratization. Um, do you think it's even possible? Especially under Qur'anic law?

Student 4: Yeah! Qur'anic law is the one that says you have to have consensus -- you have to have democracy.

Researcher: Okay. What about separation of religion and state? Do you think that's possible?

Student 4: Uh, I wouldn't know very much about that subject, but I wouldn't be surprised to know if I did go in there and ask questions and read the Qur'an and books about it, there is something about the need for separation of church and state.

Researcher: Actually, I think Muhammad -- from the bio I read on Muhammad -- that he personally felt you have to have -- the two cannot be separated.

Student 4: Again, I don't know for sure. But, uh-uh, it all depends on how you look at it, I think. Here they say separation of church and state, but they had the Ten Commandments for awhile in Washington. And you watch *CSPAN* and you hear every now and then some quotes out of the Bible. And this and that, you know. And, uh, separation of church and state, it might be a good thing; it might be a bad thing. I don't know. But democra-democratization over there -- definitively a good thing. But only if it's done in the right way.

3.1.6.2 U.S. Government Support of Democracy in Respondent's Home Nation

Eight students believed the United States would favor democracy in their country. One student replied that it's basically "none of our (America's) business." Two – both Pakistanis – opposed, arguing that Musharraf is an important ally of the U.S. As one of the Pakistani students replied, "there's always a fear of religious extremists getting more seats in parliament and maybe form a power, and they wouldn't want that."

Student 2: I think they would favor democracy. I think that's what they're pushing right now for. I think, uh, the U.S. is trying to work with the Iranian students and Iranian, um, movements. Um, to support them. . . . I think that's a very good approach. I don't like the direct involvement. But I like that they're supporting people. . . . You can oppress people to a certain point. But only to a point, you know? After that, people get to a point that they won't take it anymore. And they don't care if they get killed or whatever. And then a small pocket pop up, you know. And while they are small pockets, they are easy to oppress, you know? And then it goes and it pops up somewhere else. And then it becomes more organized. And then more people get involved and it can't be, you know, denied. So we'll see. They just have to want it, you know?

Student 11: No, it favors actually. I think Jordan -- not because it's my own country, but, uh, maybe compared to other countries in the region -- it is one of the best countries in this, uh, regard, I think. Uh, I have been in the ministry for some time and I have been in contact from other ministries and I have been in the university for some time as a T.A. and as a student at sometimes and other, uh, capabilities actually. I can feel that people like this and, uh, on the personal level, let's say there are certain people who are trying to do this. But we still have this on a very small perspective. We need it to be on the national level -- to the whole country, I think. So they are moving forward though slowly, but it is much better than we have in other countries in the region. We still have the dictatorship, unfortunately. Though they are saying they are democratic, but actually they are not.

3.1.7 Perceptions of Media

3.1.7.1 Home Nation Media

Since the age of satellite, students and their families' media tastes have grown more sophisticated. The most oft-mentioned international news media included *Al Jazeera*, *BBC* and *CNN*. Interestingly, *Al Jazeera* was perceived by many students to be “holistic” in its news coverage, while *CNN* was seen as somewhat slanted and one-sided. The *BBC* was also viewed as a highly viable news source because of its tendency to criticize the U.S.-led war in Iraq, not to mention America and Britain's actions in the conflict.

Student 3: Younger generation in Pakistan who are more open towards American-American ideas and more like Americans, they-they kind of feel that the older generation, which is running all those T.V. stations, they are anti-, or they're anti, but they're not anti . . . or maybe they're anti-U.S. policies and stuff. So I saw something on T.V., which is not in favor of Pakistan – or not in favor of U.S. – I feel like must be bias. So I was actually, kind of, whenever they say something good, I go, “Finally.”

Student 8: T.V. over there was completely useless. Um, the local T.V. and propaganda nationalists – it's stupid. But, um, used to get *BBC*, as well. So, there's *BBC* I used to watch a lot.

Student 9: Yeah, *BBC* give some really good news. Because I can see difference with Iraq War. If I watch *CNN*, *CNN* will only talk what U.S. military have done. How many place they bombed and how many U.S. soldiers and what the-the-the, um, what is their general for U.S. team at that time?

Researcher: Tommy Frank.

Student 9: Yeah, Tommy, uh, Tommy Fr-, what he said. I mean, they have, like conference, right?

Researcher: Um hum.

Student 9: And all of that stuff. But when-when I change to my national news, they will showing, uh, about people was suffering, how many place they have bombed, and how many people – civilians have died. They will give the full age of childrens who injured or who lost their hand or who lost their leg. And Malaysia took some commitment to adopt a lot of children who really ____ because of the war. The-the government adopt the children, they-they just give medicine and, uh, give them, like, sponsor them to study and a lot of things.

Researcher: And you said that was Malaysia's national media that was portraying that -- taking it from the Iraqi side?

Student 9: No, I won't say that Iraqis – they-they-they showing the real picture; what is happening. There's a war is happening. They will list what place is bombed and everything, but they also will show what really happening there. How-how people are really feeling about the war. Maybe some of the two or three people there. Or even they, I mean, of course, they will show all the ____ of all the leaders give speech from U.S. point of view. . . . But they also, I mean, they ____ everything. They show all the picture - everything. You can find that in BBC. If you watch BBC, even BBC they will show that. . . . The Iraq War. I mean, they-they-they showed even how the people are suffering. I mean, they don't- they don't, uh, in Iraqi side, but they're showing how the people are suffering. That's what I saw. Even right now I watch *CNN*, I can feel that it's-it's too much one-sided sometimes. So-so pretty much, I don't really listen to news here.

3.1.7.2 American Media

Five students view *CNN* broadcast or online news, though the information is mostly perceived as slanted. *BBC's* broadcast and online sources were also favorites among the students. One student – who admitted considering conversion from Islam to the Christian faith – listed *Fox News*, *KXAS-Channel 5* and *WFAA-Channel 8* as favorite news sources. One student said Lebanese owned-and-operated *Future TV* was a new favorite. Two respondents didn't watch T.V.; news sources included *Google.com* and *MSNBC.com*. Two respondents got most of their information from their country's online

newspapers: Jordan's *Al Ra'i* (the Opinion) and *Ad-Dustour* (the Constitution); and Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*.

Student 5: Online, sometimes, and T.V. And nowadays I'm listening to *Future T.V.* Plus, of course, the American media. I mean, if I want to know the truth, I would just reverse it. . . . I mean, they make nothing a big story. Something that little, they make it (chew).

Researcher: You're talking about the American media?

Student 5: Yeah. The media here.

Researcher: You don't think *Al Jazeera* or the Jordanian media is like that?

Student 5: I think *Al Jazeera* is a, is-is like that. Yeah, I mean, it's-it says that it's independent. But it's false, the government, okay. So *Al Jazeera* would go more to the - let's say, uh, the war in Iraq. They would go more to how desperate people - how, uh, U.S. forces are destroying people. And here, we're doing nothing! So it's -- no, you're doing something, but it's not as bad as that.

Student 6: I came here, uh, with the point of studying. Uh, the way they (respondent's parents) taught us there, don't get involved with Americans much, and don't get involved with politics much. You're international, you have nothing to do there, . . . stay away from everything, get education and get back here. . . . Uh, they're trying to protect us and I understand. But you cannot prevent yourself from listening to what's going on around you -- watching T.V. and understanding stuff.

3.1.7.3 Home Nation Media's Influence on Perceptions of America

Patterns emerged regarding whether or not the home nation's media depicted the United States in a positive light, depending on foreign relations between the two nations.

Student 5: It depends on our relationship with the United States. In 1991, okay, yeah, 199-1990 since Saddam occupied Kuwait until, I think, 1995 – U.S. was bad. And then things immediately change.

Researcher: On the news?

Student 5: Yeah! . . .because the country at that time took the side of Iraq. For five years. And I believe this is what U.S.A. wanted the king to do at that time. Go to that site -- we want people to leave the country through your country. Or, you know, we don't people to die this fast. Anyway, so we, we're, uh, with Iraq and the news, I mean, it was with . . . Iraqis fighting and the country's safe; well, you know, we took their side. People, we were ___ with Iraq. Emotionally, we were there with them. And this image changes. And now the government has problems with Iraq -- good relationships with, uh, the United States. So that we have the opposite image.

Student 8 was a Pakistani who lived in Saudi Arabia and attended an international school. Early on, he noticed the contrasting “realities” between the nation’s news and his first-hand experiences with Americans and other westerners. Student 12, too, was jarred by what he heard on his nation’s news and what he found once arriving in America. He has tried, with difficulty, to convince people back home that Americans are not all the same.

Student 8: Well, I'd read the news and, you know, watch T.V. and everything over there – the local stuff. And then I'd go to school. And what I'd see at school and what I'd see on the news was completely different. Like, the whole perception they give you is kind of negative, you know. Uh, and newspapers -- the corrupt west and all that stuff. And I'd go to school, and people are -- *fine*. So it's very disconcerting. It's like, “Well, what's real?” You know, what they're telling me and what they're feeding me doesn't seem to make any sense. It doesn't seem to match up with what I'm seeing at school.

Student 12: I think the problem of the-of the media, uh, in our country is-is-is it does not differentiate between the American people and the American – you know – administration. Uh, they need to work harder on that. They should show that, you know, not all American, you know, have the same views as their administration. They-they-they need to stress that. Because back home, I had hard time to convince people, “No, not all American are like George Bush.”

3.1.7.4 American Media's Influence on Perceptions of the U.S.

Answers were again mixed when asked how American media had contributed to respondents' perceptions. Most students were surprised by a more conservative America than the one depicted by "bad" Hollywood. Further – much like Americans' perceptions of "suicide bombings on every corner in the Middle East" -- students were pleasantly surprised to see a smaller footprint of violence than portrayed over regional, national and international media back home.

On the flip side, one student described America as "the Everest – the top." Another looked to America as the beacon of the world. Almost in spite of themselves, the participants perceived the United States as a true "land of opportunity." Education, profession, religion, the freedom to criticize one's own government, the freedom to be *nice* – students were in awe over the greatness of this land.

Student 2: Oh, that was horrible. When I was growing up, Michael Jackson was the all-time favorite (laugh). . . . He would dance with his songs. But for example, people liked -- they listened to Madonna at that time. . . . It was good to us – teenagers. But it was not good for our parents. They would try to keep us away because (the entertainers) were evil – they were naked and all different kinds of stuff, you know. So in culture that is so conservative and so, uh, traditional, in their views of family, relationships. What you can and can't do on T.V., you know. It would be harsh. So you would think the U.S. is an immoral country because they would allow those things to happen.

Student 6: Uh, it helps you to understand the world more. And this is the age of the teenager and the 20th age or, yeah, this is the age where-where the people mostly gain what they need to gain during this age. So whatever you hear, you hear outside and pretty much you're like a magnet and you can learn from it. Okay, this has happened, let's learn from it.

Um-um, it helps a lot. And, it helps me when I went this previous summer -- I went back home. Is I had nothing to do with the mentality of people there – even my parents. I mean, I was completely different. Completely

changed. My father was calling me, “The American has his different opinion over something, something, something.” The American has a different opinion. ‘cause I’d been here for five years before I went back home. But, of course my Mom had nothing to say. She’s always the weak link and, okay. But, uh, yeah, I-I didn’t have anything to do with-with people there, you know. So the way, I feel that I was brought up here. Because I learn, the most experience I learn in my life is here. So whenever I’m around here, I don’t know if it’s going to work there or not. See, I’m going to have a hard time to survive the first 1-2 years there, if I go back. Even though I was born there. See, that’s one of the media that fix me here that I cannot survive in my country anymore.

Student 7: Yeah. I was one of the fans of *Friends*.

3.1.7.5 American Media’s Portrayal of Respondent’s Region of the World

Again, students were mixed over the American media’s job rating when portraying their own nations and regions. Seven students felt that America had done a poor job relaying the realities of both their country and their countrymen. Others felt the media had done their job well and – in the case of the Pakistan tsunami – over and above the call of duty.

Student 6: It’s normal, now, to me. Whatever they say over the news or whatever they think is, for me now, after few years, y-you kind of start to think, “Okay, why they think this way?” So many Americans would say, “Oh, I know that you hate us.” Who told you that? Did I tell you that? * (laughter) So that’s your point of view. But I don’t hate you. There’s nothing wrong with you. So that’s one of the points that you feel, okay? This nation would say about those people over-over, you know, like, you know, Americans think that the Arab nation totally weird. Or hateful or anything. Fine. Okay, that’s what’s your opinion and probably their opinion over there, they think the other way around. My opinion is different. My opinion, okay. Why ____ people hate each other. That’s the way I think about it. Uh, that’s from- I think that -- By the way, everything I say about political, that’s what I think. Like I said, I don’t watch much news so I don’t know, that’s for the headaches I see. Yeah. Um, yeah, that’s-that’s pretty much it. I don’t think they really mess up everything. But I know sometimes they’d say stuff over T.V. and I can’t recall what they said. But other Muslims on the other side of the world, they won’t like it when they hear it. Like when they always call Muslims,

“They’re terrorists, they’re terrorists, they’re terrorists.” Okay, they’re terrorists because of 9/11. Fine -- what else?” Uh, so that’s, you know, they’re trying, and-and we have also a phrase in the Qur’an says, that the Jewish and the Christian, they won’t keep quiet unless they destroy Islam.

3.2 Changed Perceptions of America/Americans

Most students said their perceptions had improved regarding Americans since coming to the United States. Americans were seen as more conservative, kinder and more honest than portrayed by their nation's media. Hollywood, too, was deemed as a propagated carrier of America's negative image. Especially important discoveries entailed two students, mentioned above, who reenacted their amazement at Americans' generosity and "goodness" immediately following September 11th.

America's government and foreign policy, however, were criticized soundly by the respondents. Several students offered their negative post-9/11 experiences with federal authorities, including airport security and the FBI. Student 10 offered an appropriate comment that may also reflect his feelings for government, as a whole. "People are good; politics is evil."

Student 2: When you live in Iran, what you get through the media would be the news of the either murders or, you know, all the bad things that you get in the media but other countries here. Or you would get the cultural things that you get through media like, um, especially for the younger generations through MTV and all that, and those are not a good representative of, uh, of the U.S. You get perceptions that U.S. is an immoral country, a dangerous country, and with people that are not caring. That's what you get through the media.

Student 3: After 9/11 – that's the best thing about Americans. You know, if 9/11 happens in my country, our people will go crazy. And they will be like, "Are you Muslim?" "No." . . . anyone who does not look Pakistani, they would just go on – I think they would just kill them, kill them on the spot. But over here, when I was in New York, it was totally different. Mostly I was afraid of rednecks 'cause that's what I keep reading about. Being rude and stuff. But, it was funny 'cause I'm walking down the street, like, I actually at that time, I was going to school. People say,

“Dude.” Like, they kind of knew me. I was in that town for one-and-a-half years. They’re like, “Man, anything happens, let me know. Don’t let no one treat you wrong.” They are like, “And if you need a ride, let me know. If you need food.” Everyone was saying that; that’s so amazing! Even the rednecks, like, I’m in this mall and I know these rednecks standing behind, they are, “Brother, you all right? No one is bothering you, right?” They are all trying to encourage me and making sure like I’m all right. . . . I was telling this to my mother and everything. I’m like, “Look at this – what our people think of Americans.” Like, American people are really, really, like, I was really amazed. I was like, I thought there might little bit of, single thing. Everyone was so – I don’t know, it just change. It, it did change me a lot. Like I was, I have, I used to be where think my people, brown people, are the ones who going to protect. But now I don’t look at color or anything. I’m just amazed like at how people can be so good at heart.

Student 12: If you ask me the question if-if-if the perspective change after 9/11, yes it changed. . . . See, like now, I mean, I haven’t gone home for almost two years. Not because I don’t have the money to go back or I don’t have Visa. I have Visa; I have the money. But the last time I went there, the way they treated me in the airport is so bad. I mean, they didn’t consider that I’m coming here as a Ph.D. student. I’ve been here for six years. Before that, everything is fine – I-I don’t even a ticket for parking ticket or something like that. They treated you very bad. You cannot say anything. . . . I bring-brought some coffee with me. Coffee bar. They were like, you know, shooting the bag like this with a knife when they searching bags. . . . I mean, it’s happened to me two times. Only two times I went back after 9/11. I decided I would no longer go back. Because, you know, you have dignity, I mean, you know? And nobody has the right to, you know, take that from you.

3.3 Perceptions Stemming from Propaganda

Evidence of propaganda surfaced throughout the interviews. Americans, U.S. foreign policy, the Bush administration, Western imperialism, Israel, the war in Iraq – all were negative stereotypes based on both truth and rhetoric.

Students were almost unanimous in believing both the U.S. media and their home nation’s journalists contributed to faulty perceptions of Americans, the United States,

their own nation and region. Below are culled excerpts highlighting evidence of propaganda's conceptual and "master" symbols.

3.3.1 Israel

Since its creation in 1948, Israel and its Jewish inhabitants have been a major focus of the modern Arab world. As Student 2 points out below, this instruction begins at an early age. Jews, as a whole, are seen as a political and economic powerhouse that helps drive U.S. foreign policy, the economy and even the Hollywood entertainment industry.

Student 2: When you start reading about it since you were a child, it just changes you. For example, when, uh, in the second grade, in the Farsi literature book. It's like the English book they have here at school. And one of the lessons is about Palestinian refugees. And it's told from the mouth of a Palestinian child. And that piece is just so powerful, it makes you cry. . . . It talks about this little child, you know. It talks about how he lost his home, how he lost his family, you know. That he lives in a refugee camp. . . . And how he wishes, you know, that he could go back home. You know? And when you are raised reading all those things. Seeing all those things. People are getting killed, you know? You, you will have a different understanding of what it means to be war. What it means to be ethical. Because it's felt that you are defending those people are oppressed. Because you feel that they're oppressed. . . . Because if you go anywhere else in the world, Christians don't like Jews. And even in the Crusades, during the Crusades, Crusaders were against Muslims to begin with. But the first time that it started, they went right ahead and cleared all the Jews from Germany. . . . Except here. Because of the power that they have; the financial power that they have. Because right now they are the power behind the political lobbies, they are the power behind T.V. stations.

Researcher: Why do you think that? Where do you get that?

Student 2: I think -- I don't know where I read that. I'm not positive on that but I think. Even, um, I listen to 94.9 FM -- a Christian station. I think -- I'm not positive but I think that belongs to a Jew, too.

Researcher: Do you think there's a large population of Jews here?

Student 2: No. But there is a large population. I mean, not compared to Christians. But this small group of them have a lot of power – have a lot of money. . . . That’s because they’ve been persecuted for so long. They feel that they have to save money. So they’re more about saving money and, you know, controlling, you know. I think, I think that here they try to control their environment.

Researcher: So you think the power protects them from persecution?

Student 2: In most of the cultures and the countries they are considered dirty. In most of Europe and in the Middle East, they’re called “dirty Jews.” Not dirty as being personal dirty, but because of the way they conduct their businesses -- they’re very shrewd. They are very smart in business -- very smart. So they are not liked by the rest of the community. It’s hard because most of them are just people like us. They live their lives and they don’t have much to do with religion, anyway, you know.

Student 4: Anybody can see that the U.S. is backing Israel. It’s pretty obvious.

Researcher: Do you have an opinion as to why?

Student 4: Why? Probably money. There’s a lot of funding, a lot of powerful people that have a lot of sentimental feelings towards the Israeli people and the Israeli state. And, uh, I don’t know, it’s like, uh, that’s probably why there’s a lot of backing for, for Israel. And, uh, as you can imagine, it doesn’t really improve any image with any -- ‘cause the Israeli/Palestinian situation, if that’s solved, everything else in the region is solved. I’ll tell you that right now. But that’s not going to be solved anytime soon. Because of the way it’s going. . . .

Researcher: What, in your opinion, would solve it?

Student 4: Some kind of states -- Democratic states -- where they could live together. That’s not gonna happen. Because the amount of killing that’s been going on there. Uh, kids, they kill a lot of kids, you know. On the street, you know.

Researcher: Who are they?

Student 4: The Israelis! They kill a lot of kids. I have a lot of friends. I heard from them, they grew up there and they saw their friends die. And

so I've never been there. I've never lived there, you know. But the stories and, uh, the emotion that's passed down these stories -- that's something that's really deep rooted. . . . And, uh, it's really sad. It's really sad that a lot of the American people don't know what's really going on. This is what's going on. This – back in that place, that country. Look at the map. Look how big Israel is. Look at all the countries around it. Who literally can't wait to take it apart. And you think to yourself, "How can this country survive?" Well, there's an answer to that. You know, 'cause they're being backed. People know this, you know? It's obvious. But to the average American, it might not be. And so, that's something that awareness needs to be made of, you know. I'm, I'm not saying kill every Israeli and get rid of them; take the country. I'm saying both of these people need to live in peace, okay? They have to, like, somehow figure out a way to do that. . . . And these preemptive tactics, it's like, I feel a threat from there, I'm going to attack there. They haven't attacked me yet, but I'm going to attack already. That's what Hitler did – that's what Bush is doing.

3.3.2 *George W. Bush*

George W. Bush is another symbol propagated within predominantly Muslim regions. Respondents viewed him with almost universal disdain, although two students perceived him as a moral man and two supported his domestic policy. The reasons underlying the students' collective antagonism stemmed from the president's "bungled" foreign policy efforts – typified by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some students perceived President Bush as a greed monger who went to war in order to enrich his coffers. As noted by Student 3, President Bush "just needed an excuse to invade Iraq just to help his friends." Student 5 added, "I can tell that he hates, uh, Arabs and Muslims. Becoming more rich, richer everyday. He's smart because he did that, go to war; oil prices go up – more money George Bush."

Student 5: I don't like him. Well, I like him for things and I don't like him for other things. I like him because he's a genius. He's a smart person. He can move anyone's mind – not anyone's. Of course, there are people that don't agree with him. But he can convince you with anything he wants.

He has a very attracting smile. And if – I like about him is, is his personality is strong. And he was able easily to win another term – presidency. What I don't like . . . its personality that make people believe in what he says. Of course, I don't believe in most of what he says. But people believe, so they voted for him. Uh, what I don't like about him is, uh, or should I say "are" because there are a lot of things. He doesn't say truth all the time. Uh, I can tell that he hates, uh, Arabs and Muslims. I can tell that. . . . he doesn't like them. Yeah. And I think it's, uh, becoming more rich, richer everyday. I think, I think, this is - he's smart because he did that, he's doing that. He, he did it and he's doing it. And I don't like it because he's doing it at the same time. And, I mean, go to war; oil prices go up – more money George Bush. I mean, I, I – this is how I know. I, I heard that they own some wells, oil wells, and they worked in that company. I mean when, when the price, the prices of gas go up, it's more money in his pocket. So I don't know if he cares about the nation or his pocket. That's something that needs more thinking. Uh, that's what I don't like about him. He cares more about himself than the nation. Because since 9/11, since 2001, things gone worse in the states. Financial. Uh, I, I don't like about him also, uh, there – he's not neutral. He has, he takes one side and ignores the other. Like the war in Iraq. Whenever a U.S. soldier does something, it's fine. When someone else does it, it's not fine. This is one part. And, and, I, I, I also don't like him going after Arab countries, one after the other. This is not right. This is just not right. Of course, the same applies for the French. Jacques Chirac – he's doing the same thing, too.

3.3.3 U.S. War in Iraq

The war in Iraq was seen as unnecessary by several students; the weapons of mass destruction deemed mythical. Student 3 perceived President Bush as a warmonger determined to "out" Saddam Hussein for personal reasons. The student also surmised there was a "whole system of torture in U.S./Iran places," no doubt stemming from the Abu Ghraib incident. Students repeatedly complained that both the American media – and that of the Arab World -- slanted war stories to passify their respective audiences.

Student 2: I think it (war) should be avoided. I think, unless all ways are exhausted. But I don't they were exhausted. And I don't believe in involving in the politics of other countries. Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11. Whether Iran, for example, would develop nuclear weapons. They

would never, ever attack that holy land because there's a huge mosque that was built by the Prophet.

Student 3: I always felt Bush had personal – he was personally against Saddam. Not really what this country would want. Personal egos . . .

Researcher: Are you glad Saddam is gone?

Student 3: Right now it seems like a really bad idea. When he was in charge over there, at least people were living. I heard this on U.S. media – don't know how much was true. But they say he was evil man, torturing people; I 'm against that. But even U.S. was doing things. They're torturing from what I gather, even though U.S. media said it's isolated events. But you heard about those prisons in Europe. And I have read at enough places and enough news sources where people have commented like there was a whole system of torture in U.S./Iran places.

Student 6: Every day I'd go to the library; he'd be sitting in a -- checking the news. He was showing me pictures of what happened in Iraq for, for not only Iraqis but also soldiers. And, uh, so he's telling me, "Have you seen this picture on real TV?" You know, Fox News or whatever. And I was like, "No, I don't think I have." He said they don't put those pictures. Because they know that if they put those pictures, people will change their minds, the Americans. So they're showing us what we need to know.

The same thing, Arabic. They show you their side of story, you know. They don't want you to look all over. So the most, the real people who can, you know, judge over this subject who speak bilingual or whatever, you know. They can compare between two, you know, channel news or, or something like that.

3.3.4 Muslims/Christians

Student 6 offered an amusing story that highlights how people are often misinformed about other cultures and religions.

Student 6: The way we thought over there is like, one of my roommates was from Tanzania. And he's black. And he said that his family; parents was telling him – he's Christian -- his parents were telling him, "Oh don't live with Muslims, you know. They kill you at night." "We all taught in school that Muslims are always terrorists so it's influence from the childhood. Muslims, they tell, "Oh, Christianity's wrong, Christianity's

bad!” That’s what they told us in school. So when you’re, you know, grown and to work, you’re like, you know, feel bad to sit next to Christians. You’ll be like, “Oh no, you know, stay away.” Well, he’s human! He breathes the same oxygen you breathe, you know.

3.3.5 Imperialism

Western imperialism and its “bullying” tactics is one of the main symbolic themes propagated throughout the Arab world. The concept is used to explain much of the region’s economic underdevelopment, authoritarian regimes and social injustice. The growth of East Asian and Indian economies, however, has forced social scientists to discount dependency theory in their search for causality. A new, inward-looking paradigm focusing on cultural values and attitudes is slowly growing roots within the academic community (Harrison, 2000). What follows are excerpts of discussions that highlight the unfavorable characterization of the ‘Western imperialists’.

Student 6: They put it in you from the childhood. So Iraqi people, they think that West is trying to rule them or America is trying to rule them by moving a Democracy over there. Yes they’re cooperating but in a slow manner. You can see that over the news. Good luck for them, you know, good luck for us. Maybe we’ll reach us one day, you know, but I don’t see it.

Student 8: But if it falls apart again, or if the Americans stay there for longer than people think they should, you know, longer than two or three years, that’s when things are going to be really bad. “Yeah, they’re just another Britain again, in the modern century, you know, taking over what they want from us.” . . . So until the U.S., maybe softens their stance on the Palestinians, gives less support to the Israelis. Makes the Israelis feel more secure, but does not let them push the Palestinians around so much. . . . Because the main reason people hate them over there, is because they blindly support Israel and crushing our Palestinian brothers. That’s the first thing that they teach you, when you’re young over there and the religious leaders talk about how bad America is. Because, you know, they’re oppressing our Muslim brothers. . . . I’ve heard it all the time from, you know, religious leaders. You go to mosques in Pakistan and they-they

tell you that “They’re crushing our Muslim brothers over there. We need to support them; we need to rally behind them.” . . .

Researcher: But they have their Arab brothers, right?

Student 8: They have their Arab brothers. It’s mostly case of talking and not action. It’s used as fuel by religious extremists to push people who don’t understand into doing things they really shouldn’t do – suicide bombing. They’re just using the Israeli thing to further, you know, the anti-American stance that they have – the morally corrupt West.

3.3.6 Suicide Bombing

Suicide bombing is cultivated throughout the Arab world via stories, poetry – even children’s cartoons. Student 10 described suicide bombing as a “sacrifice.” Student 3 compared it to Kamakazi pilots, stating, “I think that’s kind of noble. That’s just like you’re giving up your life for, to save your troops or your country.” One even stated that U.S.-led efforts in Iraq could be categorized as terrorist attacks when civilians are caught in the crossfire.

Student 2: I don’t think it’s justified. But I think it’s unavoidable. It’s a cultural thing that’s being, you know, that’s used in the T.V. in the Middle East. We had this child, he was 13. And when Iraq attacked Iran, uh, his father was killed, his mother and his sister were raped and killed in front of him. And he put all this, uh, what do you call them, uh, explosives. They tie explosive around his uh, uh, waste, and on his shoulder, you know, and everywhere he could. And he threw himself in front of Iraqi tanks. Hossein Fahmideh. And you know, I would do the same thing. When people lose their families, they change. They change psychologically. And they do things that you wouldn’t normally do in situations.

Researcher: Those that committed the London bombings were actually born in Britain.

Student 2: Right, because in Palestine they are raised with the same mentality. They are raised seeing that their friends. And that is part of being a family, you know. All those Arabs, you know, they are one whole

family. Okay. In Palestine, people are getting killed. It's as much of their own family as their own cousins.

Researcher: Even if they are Shiite and you're Sunni?

Student 2: If you are Arab, you are Arab. For example, when, uh, in the second grade, in the Farsi literature book. It's like the English book they have here at school. And one of the lessons is about Palestinian refugees. And it's told from the mouth of a Palestinian child. And that piece is just so powerful, it makes you cry. It talks about how he lost his home, how he lost his family. That he lives in a refugee camp. How he doesn't have this, he doesn't have that. And how he wishes, you know, that he could go back home. People are getting killed, you know? You, you will have a different understanding of what it means to be war. you are defending those people are oppressed. Because you feel that they're oppressed.

Researcher: So even as a Christian woman, if you were to return to Iran and you saw something like that happen to your family – or even if you didn't see something happen to your family, you would think about suicide bombing? You would feel it's justified?

Student 2: I don't think that it's justified. But I think it would make you do things that you wouldn't do in normal situations.

Researcher: Even as a Christian.

Student 2: Unless someone had such great faith in God, and God would give him or her such grace to not to lose the mind.

Researcher: You think there's a remedy?

Student 2: I think the cease of war in all forms and all places – and time. If the war was to stop in – in Palestine – in Israel, I don't think the first, next two generations would heal. I think it takes healing.

3.3.7 Media

A 2003 *Newsweek* article highlighted the differences in reporting between U.S. and Arab-world wartime news stories:

There are two wars taking place in Iraq right now--the one Americans are watching on television and a wholly different version of reality being broadcast throughout the Middle East. While U.S. programming

concentrates on military achievements and the certainty of victory, Arab and Muslim TV news focuses on victims, especially children--grisly images of the dead and dying and maimed. (Masland, Dickey, Moreau, Hussain, Ephron, McIntyre & Ismail, 2003, p. 32).

These reflections were often mirrored in the thesis interviews, exacerbated by the state-owned media that proliferated in the Arab region prior to the introduction of satellite. Referring to Iran's national media, Student 2 said, "The religious people would listen to the national T.V. and national radio. And those would be, uh, very much censored. Mainly get the news if something goes wrong in America. You never, ever anything hear anything good about America. You'd get the facts. They don't change the facts. But would only get the bad facts."

Participants also expressed frustration at the U.S. media, which was perceived to be under the auspices of governmental puppeteers and/or the Jews because of its unilateral, one-sided approach to story telling. Some of the students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to tell their side of a story – a side that is rarely, if ever, transmitted to the American people.

Student 2: The religious people would listen to the national T.V. and national radio. And those would be, uh, very much censored. Mainly get the news if something goes wrong in America. You never, ever anything hear anything good about America. You'd get the facts. They don't change the facts. But you would only get the bad facts. . . . Saudi media showed bad side of Israel. Other than that, they don't show anything bad in rest of the world. . . Pakistan media more anti-U.S. compared to Saudi. . . Pakistan in past, if you criticize other Pakistani leaders, the reporter would get kidnapped just disappear, or go to jail or something like that. Musharraf is very open to criticism by the media. In Saudi, I think you going to jail for life or something like that. . . . Older generation, which is running T.V. stations, they are anti-U.S. policies and stuff. So I feel anti-U.S. on Pakistani T.V. is just bias . . . whenever they say something good, I go, "Finally."

Student 3: Saudi showed only good stuff. Never said anything bad about U.S. They try to make world appear a happy place. Pakistan media more open, balanced, realistic; shows both sides. Talk shows have people favor/oppose U.S. foreign policy. . . . *Al Jazeera* is one of the few stations that criticizes their own government. In Arab world, no one criticize their own government or other leader. But *Al Jazeera* do that, which requires really a lot of guts. And I think *Al Jazeera* is very neutral and it shows both sides.

Student 8: Well, I'd read the news and watch T.V. and everything over there – the local stuff. And then I'd go to school. And what I'd see at school and what I'd see on the news was completely different. Like, the whole perception they give you is kind of negative, you know. Uh, and newspapers; the corrupt west and all that stuff. And I'd go to school, and people are -- *fine*. So it's very disconcerting. It's like, "Well, what's real? You know, what they're telling me and what they're feeding me doesn't seem to make any sense. It doesn't seem to match up with what I'm seeing at school."

Student 11: I know about Middle East because I come from there. But I know that, doing this all over the world. I met with so many people coming from American associations here, trying to give funds, trying to support with opinion, with studies, with everything. So this is a very good, positive side,

Researcher: Do you think that's well known in the Middle East?

Student 11: Not much. Not much. Again, mass media issue I'm emphasizing, actually. Uh, this is the biggest problem in my own opinion.

Researcher: Are you talking about American or Middle Eastern?

Student 11: Middle Eastern – here in America, we have different ways, different channels, different, uh, and, uh, you have all the opinions at the same time -- both with and against. But there, we have only one side opinion – the Middle Eastern – in mass media.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses implications of the findings detailed in the previous chapter. It also addresses study limitations and suggestions for future research.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore: 1) perceptions of international students from predominantly Muslim nations toward the United States and its citizens, 2) whether those perceptions had changed since residing in the United States, and 3) whether said perceptions could stem from propaganda.. The thesis both resembles and adds to the Pew Global Attitudes Project by focusing on perceptions toward America’s cultural and sociopolitical values and ideologies, democracy, religion, terrorism, the media and the connection between the Islamic faith and public policy in countries with significant Muslim populations (2005). The research differs from Pew’s quantitative design by exploring underlying reasons for participants’ static and/or changed perceptions using a qualitative, in-depth approach. Perceptions were also explored for signs of misinformation, using Harold Lasswell’s Propaganda Theory as a guide.

4.1 Perceptions

Interviewees were happy to be residing and studying in the United States. For most, America truly represented the “land of opportunity” with its resulting freedoms, premiere educational institutions, professional opportunities, standardized laws, relatively safe environment, and wealth of conveniences and services.

4.1.1 American Culture

For some respondents, studying in the United States was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. America was perceived as the “Everest” of nations – the top. This elite perception extended to our nation’s universities. One student said the United States offered scholastic opportunities over and above anything offered in the Middle East. Top-ranked faculty, research and facilities, leading-edge technologies and adequate funding were the expressed reasons for their optimism.

Many students derived from nations that prioritize nepotism over merit. They were thus gratified by the opportunities for professional advancement based on knowledge, hard work and expertise rather than “connections.” The downside of this lack of nepotism was the perception that Americans lacked the ability to “connect” on a deeper level with community, family and friends.

America, as a whole, was perceived as an ethical nation with a standardized system of laws. Americans were seen as honest, open and friendly – even “good.” As opposed to nations that supported unethical police practices, municipal police were seen as trustworthy. One student appreciated the fact that our system of laws remained stable no matter who was the nation’s leader. He lamented that his country could not progress significantly because regime turnovers meant wiping the slate clean with a new legal standard. Social scholar Mariano Grondona confirms the importance of a statute of law in progressive societies. “In rational societies, power resides in the law,” said Grondona (2000) in his study of cultural typologies (p. 51).

Freedoms of religion, speech and privacy were especially appreciated by the students. Freedom of the press, however, was viewed with suspicion. The reason for this impression was the “one-sided” standard portrayed by the American press – including *CNN* -- concerning such issues as the war in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

4.1.2 U.S. Government/U.S. Foreign Policy

America’s government and -- in particular, the Bush administration -- was perceived negatively by most respondents. Reasons for this negativity rested firmly on U.S. foreign policy, particularly the war in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The War in Afghanistan was also perceived negatively by many respondents.

Answers were mixed regarding the Iraq war. Most viewed the war as a mistake, however, two supported U.S. war efforts. The killing of Iraqi innocents, which is broadcast almost daily across their nations’ television screens, was the main cause of this opposition. President George W. Bush was perceived by some as a good and moral man who seemed to be doing fairly well on domestic policy but who had failed miserably on foreign policy. The students disapproved of the war in Iraq, mostly because of the innocent Iraqi civilians who had died in the crossfire.

Several students perceived the Iraq war as an opportunity for the president to enhance his financial coffers. “Go to war; oil prices go up – more money George Bush,” remarked one student. Some respondents thought the president had lied about weapons of mass destruction. Another felt Americans were naïve to accept whatever agenda was being pushed by the president. Other students supported the president in his war efforts, however.

Respondents felt U.S. foreign policy was heavily biased in favor of the Israelis. None of the students sided with Israel, although a few attempted to see both sides. Some students, when asked, favored a two-state system, while others felt Israel should not exist. Some participants reasoned that a more balanced approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict would result in decreased terrorism. Many felt the U.N. – as opposed to the U.S. – could best achieve this balance. The participants also expressed frustration at the U.S. media, which was perceived to be under the auspices of governmental puppeteers and/or the Jews because of its unilateral, one-sided approach to the conflict.

4.1.3 Violence/Suicide Bombing

No respondent agreed with Osama bin Laden's terrorist tactics – including the attack on the World Trade Center -- in which innocent civilians are a justifiable target for *jihad*. Many expressed their resentment at bin Laden for staining the reputation of Islam with such atrocities. Muslim respondents defended this view by saying the Prophet Muhammad specifically prohibited the killing of women and children during times of war. Some, however, alluded to suicide bombing's justification when "the enemy" is a military target. Respondents did not provide a specific example of a viable military target.

4.1.4 Democracy in Muslim Nations

Respondents were in favor of democracy in predominantly Muslim nations. In fact, said some respondents, Islam's consensus style of governing is a form of democracy. When asked about the separation of religion and state, answers were mixed with some in favor of a secular government; others more attuned to a blending of religion (Islam) and state.

4.1.5 Home Nation

Respondents were generally optimistic about their nation's leaders. Expatriates who reside in Saudi Arabia, however, were mostly critical of the Al-Saud family, its tendency toward corruption, and the ethnically racist tendencies of the regime. Pakistani respondents were especially positive about their nation's leader, President Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf was viewed as a military hero, political reformer and staunch ally in the fight against terrorism. Jordan's King Abdullah II was seen as a leader who – though lacking the experience and respect of his late father, King Hussein -- was working hard for his nation.

4.1.6 Media

America's news media was perceived as "one-sided" when concerning such issues as the war in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *Al Jazeera*, by contrast, was seen as "holistic" by some -- though not all – respondents. Some students perceived the press to be under the auspices of the government and/or the Jews. Hollywood – accused by some of the respondents as being the primary purveyor of America's immoral and violent image -- was also perceived by some to be a tool of certain "powers" (some mentioned the Jews) to advance an underlying agenda. Such perspectives allude to a conspiracy mentality, as highlighted by Daniel Pipes (1992) below:

While the conspiracy mentality exists in all regions of the world, it is outstandingly common in the Middle East. Few there resist its impact; leading politicians, religious figures, intellectuals and journalists espouse wild fears of world domination by enemies. . . . Nothing is so false that someone will not believe it; and transparent silliness does not reduce the importance of conspiracy theories.

Some students suggested that their nation's media, as well as news entities such as *Al Jazeera*, should provide more news features focusing on the common American people in order to show a more positive and human side of America.

4.1.7 Changed Perceptions

A pattern emerged regarding changes in students' perceptions. The respondents – almost without exception -- were pleasantly surprised by the American people. Having been raised on a media diet of state-owned news, Hollywood, *MTV*, *CNN*, *BBC* and *Al Jazeera*, respondents said they were at first shocked to find Americans more conservative and less violent than expected. Instead, the majority of Americans were found to be friendly, honest, open and direct. Many students expressed difficulty convincing older family members, back home, that Americans were not as bad as portrayed. Two students, in fact, were living in New York City during September 11th. Fearing harassment and even injury, they were profoundly moved by the kindness of friends, neighbors and even strangers immediately following the attack.

Perspectives regarding the U.S. government, its foreign policy and/or President George W. Bush remained mostly static – in some cases even worsened -- after the students arrived in the United States. Those with darkened perspectives were mostly long-time international students who had lived in the United States prior to September 11th, contrasting that free, open and accessible time with the closer scrutiny and “harassment” experienced after the terrorist attacks.

4.1.8 Perceptions Stemming from Propaganda

Evidence of propaganda surfaced throughout the interviews. Americans, Western imperialism, U.S. foreign policy, the war in Iraq, the Bush administration, Israel, a

powerful Jewish influence within America's top-ranking government and media – all were viewed negatively based on both truth and rhetoric.

Lasswell (1927), says people must be slowly desensitized in order to accept radically different ideas and actions. Thus, symbols must be created and cultivated so that targeted audiences will gradually begin to associate specific emotions with them. Used wisely, such master symbols possess the power to initiate beneficial, large-scale, mass action. For this study, the Israelis offer an example of a collective or master symbol. Symbolic concepts such as western imperialism and U.S. foreign policy also inspired collective emotions among the students.

The respondents' former perceptions of Americans align with a 2002 Gallup poll that was conducted in five Arab nations (Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco and Saudi Arabia); survey results showed the respondents viewed the "West" as immoral and decadent (Schneider, 2002). Though the more recent Pew study (2005) demonstrated an increase in positive perceptions toward America, thesis respondents recounted their initial surprise at finding Americans neither as immoral nor as violent as expected. Respondents volunteered a multitude of factors for the misinformation, including America's and their home nation's media, Hollywood, the influence of older family members and local religious leaders. The study did not reveal a substantive change in perceptions regarding other research topics, including the war in Iraq, the Bush administration, U.S. foreign policy or the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

4.2 Limitations

This was an exploratory study; causality or generalizability was not the goal. Thus, participants were selected as opposed to sampled. Data results cannot be applied to the larger population of American-based international students from predominantly Muslim nations, or even to similar-criteria students attending the two universities targeted for this study.

As noted by MacDougall and Fudge (2001), qualitative samples are purposive rather than random in order to provide rich data. In other words, the researcher's objective is to thoroughly explore a specified topic -- via one-on-one interviews, in this case -- until no new information is uncovered. For such a methodology design, credibility can be a challenge since the researcher must decide subjectively whether the discovery of new information has been exhausted and the inquiry has not been closed prematurely. Confirmability, too, is a subjective endeavor that can be questioned. Was illogical reasoning used, for example, to interpret the data? As stated above, for this study, confirmability was addressed via a comprehensive audit trail, and credibility was addressed by verifying observations with respondents both during and after the interviews.

The fact that the researcher is an American female in her 40s could also be viewed as a limitation, as some respondents -- especially young males of Arab descent -- might have been reluctant to fully reveal their opinions on controversial topics. On the other hand, the researcher's demographics may have been viewed as non-threatening, enabling respondents to feel more at ease. Assurance of anonymity was also addressed to

help increase respondent cooperation. Such efforts were at least partially successful. Some respondents, for example, agreed to the use of suicide bombing in certain, specific cases. For future research, however, it might be prudent to enlist researchers from the same age group and ethnic background.

4.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Though this study was narrow in scope, resulting data offer rich possibilities for further study. The researcher suggests that further study be conducted on international students' changed perspectives – and how these findings can be used to stem the steady diet of false information that is fed to citizens of predominantly Muslim nations.

A more focused look at media propaganda in predominantly Muslim nations, for example, would help researchers determine the exact types of misinformation being fed to target audiences, the goals of such information and, perhaps, from where it derives (a goal perhaps too challenging to tackle from a remote location.)

Another suggestion for further research involves communication transmission. For some respondents, media messages originating from *CNN* were perceived as “one-sided” while *Al Jazeera*'s stories were considered “holistic.” Part of this can be explained by comparing *Al Jazeera* with state-owned media; in such cases, the former would be deemed more comprehensive. Uses and gratification theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974) partially addresses this phenomenon by suggesting users actively choose media that align with their own, personal beliefs (when options are available). Further research, however, might be applied to the process by which users decode such actively selected media messages.

A third area of research involves respondents who appear to deflect anger and frustration from their own nation to a "safe" target (such as the U.S.). The possible linkage of displacement theory to propaganda studies should be specifically examined. Richard Hoffman (2002) addressed this phenomenon in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks:

Since September 11, Americans have faced the grim reality that hatred of the United States has become endemic in many countries around the world. U.S.-backed repressive rulers such as the House of Saud in Saudi Arabia, Suharto in Indonesia, and General Sani Abacha in Nigeria, while discreetly making deals with their American patrons and often enriching themselves from oil revenues, have proven their piety to the masses by encouraging the state-controlled press to demonize America. The media have thus provided the government a safety valve through which to redirect anger from local social and political failures (p.87).

Another suggestion concerns an ethnographic study of suicide bombing and other forms of violence. In this case, a respondent had converted to Christianity (from Islam), had lived in the United States for eight years, and was studying for the ministry. Despite the respondent's obvious commitment to the Christian faith, however, suicide bombing was seen as a viable option in extreme cases. With the Christian faith's emphasis on grace through faith and the forgiveness of sins, such an enduring attitude evidences the strong influence of culture and an opportunity for further research.

Finally, by refining and expanding this study to a number of American educational institutions, resulting data could help create a deeper understanding of tomorrow's leaders from Muslim nations. The fact that respondents' perceptions of Americans improved from immoral and violent to a more conservative, honest and accepting society offers cause for hope; that they did not improve regarding U.S. foreign

policy offers cause for discussion. Effectively leveraging the data – and the respondents who supplied it -- will be a challenge, however. As Hoffman (2002) states:

The real issue “is whether moderate voices can be equipped to compete with these radical and government forces in the Muslim world. Those in the Middle East who espouse alternatives to militant Islamism must begin to compete at the same level, or they will be left without audiences (p. 93).

4.4 Conclusion

America’s image overseas faces many challenges: cultural differences, resistance to our nation’s foreign policy, envy and resentment of American capitalism, frustration over repression of freedoms, terrorist threats and America’s negligence in addressing regional concerns (Frank, 2003).

Writing in the early 1980s, Italy's Luigi Barzini explained what sets Americans apart is the belief "that all problems not only must be solved, but also that they can be solved, and that in fact the main purpose of a man's life is the solution of problems” (Nagorski, 2005, p. 13).

Barzini’s perception of America was reflected in the respondents’ answers. The interviews showed continuing negative perceptions toward U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, especially as it relates to the Bush administration, war in Iraq and the Israeli/Palestinian crisis. Such negative perceptions were based on, among other issues, a belief in American imperialism and “bullying” tactics, a powerful Jewish influence within America’s top-ranking government and media, and a U.S. president whose underlying motivations were deemed – at the very least -- suspect.

Respondents were optimistic, however, about democracy in the Arab region. Several students viewed predominantly Muslim nations as innately designed for democracy because of Islam’s decision-making model of consensus. Regarding the

separation of religion and state, students' opinions were mixed. Some preferred the United States' secular form of government; others favored the integration of Islam into the political process. University of Kent at Canterbury social scientist Fares al-Braizat (2003) offers a less optimistic prediction of the marriage between Islam and democracy, arguing that support for democratic ideals – though universal -- may not reach the ideal in some (particularly Muslim) societies. Fukuyama's (1992) argument further earmarks today's challenges facing the Middle East:

There have been pressures for greater democracy in various Middle Eastern countries like Egypt and Jordan, following the Eastern European revolution of 1989. But in this part of the world (the Middle East), Islam has stood as a major barrier to democratization. . . . greater democracy may not lead to greater liberalization because it brings to power Islamic fundamentalists hoping to establish some form of popular theocracy (p. 347).

Regarding suicide bombing and other forms of violence in the name of *jihad*, respondents disapproved of those who target “innocent civilians” (interviews occurred shortly after the November 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, Jordan.) Further, they did not agree with Osama bin Laden's orchestrated attack on the World Trade Center. Some respondents did, however, see suicide bombing and other forms of violence as a viable option when “the enemy” is a military target.

Respondents experienced improved perceptions toward American after arriving in the United States. Americans were deemed more honest, direct, kind and generous than expected. Such findings offer a seed of hope that a deeper understanding can and should be developed between America and tomorrow's leaders from Muslim nations.

Evidence of propaganda surfaced throughout the interviews on topics that included Americans, Western imperialism, U.S. foreign policy, the war in Iraq, the Bush

administration, Jews and Israel. Faulty perceptions were based, in part, on the influence of older family members and local religious leaders, the home nation's and even America's media – including Hollywood.

These interviews raised real concerns about propaganda's powerful influence on the perceptions and subsequent behaviors of targeted Muslim-nation populations. That such behaviors can culminate into acts of violence highlights the urgency of expanded and advanced scholarly inquiry.

APPENDIX A
DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview subjects were selected based upon the following criteria:

- international student
- citizen of a predominantly Muslim nation.
- age 18 or over
- enrolled as either a part-time or full-time student in one of two major southwestern universities during the Fall 2005 semester.

Subjects were chosen via on-campus purposive sampling or through the researcher's knowledge of the subjects. The researcher neither knew nor had a previous relationship with all but one subject.

The interviews followed the format of a semi-standardized interview as defined in Berg (2004). The same list of questions was used for each interview and cultural typologies were used to help guide students when needed. Interviews included unique follow-up questions based on participants' responses. Questions were refined, as needed, to reflect a subject's particular situation. Sample interview questions are included in Appendix B.

Interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed for easy access and data organization. Completed transcripts were culled and categorized in accordance with both question and topic. Excerpts were downloaded into a database for analysis of interrelationships. All interviews were conducted via one-on-one discussions and lasted from 60 minutes to 2-1/2 hours. Material for the questions was loosely based on the

2005 Pew Global Attitudes Project, as well as secondary materials gleaned from academic and other sources, which are included in Chapter 1's literature.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions below were asked to some or all of the student respondents. Questions were reworded slightly or clarified as needed. Follow-up questions unique to respective respondents are not included.

Sample Questions

- What is your perception of the United States and/or Americans?
- What do you like most about America and/or Americans?
- What do you like least about America and/or Americans?
- Has your perception toward America and/or Americans changed since living here? Why?
- Who would you regard as the most respected opinion leader in your region of the world?
- How do you feel about your nation's political leader? About U.S. President George W. Bush?
- How do you feel about the current state of your own nation?
- What do you think of U.S. foreign policy as it pertains to your region of the world? To your nation? To the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?
- What is your opinion of the U.S.-led efforts to fight terrorism? The U.S.-led war in Iraq?
- Some people think suicide bombing and other forms of violence are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Others believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. What is your opinion and why?

- Do you support the democratization of predominantly Muslim nations? Of your nation?
- Do you think the U.S. government favors or opposes democracy in your home country?
- What was your main source of news/information in your home nation? In America?
- How, in your opinion, has the media of your home nation contributed to your perception of America?
- How has the American media contributed to your perception of the United States?
- How, in your opinion, has the American media portrayed your region of the world?

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Q: How long have you been here?

A: Four years. And a half.

Q: Okay. What is your general perception of America?

A: Clarify.

Q: Just, you know, first impression. Do you like it, do you dislike it . . .

A: Okay. My impression, uh, uh, it changed after the first month of my residence in the states. It was different from the four years and five months. I came one month before 9/11; things were good at that time. And people were very nice. After 9/11, things changed a little bit. It got worse for us. So I hated the society at that time.

Q: Because?

A: Because the way people started to look at us. And, uh, the last two years were fine. I mean, things went back in order. But I still get the bad gestures sometimes. Yeah, but the general impression, I like Texas. I feel at home in Texas. I don't like other states.

Q: Oh, really.

A: Yes.

Q: So you've been to other states?

A: I've been to Kansas and Oklahoma. I didn't like Oklahoma very much.

Q: (laugh)

A: Yeah, but, uh, I was driving back, I felt like home when I was in Texas. People here are very nice. And so, for me, U.S.A. is Texas. I haven't gone to many states. So I've spent more than four years in Texas.

Q: Where was your undergrad and your grad?

A: In Iraq.

Q: In Iraq.

A: Yes.

Q: So, um, you came here specifically to work on your Ph.D.

A: Master's and Ph.D.

Q: Okay. What is your general perception of Americans?

A: Well, I think they're nice people with some, how do you say that English, irregularities. Some . . .

Q: Quirks?

A: Yeah, sometimes. You get those people. But in general, they're very helpful; sensitive. They treat you as a human, which is good. Except there are some exceptions. Yeah, but the general view, it's a wonderful society.

Q: Okay, I have some categories here. What about the ethics of Americans? Any impressions?

A: What do you mean by ethics?

Q: Sense of right and wrong. People doing the right thing as opposed to the wrong thing.

A: I think they're not doing anything right.

Q: You think they are not. . .

A: No, they're not. They're not. They're slaves of the media. Believe anything media says, and you can, uh, convince anyone with anything you want in five minutes. That's the general view I have, so it's easy to convince them of anything. Even if you lie sometimes, you get what you want, and they believe you. I don't know if it's good or bad, you will decide this in your research. But that's how I see it.

Q: Give me an example.

A: Um, an example. If you say to someone that, uh, I live in a bad financial, uh, condition and I need help. That person will help you without investigating whether you're telling the truth or not. That's just an example. Uh, so, uh, they get carried out very fast. They believe things very fast. And I think this is what led to the second term for George W. Bush.

Q: What do you like most about America?

A: Freedom.

Q: Freedom of . . .

A: Uh, freedom of living and without being asked questions by people. Of course, the government asks all the time; FBI people ask all the time. But, uh, (clears throat) feel like you're free. Can do whatever you want. Um, of course, I came from a country, a culture, where it says if you're stranger, be polite. And I am trying to keep that.

Q: I'm sorry. I was – I misunderstood. You said you were taught to be polite as a stranger, so you are polite?

A: Yes. Yeah, we-we behave in that manner. Because if you do something wrong, I don't think there isn't anyone who can help you.

Q: Here?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. What do you like most about Americans?

A: What do I like most about Americans. They don't interfere with your personal life. Um, they're nice people. And, again, they treat you as a human, which is something lacking in some parts of the Middle East.

Q: What do you like least about America and Americans?

A: Uh, okay. With me, answer this question and the one before again. Uh, hope I'm not being offensive here. It's either a person is very smart -- very smart and very clever -- or a person is super stupid. Okay, so if you, sometimes you see someone who really understands your situation as an Arab or a Muslim in the states, and other who does not, treats you as a terrorist. And, sometimes, I think people have in general a problem in geography. Uh, sometimes they ask, "Where you come from?" I say, "From Jordan." And they say, "Is this in Afghanistan?" So everything that they connect every Muslim Afghanistan or to Iraq, which is not right. And there are, I mean, the majority are clever people who would understand and try not to offend or hurt your feelings. But this is, this 25 percent I don't really like. People who don't know anything. It could be because of their education. It could be because of their religion. It could be for any reason. But they don't really understand that we are all humans and we should live in peace.

Q: So you say they don't know anything about, um, Islam or the Middle East, or your situation, or. . . ? Um, just ignorant of the Middle East situation. Is that what you're saying?

A: Yeah. It's not only the Middle East. It's like ignorant in everything.

Q: Are you talking about college?

A: Sometimes college. Sometimes outside of college.

Q: Has your perception toward America -- and you alluded to this a bit -- toward America and Americans changed since moving here?

A: A lot.

Q: Okay. Can you expand on that?

A: Okay. Again, the media -- you have a horrible media here in the states. Uh, this time not the news. We don't see the news broadcast there. But we see movies and we have our own image of the states.

Q: You mean back in Jordan.

A: Yes. Back in Jordan, we have a different image of the states. And when you come, it's not right.

Q: Okay, when you say it's a differen—

A: It is bad!

Q: There?

A: Yes. When you see movies, image is so bad. It's like people with no morals, people, I mean, crimes are as easy as buying a coke, but it's not right. It's not-its not right. It's wrong. I mean, people, uh, have morals. Maybe 1 percent do drugs and 99 don't. Uh, it's-it's more peaceful than the movies and media show it there.

Q: Okay, so you think the American media is not portraying the United States . . .

A: It's giving a wrong image, it's giving a false image to everyone.

Q: And you're saying it's a negative image?

A: Yes, yes, it is a negative, I mean, movies.

Q: So basically you're saying your perception has changed, in which -- and I don't want to put words in your mouth.

A: More to the positive. I, uh . .

Q: So people are more than what you had anticipated?

A: They're more peaceful. They're nicer.

Q: And you mentioned morals.

A: It's, I mean, uh, prostitution here -- prostitution in Jordan. It's the same, okay.

Q: Um hum.

A: The prob -- the thing is you don't see our movies here. We don't portray prostitutes. Uh, we will have a different image of what we have there. Uh, (clears throat) but I mean it, it's different in terms of moral issues. It's very different. It is very different.

Q: So were you surprised by that?

A: Yes, yes, yes, I was surprised that by that.

Q: Pleasantly surprised that by that?

A: Yeah, I was happy to see this. Yeah, I was happy -- I was scared the first month.

Q: (laugh) I've heard that from a lot of people. Um, when in your country at home, within Jordan or within the region you lived -- and this could be Iraq since you spent some time there -- who would you respect as an opinion leader in your region?

A: I don't understand question.

Q: Um, who would regard as the most respected opinion leader in your region of the world, right now?

A: From the presidency . . .?

Q: It could be anyone from a family member, to an entertainer, to a political leader. Just, who would you – whose opinion would you respect from your region. It could be a religious leader or whatever. It could be a journalist; it could be anyone.

A: I don't think anyone is suitable. If ever an opinion is out there, I spend a lot, a long time thinking, okay. And if it's – it suits me, I'll take it. If not, I will not. So there, there, there is no one person that I agreed with all the time or thought that he or she deserves to be a leader. But, uh-uh, the late King Hussein – he's dead now – King Hussein, the King of Jordan – he's dead. I think he, if-if we can get someone like him, now, he should be the leader.

Q: What about King Abdullah?

A: Not really, no. He's just a kid.

Q: (laugh) You don't think he'll grow into the position?

A: I don't think so. No.

Q: Okay. Um . . .

A: This is confidential (laugh)?

Q: Once I have all my interviews, I will be deleting the contact information.

A: Okay.

Q: And as I tell all the students, if you want to know the results, you'll have to contact me.

A: I will.

Q: What about President George Bush?

A: I don't like him.

Q: Because?

A: Well, I like him for things and I don't like him for other things. I like him because he's a genius. He's a smart person. He can move anyone's mind – not anyone's. Of course, there are people that don't agree with him. But he can convince you with anything he wants. He has a very attracting smile. And if – I like about him is, is his

personality is strong. And he was able easily to win another term – presidency. What I don't like . . .

Q: The force of his personality? Is that what you're saying?

A: Yes. Its-its personality that make people believe in what he says. Of course, I don't believe in most of what he says. But people believe, so they voted for him. Uh, what I don't like about him is, uh, or should I say "are" because there are a lot of things. He doesn't say truth all the time. Uh, I can tell that he hates, uh, Arabs and Muslims. I can tell that.

Q: You mean, overall?

A: Yeah. Overall, he doesn't like them. Yeah. And I think it's, uh, becoming more rich, richer everyday. I think-I think, this is - he's smart because he did that, he's doing that. He, he did it and he's doing it. And I don't like it because he's doing it at the same time. And, I mean, go to war; oil prices go up – more money George Bush. I mean, I-I – this is how I know. I-I heard that they own some wells, oil wells, and they worked in that company. I mean when-when the price, the prices of gas go up, it's more money in his pocket. So I don't know if he cares about the nation or his pocket. That's something that needs more thinking. Uh, that's what I don't like about him. He cares more about himself than the nation. Because since 9/11 -- since 2001 -- things gone worse in the states. Financial. Uh, I-I don't like about him also, uh, there – he's not neutral. He has, he takes one side and ignores the other.

Q: In what way?

A: Like the war in Iraq. Whenever a U.S. soldier does something, it's fine. When someone else does it, it's not fine. This is one part. And, and I-I-I also don't like him going after Arab countries, one after the other. This is not right. This is just not right. Of course, the same applies for the French. Jacques Chirac – he's doing the same thing, too. But he will never be there (clears throat). Yeah, but I'm – yeah – they send people to, for personal benefit, is not good.

Q: Okay.

A: And being smart and be able to deceive people – that's good. I mean, uh, analyze and see how, what I mean by that. I mean, he's a genius and that's a good thing. And it's something about him. But he's using his mind to deceive people. He's after them.

Q: How do you feel about the current state of Jordan?

A: I don't know. We're a country with borders. We have a king, we have population. Uh, we use to be respected as a state in the world because of King Hussein. We don't

have that respect anymore because, uh, our king is busy taking vacations here and there. So, but I think in general people like Jordan here. And they like visit it. And they think it's a peaceful country, which it is. And safe place. A lot of poverty. And this gives the power to a group a people, just a group of people, show the image, show the image of Jordan outside. But poor people do not have that power to show the real image of the country. We have corrupt, um, but a-as long as we are allies with the United States, no one will see that.

Q: I'm sorry, what did you say?

A: We're – that's the end of the protection of the United States. The true image will not appear. I mean, we, people respect Jordan now because of its good relationships with the United States. And I think if this relationship changes, also the image will change.

Q: I see. So you don't think, so you think there's a lot of issues there that are not being portrayed over here.

A: Yes. A lot of them.

Q: Okay. Um, what do you think of U.S. foreign policy as it pertains to your region of the world?

A: Um, I think everyone has the right to survive. And the United States, as government, is doing whatever it can to do that. And they're the lion and we're a goat. Their policy is not good (clears throat). I mean, it's clear, the policy, everyone knows the policy towards the region. If we didn't have oil, we would never have all these problems w/ the world. And the policy there is (pause) to protect certain things in that area. Uh, and I-I'm sure that you've heard this, that we don't like the states or the policy of America is to protect Israel and ignore the rest of the area for the sake of that country. That is true; that's how I believe.

Q: What would you like to see regarding foreign policy?

A: I would like to see, I would like to see Germany and Japan and – what do you call it – not United Nations, but, uh, what do you call it . . . Security Counsel. Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, I want to see Germany and Japan there so we'd get more vetoes and U.S. would not have that 100 percent power. That's-that's the real change I would like to see.

Because it . . . when a, when a country in that region benefits – take Israel out – when a country of that region benefits from a, um, decision, there is a U.S. veto – okay?

Q: Um hum.

A: And the rest of the four members can't say anything. Okay? It's a veto. And when it does not concern the countries but it concerns Israel, uh, there is not veto and the other countries do not -- cannot say that veto because their relationships with the states and, uh, you know, sometimes I would say fear of the United States. I would really like to see more countries that would make a change in the region and the U.S. policy there.

Q: So you'd like to see a little diluted power regarding the United States.

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: Okay. Um, how do you feel about U.S. foreign policy toward Jordan?

A: It is good (pause) for the government. The king, it's-it's very good.

Q: What about for the people?

A: No, it's not.

Q: Because?

A: Because we have thieves in our country, so when the U.S.A., uh, gives any financial support to Jordan, it goes to the king and -- cool -- follow the king. People do not see any of that. We don't see anything of that support.

Q: So if you were to blame, if you were to point the finger at whose fault it was, whose fault would it be in your mind?

A: It is the U.S.'s fault, for sure.

Q: The U.S.

A: Yes.

Q: How would you remedy that?

A: I want them to support the country. Let's say I am the U.S. and I want to support Jordan, I would send-I would send, uh, employees from the states to make sure the money is distributed in the right way. Uh, I will not support the country, uh, by giving into the jets or tanks. Because we don't benefit from that as a nation. Um, if I-if the country-if the country donates, uh, let's say, \$1 billion for "X" country to build schools, well, I can -- instead of sending that cash -- I can give them books. Give-send contractors to build these schools. But not hand money to that person or to this government. And

U.S.A. knows this fact, okay? And they give them money. And they want that to happen. They want this government to take it or the king or the president to take it to shut his mouth up. So he would shut our mouths up. Okay, so we're not getting anything. Do you, do you get my point?

Q: Yes. And you're not really able to speak of these to your king?

A: You can't. You simply can't.

Q: What would happen if you did?

A: You wouldn't be able to tell anyone after what happened to you. Uh, it depends on whoever you are. I mean, we can't-we don't sa- we can't speak anything, because if they fire you from your work, you're over. Uh, put you in jail, you're over. Uh, (long pause) make your life miserable in other ways. It's very simple. You can't say anything. You can't say anything. So we will – I don't know, maybe. Or coming generation may change something -- we don't know.

Q: You're a fascinating person . . . um, how do you feel – and you've talked about this a bit, but how do you feel about U.S. foreign policy regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict? About –

A: It is not-it's not only the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. It's Israeli/U.S./Palestinian – it's that way. Yeah, because uh, the U.S. – it's 100 percent with Israel in its conflict. Um . . .

Q: And why do you think the U.S. is 100 percent . . .

A: It's simple; it is very simple. Uh, I've been here for four years now. I watch public T.V. I listen to public radio. Uh, I watch other news broadcasts to, uh, people. They never mention that Palestinian got killed. A child got killed. A woman got killed from the Palestinian part. They're all terrorists -- suicide or whatever. Explosion somewhere in the Israeli part. But they don't say anything about that. This tells you that the media is going that way, not that way. And this portrayed what the government wants. Um, yes we say, we have, it's a free country. Okay, but this is – media is not free in the states. It's one-sided, goes to the nation side. I mean, it does what the congress, it does what the president wants it to do. Although they may not admit. But that's what's happening. So, if there is a problem there, U.S.A. would be on the side of Israel, not on the side of the Palestinians. Okay. Although sometimes, you know, to calm people down in that region, president – I'm not picking on George Bush; but any-anyone of the them – and, and they, they did. They would say nice things about Palestinians and then they do the opposite.

Q: Would you say that about Clinton, too?

A: Clinton was-was different. Clinton was different. Especially – uh – I think; yeah, I think that Monica Lewinsky thing – that-that time, he was different.

Q: In a good way or a bad way?

A: Uh, I think he wanted his name to be, um, gleaming in history -- of peace. And he tried to do that.

Q: Do you think he was successful?

A: Successful?

Q: Um hum.

A: No, no. I mean, you know, you can tell -- they're still fighting. So it was not. But he tried – what's his name, Rabin? Yeah, he tried to - okay. And they didn't succeed because as long as people think that U.S.A. is the right arm of Israel, nothing will change.

Q: What would you like to see, as far as changes?

A: In . . .

Q: U.S. foreign policy as it pertains to Israeli/Palestinian situation.

A: I-I-I -- what I really want to see is the United Nations doing the-the work of the states. Not the United States. Of course, now the United Nations is the U.N.-United States. It's U.S.A. equals U.N. – that's for sure. So that - it's not going to make any change now, but maybe in the future we have more . . . as I say, maybe Germany, Japan, other countries join the security counsel -- things may change with the foreign policy. The United Nations towards the Palestinians. Yeah, be neutral. Why do you ask Palestinians -- why do you ask the Syrians to obey the resolutions, but you don't ask Israel to do that? And it's been 20 years, and they did not do it. That's-that's a big question mark. Why do he do that? I mean, you asked Israelis to leave the parts that's occupied from Syria; Lebanon, I think, or Syria. And some parts of Jordan; some part of Egypt. They can do that and no U.S. planes were there to attack and take them out. But they were there to _____. So you can, it's – I don't know what to say, but it's clear. I mean, any-anyone can see that, except for U.S. citizens – they don't see it.

Q: Because of . . .

A: The media.

Q: The media.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Um, why did you come over here to study?

A: I got a scholarship, uh, from (respondent's alma mater) university to do (respondent's college major). And I had two options -- either United Kingdom -- England -- or U.S.A. And, uh, (clears throat) I couldn't do it anywhere else, of course. Because they want me to study in an English-speaking country. And these are the best two countries in (college major). So I had the option of there, or, you know, either England or the U.S.A. But then, my -- let's see, stepfather is the father of my wife, right? Father-in-law.

Q: The stepfather is married to your mother.

A: Okay, no. Then my father-in-law suggested I come here because he was here in the 70s. He said it's easier here, um, people are nicer. Of course, no one knew 9/11 was coming. But, that's what he said. So we made up our-our minds to come here and not to go to England. Because English people are so aggressive and, uh, they don't like Arab Muslims and I guess they're (pause) right (huh).

Q: Let me check the time to be sure I get you out of here. Okay, some people think suicide bombing and other forms of violence are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies . . .

A: Um hum (clears throat)

Q: . . . others believe (clears throat) no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is justified. What is your opinion and why?

A: Uh, I wouldn't -- if I were you, I would take the word "Islam" from that question.

Q: Excuse me?

A: I would take the word "Islam" from that question because it has nothing to do with Islam. Uh, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, he told people when they go in war not to kill women, not to cut tree, not to kill children. Those who do the suicide bombing, doing -- I mean, they're killing innocent people. So it's not a way fighting. I mean, I usually say to myself is, uh, do you, do you believe, as a person, that you are going to heaven?

Q: Me, personally?

A: Why?

Q: Uh, through Jesus Christ.

A: Okay, so if-if-if I tell you, "If you throw yourself from this mountain or building, you're going to go to heaven."

Q: Um, no (laugh).

A: No, no, no. Let's say-let's say-let's say that it's true. That if you do that -- if you jump from there -- you go to heaven. Okay, you would jump. But why wouldn't I, myself, the one who told you that, jump myself if I wanted to go to heaven? And Osama bin Laden is doing the same. I mean, he's asking people to go bomb, uh, you know (laugh), explode themselves because is an easy way to heaven. Why don't you do it yourself? Okay. So it's not really about Islam. It's not about going to heaven. I think they're going all to hell because they killed a lot of innocent people. The last two attempts were in Amman -- they killed like 60 people. And the person who encourages people to do that, didn't do that himself. So it's not a way of fighting -- it's not Islam -- is terrorism. It's just angry minds that wants to express their delight by watching other people die. It's just crazy.

Q: Is there debate going on between scholars about interpreting the Qur'an? I mean . . .

A: (clears throat)

Q: I-I knew that, there were times during the Crusades that . . .

A: Um hum.

Q: . . . we, even though Americans (pause) You know, I hadn't even thought about the Crusades until I started this study, and then I keep hearing it referred to over and over and over again. And, uh, you know, uh, there are those who say it's a stain on Christianity. It's a-it's a blemish on Christianity, even though it was 1,000 years ago, but, (clears throat) within the scholars of Islam, is there a debate going on between this issue right now? I'm assuming there must be.

A: Um hum.

Q: Or do you know?

A: It is clear, there is no saying in the Qur'an -- there is no saying by the Prophet that says, "Go kill yourself." In fact, there is a verse in the Qur'an that says, "Don't kill yourselves. Don't throw yourselves to death." Okay. Scholars can say whatever they want. I mean, they're cheap. Some of them are real cheap. Some of them are real cheap. They would say whatever the president wants them to say. I mean, as long as the government pays their, uh, gives them a paycheck at the end of the month, they will say whatever the government wants. Uh, I-I don't know of any independent scholar . . . uh,

who lives here. I mean, if we had independent scholars who live here, they would say the truth. We have imams, in the mosques here who say this is terrorism, this is suicide, it's not *jihad*, it's not *jihada*, or whatever they say. Yeah, but as long as the scholars back there debate about these things. And as long as they are, uh, paid by the government, then they say what the government wants. And, we consider them to be not true scholars.

Q: We being. . .

A: As Muslims in general. Yeah, we don't believe that. They're saying the truth. I mean, they-they say this who goes and does suicide bombing in Israel to go to heaven, and this who does it in Iraq goes to hell. What is the difference? I mean, you can tell, I mean, it's very simple. You can see. There are a lot of stupid people. In – they would say something and unknowingly contradict themselves immediately. Because, you know, if you, if you lie-if you tell a lie about something, you will forget what you said the next day. And you will add or delete some information. In fact, what happens with that -- if you pay closer attention to them, most of them -- say something and the other day they add or delete so you can tell they're not telling the truth.

Q: You're very interesting. Um, (clears throat) do you believe, do you support the democratization of predominantly Muslim nations?

A: Uh, (pause) I do. But-but how-how to achieve it is not through bombing Iraq or going after Syria. This way, it's not democracy, it's _____ the people. Uh, we can achieve democracy if all presidents die and their governments, too, die, and the nation is there by itself and they choose their presidents by themselves. I mean, we will never get to democracy this way. I mean, uh, if the king dies, his son becomes a king. Even if he was stupid, he's still a king. Presidents nowadays, it's becoming (laugh) it's like kingdoms. President would let his son or his follower or his deputy be president, and the people do not choose – they don't have the option to say anything. And at the same time, democracy through war -- like what is happening here in Iraq -- is not a democracy. I mean, you can take the street riots and the presidents of this country. I mean, this is impossible. All of the U.S., uh, how do I phrase that? All the-all the-the people who govern Iraq used to be nothing here.

Q: Nothing here, meaning in Iraq?

A: They're just ordinary people. They're not smart. I mean, they should-they-they don't deserve to be president. If you want someone to be a minister or a president, that one should be like George Bush, okay. And, I mean, because George Bush is very smart, he selected a person who would, again, be like other presidents. Take step under people – that's it. They put the one that really suits U.S.A. -- not suits the Iraqi people. Or they do it to Syria; the person-the president will be special designed to suit the U.S. needs, not the Syrian people or any country.

Q: What about democratization of Jordan?

A: We will never be there if we have a king.

Q: You don't see it ever happening?

A: No. The king has a right to cancel, uh-uh -- how do you say -- the council of deputies anytime he wants. This is no democracy. Um, the, I-I don't think deputies should have a vacation, at all, as a group. If there are 81 -- if one or two wants to take a vacation, that's fine. But you can't get them a three-month vacation -- all of them -- at the same. And you then -- your government does whatever it wants. Passes laws, changes things, and this vacation.

Q: While they're gone?

A: Yeah! And the-the deputies come and ("chew" sound) that's it. It's done -- you're not there.

Q: Interesting.

A: Yeah, this happens every year -- which isn't a democracy. But people can't say anything because they're hungry -- they're busy. And this would, you know, this is the policy -- to keep your people hungry, they will keep thinking putting food on the table and they will never pay attention to what you are doing. And that's what they're doing to us. Although we receive a lot of money from here, but we don't see it again.

Q: Interesting. Um, (pause) do you feel democracy is possible in a Muslim nation?

A: It is.

Q: What about church and state?

A: You mean-mean religion and state.

Q: (laugh) I'm sorry -- religion and state.

A: Uh, I don't think they should be separated. Because Islam came with all the rules we need to live in democracy. And people like ___ and-and like our president, changed this, uh, view; make it bad. They made it look like it's-it's something horrible. It is not. I mean, if they follow the teachings of the Qur'an, it is clear that you will live in democracy. And the Qur'an, it says that you have -- if you want to make a decision, you have to ask your people. They have to agree. This is not happening, okay. And if you want to, especially in Islam -- I don't know about Christianity -- but in Islam, if you want to separate this, this means that this concept is gone with the religion. You will not be

doing it in your policy, which is not right. Uh. I mean, what would, um, a question to anyone would be, what would be in the religions – especially Islam – that would contradict with a good democratic policy? Nothing. It's as simple as that. Yeah, I don't think democracy is achieved by, uh, having more prostitutes. I don't think democracy is achieved by, uh, by allowing people to, uh, take off their *hijab*. It's part of the religion. It's part of our faith. If you're not a Muslim, don't do it. It's fine. We don't – as Muslims, we don't force religion on anyone. And because it's in the Qur'an says that. You can't force anyone to follow you. But that's our policy. It isn't conflict with anything. It doesn't conflict with anything. There are teachings in the Qur'an that tell you exactly how to spread the money of a deceased person. Because there, it is clear there.

Q: What was your main source of news and information in your home nation of Jordan?

A: Jordanian TV. Papers. Uh, satellite dish. That's it.

Q: Did you ever listen to American media?

A: Uh, *CNN* sometimes.

Q: What about *Al Jazeera*?

A: Back there?

Q: See you were here in '99 . . . 2001. So *Al Jazeera* was there then. Did you watch it then?

A: Yeah, yeah. A little bit.

Q: A little bit. What about America?

A: *Al Jazeera*. Mainly.

Q: Online?

A: Online sometimes, and T.V. And nowadays I'm listening to *Future T.V.* Plus, of course, the American media. I mean, if I want to know the truth, I would just reverse it. Reverse the truth -- what they say -- you get the truth. I mean, they make nothing a big story. Something that little, they make it (chew).

Q: You're talking about American media?

A: Yeah. The media here. I mean. . .

Q: You don't think *Al Jazeera* or some of the Jordanian media is like that?

A: I think *Al Jazeera* is-is like that. Yeah, I mean, it's-it says that it's independent. But it's false -- the government, okay. So *Al Jazeera* would go more to the -- let's say, uh, the war in Iraq. They would go more to how desperate people, how, uh, U.S. forces are destroying people. And here, we're doing nothing! So it's -- you're doing something, but it's not as bad as that. Those people are portraying it . . .

Q: I see.

A: Yeah. So, we're -- I mean, uh, I always believe that I shouldn't believe anything unless I see it.

Q: That's probably the scholar within you. Uh, how has the media of your home nation contributed to your perception of America?

A: It depends on our relationship with the United States. In 1991; okay, yeah, 199-1990 since Saddam occupied Kuwait until, I think, 1995 -- U.S. was bad. And then things immediately change.

Q: On the news?

A: Yeah!

Q: The way the media portrayed?

A: Yeah-yeah, because the country at that time took the side of Iraq. For five years. And I believe this is what U.S.A. wanted the king to do at that time. "Go to that site. We want people to leave the country through your country." Or, you know, "We don't people to die this fast." Anyway, so we-we're, uh, with Iraq and the news, I mean, it was with Iraq-Iraqis fighting and the country's safe. Well, you know, we took their side. People, we were ___ with Iraq. Emotionally, we were there with them. And this image changes. And now the government has problems with Iraq; good relationships with, uh, the United States. So that we have the opposite image. Okay.

Q: Is your family still there, by the way?

A: Yeah. Yeah, still in Jordan.

Q: Uh huh. So you're hearing what's going on with them, basically?

A: Yeah, some. Some, some news.

Q: And how has the American media contributed to your perception of America? And I'm talking about, uh, when you were over there, when you listened to American media. Or, not only media but Hollywood entertainment, things like that. Growing up, did it contribute, in any way, to your perception of America when you came over here?

A: Um, okay, let me say this again. I don't trust the media. I don't believe it anymore.

Q: Even when you were young?

A: No, in the past, I used to take that. Nowadays -- no. Uh, I don't believe what I hear on T.V., especially with those reality shows. I mean, this is not true. This is absolutely not true. Uh, and on the news sometimes, there's this accident -- then this street, it is blocked. And we go to that street, there's nothing. It's just a guy who wants to be paid. They have to waste this time or this hour telling people things that most of the time did not happen. It's just to, you know, spend this hour, commercials, make money, stuff like that. Yeah. For example, this is last week -- the snow; the ice thing. They made a big deal of it here in Texas. It's not. Schools off. Why? But the media made it horrible. If there's a small tornado coming, they would scare the hell out of people here for nothing. I mean, they-they make . . . in our culture, we have a saying, "They make a mountain out of a seed."

Q: We say, "make a mountain out of a molehill."

A: Yeah, so it's almost the same. That's what they're doing. Yeah, ____ people this way. And people, you know, people here, uh, like my people, it's the same. Uh, feel

some kind of excitement about that. We know they're lying, but we enjoy it. That's what happened. They're-they're -- last week I just (chew) to hear that broadcast. It's the same, but I (chew), I walk to the Internet. Because we want this excitement; it's part of our nature. Yeah, but most of the time, I don't believe what I hear here. Uh, so, uh, it -- this might be-this might have contributed a little bit to my perception of the United States. Uh, but, uh, that the, because I don't believe the T.V. and what is said there. The image on the people outside is different. I mean, if they say that we have -- 99 percent of the Americans are bad, then 99 is good out there, okay. And when you live it, you know that this is, uh, true.

Q: And, last question. In your opinion, how has the American media portrayed your region of the world?

A: Horrible. So bad. You can't go there. If you go there, you may die. "I want to go there but I heard that you might get killed." This is what I hear most of the time from my students at, uh, I teach at xxx. They study Arabic. And it is not safe.

Q: These are American students?

A: Yeah. People there hate Americans. Uh. . .

Q: This is what they're hearing. . . .

A: Yes. This is what they hear from the media. They believe it. I told you, people here would believe anything. And they're believing the media now. They're saying this, it is not safe – women are not allowed to drive. That's only in Saudi Arabia, it's not everywhere. But geography, again, problems. Uh, think the media is screwing the image there. Okay, they -- I only once saw a program about Islam art on *PBS*. Is it *KRE*? What is it – public T.V.? About Islamic art and things like that. People do not watch public T.V. here.

Q: They do. There's some that do.

A: Some older people . . .

Q: Probably not so many at xxx -- the younger students.

A: Younger students.

Q: A lot of them are big on the History Channel -- things like that.

A: But at the same time, they would, after a week or so, change this image again by broadcasting a movie about a Saudi princess who got killed because she fell in love with a guy and she committed adultery with him -- with that guy. And they killed the princess and killed the, uh, the, uh, guy. And that's being not, uh, right. They shouldn't do this. They should respect human rights. And our faith – what happened for that princess, for example, is not right. Okay, if she was married and he was married, they should both be killed. If not, then they should marry. That's it. That's how the problem is solved (clears throat). Uh, so, they don't say that. What they say is, in Islam, if someone does that, kill him. Okay. Uh, war all over the area. You can't sit in a place in peace -- someone might come and commit suicide bombing. That's what they hear, so the media's doing a lot of damage to the image of that region.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to add?

A: Um.

Q: You have your voice and it's anonymous, so you can say anything you like.

A: I'm glad you only allow presidents for two terms.

Q: (laugh) It changed under Roosevelt.

A: Yeah, it's just -- I don't know. This home security -- homeland security thing has messed up a lot of our lives. I don't blame the country -- they have to protect themselves. But, I mean, they should *not* go after people who are registered, who came into the states legally and who does no harm to either students or people here to work. Go after those who come illegally, and, uh-uh, I wish the U.S. media goes to airports and show others how Muslims are searched in airports. Okay. And they ever say, "Well, we put this security machine or whatever in the air-airport. We're using this method now to scan people." Okay. It's not scanning people -- it's scanning Muslims. Okay. And they would ask you sometimes, uh, "What kind of a Muslim are you?"

Q: *Kind* of a Muslim?

A: Yeah.

Q: Are you talking about what sect you are?

A: No.

Q: or . . .

A: Are you one of the ones who would commit suicide bombing or are you a, you know, moderate? I don't know. So-so really (laugh).

Q: If you are a fundamentalist?

A: That's a stupid question.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't blame the country for this homeland security. But I mean, they should, you know, go after who really wants to do harm. And it's easy to tell who wants to do harm.

Q: Really.

A: Yeah.

Q: How can you tell?

A: You know, (pause) go in bars, you will find them all there.

Q: Hmm. Well, I know the-the-the ones that were in 9/11, I think -- I-I haven't read a whole lot on that, but I think they were partying or something like that.

A: Drinking, yeah.

Q: Before that, because they thought they were going to heaven anyway?

A: No. That's-that's . . . no. Because they're sick people. And I just -- I don't know-I don't know why they're doing that. They-they hate life. Maybe the-those peo-, the, like, people like Osama bin Laden or Zarqawi or whatever, they know which people to select. People who are so desperate, they want to die.

Q: Gullible perhaps, maybe? Young men that are gullible?

A: Desperate. No, people with depression.

Q: Umm.

A: Uh, because, uh, most people with depression usually think of committing suicide. Okay, so they go after these people. If they're not depressed, they will make them more depressed at life. They will make them more depressed at life. And then put this, "I mean, you want to do suicide, why not bombing yourself? People say this about you. We will take care of your family." I mean, we've seen this in movies. It's true -- that's what's happening. They're deceiving people to do wrong things.

REFERENCES

- al-Braizat, F. (2003) Muslims and democracy: an empirical critique of Fukuyama's culturalist approach. In Ronald Inglehart (Ed.), *Islam, Gender, Culture, and Democracy* (pp. 46-76). Willowdale, Ontario, Canada: de Sitter Publications.
- Al-Arian, L. (2004, September). Perceptions of U.S. in the Arab world. *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 23, 7.
- Amin, H. (2002). Freedom as a value in Arab media: Perceptions and attitudes among journalists. *Political Communication*, 19, 125-135.
- Amin, H. Y. (1995). Islamic newspapers and magazines. In J. L. Esposito (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the modern Islamic world* (pp. 244-246). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Amin, H. Y. & Napoli, J. (1997). The politics of accommodation: CNN in Egypt. *Journal of African Communication*, 2, 18-32.
- Anderson, J. A. (1987). *Communication Research: Issues and Methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Barone, M. (2005, August 29). Of minds and metrics. *U.S. News & World Report*, 139, 7.
- Battle, J. (Ed.) (2002, December 13). U.S. propaganda in the Middle East – The early cold war version. *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 78*. Retrieved April 25, 2006 from the National Security Archive Web site: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB78/essay.htm#3>

- Berg B. L. (1998) *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon
- Berg, B.L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences (4th Ed.)*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Berg, B. (2004). *Qualitative Research Method for the Social Sciences (5th ed.)*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. .
- Bernays, E. (1955). *The engineering of consent*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Blumler, J.G., and Katz, E. (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratification research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Boyd, D. A. (1999). *Broadcasting in the Arab World: A Survey of the Electronic Media in the Middle East*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press.
- Boyd, D. & Amin, H. (1993). The impact of home video cassette recorders on Egyptian film and television consumption patterns. *European Journal of Communication*, 18, 77-87.
- Calabresi, M. (2006, April 24). Iran's nuclear threat. Retrieved April 24, 2006 from Time.com Web site:
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,430649,00.html>
- Chapman, J. (2000, October). Review article: The power of propaganda. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35 (4), 679-688.
- Cull, N. J., Culbert, D. & Welch, D. (2003). *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: a Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Inc.

- Development versus dependency theory. Retrieved March 17, 2006 from
<http://www.revision-notes.co.uk/revision/619.html>
- Dore, R. (1990). *British Factory, Japanese Factory: The Origins of National Diversity in Industrial Relations*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: the social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. New York: Free Press.
- Fukuyama, F. (2001, October 11). The West has won: Radical Islam can't beat democracy and capitalism. *The Guardian*.
- Grondona, M. (2000). A Cultural typology of economic development. In L. E. Harrison and S. P. Huntington (Ed.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (pp. 44-55). New York: Basic Books.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Harrison, L. E. (1997). *The Pan-American dream: Do Latin America's cultural values discourage true partnership?* New York: Basic Books.
- Harrison, L. E. (2000). Promoting progressive cultural change. In L. E. Harrison & S. P. Huntington (Eds.), *Culture matters: How values shape human progress* (pp. 296-307). New York: Basic Books.
- Harrison, L. E. (2006, Spring). The culture club: Exploring the central liberal truth. *National Interest*, 83, 94-101.

- Harrison, L. E. & Huntington, S. P. (2000). *Culture matters: How values shape human progress*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hoffman, D. (2002, March/April). Beyond public diplomacy. *Foreign Affairs*, 81 (2), 83.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values (2nd Ed.)*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hoke, Z. (2005, October 12). Less information widens U.S.-Muslim gap. Retrieved October 14, 2005 from VOA News' Web site:
<http://www.voanews.com/english/NewsAnalysis/2005-10-12-voa72.cfm>
- Holbrooke, R. C. (2001, October 28). Get the Message Out (Op Ed). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved April 29, 2006 from
http://www.cfr.org/publication/4148/get_the_message_out.html
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Inglehart, R. (2000). Culture and democracy. In L. E. Harrison & S. P. Huntington (Eds.), *Culture matters: How values shape human progress* (p. 80-97). New York: Basic Books.
- Inglehart, R. (2003). Introduction. *Islam, Gender, Culture, and Democracy*. Willowdale, Ontario, Canada: de Sitter Publications.
- Inglehart, R., and Baker, W. (2000, February). Modernization, cultural change and the persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, 65, 1, 19-51.

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC – Pasdaran-e Inqilab). Retrieved February 12, 2006 from the Intelligence section of GlobalSecurity.org's Web site:

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/iran/qods.htm>

Jowett, G. S. and O'Donnell, V. (1999). *Propaganda and Persuasion (3rd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Kaplan, D. E. and Schaffer, M. (2001, October 8). Losing the psywar. *U.S. News & World Report*, 131 (14).

Kelidar, A. (1993). The political press in Egypt, 1882-1914. In C. Tripp (Ed.), *Contemporary Egypt: Through Egyptian eyes: Essays in honor P. J. Vatikiotis*. London: Routledge.

Kershaw, I. (1987). *The 'Hitler Myth.'* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Kluckhohn, F.R. and Strodtbeck, F.L. (1961). *Variations in Value Orientations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Lasswell, H. D. (1927). *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: Garland Publications.

Lasswell, H. D. (1927, August). The Theory of Political Propaganda. *The American Political Science Review*, 21, (3), 627-631.

Lindlof, T. R. (1991, Winter). The qualitative study of media audiences. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 35 (1), 23-43.

Lindsay, S. (2000). Culture, mental models, and national prosperity. In L. E. Harrison and S. P. Huntington (Ed.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (pp. 282-295). New York: Basic Books.

- Lull, J. (1980). The social uses of television. *Human Communication Research*, 6, 198-209.
- Lull, J. (Ed.) (1988). *World Families Watch Television*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- MacDougall, C., & Fudge, E. (2001). Planning and recruiting the sample for focus groups and in-depth interviews. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11, (1), 117-126.
- Masland, T.; Dickey, C.; Moreau, R.; Hussain, Z.; Ephron, D.; McIntyre, A.; & Ismail, G. (2003, April 14). The gathering storm. *Newsweek*, 141 (15), 32.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Military Intelligence Service (1946, February 14). Islam: A threat to world stability. *Intelligence Review* (declassified in 1979), 1. Washington D.C.: War Department.
- Mishler, E. (1986). *Research interview: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mohamad, H. (2000, Fall). [Review of the book Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy]. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 22, (4), 111.
- Nagorski, A. (2005, March 21). The pre- and post-Bush divide. *Newsweek*, 145 (12),13.
- Nanda, S. and Warms, R. L. (1998). *Cultural Anthropology (6th Ed.)* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Parsons, T. (1959). *The Social System*. Chapter 1. New York: Free Press.
- Parsons, T. and Shils, E. A. (1951). *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Perkovich, G. (2005). Deconflating “WMD.” White paper commissioned by Sweden’s Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC). Retrieved November 16, 2005 from: <http://www.wmdcommission.org/files/No17.pdf>
- Phillips, J. (2005, December 2). Dispelling the myths about Iraq. Research paper retrieved from The Heritage Foundation Web site:
<http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/wm932.cfm>
- Pipes, D. (1992). Dealing with Middle Eastern conspiracy theories. *Orbis*. Retrieved March 17, 2006 from <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/214>
- Pipes, D. (2005, December 27). Winning the propaganda war (versus radical Islam). *New York Sun*. Retrieved February 14, 2006 from
<http://www.danielpipes.org/article/3235>
- Pipes, D. (2006, February 13). Moslem states represent a potential threat to world peace. Retrieved February 13, 2006 from *FrontPageMag.com*:
<http://www.frontpagemagazine.com/>
- Pitts, Jr. L. (2006, February 13). When the ‘facts’ collide, honest debate is elusive. Retrieved February 25, 2006 from MiamiHerald.com Web site:
http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/living/columnists/leonard_pitts/13857767.htm
- Pratkanis, A. R. and Aronson, E. (1992). *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*. New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Rugh, W. A. (1979). *The Arab Press: News Media and Political Process in the Arab World*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Samovar, L. A. & Porter, R. E. (2004). *Communication between Cultures* (5th ed.), 58-59. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Scheuer, M. (2004). *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*. Washington, D.C: Brassey's Inc.
- Schneider, W. (2002, March 9). Reciprocal hostility. *National Journal*, 34, (10), 734.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Tait, R. and Harding, L. (2005, December 15). Iranian president calls holocaust a 'myth' in live T.V. broadcast. *The Guardian*. Retrieved February 11, 2006 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1667634,00.html>
- The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved March 30, 2006 from <http://www.heritage.org/about/>
- The Pew Global Attitudes Project (2005, June 23). U.S. Image Up Slightly, But Still Negative. Retrieved July 15, 2005 from: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=247>
- The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004, March 16). A year after Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe ever higher, Muslim anger persists. Retrieved November 29, 2004 from <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=206>
- Thomson, O. (1977). *Mass persuasion in history*. Edinburgh: Paul Harris.

- Trochim, W. M. (2004, August 16). Qualitative validity. *The Research methods Knowledge Base* (2nd Ed.). Retrieved May 2, 2006 from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.htm>
- Weaver, G. R. (2000). Contrasting and comparing cultures. In L. E. Harrison and S. P. Huntington (Ed.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (pp. 72-77). New York: Basic Books.
- Weiss, J. (2006, February 11). Struggling to save history's truths: Efforts to combat lingering denials of Holocaust's existence. *The Dallas Morning News*, p. 1H, 3H.
- Welch, D. (2002). *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Welzel, C., Inglehart, R., and Klingemann, H.D. (2003). Human development as a theory of social change: A cross-cultural perspective. Paper retrieved October 15, 2005 from the World Values Survey Web site at: <http://wvs.isr.umich.edu/papers/KRISEJPR.pdf>
- Wimmer, R. D., and Dominick, J. R. (2003). *Mass Media Research: An introduction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Winslow, L. (Executive Producer). (2006, February 7). Newsmaker: Vice President Dick Cheney. PBS's *Online News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. Interview transcript retrieved February 11, 2006 from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house/jan-june06/cheney_02-07.html

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Mary K. Pinkerton earned her bachelor's degree in journalism (public relations) from The University of Texas at Arlington in Arlington, Texas. She plans to return to full-time public relations employment upon graduation. Pinkerton's thesis topic was chosen partly because of her interest in world affairs and partly due to her vision of using public relations as a peacekeeping tool. For her efforts, Pinkerton earned U.T.A. Department of Communication's 2005 "Outstanding Graduate Student" award.