Arab-Muslim views, images and stereotypes in United States

Nader Al-Aulaqi

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ARAB-MUSLIM VIEWS, IMAGES, AND STEREOTYPES
IN UNITED STATES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Interdisciplinary Studies

by
Nader Al-Aulaqi
June 2003
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ABSTRACT

Even Though the United state is pluralistic society with many different people of all races, ethnic groups, and religious affiliations living going to school, and working together, an event like the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. did radically impact the general mood and atmosphere of the government, media, and people towards us Arab Muslims. Because of the ethnic and religious makeup of the terrorists being the same.

What are the perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of Arab Muslim Students about the racism and prejudice towards their ethnicity and religious affiliation before September 11, 2001 and after? These questions will be addressed in this research project by employing marketing research tools, techniques, and analysis.

If Arab-Muslim students feel unsafe, threatened, or general hostility from Americans, on and off campus, then they are likely to reconsider their decision to continue to receive their higher education here in the United State. Subsequently, their family members, brothers and cousins, from their countries will also likely not decide to attend U.S. universities in the future. Obviously, the exodus of Arab Muslim students from CSUSB as well as other
local universities. First, it would mean a loss of diversity in the student bodies. Most universities pride them selves in offering a diverse Second body with members from many ethnic groups and foreign contries. Secaned, these universities would also lose a significant amount of money received from us international students paying out-of-state tuition. Third, the local budinesses and apartment complexes would lose substantial revenue recived from us Arab students to live here while attending the universities.

The first part of the research will FOCUS ON addressing one prominent questions: What are the current attitudes of ara-mMuslim students towards the United state government, people, and media since the terrorist attacks of September11, 2001? From Marketing research prespective, an attitude is defined as a learned predisposition to react in some consistent positive or negative way to a given objects, idea, or set of information. Attitudes are state-of-mind constructs that are not directly observable. The only way to accurately capture and measure attitudes of Arab-Muslim student body on our campus, CSUSB, as well as some other local campuses, was to employ a survey research instrument to distribute to indiviual students for their responses. Once the current attitudes could be
quantified and measured with marketing research analysis, then the second part of the research study could be pursued in selecting a smaller sample of these respondents from the survey to participate in a focus group to investigate attitudes, feelings, and thoughts about racism and prejudice against Arab Muslims before and after September 11, 2001.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

California State University, San Bernardino, along with many other Southern California universities, have Arab-Muslim student bodies that are definitely impacted by the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks and the consequences felt by the American government, media, and general public toward them because of our racial-religious status of 'Arab-Muslim.' Most of us international, Arab Muslim students, in fact, are deeply concerned and afraid of the growing tensions in the United States as a whole towards our ethnic group.

Did the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001 create this tense, racist environment for us Arab Muslims in the United States or was it already pre-existing in a less evident manner? Have the American people been ingrained with years of negative images and stereotypes of Arab Muslims so that an event like September 11th simply triggered the media and public to elevate these negative, even violent, feelings towards Arab Muslims to more open, expressive levels? How have the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of the Arab Muslim
students changed since September 11, 2001? Do they feel safe? Do they feel threatened? Are they staying to finish school or are they leaving for back home because of safety concerns? What are the perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of Arab Muslim students about the racism and prejudice towards their ethnicity and religious affiliation before September 11, 2001 and after? These questions will be addressed in this research project by employing marketing research tools, techniques, and analysis.

Statement of the Problem

If Arab-Muslim students feel unsafe, threatened, or general hostility from Americans, on and off campus, then they are likely to reconsider their decision to continue to receive their higher education here in the United States. Subsequently, their family members, brothers and cousins, from their countries will also likely not decide to attend U.S. universities in the future. Obviously, the exodus of Arab Muslim students from CSUSB as well as other local universities. First, it would mean a loss of diversity in the student bodies. Most universities pride themselves in offering a diverse student body with members from many ethnic groups and foreign countries. Second,
these universities would also lose a significant amount of money received from us international students paying out-of-state tuition. Third, the local businesses and apartment complexes would lose substantial revenue received from us Arab Muslim students to live here while attending the universities.

The first part of the research will focus on addressing one prominent question: What are the current attitudes of Arab-Muslim students towards the United States government, people, and media since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001?

From the marketing research perspective, an attitude is defined as a learned predisposition to react in some consistent positive or negative way to a given object, idea, or set of information. Attitudes are state-of-mind constructs that are not directly observable. The only way to accurately capture and measure attitudes of the Arab-Muslim student body on our campus, CSUSB, as well as some other local campuses, was to employ a survey research instrument to distribute to individual students for their responses. Once the current attitudes could be quantified and measured with marketing research analysis, then the second part of the research study could be pursued in selecting a smaller sample of these respondents from the
survey to participate in a focus group to investigate attitudes, feelings, and thoughts about racism and prejudice against Arab Muslims before and after September 11, 2001.

Need For The Study

Even though the United States is a pluralistic society with many different people of all races, ethnic groups, and religious affiliations living, going to school, and working together, an event like the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. did radically impact the general mood and atmosphere of the government, media, and people towards us Arab Muslims because of the ethnic and religious make-up of the terrorists being the same.

The nineteen Al Qaeda operatives who participated in the terrorist act have been identified as Arab Muslim men who were members of a radical, fundamentalist terrorist group led by Osama Bin Laden, who has professed hatred and spite for the United States for many years. Yet despite the physical evidence and facts that no CSUSB students, or any Arab Muslim students from any local university in the immediate area, are associated or affiliated with these Al Qaeda operatives responsible for the horrifying, tragic
acts in New York City and Washington, D.C., the consequences of September 11, 2001 have affected all of us and our attitudes about living here in the United States with the same ethnic and religious identity as the nineteen terrorists. Yet, was the pre-existing climate and mood already racially-charged and tense from mass media stereotyping of Arab Muslims?

Objectives of the Study

The first objective of the research study is to examine the assumption that anti-Arab-Muslim prejudices and racist images exist in the United States public and media. An extensive literature review will be conducted on secondary sources concerning the racism and stereotyping done in the American mass media in the past about Arab Muslims. This background information can be extremely useful in demonstrating a pre-existing climate of prejudice and racism towards Arab Muslims was already established before the events of September 11, 2001 to compare to the responses of the focus group participants in the second part of the study.

The second objective of this research study is to try to distinguish and measure precisely and accurately the current attitudes of Arab Muslim students on CSUSB campus
as well as some other local area campuses to measure the depth of the individual cognitive, affective, and conative components. To achieve this research objective, the Trilogy approach will be employed. This Trilogy approach is a theoretical viewpoint in marketing research and used by researchers that assumes that a person's overall attitude consists of the interaction between three specific components: (1) beliefs (cognitive component), (2) their feelings (affective component), and (3) their outcome behaviors (conative component).

The third objective of the research study will be selecting ten to twelve respondents from the attitude survey portion to convene in a focus group with this researcher functioning as focus group moderate to examine more in-depth the beliefs, feelings, and behaviors of these Arab Muslim students in regards to the pre-September 11th and the post-September 11th social and cultural environment.

Definition of Terms

Attitude - a learned predisposition to react in some consistent positive or negative way to a given object, idea, or set of information
Cognitive component - represents the person's beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge about a specified object.

Affective component - represents the person's emotional feelings toward the given object.

Conative component - represents the person's intended or actual behavioral response to a given object.

Focus group - an interviewing technique where a moderator listens to a group of consumers talk about a brand, product/service, or consumption experience.

Literature review - an examination of secondary research sources to address a topic or problem of note.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research study concerns measuring attitudes of Arab Muslim students toward the United States government, media, and people since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. By accurately measuring these current attitudes, some conclusions and implications can be discussed from the results to be useful in comparing with the findings in the focus group interview session. A limitation of the study is that only the Arab Muslim students from CSUSB and other local area universities in Southern California will be surveyed and interviewed.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Anti Arab-Muslim Views, Images, and Stereotypes in United States

This literature review will examine and discuss the stereotypes and racist profiles spread by the American media concerning Arab-Muslims as violent terrorists to supplement and verify the assumptions of our research study concerning the attitudes of Arab-Muslim students in the post-September 11th climate. Arab-Muslim students who participated in this research study cited in some of their responses that anti-Arab Muslim views, images, and stereotypes were pre-existing in the United States before September 11th’s terrorist attacks. Some of the respondents blamed the mass media for establishing powerful anti Arab-Muslim views, images, and stereotypes. To clarify these sentiments, an extensive literature review was conducted in regards to U.S. mass media’s portrayal of Arab Muslims in print, on television, and in movies. This literature review will serve as background information for the research study to establish the facts and evidence that a racist, prejudice environment and climate already existed for Arab Muslims prior to the September 11th terrorist attacks.
When studying the portrayal of Arab Muslims in the United States mass media, terrorism and Islam are blended together into the same stereotypical racist images to make the American public think that all Arab-Muslims are crazy, violent terrorists. Almost everyday in the print newspapers and magazines, for example, in the reporting on the Jewish-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East, the slanting of the American media is evident in always showing Palestinians as Muslim terrorists willing to do suicide bomb missions in the name of Allah. On the other hand, the Jewish terrorists who slaughter innocent Palestinians are not displayed in the same way and we never see Jewish terrorists represented in the same negative imagery and stereotypes as the Muslims.

The ingrained stereotype of a Muslim being a terrorist in the American mass media and American public’s perception was most evident during the immediate aftermath of the Oklahoma City in 1995 bombing, when 'Arab-Muslim terrorist groups' were the first to be discussed as the bombers by the American mass media. (<terrorism.htm> 1). These racist conclusions were exposed as inaccurate when a native-born American man, Timothy McVeigh, ended up being the bomber. Yet, in the immediate hours and day after this bombing, before McVeigh was captured and identified as the
Oklahoma City bomber, the mass media was conveying the assumption that Arab Muslim terrorism was the source of the massive explosion and innocent people being killed.

When investigating this potential problem of stereotyping Arab Muslims, some interesting evidence was found that younger Americans are also taught to hold these false, negative stereotypes. Yahya R. Kamalipour, writer in the Web site, The Iranian, took an impromptu study of 500 high school students in five cities throughout northern Indiana in 1997 to find out their free associations with such subject matters as the Middle East, Arabs, Muslims, Iranians, and Israelis. This study uncovered the deep ingrained racist stereotypes in these young Americans' minds. The word 'terrorist' was used by most students in their associating words with the Middle East and Muslims. The high school students also viewed Muslims, Arabs, and people from the Middle East as 'anti-American.' When given a map of the Middle East, most students were only able to distinguish Israel as a distinctive country with its own culture, language, and politics. The Arab-Muslim countries were viewed as one 'big blob.' One of the most interesting results was that students were not able to recall anything positive about
the Middle East or Arab-Muslims in general. (Kamalipour 3).

In fact, when seriously investigating the roots of this kind of racism and bias, the stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims dates back to the Middle Ages. The expansion of Islam into North Africa and lower Spain brought the first conflicts between Arabs and Europeans. The Crusades to the holy cities in present-day Israel also were sources for stereotyping and racist profiling by the white Europeans. The Europeans eventually had to withdraw from this region but hatred and spite were formed in the minds of these rivals. The context for the American child to develop racist and negative stereotypes of Arab-Muslims, according to Kamalipour, begins with the movies and television shows that children watch about this region’s peoples. He points to the anti-Arab movies of “Aladdin” and “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” as great examples that indoctrinate negative, violent imagery of Arab-Muslims in the American children’s mind. (Kamalipour 3).

To support this assertion, Narmeen El-Farra, in “Arabs and the Media,” explains that Walt Disney’s animated feature film, Aladdin, released in 1993, has Americanized the names and appearances of the characters.
The main antagonist, Jafer, is the only character with exaggerated Arab features and becomes the evil villain in the film and the Saturday morning cartoon show on CBS. This depiction of Jafer as manipulative, scheming, and violent is typical of how the Arab-Muslim is portrayed by Americans. The making of Aladdin by Disney also reshaped the story to make Aladdin an orphan as if the Middle East is some backward region that did not have social programs or foster homes for orphans. Princess Jasmine, according to El-Farra, does not have the clothes of a traditional Arab-Muslim princess, but instead is put in the attire of a belly dancer to give her an air of sexuality instead of royalty to the young American viewers. (El-Farra 3). What are the consequences and implications of these images and stereotypes? Young American children develop a false stereotype of Arab Muslims.

The Hollywood film industry is legendary in conveying racist stereotypes and false images of Arab Muslims in their films. For example, in the popular film, True Lies, which was an action-packed comedy starring major box-office stars, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis, Arab-Muslims are depicted throughout the film in a very negative, violent way. The stereotypes are reinforced with this film that all Arab-Muslims are fanatical
terrorists and that Islam is a violent-oriented religious faith. The film shows the Arab-Muslim characters are religious fanatics bent on destroying the world. These Arab-Muslims are portrayed as very shallow characters who are sexist and racist. These individuals are failures in the film because they are portrayed as ignorant of common sense solutions. In other words, True Lies makes a viewer in this society confirm racist and negative portraits of Arab-Muslims in general. The Arab-Muslims are the 'bad guys' and they are given very surface, shallow qualities. (El-Farra 4). The American audience viewing this film, as well as the worldwide audience viewing it, comes away with images, stereotypes, and false assumptions about Arab Muslim people.

These types of racist stereotypes and violent imagery of Arab-Muslims in children's cartoon films and adult films in the United States are influential in the public perception of Islam and Arab people. Returning to the subject matter of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, this point can be made very clearly. For instance, as noted above, some American newspapers assumed the rumors were true that a Middle Eastern terrorist group was responsible. The headline of the Chicago Sun-Times was: In the Name of Islam. Below this headline, a large picture is
shown of a fire fighter holding a dead child in his arms. In the article, the assumptions are made that Arab-Muslim terrorists were responsible for the deadly bombing. The following racist comments make it clear that the writer was using his ingrained stereotypes of Arab-Muslim terrorists in his mind:

Who else could do such an act? Who else has motives? Why would these Middle-Eastern terrorists chose Oklahoma City? Because it’s in the heartland of America, and if they can strike there, they can strike anywhere. The whole aim is to strike fear in the hearts of Americans. (Tierney A1).

After the truth surfaced that an ex-American soldier did the bombing, the mass media stories and central focus of the bombing shifted quickly away from the Arab-Muslim terrorist angle. However, the press didn’t include apologies to the Arab Muslim community. Timothy McVeigh emerged as the guilty party and began to admit that he was a participant in a wider plot with other Americans to commit this act of domestic terrorism. McVeigh went on record about his motives and reasons for undertaking this type of terrorist action. McVeigh blamed the U.S. government for unjust and evil killings at Waco, Texas and Ruby Ridge, Idaho. He claimed this bombing was a revenge tactic for these unjust government actions against innocent civilians. McVeigh had no connections with any
Arab-Muslim terrorist group or did the mass media really bring this connection up again after McVeigh was caught. The point is that McVeigh was an American terrorist who bombed and killed American civilians. Arab-Muslims had nothing to do with it. Yet, this initial reporting demonstrates the ingrained images, stereotypes, and prejudices against Arab Muslims in American journalists and in much of the American public.

When broadening the investigation to include more evidence on the history of terrorism and terrorists, the facts clarify that terrorists are from every area of the globe, including from the United States and Israel. For instance, in the post-World War II politics of the Middle East, Jewish terrorist groups were numerous and very aggressive in their terrorist acts. British rule was coming to an end in Palestine. The Jewish terrorists were focused on ensuring the creation of the State of Israel by forcing the British to act. Jewish terrorists killed 338 British citizens in Palestine during the 1940s in acts of terrorism. The Jewish terrorists, for instance, blew up the King David Hotel, the British Headquarters in Jerusalem, in 1946, which resulted in the deaths of ninety-one people and demonstrated the first use of the letter bomb. Two of these Jewish terrorists later became
political leaders in Israel. Their names are Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. In other words, today's terrorist may become tomorrow's statesmen. Yet, the American media did not discuss or expose long stories on these two men's terrorist histories and violent acts in their pasts. Begin and Shamir were honored, respected, and given good media coverage during their time as Israeli leaders. (<terrorism.htm> 2).

The following comments by Edward Said on the U.S. government and media bias on terrorism in the Middle East support this argument that Jewish terrorists are not given the same attention:

It is simple extraordinary and without precedent that Israel's history, its record - from the fact that it is a state built on conquest, that it has invaded surrounding countries, bombed and destroyed at will, to the fact that it currently occupies Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian territory against international law - is simply never cited, never subjected to scrutiny in the U.S. media or in official discourse...never addressed as playing any role at all in provoking 'Islamic terror.' ("The History of Terrorism in the Region" 2).

The American mass media favors Israel over the Palestinians in the coverage and reporting on the violence erupting between them in almost continuous fashion year after year since Israel was formed without the Arab neighbors consent in 1948. The cycle of violence is always
blamed on the Palestinians or Arab-Muslim terrorist groups in most mainstream articles. Israel is portrayed as the victim and peacemaker, while the Palestinians are portrayed as the evil-minded terrorists. For instance, in an article during the attempt to forge a peace agreement in *Time*, the headlines read: Israel’s Last-Ditch Peace Plan. The copy underneath the headline reads: “Exhausted by violence, Israel’s politicians consider a radical move. Is it time for economic separation?” (Rees 90). The article is slanted in favor of Israel from start to finish. The Israeli leaders are referred to as Prime Minister Ehud Barak or Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami. In contrast, the Palestinian leader is just called by his regular name, Yasser Arafat, as if he is not distinguished by a presidential or a chairman title for the Palestinian cause. In other words, the bias and prejudice is evident even in the little things as giving people their right titles and identifications in the news article. The rest of the report refers to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat as simply ‘Arafat.’ He is portrayed as a negative and violent leader of the Palestinians in the article while the Israeli leaders are provided honorable praise and respect. The following assessment is given about PLO Chairman Arafat’s decision-making ahead of him:
In private, the Palestinian leader is showing signs of wanting to step back from the abyss. But his next steps involve the tricky problem of pleasing both the world community and his constituents. In a meeting of his national security council last week, top figures from his Fatah faction tried to dissuade Arafat from accepting Clinton's invitation to the White House. (Rees 92).

What abyss is the reporter talking about? Chairman Arafat is portrayed as the 'evil' villain by implication and inference in this report about the peace process in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians. The report is slanted that the Palestinians depend on Israel for their economic future and that the separation of the two into totally separated states would be a disaster for the Palestinians. In other words, the quality of life for Palestinian people is being assumed to have an interpendence on the success of the peace process. This American mass media article is typical to stereotype the Arab-Muslim leader as the radical or fanatic in the peace process negotiations. He is not even called by his official title of PLO Chairman because of the bias and prejudice on behalf of the reporter writing the article.

The past couple of years, the American mass media is also reporting the suicide bombers and other Arab-Muslims participating in the uprising against the brutal Jewish rule over their land and culture as 'terrorism.' A great
example is the reporting on the Palestinian man, Khalil Abu Albah, who drove his bus into a crowd of Israeli soldiers at Azur Junction near Tel Aviv killing eight and injuring 38. He was later wounded and captured after a high speed chase. This bus incident is called by the reporter of a Time magazine article is 'the worst attack in Israel since late September and plunged the country into yet more grief and anxiety.' (Hammer 42). This incident is called a terrorist act by this magazine writer when obviously it was a bus driving who drove his bus into a crowd. He wasn't throwing bombs or shooting guns. He was just a hard-working bus driver who snapped because of the frequent deaths of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli soldiers in Gaza. The assessment of this Palestinian bus driver by the magazine writer is prejudice, bias, and stereotyping Palestinians as terrorists:

Many Israeli security experts fear that the driver could re-present a new breed of terrorist: apolitical, unaffiliated with militant organizations, yet radicalized. Israeli hardliners in-tensified calls for permanent closure of the West Bank and Gaza. Others warned that imposing a total stranglehold could foster deeper rage - and create an army of Abu Ulbahs (Hammer 42).

The family members of Abu Ulbah claim that evidence of this incident appears to indicate that it was a traffic accident. Could it have been just a traffic accident? This
possibility is immediately undermined by this magazine’s writer deciding to place these quotes from a family friend named Hani, 25, who gives this feedback to help justify the racist, stereotype of the Arab-Muslim as a blood-thirsty, cold-blooded terrorist: “I’m happy about it. The killings were a simple way to teach Israelis a lesson - blood for blood.” (Hammer 42). This kind of quotation is used to support the stereotype of Arab-Muslims as terrorists in the Middle East for the American reading public to reaffirm their own racist stereotypes. This writer ends the article with the emphasis that this is a lesson that “more and more ordinary Palestinians to impart.” (43). This is a racist judgment call. Hammer is a reporter who is assuming that all Palestinians are potential terrorists. He isn’t taking into consideration any other view or judgment. Palestinians are angry, violent terrorists and therefore Israel is probably going to have to get more violent against them.

Another media event that stereotyped and displayed racist prejudice against Arab-Muslims and the Islam religion is the case of the EgyptAir Flight 990 that crashed into the Atlantic Ocean in 1999. The investigation revealed that the pilot had deliberately put the plane into a steep descent and turned off the engines. The
bizarre behavior of the pilot is not understood in this article because of the fact that the voice data recording had not been studied. In this article, the implications and inferences that human error was a cause of the crash is very evident. The graphics and report illustrate that the pilot and co-pilot may have engaged in some kind of struggle to fly the plane. Eventually, they lost control as the plane plunged into the Atlantic Ocean with all people dying aboard, including some 30 Egyptian military officials. (Hosenball 37). Yet, later on, when additional reports surfaced on this tragic flight of EgyptAir 990, the investigators pointed to one of the pilots as responsible for deliberately crashing the jet airliner as an act of 'terrorism' for some unknown cause. In other words, due to the fact that this pilot is an Arab-Muslim, the conclusions drawn by the U.S. investigators is that he decided to commit an act of terrorism.

The terrorist stereotypes and imagery of Arab-Muslims is always being reported in the mass media everyday in the United States. The connection between terrorism and Arab-Muslims is deeply ingrained and impressed in the average American’s mind. The mass media is unrelenting in the negative portraits and negative imagery. For instance, the Iranian hostage crisis of the late 1970s has also
labeled this ancient people as terrorists by American media. All Iranians are terrorists in the eyes of the American mass media. For instance, in one recent article, the Iranian terrorism stereotype is clearly shaped in the pictures and the report itself. The headline reads: Hizballah Returns to a Dangerous Business. This headline is typical of an American media report.

The pictures say a thousand words. One of the leaders of this terrorist organization, Hizballah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, is pictured in his all-black 'terrorist' garments right above a picture of weapons and a group sitting near them. The association of the black garments and the weapons is obvious. What we have is a terrorist group preparing to do more violence, right? This is the central message of this reporter’s article and graphics. Nasrallah is quoted as saying that the principal goal of the terrorist organization is to free Jerusalem from Israeli occupation (Moaveni 94).

When Al Qaeda terrorists drove commercial airliners into the World Trade Center towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, the American mass media and public were already prejudice and racist towards Arab Muslims in a significant sense because of the sociocultural images and stereotypes
already established in their minds. So, the September 11th terrorist attack on the United States can be signifiged as the coup de grace to solidify and permanently establish these stereotypes and profiles of all Arab-Muslim men as terrorists. The mass media has been eating this story up like a frenzy as the identifications were made on most of the hijackers, and most were coming from Saudi Arabia, as well as assorted other Arab-Muslim countries. Osama Bin Laden, another Saudi, emerged as a primary suspect because of the involvement of his Al-Quaeda terrorist group. This connection drawn by the initial investigations called for only one solution for the Bush administration. Invade Afghanistan, eliminate the strong holds of Al Quaeda and the ruling government, the Taliban, and punish these terrorists for their killing of almost three thousand innocent Americans in the September 11th attacks. The war on terrorism has intensified the prejudices and bias of Americans in some places in society, especially those most narrow-minded Americans, who tend to stereotype and profile based on media information. These Americans are the ones heavily influenced by the mass media stereotyping of Arab Muslims as terrorists on television, in the movies, and in print articles concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
The American mass media is outright racist at times with some of their stereotyping of Arab-Muslims. The flood of media attention to the racist profiling of Arab-Muslims as potential terrorist suspects has meant difficult circumstances for even the permanent Arab-Muslim residents of the U.S. For example, being an Arab-Muslim international student, attending California State University, San Bernardino, several incidents involving my friends from back home have unfolded since September 11th that shows racist profiling is happening. One of my friends was in the international section of the Lox Angeles airport when two security people approached him and requested to ask him a few questions. He was taken into a secure room and detained for over two hours. He was asked many questions concerning the terrorist attacks and his activities in the United States. He is an international student studying to be a marketing manager in his home city. But, the racist profiling of Arab-Muslims transformed this student friend into a terrorist suspect in the eyes and minds of these two security persons. How? Because he looked like a typical Arab-Muslim man. The mass media has fed the American public so many stereotypes and racist profiles that an Arab-Muslim man is like a walking neon sign at the current
time in this society that spells out “terrorist” in big, bold letters.

Based on this literature review of the American mass media’s portraying of Arab Muslims as terrorists in print, on television, and in the movies clearly demonstrates a pre-existing climate of prejudice and bias already existing against Arab Muslims before the September 11th attack. The American mass media is definitely and clearly stereotyping the ordinary Arab-Muslim as a ‘terrorist.’ By reviewing the American media’s articles and information about Arab-Muslims, the bias and slanted judgments are obvious and very evident in both the pictures and writing. The negative portrayals of the Arab-Muslim as terrorist is something that only causes problems and conflicts with our people and the Westerners. There is no reason why us peace-loving, non-violent Arab-Muslims should be victims of racist prejudice and bias here in the United States.

The stereotypes and prejudice opinions about Arab-Muslims has been somewhat offset by the accurate information and accurate reporting about the average, everyday Arab-Muslims who are peaceful, law-abiding, and very generous individuals. All of my Arab-Muslim family, friends, relatives, and neighbors back in my home country are all friendly, peaceful, generous people. These
stereotypes and racist profiles are readily accepted by 
the American public because there is not sufficient 
attention and reporting about the "real" Arab-Muslims. The 
typical media report in this country continues to feature 
the description of the Arab-Muslim 'terrorists' doing 
terrorist acts. The front page of the newspapers don't 
feature Arab-Muslims praying together but instead we see 
terrorist suspects being held in Cuba, or another 
terrorist bombing in Israel.

When assessing all the information and material, the 
American mass media has sustained and reinforced these 
stereotypes and racist images of Arab-Muslims as 
terrorists. The September 11th tragedy in New York and 
Washington, D.C. has only amplified these stereotypes, 
prejudices, and racist profiles. The mass media has 
brought some positive portraits and portrayals of the real 
Arab-Muslim family and people but not sufficient numbers 
to offset the negative reporting and negative 
stereotyping. The only solution is for the federal or 
state governments to initiate some kind of watchdog 
organization to oversee the American media and demand that 
stereotyping and racist opinions be prevented. 
Arab-Muslims deserve fair treatment just like any other 
people who are discussed in the American mass media. The
use of prejudices, racism, and stereotyping in the free press in the United States only brings out the worst in the people reading and assuming what is being told to them is all facts and the truth of Arab-Muslims. Thus, this literature review verifies and confirms to an extent that indeed an anti-Arab-Muslim sentiment, value system, and set of images are perpetuated by the American mass media in the various forms of media vehicles.

It is now appropriate to undertake an analysis of the questionnaire and focus group interview results to compare and evaluate the findings and implications from this research data with that found in the secondary sources to frame potential conclusions.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

Secondary resources on the issue of Arab Muslim stereotypes and negative images being conveyed by the American mass media can be found in the university library, on the Internet, television programs, and in movies. These secondary sources provide evidence that can be discussed in regards to the pre-existing problem of stereotypes and racist imagery of Arab Muslims before September 11th even happened. The literature review portion of this research project is framing the background information that will be useful when comparing with the results of the survey and focus group interview.

Survey - Questionnaire Design

The content and organization of the data gathering instrument in part one of the research study focuses on distinguishing the current attitudes of 40 Arab-Muslim students from CSUSB and other area universities toward the United States people, media, and government in the aftermath climate and environment since September 11, 2001. This questionnaire in its complete form can be found in Appendix One in the back of this paper.
The questions are designed to provoke responses along a scale with the opposing poles of Strongly Agree (SA) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The three middle responses consist of Agree (A), Neutral (N), and Disagree (D). The objective was to collect information from these 40 students in the research sample that reflect cognitive, affective, and conative components of their overall attitudes. A copy of the questionnaire is contained in the Appendix Section in the back of this research report.

Sampling Procedures

The sample population consists of 40 Arab-Muslim students from United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain who are attending California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), Riverside Community College (RCC), and University of California, Riverside (UCR). This researcher is a citizen of the United Arab Emirates and is friends and acquaintances with almost all of these students, with the exception of ten, who were generated through these other participating students. By generating a sample of 40 students from three university campuses, the sample size is sufficient to give a level of statistical significance.
The sampling plan was framed from a set of logical steps to determine and identify the group of people that are investigated in this project. This researcher used the defined information problem statement and the established research objectives as guidelines so these steps can be distinguished.

Step 1 - Define the Target Population

In any sampling plan, the first task of the researchers is to determine and identify the complete group of people or objects that should be investigated in the project. The target population was given its identity: Arab-Muslim students. Clear understanding of the target population helps the researcher successfully draw a representative sample.

Step 2 - Select the Data Collection Method

The questionnaire instrument was selected as the method for collecting the required raw data from the target population.

Step 3 - Identify the Sampling Frame Needed

After gaining an understanding of who or what should be investigated, the researchers must assemble the list of eligible sampling units. This list needs to contain enough information about each prospective sampling unit so the us researchers can successfully contact them. We composed a
list of all our Arab-Muslim friends from the three different local campuses, CSUSB, RCC, and UCR, and also expanded the list when getting ten more students from these contacts and the relevant information to request their participation in this research. An accurate representative sample was composed of these sampling units. All individuals were Arab-Muslim students who were attending local universities on student visas from Arab-Muslim countries near and around the Arabian Gulf region.

Step 4 - Select the Appropriate Sampling Method

Depending on the extent to which raw data will be used to form estimates about the target population, using a probability sample method will always yield more and better accurate information about the target population’s parameters then will any of the available nonprobability sampling methods. The seven factors that us researchers considered in the appropriateness of using the questionnaire method were: (1) research objectives, (2) degree of desired accuracy, (3) availability of resources, (4) time frame, (5) advanced knowledge of the target population, (6) scope of the research, and (7) perceived statistical analysis needs.
Step 5 - Determining Necessary Sample Size

In this step of the sampling plan, the researchers are considering the precise sample size to collect the necessary and appropriate raw data. To determine the appropriate sample size, decisions were made concerning (1) the variability of the population characteristic under investigation, (2) the level of confidence desired in the estimates, and (3) the degree of precision desired in estimating population characteristics. It was in this step of the plan that we also decided how many completed surveys were necessary to enter the data analysis activities of the overall research project. We assumed that the sample size is not equal to the usable raw data.

Step 6 - Creating an Operating Plan for Selecting Sample Units

In this step, we carefully laid out operating plans to contact and provide the survey instrument to each sampling unit. The questionnaire was double-checked and evaluated to ensure that the instructions are clearly written so that the respondents know exactly what to do.

Step 7 - Execute Operational Plan

The operational plan was undertaken and all 40 sample units were given the questionnaire and pick-up times were arranged with each individual. Our contact phone
number was provided so that when questionnaires were completed, they were immediately picked up without delay.

Data Collection
Self-administered questionnaires was an excellent way to collect the raw data from the 40 sampling units because of our personal connections and contacts with each individual. The delivery of the questionnaires and the pick-up of the completed questionnaires provided us with a 100% response rate. All 40 sampling units participated and completed the questionnaires. They were given assurances by this researcher of total confidentiality in their identities and responses. All respondents were courteous and prompt in returning their responses to this researcher.

Focus Group Interview
The focus group interview is a time-honored data-collection method in marketing research. Focus groups provide a good opportunity for marketers to experience firsthand how consumers think and feel about a product brand, its characteristics, and their consumption experience. The focus group interview presents an opportunity for these consumers to provide information that would be difficult if not impossible to obtain
through traditional interviewing methods. For this research study, the focus group interview provides an opportunity to get a small sample of Arab Muslim students who participated in the survey portion of the study to provide more detailed information about their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors before September 11th and after September 11th. As moderator, specific questions can be designed to try to keep the participants focused on providing the most valuable, useful information for achieving the objectives of this study.

Procedure

The focus group was composed of 10 Arab Muslim students from the survey portion of the study. These individuals were asked to participate randomly from the larger sample of 40 students who responded to the survey questionnaire. The focus group convened at the banquet room reserved in one of the Riverside Sizzler Restaurants. The session lasted for two hours. A relaxed, comfortable setting was provided. All participants were given complete details of the focus group interview's function in this research study. My role as focus group moderate was to keep the participants discussing a certain set of topics within the time limit. My responsibility as focus group
moderate was to make sure every member of the focus group participated in the discussion.

Value of Focus Group Interview

The overriding reason for conducting focus groups is to collect more detailed, in-depth responses from individuals concerning their experiences. Because of the unstructured nature of the data collection exercise, the focus group interview can provide information that would be difficult if not impossible to obtain through the use of other marketing research techniques. The primary usefulness of the focus group interview is providing qualitative, descriptive information. The value of the interaction of a small group of participants of the same age and same background addressing the same problem is that new thoughts and new ideas are sparked by the group interaction. Also, due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, this gathering of individuals in a focus group allows them to not temper their remarks and speak their minds about the topics being addressed. Another value of the focus group interview is the logistics that these participants can be assembled in one location at the same time to collect data from them on this set of topics being addressed by this research study.
CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS OF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The triology approach recognizes that a person’s compete attitude toward an object consists of three components: the cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive component of an attitude represents the person’s beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge about a specified object. These aspects are key elements and outcomes of learning. An attitude’s affective component represents the person’s emotional feelings toward the given object. Many times, this is the component that is normally expressed when a person is asked to verbalize his or her attitude toward an object. The affective component can be viewed from the marketing research position as the amount of feeling given to an attached belief. It serves as a mechanism that allows a person to create some type of hierarchical order among a set of beliefs about an object. The conative component of an attitude represents the person’s intended or actual behavioral response to the given object. This part of an attitude tends to be an observable outcome driven by the interaction of a person’s cognitive and affective components toward a given object.
Appendix I contains the complete questionnaire that each of the 40 respondents received and filled out and returned to this researcher. This questionnaire was carefully designed to attempt to measure these three components, cognitive, affective, and conative, of each respondent's attitude towards the object(s), the United States and Americans. The responses to the twenty questions varied among the respondents with the exception of a few which brought almost unanimous agreement from the 40 respondents.

One of these questions was #2, which asked: “People’s attitudes towards me have changed since September 11th, 2001.” All 40 respondents in the survey circled Strongly Agree or Agree. This unanimous response that Americans’ attitudes have changed towards them, as Arab Muslim students, is significant for the objectives of this study. These 40 Arab Muslim students attending universities here in Southern California “think” and “feel” that attitudes of Americans around them have changed since September 11, 2001. The focus group interview portion of this research study targeted the more detailed reasons and motives for these students responding to this particular question in this manner.
Another unanimous response that is significant for this study concerns Question #4 on the survey questionnaire which states: "The racist incidents against Arab Muslims I know at school or in the general area have increased since September 11th, 2001." All 40 Arab Muslim students circled either Strongly Agree or Agree. Evidently, all of the Arab Muslim students have encountered some racist incident involving themselves, friends, or fellow students since September 11, 2001 or have heard about some ugly incident through word-of-mouth sources. Most important, this unanimous response shows the cognitive and affective components of these 40 Arab Muslim students are impacted since September 11, 2001 in regards to the possibility of a racist incident occurring to them or their fellow Arab Muslims. Again, the focus group interview of this research study targeted more detail responses in relation to this issue.

The four questions that provoked a unanimous response of Strongly Agree from all 40 Arab Muslim students participating in the questionnaire concern the set in the middle of the survey addressing the mass media. These questions, #9-#12, are framed almost exactly the same. Question #9 can be used as an example: "The American television media uses the September 11th terrorist attacks
as a factor to fuel prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public." The other questions in this set simply use the same format but replace "television" with "print media," "radio media," and "internet media." All 40 students responded that they "Strongly Agree" that the mass media is fueling prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public with their reporting bias. The focus group interview targeted finding out in more detail what caused these Arab Muslim students to have this attitude towards the mass media.

A majority of Arab Muslim students participating in the survey questionnaire also strongly agree or agree with the statement that may have huge implications for the local universities. Question #16 states: "The September 11th terrorist attacks and its consequences among Americans towards Arab Muslims have made me reconsider my educational plans in the United States." Thirty-five out of the forty respondents either strongly agree or agree with this assertion. Only five respondents selected neutral or disagree. This finding implies that CSUSB and the other universities in the area could experience an exodus of Arab Muslim students if the racist tensions and racist stereotyping of these students continues in the near future. The focus group interview sought more details
about what alternative plans these students were organizing if they did leave the United States for other universities overseas.

Another important finding in the results of the survey questionnaire are that a majority of the respondents strongly disagree or disagree that they have changed their socializing habits since September 11th, 2001. Most of the respondents disagree that they have changed their socializing habits with fellow American students, instructors, neighbors, and American people in routine interactions in convenience stores, grocery markets, and other public places. Obviously, more details were pursued in the focus group interview in terms of precisely why and how these socializing habits among the Arab Muslim students have not substantially changed.

It was also clear that the majority of the respondents did clarify in their responses to Questions #6 and #7 that they have not experienced any increase of racial prejudice or hostility on campus, by fellow American students, or by any of the instructors. In fact, the 40 respondents unanimously circled disagree or strongly disagree to Question #7 which states: "The September 11th terrorist attacks have increased racial prejudice and hostility towards Arab Muslims among
instructors in the classroom based on your personal observations and experiences.” The majority circled disagree or strongly disagree to Question #6 which states: “The September 11th terrorist attacks have increased the racial prejudice and hostility towards Arab-Muslims among the student body on campus and in the classroom.” The implications of these findings is that the Arab Muslim students feel safe on campus and in the classroom. They are responding that the campus, classroom, and behavior of instructors and students has not changed against them in any significant sense.

The majority of respondents also cited that they have not radically changed their religious behaviors or expressions of their religious beliefs in public because of the September 11th terrorist attacks. For instance, 38 out of 40 respondents circled Strongly Disagree to Question #17 which states: “The September 11th terrorist attacks and consequences on Americans’ prejudices has made me conceal or hide my religious views, expressions, and rituals as a Muslim?” A similar majority, 34 out of 40 respondents, circled Strongly Disagree to Question #18 which states: “The September 11th terrorist attacks and its consequences on Americans’ prejudices towards Arab Muslims has been a factor for my fellow Arab Muslim
students to conceal or hide their religious views, expressions, and rituals as Muslims." Almost all of the student respondents obviously did not feel or think they were threatened by any Americans for openly expressing their religious views, beliefs, and exercising their religious rituals in public as they did before September 11th.

The majority of respondents in the survey questionnaire appear to clearly think and feel that Americans and the American government are more prejudiced and racist towards Arab Muslims in general by their responses to these types of questions. For instance, 35 out of 40 respondents circled Strongly Agree or Agree to Question #19 which states: "The September 11th terrorist attacks has made the general mood and attitude of most Americans more and more anti-Arab and anti-Muslim." Also, 37 out of 40 respondents circled Strongly Agree or Agree to Question #20 which states: "The September 11th terrorist attacks caused American government and people in the general public to look for a scapegoat to blame for these horrifying events." And 31 out of 40 respondents circled Strongly Agree or Agree to Question #5 which states: "The September 11th terrorist attacks have shaped a climate of prejudice and hostility towards Arab Muslims.
in the United States government and its agencies, such as the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS)?"

Obviously, these student respondents’ cognitive and affective components are impacted significantly by the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks based on these responses in regards to their general attitude of the public and government reaction to Arab Muslims. They "think" and "feel" Americans and the government have changed significantly towards their presence in the country.

Yet, in regards to their everyday behavior and behavior outcomes with Americans they interact with personally, which is directly involving the conative or behavior component, these student respondents are not as significantly impacted by the September 11th terrorist attacks. This finding can be supported by the majority responses in the first three questions of the survey questionnaire. A majority, 29 out of 40 respondents, circled Strongly Agree or Agree to Question #1 which states: “I feel safe at all times.” A majority, 27 out of 40 respondents, circled Disagree or Strongly Disagree to Question #2: “People’s attitudes towards me have changed since September 11th, 2001.” And another majority, 26 out of 40 respondents, circled Disagree or Strongly Disagree
to Question #3: "I have changed the way I live in the United States since September 11th, 2001." A majority of student respondents feel safe at all times, don't think people have changed their attitudes towards them in any radical sense, and they have not changed the way they live in the United States since this event. In their personal lives, and the immediate environment around them, a majority of these student respondents are conveying the attitudes that they have not changed their behavior dramatically or significantly in regards to their routine behavior in living, going to school, going to markets and stores, and interacting with Americans. The focus group interview sought to examine more in-depth this stable behavioral component among most of the respondents despite September 11th. It is appropriate to now shift over to the analysis of the results of the focus group interview with 10 randomly selected respondents out of these 40 who participated in the survey to try to probe deeper and into more detail concerning their responses.
The focus group interview was tape recorded by this researcher to study and evaluate the responses of the two hour session involving 10 Arab Muslim students selected randomly from the survey questionnaire respondents. All participants were made aware of the tape recording rationale. Also, since all of us speak Arabic as our first language, the focus group session was conducted in this language. This researcher made the appropriate translations into English for this study. The set of questions is found in Appendix II.

The purpose of the focus group interview was targeting some of the significant issues and findings from the survey questionnaire to pursue more details from the participants concerning their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors since September 11th. Functioning as the focus group moderator, this researcher was aware that the success of the actual focus group session depends heavily on my communication skills, interpersonal interactions with participants, and my own probing and interpretive skills to collect the desired data from these
participants. As moderator, my responsibility in this two hour session as not only to ask the right questions but also to stimulate and control the direction of the participants' discussions over a variety of predetermined topics associated with their responses to the questionnaire survey.

The actual focus group session took place on a Saturday afternoon at a banquet room in Sizzler's Restaurant in Riverside, California. This banquet room was reserved by this researcher specifically for this focus group session for two hours. The participants were asked to come an hour early to enjoy lunch before the session started to heighten their comfort levels. Each participant was greeted warmly by me as the moderator and made to feel comfortable. An opportunity was given during the lunch hour for the participants to get friendly, exchange small talk, and feel comfortable with each other. During this socializing period, as moderator, my observations were made to notice how well the group members were interacting and conversing with one another. After the lunch period ended, all ten participants were asked to take their seats around a table.

The ground rules at the start of the session were established: (1) Only one person was to speak at a time;
(2) Stick to the topic or issue being discussed; (3) When a person is finished speaking, other participants may ask that person questions or challenge his or her position one at a time; (4) All participants must maintain awareness at all times of the research purpose of this session; (5) No personal attacks or put-downs are tolerated; (6) Be courteous and use clear speaking voice; and (7) Try to limit each response to 5 minutes or less.

As the survey questionnaire revealed, some of the questions evoked unanimous responses from all 40 of the participating respondents. The issues related to these unanimous responses were selected by me as the moderator as the initial topics to be discussed in the session to try to establish solid rapport and interaction among the 10 focus group participants. The first issue was introduced by me as the moderator in this manner: "All of you present today responded with either a Strongly Agree or Agree that Americans' attitudes have changed towards each of you as Arab Muslims studying in this country. What are your thoughts and feelings about why this is so?"

As each participant took their turn addressing this topic, my purpose as moderator was to guide the process of making sure everyone got to say something and provide feedback or questions to other participants. The focus
group participants were eager to respond to this issue. When studying the tape recording of this part of the session, all the 10 participants did support the contention that they "thought" and "felt" the Americans' attitudes had changed to the negative because of the horrific nature and number of people that died in the tragedy and how the blame was being placed on the Islam religion as much as the Arab Muslim people as one collective entity rather than separating the ordinary, law-abiding, and good Arab Muslims like themselves from the violent-prone Al Qaeda terrorists who are following a deranged version of Islam. An important detail of the assumption among these 10 focus group participants that Americans' attitudes have changed towards them was the belief that Americans accepted the mass media's interpretations and judgments on Arab Muslims.

The next topic issued by me as the focus group moderator in relation to the unanimous responses from the survey questionnaire concerned the mass media bias and racist stereotyping. The topic was introduced in this manner: "All of you in the survey strongly agreed or agreed that the American television, print media, radio media, and Internet media were fueling prejudice and racist sentiments among the American public. Can you
please provide more details of your thoughts and feelings about this belief?" This topic, when studying the responses on the tape recording and examining the different participants’ emotional outbursts, can be considered a critical and significant one for the overall conclusions for this study. Obviously, these participants had been exposed to the mass media coverage of September 11th in all its different forms and do continue to be exposed to this coverage. Several of the respondents gave detailed descriptions of some of the most obvious racist coverage and anti-Muslim sentiments conveyed by the television journalists. These respondents conveyed their thoughts and emotions with anger and concern. All of the respondents had something to say critically against the American mass media.

At this point, as moderator, my decision had been made to raise the issue of the pre-existing stereotypes, images, and prejudices against Arab Muslims in general in the American mass media before September 11th. The literature review conducted in this research study clarified that the mass media had provided negative images, stereotypes, and messages about Arab Muslims prior to the September 11th attacks. The question posed to these focus group participants was: "Since all of you do agree
that the American mass media has been responsible for
fueling prejudice and racist sentiment among the American
public since September 11th, do you think and feel that
the mass media has been guilty of the same kind of bias
and stereotyping of Arab Muslims before September 11th?"

All 10 participants delivered more emotional
outbursts and opinions about the American mass media
creating a hostile, prejudice environment for Arab Muslims
before September 11th because of the pro-Israeli and
pro-Jewish journalists and media companies. When listening
to the details of some of these respondents for this
topic, the evidence points clearly to the fact that all
the focus group participants believe that the American
mass media has been responsible for perpetuating anti-Arab
and anti-Islam stereotypes, images, and viewpoints.

All the 10 participants expressed their most
emotional and angry feelings and thoughts when discussing
the American mass media’s involvement before and after
September 11th, 2001 in creating racist images and
stereotypes of Arab Muslims. Some of these participants,
for instance, expressed strongly their feelings that the
television coverage and newspaper coverage was a driving
force behind their assumptions that Americans’ attitudes
had turned negative and prejudice towards them as Arab
Muslims. For instance, one of the participants compared the continuous television coverage of the terrorist attacks as paving the way for prejudice, hostility, and even racist violence against Arab Muslims because of the slanted, bias opinions of the journalists and reporters. All 10 participants agreed that the media coverage was a major problem and that they were concerned that the terrorist attacks were being exploited by the mass media to make significant profits and revenue. Three of the participants went as far as citing an Israeli conspiracy in the American mass media to slant the news coverage and media coverage to create these false perceptions and racist stereotypes of Arab Muslims for the purpose of keeping Americans supportive of Israel and its violent, terrorist policies against the Palestinians.

Another unanimous response from the questionnaire survey concerned racist incidents that happened to the students or their knowledge of such incidents having happened to Arab Muslims since September 11, 2001. The issue was presented in the focus group session in this manner by me as the moderator: "Since September 11, 2001, racism and prejudice against Arab Muslims has sometimes turned into actual incidents involving Arab Muslims. All of you responded to some knowledge or awareness of such
incidents in the survey. Can you provide more depth and
details to these incidents you know about?"  

Eight out of the ten respondents referred to an
incident involving an Arab Muslim student in Riverside who
was assaulted off campus when he was getting in his car.
He was slammed to the ground and his car was stolen from
him. Two of the three criminals involved in this incident,
according to one of the participants’ version of the
incident, blurted racist comments to the Arab Muslim
student about his involvement with Osama bin Laden or the
terrorist attacks because of his ethnicity. This racist
incident and hate crime obviously spread fast through the
Arab Muslim student population in the local area because
of the common knowledge of its nature and its details.
Another respondent talked about how the Arab Muslim
student had to stay in the hospital for a few days and
that he quickly left the country as soon as possible. 7
out of 10 focus group participants mentioned racist names
and racist comments delivered by people towards them and
their Arab Muslim friends when driving in downtown San
Bernardino or downtown Riverside. These racist comments
were made by people walking in the streets and yelling at
them while they drove by in their cars. None of the
respondents actually experienced a direct racist incident
with an American on campus or in any public place that involved physical violence or physical contact.

The focus group participants were then asked to address their future education plans in the United States. As moderator, this issue was introduced in this way: "Most of you in the survey noted that you are reconsidering your educational plans here in the United States. If you are leaving for certain, please state your reasons, but if you are staying, then please explain why you made this decision?" Two of the ten participants in the focus group emphasized that they were leaving because of graduation in June. However, these two participants also cited their change in plans to attend graduate school in the United States. One of the participants clarified his belief that the United States was going to become more hostile and prejudice in the next few years because of the Bush administration’s policies in the Middle East and the bias and racist opinions of the American mass media. The other student leaving the United States explained that he was going to graduate school in Scotland because of his friend’s favorable analysis of this location as being less tense and more free of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim images and views in the mass media.
However, the other eight participants in the focus group session clarified that they were remaining to finish their undergraduate education in the United States. All of them clarified that it was too difficult to change to another country because of the refusal to accept the American education credits or other such problems with transcripts being transferred overseas. Also, when probed about their safety here in the near future, all eight of the participants conveyed the response that they were feeling safe in the San Bernardino-Riverside area at the current time. They were free of any direct hate crime incidents or any other type of problems with their routine living in the area. However, all eight of these respondents staying did convey a sense of worry about their government back home allowing them to stay if the War on Terrorism heightens tensions and prejudices against Arab Muslims here. They might have to reconsider their plans if they are given no alternatives by their government who provides them the clearance to attend universities in the United States and provides most of them with scholarship money.

The focus group participants seem to contradict some of their cognitive and affective responses to the situation in the United States when addressing the topics
of their everyday routine behaviors as students in the United States and interactions with the common Americans they see and meet up with most days. This issue was introduced by me as the moderator in this manner: "In the responses to the survey questions, most of you also cited that your daily social behaviors have not significantly changed that much and that you are not seeing any major differences in Americans at markets, convenience stores, fellow students, and instructors. Why is this so?"

When studying the tape recording of the participants' responses to this issue, and comparing it to the emotional outbursts in those related to the mass media's coverage and slanted views, a significant finding begins to emerge in this research study. All 10 focus group participants conveyed a sense of trust and rapport with these Americans that they interact with at the convenience stores, grocery markets, and on campus. These participants spoke in logical, even tones on the tape recording that they had no problems with anyone on campus or in the classroom since September 11, 2001. They conveyed a sense of normalcy in their routine lives as college students despite the September 11th event. They have nothing negative to say about classmates or instructors. They have nothing negative to say about the clerk at the convenience store
or the clerk at the gas station. Besides some references to racist slurs and name calling in downtown areas, where a distinctive type of American social group congregates, which may tend to be more prejudice or at least more vocal about their prejudices, the Arab Muslim students have not experienced anything significantly negative or different than they encountered as students before September 11, 2001 in their actual routines and behavior patterns.

Another interesting finding from the survey questionnaire was that almost all of the respondents clarified that they had not changed their religious behaviors or expressions since September 11th. To try to gain more detailed perspective on this collective decision among the 10 focus group participants, this issue was introduced in this way to the group: “In the survey, most of you have not changed your religious habits, routines, or expressions since September 11th and continue to practice your Muslim faith openly and in public. Where do you practice your religious faith and does the other Muslims you meet and pray with feel the same as you?”

In studying the tape recording, and assessing the different commentaries delivered by the 10 participants in the focus group, it is evident that they are clearly not pressured by any private or public influence in society to
stop praying or expressing their Muslim faith. All of the participants pray and express their faith in the local mosques. These individuals described how they were actually trying to exercise their religious faith even more strongly and more consistently since September 11th than in the past. For instance, eight out of ten participants in the focus group claim that they have actually been going to the mosque more frequently and praying together with other local Muslims to end the growing conflict and tensions between the Middle East and the United States. All of the participants did give credit to the U.S. Constitution for safeguarding religious freedom and protecting the rights of people to practice their religious beliefs and expressions without fear of reprisal. This understanding of the importance of religious freedom is very significant because all the participants recognized this constitutional freedom here in this society and how they appreciate it. Also, they conveyed the sense that they felt perfectly safe and secure in practicing in the local mosque and not fearing any kind of reprisals from local Americans because of their Muslim faith.

At this ending phase of the focus group interview session, my responsibility as moderator was to ask each
participant to summarize and express his final thoughts, feelings, and ideas to the group. To enhance the closure process, my summary of the session was undertaken first where the main points were made about how participants unanimously agreed on both survey and in the focus group that the American mass media was guilty of flaming and fueling racist sentiments, feelings, and images in the American public towards Arab Muslims in general. Also, it was noted that the participants agreed that they felt relatively safe in the United States right now and that most of them were intending on staying to finish their studies. In addition, the participants were all agreeing on their routine and everyday behaviors as being almost the same as before September 11th especially in regards to their local social interactions on and off campus and their religious activities.

Each of the 10 participants briefly summarized his views, feelings, and thoughts about the focus group session. All of them approved of this kind of forum to air their concerns, thoughts, and feelings about what was unfolding in the United States since September 11th and everyone of them seemed to attack the mass media one last time before the session ended. Two of them re-emphasized the Jewish conspiracy theory in the media. After everyone
was finished speaking the final time, they were thanked for participating and given the promise of receiving a copy of this research study to demonstrate their important and significant contributions to the findings and results, as well as the implications for future research. All of the focus group participants approached me and thanked me for the opportunity to participate in this important research and they were all eager to find out the results and conclusions from the study. Based on these focus group interview results, combined with the results from the survey questionnaire and evidence in the literature review, it is now appropriate to draw some conclusions and discuss the implications of the research study.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the results of the questionnaire survey and focus group interview provide direct evidence from primary data sources, Arab Muslim students from several Southern California campuses, confirm what was illustrated by the analysis of secondary sources in the literature review that the American mass media has been a primary agent responsible for creating racist stereotypes, images, and viewpoints before and after September 11, 2001 for Arab Muslims. The American people, including government officials, therefore have been ingrained through the years with negative images and stereotypes of Arab Muslims that culminated with the intensive mass media coverage of the September 11th attacks and subsequent aftermath.

Another conclusion drawn from the analysis of the results from the questionnaire and focus group interview, cognitively and emotionally, the Arab Muslim students from the San Bernardino-Riverside area universities claim that attitudes and perceptions of Americans and the U.S. government has grown more hostile and racist since September 11, 2001. In other words, based on their
responses and interviews, the Arab Muslim students think and feel the racism and hostility of Americans and government officials towards their ethnic and religious group has increased significantly since September 11, 2001.

Yet, what they think (cognitive component) and what they feel (affective component) has happened to the climate of society and Americans’ attitudes towards them does not necessarily align with their behavior (conative component) since September 11, 2001. Based on the responses and interviews from the questionnaire and focus group session, the majority of the Arab Muslim students have not significantly changed their behaviors since the September 11th event in regards to routine living habits and lifestyles. Almost all of them cited in their responses that they have no changes in socialization with ordinary Americans in markets, stores, and on campus. These Arab Muslim students also noted that they have no negative attitudes or feelings towards fellow American students or instructors on campus or in the classroom. In addition, despite the initial reconsiderations of their educational plans in the United States, the majority of respondents in the research study are going to remain in
the United States to finish and complete their requirements for graduation.

Obviously, based on the literature review, as well as the questionnaire responses and in-depth interview responses, the central agent of responsibility for inflaming racist sentiments, racist stereotypes, and negative images of Arab Muslims to impact not only the cognitive and affective components of these Arab Muslim students, but also the American public and government officials, is the mass media interpretations and messages from the September 11th events as well as other events involving Arab Muslims from the Middle East. This research study clarified that the actual behavior and everyday living of the Arab Muslim students are not adversely affected in any significant sense by the September 11th terrorist attacks and its aftermath. Instead, these Arab Muslim students continue to socially interact in routine ways with the ordinary Americans they see in their everyday lives, at the convenience stores or grocery markets, and that they are also engaging in normal relations with fellow American students and instructors in the classroom and on campus. The most significant change in the mood, attitudes, and climate in the American experience for them is directly associated with the mass
media coverage and their negative, racist reporting and coverage of Arab Muslims in the United States and throughout the world. The most angry, emotional outbursts in the focus group interview session, for example, was clearly aimed at the mass media’s reporting and slanting of the news concerning Arab Muslims and the September 11th attacks. Another common topic of interest concerning slanted coverage and racist images of Arab Muslims was the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East. The Arab Muslim student participants in the focus group interview were very emotional and opinionated about the connections between the American mass media and the Israeli influence over the media here.

The scenario of Arab Muslim students leaving American universities because of racist and prejudice climates on campus and in the classroom is not likely to unfold based on these research findings. Arab Muslim students from these Southern California region campuses cited that they were not experiencing any overt racist treatment or hostility among the student body and instructors. However, the American mass media exposure of negative images, stereotypes, and racist commentary towards the Arab Muslim students could be sufficient if continued to drive limited numbers out of the U.S. schools because of the angry,
fearful cognitive and affective responses observed, recorded, and studied in the focus group interview session. Based on these results and findings, most of the Arab Muslim students are discovering through their own social interactions and daily behavior experiences that ordinary Americans are not being racist and prejudice towards their presence in this society. Of course, more terrorist attacks or future problems involving the United States and Arab Muslim countries in the Middle East could significantly change this current climate to a more negative one.

The findings and results evaluated from the literature review, the questionnaire survey, and the focus group interview does clearly demonstrate that the American mass media is slanted, bias, and racist towards the Arab Muslims in general. The literature review exposed different media forms, from children cartoons to Hollywood films to print media coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing, that the mass media generally portrays negative, false, and racist images and stereotypes of Arab Muslims. So, when an event as tragic and intense as September 11th happens, Arab Muslims in the United States, including college students, are going to become very fearful and concerned that the American people and American government
may act upon these false, racist images and stereotypes in an extremely hostile and even violent manner. Based on the respondents questionnaire results, as well as the focus group interview results, the majority of the Arab Muslim students continue to feel safe in the United States attending school on a racist-free campus with instructors who are treating them fairly and justly.

The implications of this study are evident that the American mass media needs to be scrutinized and monitored by watch dog groups for its unending practice of Arab Muslim stereotyping and negative racist coverage. The watch dog groups can help expose this slanted news coverage, and force the media companies to reduce their racist and bias images and stereotypes, so that the American public as well as the Arab Muslim people in the United States, can receive a more balanced, just view of this ethnic group.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
Questionnaire

For each of the following, students, please indicate your agreement or disagreement by circling the letter that best represents your response. (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, and SD = Strongly Disagree).

1. I feel safe at all times.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

2. People's attitudes towards me have changed since September 11th, 2001.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

3. I have changed the way I live in the United States since September 11th, 2001.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

4. The racist incidents against Arab-Muslims I know at school or in the general area have increased since September 11th, 2001.
   SA   A   N   D   SD

5. The September 11th terrorist attacks have shaped a climate of prejudice and hostility towards Arab-Muslims in the United States government, and its agencies, such as the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS)?
   SA   A   N   D   SD

6. The September 11th terrorist attacks have increased the racial prejudice and hostility towards Arab-Muslims among the student body on campus and in the classroom?
   SA   A   N   D   SD

7. The September 11th terrorist attacks have increased racial prejudice and hostility towards Arab-Muslims among instructors in the classroom based on your personal observations and experiences.
   SA   A   N   D   SD
8. At times, in certain situations, I have a higher level of discomfort and anxiety going to school in the United States than before September 11th, 2001?
SA A N D SD

9. The American television media uses the September 11th terrorist attacks as a factor to fuel prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public?
SA A N D SD

10. The American print media uses the September 11th terrorist attacks as a factor to fuel prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public?
SA A N D SD

11. The American radio media uses the September 11th terrorist attacks as a factor to fuel prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public?
SA A N D SD

12. The American Internet media uses the September 11th terrorist attacks as a factor to fuel prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public?
SA A N D SD

13. The September 11th terrorist attacks changed my socializing habits and interactions with American students and instructors on campus?
SA A N D SD

14. The September 11th terrorist attacks has changed my socializing habits and interactions with American people in my everyday routines at convenience stores, grocery markets, and other such places?
SA A N D SD

15. The September 11th terrorist attacks has changed my socializing habits and interactions with American neighbors?
SA A N D SD
16. The September 11th terrorist attacks and its consequences among Americans towards Arab-Muslims has made me reconsider my educational plans here in the United States?
SA A N D SD

17. The September 11th terrorist attacks and its consequences on Americans' prejudices has made me conceal or hide my religious views, expressions, and rituals as a Muslim?
SA A N D SD

18. The September 11th terrorist attacks and its consequences on Americans' prejudices towards Arab-Muslims been a factor for my fellow Arab-Muslim students to conceal or hide their religious views, expressions, and rituals as Muslims?
SA A N D SD

19. The September 11th terrorist attacks has made the general mood and attitude of most Americans more and more anti-Arab and anti-Muslim?
SA A N D SD

20. The September 11th terrorist attacks caused American government authorities and people in the general public to look for a scapegoat to blame for these horrifying events?
SA A N D SD
APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TOPICS
Focus Group Interview Topics

(1) All of you present today responded with either a Strongly Agree or Agree that Americans' attitudes have changed towards each of you as Arab Muslims studying in this country. What are your thoughts and feelings about why this is so?

(2) All of you in the survey strongly agreed or agreed that the American television, print media, radio media, and Internet media were fueling prejudice and racist sentiments among the American public. Can you please provide more details of your thoughts and feelings about this belief?

(3) Since all of you do agree that the American mass media has been responsible for fueling prejudice and racist sentiment among the American public since September 11th, do you think and feel that the mass media has been guilty of the same kind of bias and stereotyping of Arab Muslims before September 11th?

(4) Since September 11, 2001, racism and prejudice against Arab Muslims has sometimes turned into actual incidents involving Arab Muslims. All of you responded to some knowledge or awareness of such incidents in the survey. Can you provide more depth and details to these incidents you know about?

(5) "Most of you in the survey noted that you are reconsidering your educational plans here in the United States. If you are leaving for certain, please state your reasons, but if you are staying, then please explain why you made this decision?"

(6) In the responses to the survey questions, most of you also cited that your daily social behaviors have not significantly changed that much and that you are not seeing any major differences in Americans at markets, convenience stores, fellow students, and instructors. Why is this so?

(7) In the survey, most of you have not changed your religious habits, routines, or expressions since September 11th and continue to practice your Muslim faith openly and in public. Where do you practice your religious faith and does the other Muslims you meet and pray with feel the same as you?
REFERENCES


