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By Eiman A. Eissa[1], Hala A. Guta[2], and Rana S. Hassan[3]

Abstract

Many scholars argue that the image of Arabs in Hollywood has always been tainted by prejudice and stereotyping. However, little attention is paid to women's representation in general or the influence of 9/11 on that representation. This paper compares portrayals of Arab women in popular Hollywood films before and after 9/11. A purposive sample of 76 Arab female characters from 40 popular Hollywood films is used to conduct a content analysis, comparing portrayals in films released before and after 9/11. Popular Hollywood films are defined as films with at least 50,000 reviews that score seven or more on the International Movie Database (IMDB). The results show that Arab women's representation lacks diversity and Arab women remain unidentified in Hollywood films. Arab women's portrayal shifts from one of the magical or sexualized characters to one of the violent terrorists. Despite the overall increase in the amount of violence depicted after 9/11, there is a shift in favor of the portrayal of Arab women, with more depicted as good or pure after 9/11. Finally, the results show that the morality of Arab female characters improves, with more characters depicted as evaluating options and making their own decisions.

Keywords: Arab women, Hollywood films, Orientalism, Visibility

Introduction

The United States film industry (Hollywood hereafter) represents one of the greatest sources of entertainment worldwide. Media scholars repeatedly argue that mass media play a significant role in our understanding of social reality (Burgess & Gold, 2016). Although the extent to which social reality is constructed by media remains debatable, the study of mass media is based on the premise of their influence on our social reality (McQuail, 2000). Mass media are often major sources of information about the world that fall beyond audiences' immediate experience. With its

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worldwide influence, Hollywood contributes to the creation, distribution and reinforcement of socially constructed images about the world and the "Other". Films do not mirror the real world; they create their versions of it" (Denzin, 2005, p.470).

Numerous studies investigate depictions of Arabs in the US film industry and conclude that Hollywood films perpetuate a racially prejudiced image of Arabs (Boggs & Pollard, 2006; Kozlovic, 2007). One of the most comprehensive studies of Arab representation in the US film industry is the work by Jack Shaheen (2001), who surveyed more than 900 films from 1896 to 2000. His research concludes that Hollywood filmmakers present Arabs as the number one enemy in addition to giving them negative traits such as being violent, extremist, uncivilized and brutal.

Boggs & Pollard (2006) state that the 9/11 attacks brought the narrative of the terrorist Arab to the forefront of film. In the post-9/11 terrorist genre, Arabs and Muslims were depicted with intertwined characteristics and as the new enemy, and "the demonized other appears as a monolithic culture of thuggish male warriors who relish violence, directed mostly against innocent civilians, and who lack motives beyond hatred and jealousy" (Boggs & Pollard, 2006, p.347).

There have been a number of studies investigating the impact of 9/11 and the subsequent Afghanistan and Iraq wars on Arab and Muslim representations in Hollywood (Alsultany, 2013). Alalwai (2015) points out that, after 9/11, Hollywood films changed to a War on Terror theme, usually showing extremists and terrorists as Arabs. This paper contributes to the ongoing discussion on Arab representation, by taking a close look at representations of Arab women in Hollywood before and after 9/11.

Who are the Arabs? Arabs Stereotypes and Orientalism

For the purposes of this research, Arab countries are defined as the 22 members of the League of Arab States. The Arab countries are diverse in terms of their histories and their socio-political and economic conditions. Egypt has existed since 3200 BC, while Bahrain was established in 1783 and claimed its independence in 1971 (CIA World Factbook 2018-2019). Saudi Arabia has a population that consists of 99.3% Muslims, while Lebanon has 54% Muslims, 40.5% Christians and 5.5% Druze (World Atlas, 2018). Qatar has a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of 63,249.4 USD, while Somalia has a GDP of 478.8 USD (World Bank Report, 2017). The status of women in Arab countries also varies. Tunisia's Code of Personal Status bans polygamy and grants women equal divorce rights (Kheder, 2017). Saudi Arabia granted its women the right to drive in June 2018 (Ahmad & Mahfooz, 2018). The identification of Arab women also differs from one society to another. Arab women usually keep their maiden and family name when they get married, but there are some exceptions to this naming practice (Notzon & Nesom, 2005). In some societies, women may be addressed in accordance with patriarchal relations, such as *bint* (daughter of) or *om* (mother of). This is sometimes done out of conservatism, so that strangers do not know the woman's name, and sometimes as a sign of social positioning and respect.

One of the major tools that Hollywood uses as a depiction of Arab women's oppression is clothing. Arab women are represented either in sexualized clothes or covered from head to toe in black. As explained by Fernea and Fernea (1995), "instead of a reference to a national group, the veil... is often viewed by Westerners as a symbol of female restriction and inequality" (p.240). McDonald (2006) argues that the portrayal of covered and veiled women in Western discourse reveals a colonialist and orientalist mentality.

Ironically, the veiling practice in the Arab region did not start with Islam as Women in pre-Islamic Arabia, Greece and Assyria, adopted the veil as a cultural practice (McDonald, 2006). Also, Arab women's dress styles are as diverse as the region. For instance, the abaya is usually

worn by women in Gulf countries, some see it as a sign of Islamic wear but others as a symbol of national identity (Moors, 2003, p.46). Moroccan women's attire ranges from the djellaba, a traditional loose fitting maxi dress with long sleeves, to Western clothing such as jeans, skirts, pants and tops (Bachleda et al., 2014). Women in Saudi Arabia were legally required to wear an abaya until 2018, when Prince Mohammed bin Salman declared that it was not mandatory as long as the women "wear decent, respectful clothing" (Abdulaziz, 2019). On the other hand, the Tunisian government banned both the hijab and niqab until the 2011 uprising, after which women were allowed to wear them, until 2019 when the niqab was banned again in public institutions for security reasons (Amara, 2019).

Despite this diversity, Arabs are often put into the same category in Hollywood films, which represent all Arab countries as a homogenous "Other", and this can be explained through the lens of orientalism. The concept of orientalism refers to "the style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between the "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (Said, 1987, p.2). Scholarship on Arab representation in Hollywood and popular Western culture reveal a dichotomy in which the West portrays the East as the "Other." Said (1987) explains that through the discourse of orientalism, Arabs are often seen as Orientals and portrayed as uncivilized, exotic, backward and sometimes dangerous, in contrast to the civilized West. This "Otherness" has been imposed on Arabs by Western media through the mixing of myth and reality, reflecting a distorted image of Arab culture (Said, 1987).

Arab Women in Hollywood

Scholarly research reveals that women are proportionally underrepresented and misrepresented in the mass media, and "when they are present, they are oversexualized and confined to traditional stereotypes that exclude them from the public sphere" (Guta, 2019, p.257). Movies remain a medium in which these stereotypes are prevalent, in 2019, only 34% of speaking or named characters were female in Hollywood films, which continue to be dominated by white characters, as only 17% of leading or co-leading roles were women or girls of color (Women and Hollywood, 2019).

Many scholars who explore the portrayal of Arab women in mainstream Western media conclude that they are often depicted as passive, oppressed and submissive in a male-dominated region (Abu Lughod, 2002; Navarro, 2010). Racial stereotypes of Arabs influence the image of Arab women in Hollywood. Tania Kamal El-Din, producer of *Hollywood Harems* (2000), explains that Hollywood depictions of Eastern and Middle Eastern women follow the popular orientalist imaginary which portrays the Orient as an exotic, seductive and mysterious place. This has led to a plethora of movies featuring the harem or dancing girls. Through examining orientalism as a discourse and ideology we can begin to understand how the West places itself against the "Other" of the Orient. Confirming the impact of the colonial gaze on Arab stereotypes in Hollywood, Jack Shaheen (2001) suggests that the negative portrayal of Arabs and Muslims is inherited from the pre-existing European portrayal of Arabs in the 18th and 19th centuries, which include images of deserts, slave markets and uncivilized individuals. Women, in these early portrayals, are often shown as oppressed, exotic and sexual. For instance, the first movie to feature an Arab woman, Fatima (1878), a silent film, features face-veiled belly dancers. Western media have a fixation with the veil and a "fascination with uncovering the veiled woman" in line with "the Western conceptualization of the Orient as a feminine mystery" (Macdonald , 2006, p.9). These films equate the veil with the Orient's backwardness and lack of civilization, and the unveiled Western dress code with modernity (Abu Lughod, 2002; McDonald, 2006). Dina Abdo (2002) points out

that that Arab males are portrayed as "sinister and ruled by sexual desire", while Arab female characters are often "humiliated, demonized and eroticized" (Abdo, 2002, pp.235-236). Shaheen (2001) finds that Arab women "surface either as gun toters or bumbling subservients, or as belly dancers bouncing voluptuously in palaces and erotically oscillating in slave markets" (Shaheen, 2001, p.23). Films that portray Arab women in the manner described by Abdo and Shaheen can build misconceptions about Arab women in the minds of those who have never visited or read about the Middle East.

After the 9/11 attacks and during the ongoing War on Terror, a hostile relationship and pattern of suspicion between the US government, Arabs and the Islamic world has emerged, helping to create a negative stereotype of Arabs and Muslims among Western societies. Rising rates of Islamophobia and hate crimes against those who are perceived as Arabs or Muslims are well documented (Naber & Jamal, 2008). After 9/11, Hollywood began to focus on portraying Arabs as terrorists, repositioning them from being "comic villains" to "foreign devils", leading to the creation of the dangerous "Arab Other" (Arti, 2007). The female terrorist becomes a frequent trope of Hollywood (Shaheen, 2007). However, some scholars point out that the dangerous Arab image appears in Hollywood much earlier with movies such as Black Sunday (1977) (Michalek, 1989; Senanayake, 2021).

The dangerous Arab image has consequences beyond the portrayal of terrorists, as it leads to larger conclusions about Arabs' morality and belief systems. Psychologists argue that those who hold beliefs supportive of violence are more likely to be violent (Bowes & McMurran, 2013). According to Rai et al. (2017), violence is inhibited by moral obligation and sympathy towards other human beings. Thus, those who commit harmful or violent acts without remorse lack such sympathy, a phenomenon called moral disengagement by Bandura (2016). This moral disengagement leads perpetrators to believe that the violence they commit is virtuous; in other, words aggressors feel that they have sanctified conscience. The way Arabs are portrayed as dangerous, violent, and perpetrators of harmful acts, while believing that they serve a worthy cause, says a lot about how Hollywood peves the Arab morality and conscience.

Methodology

The sampling method used is purposive sampling of 76 characters from 40 films produced in the United States, which score seven or more on IMDB, as of January 2019, with 50,000 or more reviews.

The pre-9/11 films included in the sample are: Casablanca (1942), The Ten Commandments (1956), The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956), Ben-Hur (1959), Patton (1970), The Spy Who Loved Me (1977), Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989), Aladdin (1992), Malcolm X (1992), Stargate (1994), The English Patient (1996),Three Kings (1999), and The Mummy (1999).

The post-9/11 films included in the sample are: Spy Game (2001), Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004), Kingdom of Heaven (2005), Munich (2005), Children of Men (2006), Babel (2006), The Bucket List (2007), The Kingdom (2007), The Hurt Locker (2008), Waltz with Bashir (2008), Body of Lies (2008), Iron Man (2008), Agora (2009), The Adventures of Tintin (2011), The Dark Knight Rises (2012), Zero Dark Thirty (2012), Hotel Transylvania (2012), Captain Phillips (2013), World War Z (2013), American Sniper (2014), Eye in the Sky (2015), Furious 7 (2015), Allied (2016), X-Men: Apocalypse (2016), War Dogs (2016), and 13 Hours (2016).

After the researchers prepared the coding lists and definitions, they agreed on the general guidelines and conducted a pilot study of six characters. The coding was conducted after viewing the films to the end, to ensure that the results reflect the whole image of the character.

Following the pilot study, two coding items were added (identification and magic) to the coding list, to make nine items. Two of the three researchers separately conducted content analysis by making coding decisions for each character. Holisti's intercoder reliability is used to calculate the agreement between the two coders:

$$\textbf{Intercoder reliability} = \frac{2M}{(N1+N2)} = \frac{2\text{X}622}{(684+684)} = 0.91$$

where M is the total number of decisions that are agreed upon by the two coders and N1 and N2 are the number of decisions made by the two coders. There are a total of 684 coding decisions, and agreement on 622, giving an intercoder reliability of 0.91. Since there is almost complete agreement between the two coders' decisions, using the decisions of the primary coder for each film is acceptable for this study.

The content analysis tests three categories: national origin, depiction of orientalism, and depiction of violence. The analysis focuses on characters addressed by country of origin and identification, as these are often indicators of the presence or absence of stereotypes and awareness of Arab population differences. Depiction of orientalism is operationalized to include four variables: jobs, clothing, sexualization and magic or superpowers. Depiction of violence is operationalized to include three variables: aggression, conscience level and overall morality (see Table1).

Table 1: Operational Variables and definitions

Category	Variables	Operational definitions
National origin	Country of origin (http://www.leagueofarabstates.net)	Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen N/A: the information provided about the character is insufficient for this categorization Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
	Identification	Not identified: character is not called by her name or referred to during the film, she is a background extra. Identified by relationship to a man: character is called/referred to using her relationship to a male character, such as sister of, wife of, daughter of, etc. Identified by name: character is called/referred to using her name Identified by job: character is called/referred to using her job, such as the doctor, the farmer, the dancer etc.
Orient nt	Jobs	Not working: no job White-collar and high skilled: senior officials, managers, etc. White-collar and low skilled: clerks, service workers, sales workers, etc.

ali sm		Blue-collar and high skilled: skilled agricultural or fishery workers, craft workers, cooks, etc. Blue-collar and low skilled: machine operators, assemblers, etc. Intellectual: teachers, thinkers, philosophers, etc. Self-employed: owns a business, works from home, etc. Illegal job: criminal, such as drug dealer, thief, working in the black-market, etc. Un-respected job: depends on the context in the film (if the character or her job is referred to in a degrading manner) Professional: engineer, doctor, lawyer, etc. Law enforcer: police officer or equivalent in society, such as superhero Royalty: member of the ruling family, princess, daughter, sister or wife of the president, etc. Ruler: president or queen Slave/harem: owned by another person, has no free will Beggar/homeless: asks others for financial aid and/or does not have a home N/A: the information provided about the character is insufficient for this categorization Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
	Clothing (worn in public)	Revealing: at least two of the following: 1) sleeve length: sleeveless/no sleeves; 2) cleavage showing; 3) bottom length: above the knee or shorter, or longer but with a slit to above the knee; 4) tightness: defines the body Modest and not veiled: no headscarf and at least two of the following: 1) sleeve length: half sleeves or longer; 2) cleavage not showing; 3) bottom length: knee length or longer or with a slit to the knee 4) tightness: somewhat loose Modest and veiled: headscarf worn and 1) sleeve length: long sleeve; 2) cleavage not showing; 3) bottom length: ankle length or longer; 4) tightness: somewhat loose Conservative (veiled but no face cover): all of the following: headscarf worn but face showing; top: long sleeves; bottom: ankle length or longer; loose clothing (does not define body parts) Conservative (veiled with face cover): all of the following: head and face scarf worn; top: long sleeves; bottom: ankle length or longer; loose clothing (does not define body parts) Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
	Sexualization	Attractive/respected: the character receives compliments, mentions or gazes showing that she is considered good looking, and is not degraded or treated as a sexual object. Attractive/objectified: the character receives compliments, mentions or gazes showing that she is considered good looking, and is degraded or treated as a sexual object Attractive/sexually proactive: the character receives compliments, mentions or gazes showing that she is considered good looking, and makes sexual advances towards others

		Not attractive/objectified: the character receives no compliments, mentions or gazes showing that she is considered good looking, and is degraded or treated like a sexual object Not attractive/respected: the character receives no compliments, mentions or gazes showing that she is considered good looking, and is not degraded or treated as a sexual object Not attractive/sexually proactive: the character receives no compliments, mentions or gazes showing that she is considered good looking, and makes sexual advances towards others N/A: the information provided about the character is insufficient for this categorization Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
	Magic	Has supernatural powers: actions beyond human abilities, i.e. magic Has special abilities: extraordinary talent or enhanced human powers, i.e. prodigy Supernatural powers/special abilities appear in the film, but she does not have them The character has no supernatural powers or special abilities and there are none in the film Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
Violence	Aggression (adopted from the UK Violence Intervention and Prevention Centre)	Passive: avoids expressing her opinions, feelings or needs, or avoids protecting her rights. Aggressive: expresses her opinions and feelings in a verbally and/or physically abusing manner that violates the rights of others Passive-aggressive: resentful, appears passive but indirectly acts on her anger Assertive: states her feelings and opinions firmly to advocate for her rights but does not violate the rights of others N/A: the information provided about the character is insufficient for this categorization Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
	Conscience level (adopted from Elden Chalmers (1995) reference to the consciences found in Scripture)	Good/pure: does not commit violent/harmful/sinful acts, or does commit them for the greater good of society, not for personal gain Wounded/weak/defiled: commits violent/harmful/sinful acts but feels guilty about them or empathetic towards the victims Purged/evil/seared: commits harmful/sinful acts and feels satisfied or apathetic about them (does not feel guilty) N/A: the information provided about the character is insufficient for this categorization Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories
	Overall morality (adopted from Kohlberg's moral	Pre-conventional: character acts to avoid punishment and to further her self-interest Conventional: character meets the expectations of others and upholds laws to meet societal expectations Post-conventional: character uses personal values to achieve social consciousness and self-selection of universal moral principles

	development stages (Yılmaz et al. 2019))	N/A: the information provided about the character is insufficient for this categorization
		Other (specify): the information provided about the character does not fall into any of the above categories

The following hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 1: The variety of national origins of Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films released after 9/11 increases, compared to those who appear before.

Null Hypothesis 1: The variety of national origins of Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films released after 9/11 is consistent with those who appear before.

Hypothesis 2: Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films released before 9/11 have more oriental characteristics than those who appear after.

Null Hypothesis 2: The 9/11 attacks have no effect on the portrayal of Arab females in popular Hollywood films as Orientals.

Hypothesis 3: Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films released after 9/11 are more violent than those who appear before.

Null Hypothesis 3: The 9/11 attacks do not have an effect on how violent the Arab female characters portrayed in popular Hollywood films are.

Results

National Origin of Arab Female Characters Portrayed in Hollywood Films

The discourse on 9/11 and the War on Terror has added a layer of visibility to Arab women. To begin with, the number of films with female Arab characters increased drastically after 9/11. However, the results show that the difference in the number of Arab women in films is not statistically significant before and after September 11, 2001. Yet there is a significant statistical difference in the countries of origin of characters before and after 9/11, with a Fisher scale p-value of 0.01603. Before 9/11 the following Arab nationalities are portrayed: Egyptian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Libyan, Moroccan and Palestinian, along with one imaginary country, Agrabah. After 9/11, Lebanese, Saudi Arabian and Somali are added to the list. As shown in Table 2, 40% of the Arab female characters portrayed in the films before 9/11 are Egyptian, as opposed to 10.71% after; in 10 of the 40 films. Before 9/11, only 5% of the characters portrayed in the films are identified as Iraqi, but after 9/11 this percentage increased to 26.79%. Women identified as Iraqi appear in four films: *Three Kings* (1999), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *The Hurt Locker* (2008), and *American Sniper* (2014). These four films focus on American troops in Iraq, with *Three Kings* (1999) being set immediately after the Gulf War and the other three focusing on the War on Terror. Although the storyline of *Aladdin* (1992) is taken from *One Thousand and One nights*, a collection of Arabic folklore stories which were originally set in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, "the location was changed to avoid associating this fairy tale with the Gulf War" (Nilsen & Turner, 2014, p.151). For this reason, the nationality of the main character, Jasmine, is coded as other in Table 2. In addition to Jasmine, four other characters are either referred to as Arabs or appear speaking Arabic but without association with a specific country of origin. The unidentified Arab characters, all of which are in films released after 9/11, are in *Children of Men* (2006), *Iron Man* (2008), *Zero Dark 30* (2012) and *Furious 7* (2015). It is worth noting that, of the 22 League of Arab States member countries, only nine appear in the sample.

Table 2. Country of Origin of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films*

	Egypt		Iraq		Jordan		Lebanon		Libya		Morocco		Palestine		Saudi Arabia		Somalia		N/A		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre-9/11	40	8	5	1	5	1	0	0	10	2	20	4	15	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	26.32	20
Post-9/11	10.71	6	26.79	15	3.57	2	1.79	1	1.79	1	14.29	8	21.43	12	5.36	3	5.36	3	8.93	5	0	0	73.68	56
Total	18.42	14	21.05	16	3.95	3	1.32	1	3.95	3	15.79	12	19.74	15	3.95	3	3.95	3	6.58	5	1.32	1	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.01603
P-value ≤ 0.05 indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, so we reject the null hypothesis.
*None of the characters are identified as being from Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates or Yemen.

As seen in Table 3, more than half the characters analyzed are background extras who are not identified (57.89%). Arab women often appear as an extra, such as in *Malcom X* (1992), *The English Patient* (1996) and *Munich* (2005). Some of the female Arab characters are only identified by their relationship to a man (19.74%); for example Salim's wife in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), Hassan's wife in *Babel* (2006) and Moose's wife in *American Sniper* (2014). Only 13.16% of the characters are identified by name, examples include Aisha from *Body of Lies* (2008) and Talia Al Ghul from *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). Finally, 9.21% are identified by their job, such as the cabaret singer in *Casablanca* (1942), dancers or slaves in *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) and bodyguards in *Furious 7* (2015). There are no statistically significant differences before and after 9/11, as most Arab women remain unidentified, with a p-value of 0.4987, indicating weak evidence against the null hypothesis.

Table 3. Identification of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films*

	Identified by name		Identified by relationship to a man		Identified by job		Unidentified		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Before 9/11	20	4	10	2	10	2	60	12	100	20
Post 9/11	10.71	6	23.21	13	8.93	5	57.14	32	100	56
Total	13.16	10	19.74	15	9.21	7	57.89	44	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.4987
P-value > 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.
* Results of this question are non-mutually exclusive.
If female characters are identified in more than one way, they are categorized in the following order: identified by name, identified by job, identified by relationship to man, not identified.

Orientalism of Arab Female Characters Portrayed in Hollywood Films

This paper investigates orientalism through four aspects of Arab women's representation: jobs assigned, type of clothing, degree of sexualization and appearance of magic.

The job categories specified for the Arab women who appear in the films are consistent before and after 9/11. Since the Fisher exact test for count data has a p-value of 0.08147 we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The data is coded based on job categories, along with the options of not applicable and other. There are nine categories that do not apply to any of the characters and thus are not included in Table 4. The analysis reveals that 69.76% of the characters are not assigned identifiable jobs. It is once again emphasized that the Arab women are usually background extras who are insignificant in the storyline of the films, which reflects on the public view of them as an "Other". This shows that the framing of Arab women in Hollywood films is restricted to certain roles that mainly support an orientalist view, usually as housewives serving men, princesses or sexual slaves (in a harem).

Table 4. Job Categories of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films*

	Not working		White-collar and high skilled		Blue-collar and low skilled		Royalty		Ruler		Slave /Harem		Beggar /homeless		N/A		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Before 9/11	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	3	0	0	10	2	5	1	60	12	10	2	26.32	20
Post 9/11	7.14	4	1.79	1	3.57	2	1.79	1	1.79	1	1.79	1	0	0	73.21	41	8.93	5	73.68	56
Total	5.26	4	1.32	1	2.63	2	5.26	4	1.32	1	3.95	3	1.32	1	69.74	53	9.21	7	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.08147

P-value > 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

*None of the following categories are represented: white-collar and low skilled, blue-collar and high skilled, intellectual, self-employed, illegal job, un-respected job, professional and law enforcer.

Clothing category is analyzed on a five-level scale based on its modesty. Fisher's exact test for count data has a p-value of 0.002715 before and after 9/11, which indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Therefore, a statistically significant difference is seen, as presented in Table 5. This variable is analyzed in terms of the clothing worn in public. However, some of the characters only appear inside their houses, and thus the clothing of 5.26% of the sample is classified as other. Before 9/11, 25% wear revealing clothes in comparison to only 1.79% after. The number of females who wear modest clothing seems to flip from a focus on unveiled women to veiled (hijabi) women. For example, before 9/11, 15% of the sample wear modest clothing but are veiled, in contrast to 30.36% after; yet the percentage of modest women who are unveiled goes from 25% before to 16.07% after. 33.93% of Arab female characters appear conservatively dressed after 9/11, in contrast to 10% before. Finally, the percentage of conservatively dressed Arab female characters who wear a niqab falls from 25% before to 10.71% after. Before 9/11 we see an equal number, 25%, of women wearing revealing clothing, modest but not veiled or conservative and veiled with a face cover. Yet after 9/11, the highest percent of Arab female characters are either modest and veiled or conservative and veiled but without a face cover. Therefore, there seems to be a general shift away from the orientalist view of either sexualizing Arab women or making them invisible with a face cover (Alalawi, 2015).

Table 5. Modesty of Public Clothing of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films

	Revealing		Modest/not veiled		Modest/veiled		Conservative/veiled but no face cover		Conservative/veiled with face cover		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre 9/11	25	5	25	5	15	3	10	2	25	5	0	0	26.32	20
Post 9/11	1.79	1	16.07	9	30.36	17	33.93	19	10.71	6	7.14	4	73.68	56
Total	7.89	6	18.42	14	26.32	20	27.63	21	14.47	11	5.26	4	100	76
Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.002715 P-value ≤ 0.05 indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, so we reject the null hypothesis.														

The level of sexualization of Arab women the films is analyzed before and after 9/11. As shown in Table 6, Fisher's exact test for count data is marginal, with a p-value of 0.00565; therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted or rejected. Overall, there is not enough information about many of the characters to classify them accurately, and thus the level of sexualization is not discernable for 57.89%. However, 2.63% are sexually proactive and 26.32% are respected. The results show that 30% of the films before 9/11 objectify the Arab women characters, whether they are attractive or not, as opposed to only 1.79% after. In *Ben Hur* (1959), Ilderim, the Arab Sheikh, says he has eight wives and enjoys spending the night with one and making the others jealous. He later introduces his horses as his "wives", and it is unclear if his first reference is to them or to his real wives, but in either case the scene shows that he considers horses and women to be of equal status, thus stripping the Arab women of their humanity. *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) portrays women in Egypt as either part of a harem, dancers or poor and ignorant. In *Stargate* (1994), the Egyptian tribe ruler makes his daughter, Shauri, offer herself to the American scientist, Daniel, and becomes offended when Daniel lets her out of the room too soon. In *Babel* (2006), a Moroccan teenage girl, Zohra, gives her brother flirtatious gazes then allows him to watch her shower, after which he masturbates. In *Furious 7* (2015) an Arab Emir has a number of girls wearing thong bikinis, painted gold and dancing for the guests at a party. So, although the percentage of films that sexualize the characters is low, the amount of screen time and emphasis placed on their sexualization is high.

Table 6. Sexualization of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films

	Attractive/respected		Attractive/objectified		Attractive/sexually proactive		Not attractive/objectified		Not attractive/respected		Not attractive/sexually proactive		N/A		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre 9/11	15	3	10	2	5	1	20	4	5	1	0	0	40	8	5	1	26.32	20
Post 9/11	25	14	1.79	1	1.79	1	0	0	3.57	2	0	0	64.29	36	3.57	2	73.68	56
Total	22.37	17	3.95	3	2.63	2	5.26	4	3.95	3	0	0	57.89	44	3.95	3	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.00565
P-value close to 0.05 is marginal, so we do not reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Magic is often portrayed as reality in films about the Arab world, with around one fifth of the films showing super powers or special abilities, as shown in Table 7. The null hypothesis is not rejected because there is weak evidence against it, with a p-value of 0.1113 using the Fisher exact test for count data. While the comparison of the level of magic portrayed pre- and post- 9/11 did not identify a consequential relationship, the magic theme is prevalent in a higher percentage pre-9/11, with 5% of the characters having supernatural powers and 30% of the films have supernatural powers or special abilities while the character does not. In contrast, the magical powers portrayed post-9/11 was limited to 21.06% of the characters having supernatural powers, special abilities or the film having them while the character did not. This is especially seen when ancient Egypt is depicted, in a variety of genres ranging from animation, *Hotel Transylvania* (2012) to alien movies, *Stargate* (1994), superhero movies, *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016) to adventure movies, *The Mummy* (1999).

Table 7. Magic Associated with Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films

	Has supernatural powers		Has special abilities		Supernatural powers/special abilities appear in the film, but she does not have them		The character has no supernatural powers and there are none in the film		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre 9/11	5	1	0	0	30	6	65	13	0	0	100	20
Post 9/11	1.79	1	1.79	1	12.50	7	83.93	47	0	0	100	56
Total	2.63	2	1.32	1	17.11	13	78.95	60	0	0	100	76
Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.1113 P-value > 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.												

Violence of Arab Female Characters Portrayed in Hollywood Films

The aim of this section is to understand if there are shifts from portraying Arab women as submissive, objectified, sexualized Oriental characters to a new stereotype of violent terrorist characters. The depiction of violence is operationalized through three categories: aggression, conscience level, and overall morality.

The level of aggression of the Arab female characters in the films is analyzed on a four-point scale consisting of passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive; there are also options of not applicable and other, which none of the coders selected. Comparing the levels of violence before and after 9/11, as shown in Table 8, there is weak evidence against the null hypothesis, indicated by the Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value of 0.3738. The majority of the characters are passive, 35% before and 32.14% after. A difference is seen in the number of characters classified as aggressive, with 0% of the characters who appear before 9/11 classified as such and 12.5% of those who appear after. The percentage of characters before and after coded as passive-aggressive is almost equal, 5% and 5.36%. Finally, the percentage of characters classified as assertive is 10% before and 17.86% after. The level of aggression of most characters is unspecified, both before and after 9/11, at 50% and 32.14%, respectively, as many of them are not placed in violent situations. Statistically, the Arab women are not depicted as aggressive, but qualitatively, once Arab women appear in a main role, they are usually portrayed as aggressive.

Table 8. Level of Aggression of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films

	Passive		Aggressive		Passive-aggressive		Assertive		N/A		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre 9/11	35	7	0	0	5	1	10	2	50	10	0	0	26.32	20
After 9/11	32.14	18	12.50	7	5.36	3	17.86	10	32.14	18	0	0	73.68	56
Total	32.89	25	9.21	7	5.26	4	15.79	12	36.84	28	0	0	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.3738
P-value > 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

In *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), Talia Al Ghul is the daughter of Ra's Al Ghul (Head of the Devil) who stabs Batman and attempts to bomb the city. In *American Sniper* (2014) an Iraqi mother walks with her son towards American soldiers and gives him a bomb with which to attack the troops. In *Furious 7* (2015) Arab female bodyguards of an Emirati prince (Emir) engage in a fight to protect him and his possessions. In *X-men: Apocalypse* (2016), the character Death is portrayed as an evil lieutenant who is violent, aggressive and destructive. These depictions of violence frame Arabs as foreign devils, and such stereotypes "have led to the creation of the dangerous 'Arab Other'" (Arti, 2007).

The morality of the Arab female characters is analyzed using their conscience level and moral development stage. Fisher's p-value is greater than 0.05 for both, as shown in Table 10 and Table 11. There is weak evidence against the null hypotheses, suggesting no statistically significant difference between the morality of these characters before and after 9/11. The overall morality shows that one of the characters (5%) who appear before 9/11 is in the category purged/evil/seared, while five (8.93%) of those who appear after are. Although the overall morality and moral development stage of the Arab female characters shows a number who are good, pure and post-conventional, it is important to note that these characteristics are bound to the viewpoint of the American film producers. For Example, Moose's wife in *American Sniper* (2014) serves the American soldiers food and drink in celebration of Eid Al Adha, but she also gives them looks of hatred, and it turns out that she and her family are hiding weapons in their home. The scene implies that she is seared, but some audiences may judge her actions differently.

Table 10. Conscience Levels of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films

	Good/pure		Wounded/weak/defiled		Purged/evil/seared		N/A		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre 9/11	30	6	25	5	5	1	40	8	0	0	26.32	20
fter 9/11	48.21	27	5.36	3	8.93	5	32.14	18	5.36	3	73.68	56
Total	43.42	33	10.53	8	7.89	6	34.21	26	3.95	3	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.1064

P-value > 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

The results, given in Table 11, show that the moral development stage of the characters under study has shifted, although the difference is not statistically significant. In the pre-9/11 films, 30% of the characters have a pre-conventional moral development stage, 20% conventional and 20% post-conventional, while in the post-9/11 films the figures are 16.07%, 12.5% and 37.50%, respectively. This shows that, as time goes on, there is steady improvement in the representation of Arab women characters consciously setting their own values and activities. However, it is worth noting that almost a third of the pre- and post-9/11 film characters do not appear for long enough or have significant enough roles for the coders to analyze the intentions behind their actions, and consequently could not apply the coding criteria.

Table 11. Moral Development Stage of Arab Female Characters in Popular Hollywood Films

	Pre-conventional		Conventional		Post-conventional		N/A		Other		Total	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Pre 9/11	30	6	20	4	20	4	30	6	0	0	26.32	20
After 9/11	16.07	9	12.50	7	37.50	21	32.14	18	1.79	1	73.68	56
Total	19.74	15	14.47	11	32.89	25	31.58	24	1.32	1	100	76

Fisher's exact test for count data: p-value = 0.4174

P-value > 0.05 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

Being exposed to too much television and film creates illusory perceptions of reality, mainly caused by the repetition of certain images in various contexts (Gerbener & Gross, 1976). Since representation in the fictional world signifies social existence, absence means "symbolic annihilation" (Gerbener & Gross, 1976, p.182). Therefore, Hollywood either symbolically annihilates Arab women or confines them to certain stereotypes. "Representations of the 'Orient' no matter how seemingly innocent, are charged with meanings about cultural relations" (Felperin,

1997). When Hollywood films repeatedly portray Arab women with the same framing, audiences start to believe this to be reality.

The first hypothesis focuses on the national identity of the Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films, determined through two variables, the nationality and identification of the characters in the sample. There is an apparent shift of interest towards Iraq after the 9/11 attacks and War on Terror. However, no significant difference is found between the identification of the Arab female characters before and after 9/11, as there is a consistency in the results showing that the majority of the sample are not identified. Although the p-value does not indicate a significant difference between the two periods, there is a consistency in the de-humanizing of the Arab female characters by not even giving them a name. There also seems to be an emphasis of the stereotype of Arab females being owned or controlled by men and not having an independent identity, as many are referred to as a specific man's sister, wife or even mistress. This becomes more evident after 9/11.

The second hypothesis focuses on the orientalism of Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films, determined through four variables, job, clothing, sexualization and magic. The results show that there is consistency in the types of jobs the characters have before and after 9/11. In general, the sample characters do not have their job mentioned. In contrast, there is a significant difference in the clothing the characters wear. There is a greater variety of clothing styles before 9/11 including revealing clothes, veiled with a face cover or modest but not veiled. However, after 9/11 most women are veiled with no face cover and either wear conservative or modest clothes. The levels of sexualization of the characters in the sample shows a significant difference, with a total of 30% of those appearing before 9/11 being objectified, and only 1.79% after. Finally, there is no significant difference between the magic associated with Arab female characters in the two periods, with only 5% of those who appear before 9/11 having supernatural powers, and 3.58% of those who appear after having either supernatural powers or special abilities.

The third hypothesis focuses on the violence of Arab female characters in popular Hollywood films, determined through three variables, aggression, conscience level and overall morality. The results show that there is consistency in the levels of aggression before and after 9/11, with the main difference being that no female characters are portrayed as aggressive before 9/11, while 12.5% are after. The conscience levels of the sample characters are consistent across the two time periods, as there is no statistically significant difference. However, a difference that is notable is that the percentage of good or pure characters actually increases after 9/11, while the number of the wounded, weak or defiled characters decreases. Many of the characters included in the sample are not given enough screen time for the coders to categorize them, and thus they are coded as not applicable. Similarly, the moral development stage of almost a third of the characters is not knowable during either time period, yet the number of pre-conventional and conventional characters before 9/11 exceeds those after. The number of post-conventional characters almost doubles in the second time period. The films show some Arab female characters standing up to society's norms and taking an active role in making their own decisions.

Recommendations

This research focuses on applying a qualitative content analysis to the films under study, but does not include holistic qualitative details of the differences between them. Further research could be conducted to examine the context of the films, especially those that depict similar

historical events or which are set in the same geographical area. Also, this research focuses on how Arab women from various countries are portrayed, but it is important to note that even within the same country there are different cultures, beliefs, socioeconomic standards and physical appearances. Therefore, future research which includes the differences between the ways women within the same country are portrayed in local and foreign media would make for an interesting comparative study.

Limitations

The main limitation faced by the researchers is that content analysis is a time-consuming process. The researchers worked to overcome this by reviewing the films over a long period, which enabled them to focus on each character in each film. Another limitation faced by the researchers is that coding is subject to the coders' interpretations. The researchers worked to overcome this limitation by assigning two coders to each film, enabling them to compare the results by applying Holisti's intercoder reliability. The results show a high level of agreement between their coding decisions.

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