

Alienating: How the portrayal of Muslim women in US media affects Muslim women's social identities

by

Barikisu Issaka

B.A., University of Ghana, 2017

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Nancy Muturi

Copyright

© Barikisu Issaka 2021.

Abstract

Among the portrayals of the minorities in general and Muslims, men and women, in particular in the U.S., Muslim women have been noted to be the most misrepresented and negatively framed. Although previous studies have highlighted the effects of media framing on minorities including their identities, little research exists which analyzes how Muslim women are portrayed in US media from the women's perspectives and how these portrayals affect the women's social identities. Accordingly, this phenomenological research sought to fill the gap in the literature through an examination of how Muslim women are portrayed in US media and the impact of such portrayals of their social identities. This study employed a qualitative approach through in-depth semi structured interviews and framing theory and social identities theory as the theoretical frameworks.

The study found that the negative framing and misrepresentations of Muslim women in the mainstream media are widespread and cut across themes such as victims of oppression, lack of agency, and underrepresentation. From the women's perspective, these do not reflect their realities. Yet, such negative portrayals have adverse consequences on the women's social identities such that they lead to identity threats. These identity threats compel the women to compare themselves to other majority/minority groups such as Christians and Jews. To cope with such identity threats, some of the women dissociate from their Muslim ingroup and its identity markers such as the wearing of the hijab; others associate with the ingroup and its identity markers; and almost all of them avoid mainstream media. The theoretical and practical implications of this phenomenon are highlighted.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Dedication	viii
Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
Thesis statement	7
Problem Statement	7
Study purpose	8
Study Significance	9
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	11
Minorities and Media representation	11
Media (Mis)representation of Muslims	12
Muslim Women, Hijab and the Western Media	17
Why Media Representation Matters	26
Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework	30
Framing Theory	30
Social Identity Theory	34
Background on Identity Threats	36
Media Presentations and Identity Threats	36
Chapter 4 - Methods	39
In-depth Semi-structured Interviews	39
Sampling	40
Participants Recruitment and Research Setting	41
Data Collection	41
Positionality	42
Participants Details	42
Data Analysis	43
Chapter 5 - Results and Discussion	45
Lack of Agency	45
Underrepresentation of Muslim Women in the US Media	47

Victims of Rights	47
Marginalization	48
Misrepresentation.....	49
Lack of Agency.....	50
Need to Liberate the Hijab-wearing Woman	51
Alien Symbol	51
Positive Representations	52
Target of Abuse.....	53
Low Self-Esteem.....	54
Low Self-Esteem.....	55
Target of Abuse/Discrimination	56
Ingroup Identity Threats	56
Comparison with Other Majority/Minority Groups.....	57
Perceived Threat and Insecurity.....	58
Vulnerability	59
Embarrassment.....	60
Talking Back.....	61
Show Up and Speak Up	61
“Tuning out”	62
Alienating from Ingroup	63
Ingroup Association	63
Avoidance of Mainstream Media.....	63
Discussion.....	64
Chapter 6 - Conclusion, Implications And Limitations	72
Theoretical Implications	73
Practical Implications.....	74
Limitations	75
References.....	76
Appendix A - Interview Guide	86
Appendix B - IRB Approval.....	88

List of Figures

Figure 1. Forms of hijab. Adapted from Soni (2003) and retrieved from https://www.channel4.com/news/from-hijab-to-burqa-a-guide-to-muslim-headwear	20
Figure 2. An integrated process model of framing adopted from De Vreese (2005)	32

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Almighty Allah for His Guidance and favour throughout my academic journey. I would like to also acknowledge my family for their support throughout this journey. The long hours of calls and video calls from my family always gave me the motivation to get back to work with joy. To my dad, thank you for being my biggest cheerleader.

My academic journey and this thesis would not have come to a successful completion without the support of my major advisor, Dr. Nancy Muturi. I'm grateful to her for the mentorship, research opportunities, advice, and encouragement throughout the process. I would also like to show my gratitude to Dr. Raluca Cozma, my graduate coordinator and committee member. Dr. Cozma was instrumental in my journey to coming to K-State for graduate studies, and she has been immensely supportive in diverse ways since day one. Further, I am grateful to Dr. Alisa Garni for her expertise and the insightful feedback she provided during my research.

I am equally appreciative of the many Muslim women participants who shared their experiences with me. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me and advocating for change in media practice and representations of Muslim women.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank all my friends and loved ones for their love, care and support throughout my academic journey and during my thesis. To all the friends and families I made here in Manhattan, thank you all for showering me with love!

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their immense support and love for girl child education although they themselves were not formally educated.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

For most people in America, and most of the Western hemisphere, the first time they get to learn or hear about the Islam religion is when information about it appears on their screens or in a printed media source. Over the years, many scholars have highlighted American audience's reliance on the mainstream media for information about Islam and Muslims. For example, Powell (2004) noted that Islam first reached the homes of many Americans through press, and that the media coverage of Muslims was mostly based on oil, war, and terrorism. Similarly, Khan and Eid (2011) asserted that Islam is constructed as a strange and threatening religion to people in the West and America who continue to rely on media sources for the bulk of their knowledge about Islam.

Khan and Eid (2011) noted that although the media had been covering Islam and Muslims before the September 11 attacks, that incident and other terrorist attacks in the West heightened the media's attention on Muslims and Islam. For the most part, this heightened coverage exacerbated negative stereotypes about Muslims. The researchers observed that the September 11 incidents intensified prejudiced representations of Muslims in Western media, with a propensity to insert generalizations and orientalist images, creating stereotypical effects on Muslims' and Islam's popularity.

Given these negative framings of Muslims, a 2014 Pew Research Center data showed that Americans typically regard Muslims even less favorably than other religious and ethnic minorities. This is corroborated by Terman (2017) who asserted that the most common reason for this disadvantage is the alleged connection between Muslims and terrorism, driven primarily by the 9/11 attacks and the resulting War on Terror, and where many blamed the media for reinforcing this association in the American public consciousness.

Such a trend in the media is particularly worrying in view of the fact that the population of Muslims in America is on the rise and yet many Americans do not seem to know much about Islam and Muslim beyond what is put out there by the media. According to Pew Research Center, by 2040, Muslims will become the nation's second-largest religious group after Christians. And by 2050, the U.S. Muslim population is projected to reach 8.1 million or 2.1% of the nation's total population — nearly twice the share of today.

The role the media plays as a significant source of information and communication cannot be overlooked or argued upon. Most people rely on the media – traditional or social media - for new information, past information and to communicate with others. This reliance upon the media is part of our daily routines that will continue to increase in the Internet era where smart communication devices are widespread globally, thus making it more difficult to escape the ever-encompassing aspects of media in our lives (Miles-Novelo & Anderson, 2020).

Several scholars have demonstrated the impact of media representations of issues on audiences' perceptions and attitudes to those issues and the communities represented in them. Media representations of issues usually depict a story line, or an evolving issue and these representations are very powerful such that they influence how viewers and audiences make sense of the world (Kendall, 2011). Brummett (2014) noted that the media forms perceptions, affects and creates assumptions in the national debate and generates stereotypes. In fact, research in psychology demonstrates that perceptions about people and communities can be incredibly potent and compelling when it comes to prejudices about how they are depicted in the media. In reality, much of our views and behaviors towards certain classes of people could be based not on real-world contact with members of the category but on what we see in the media (Miles-Novelo & Anderson, 2020). Likewise, Sheaffer and Dvir-Gvirsman (2010) observed that negative media

presentations and depictions tend to have a much more important effect on the attitudes of viewers. Studies like these highlight why the fear of Muslims features prominently in everyday conversations of many people within the traditional and new media in America.

Many scholars' continuous engagement with this phenomenon of the visibility and representations of Muslims in the American media is an indication of the importance of this issue because it has direct consequences on Muslims. For instance, Saleem et al. (2017) reported that "existing theory and empirical evidence suggest that exposure to media depictions of Muslims in a violent context...influence aggressive perceptions and in turn support for policies that harm Muslims" (p. 846). Powell (2018) also noted that Western media's engagement in racism and generation of prejudice against Islam is acknowledged, in the scholarly community, but the media for the most part do not distinguish Islam and Muslims, the acts of one Muslim are equated with all Muslims.

The media in the West significantly attach Islam to or blame Muslims in general for a bad practice even if it's an individual action taken by a single Muslim; for instance, in America, the trend is to stereotype the act of an individual or a group as being representative of the entire Muslim community or Islam (Rahman, 2012). The media fails to consider factors like cultural affiliations, political or other social groups' affiliations which could affect or determine an individual's action. These actions by the media affect people's attitudes and way of thinking towards Muslims in general. Screen media can have a powerful impact on public debate and political policies especially for minority groups like Muslims with whom most Americans have very little direct communication (Anderson & Miles-Novelo, 2020).

In reality, media influence on the attitudes of Americans towards Muslims is stronger than those of other sources of knowledge (Kalkan et al., 2009). Scholars have found that negative

media stereotyping also causes Muslims to fail to find and maintain their jobs, relationships and lives (Kincheloe et al., 2010; McQueeney, 2014). People develop hatred and fear towards Muslims, and this has been termed “Islamophobia.” Islamophobia refers to the fear and hostility to Islam and Muslims leading to hate crimes, bigotry, dehumanization and misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims (Kincheloe et al., 2010). Allen (2001) noted the dangers and adverse effects of this phenomenon asserting that:

Islamophobia is dangerous because it does not respect the individual. It is an indiscriminate prejudice that tarnishes every Muslim irrespective of social, ethnic or cultural orientation. And it is equally true that it has effects on the motives and attitudes of millions of individuals, that in turn determines their behavior to and beliefs about Muslims (p. 4).

Islamophobia is now recognized and classified as a form of special discrimination (Considine 2017). The term Islamophobia gained further interest and usage when Runnymede Trust (1997) defined Islamophobia as the irrational and close-minded fear and/or hatred of Islam, Muslims or Islamic/Muslim culture.

While Islamophobia awareness has risen in recent years, the fear of Muslims and Islam has continued and even intensified, leading to attempts to stop immigration for those from Islamic countries (Powell, 2018). In addition, a recent surge of aggressive violence, skewed press reports and negative propaganda against Muslims in America arose with Donald Trump’s candidacy (Powell, 2015). During Trump's campaign in 2016, he proclaimed “Islam hates us” and called for a Muslim travel ban, as well as regulating or even closing American mosques by intimidation (Morey, Yaqin, & Forte, 2019).

Such Islamophobic rhetoric translated into action or state policy when on January 27, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order indefinitely halting Syrian refugee resettlement, pausing the overall refugee resettlement program, and temporarily barring non-

citizens from seven majority-Muslim nations from entering the U.S. The executive order was named "Protecting the Country from International Terrorists Entering in the United States" (Migration Policy Institute, 2017).

This executive order has a much- more reaching negative impact such that it fuels the country's Islamophobia machine, strengthening the impression that Islam and Muslims are to be feared by connecting the discourse on Muslims and Islam to sensationalized security debates (Jamal, 2017). As Rubin (2020) recently observed, Trump used the language of fear to generate hate for Muslims and immigrants amongst his followers by comparing terrorism with both groups. Following this, hate crimes against Muslims in the United States were reported to have grown sharply between 2015 and 2016, surpassing 2001 levels after the 9/11 attacks (Kishi, 2017). A 2017 Pew Research Center study reported that "74 percent of Muslim-Americans say the current president and media systems are "unfriendly to them."

Since the coverage of the 9/11 events, nobody suffered more from the badly informed media than Muslim women (Weiss, 2016). One major target of attacks and media stereotypes when it comes to Islam and Muslims is the hijab. Generally, the hijab, which has been used in many instances to represent Muslim women's way of dressing modestly, is understood as a piece of scarf/veil that Muslim women use to cover their hair and necks. It is an integral aspect of many Muslim women's identities within public and private spaces and a site of tension and resistance between Muslim women and people who perceive the hijab as alien to American culture (Iddrisu, 2019). Medina Bravo, Alsina, and Guerrero Solé (2018) noted that it is common for Western media to perpetuate notions of sub-alterity and stereotypical perceptions of cultural diversity when it comes to the media depictions of Muslim women. Such representations explain

the data reported by Pew Research Center in 2017 which showed that “a majority (68%) of Muslim women stated that media coverage of Muslims is unfair, compared with 52% of men.”

Terman (2017) explained that US news representation of women in foreign countries is motivated by confirmation bias. With regard to Muslim women in particular, she further observed that, first, journalists are more likely to report on women living in Muslim and Middle Eastern countries when the women’s rights are violated; on the contrary, journalists focus on women in other cultures when the women’s rights are respected. Second, reports about Muslim women illustrate the trend of abuses of women's rights and gender discrimination, even for countries with reasonably good records of women's rights.

As a consequence of the biased reportage about rights, Muslim women are also portrayed in the media as oppressed women. Watt (2012) asserted that in the news media in particular, depictions of covered women as marginalized, exotic, and dangerous are common. Muslim women are portrayed as lacking freedom because they choose to observe the hijab as a religious practice. This practice is constantly misrepresented not as an expression of freedom of religion and an exercise of the women’s agency but as a practice that is imposed upon Muslim women by their men folk.

Muslim women who observe the hijab have been attacked and misrepresented. The women have been subjects of attack because their hijabs make them highly visible in public, making them easy targets of discrimination and anti-Islamic sentiments (Iddrisu, 2019). Pew Research Center reported that “Six-in-ten (64%) Muslims whose appearance identifies them as Muslim have experienced discrimination compared with 39% among those who are not easily identifiable as Muslim”. Muslim women face a particular form of racial isolation due to their gender and diverse cultural and religious origins, as opposed to their male counterparts. (p.1).

Karaman and Christian (2020) asserted that, “Muslim women, in particular, in the United States embody distinct visual subjectivities that render them racially “visible” by wearing hijabs” (p.2).

Thesis statement

Considering the media’s heightened negative portrayal of Muslims since the events of 9/11 to date as shown in the existing research and the recent exponential increases in Islamophobic sentiments in the Trump era, there is the real tendency of those sentiments to influence social identities of Muslim women; this is particularly likely given the reality that such anti-Muslim sentiments can translate into discriminative acts against Muslims in public spaces and institutions. Yet, there is a gap in the literature regarding the effects of these misrepresentations on Muslim women’s social identities. This requires renewed studies into these issues because a neglect of this phenomenon will lead to consistent discrimination and stereotypes against Muslims in public spaces and institutions and continued stereotyping of Muslims in the American media. By understanding the effects of these misrepresentations on Muslim women, scholars and practitioners in the field of Mass Communication and Journalism can advocate for best practices in media reportage that promotes unbiased representation of Muslim women’s images in the American media. Such insights can also help Muslim women and scholars to be more critical of media consumption and challenge negative portrayal of Muslim women’s identities in the media.

Problem Statement

Research has shown the continuous repetitions of negative and stereotypical representations of Muslim women and the hijab in the US media and political space. However, the tendency of this negative repetitive representations and portrayals to make Muslim women question their belonging to Islam or to hide their association with Islam hasn’t received much

scholarly attention. Furthermore, these negative portrayals have the tendency to cause discrimination and hate crimes against Muslim women which can cause Muslim women to question their acceptance in and affiliation with the Muslim community in America.

Accordingly, research is needed to ascertain the impact of media misrepresentations on them and how the Muslim women are navigating their social identities within the American society.

Specifically, it is important to understand how these misrepresentations influence Muslim women's confidence in portraying their identities in public spaces, the identity threats which result from these misrepresentations, and how Muslim women cope with the effects of these misrepresentations on their identities. It is also important to find out dominant themes within these media representations as perceived by Muslim women.

Study purpose

Women in general are viewed as vulnerable and are largely stereotyped. Tuchman (1979) noted that while American media grew significantly after the Second World War, women were not involved in the public sphere. According to Tuchman, women in America have been underrepresented and continue to face stereotypical media portrayals. There is a lack of empowering representations of women of any national or religious origin in U.S. journalists' coverage. The common ones use overly sexual representations of women as empowerment rather than images of powerful women or intelligent women (Brinkman et al., 2014). Muslim women being framed negatively in the media makes them doubly vulnerable as women and then Muslim. This negative framing of Muslim women in the American media could potentially affect people's attitudes towards them and also affect how the Muslim women perceive themselves with America.

In reality, communication theorizing and analysis have shown that media can serve as agents that form one's social and political identity in separate, diverse ways. (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011). Exposure to unfavorable media portrayals of minority groups is correlated with a number of adverse consequences for minorities, such as decreased self-esteem, low perceived individual and community importance, lower academic achievement, higher perceived discrimination, and increased expectations of dominant group ostracism and exclusion (Appel & Weber, 2017; Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Schmuck et al., 2017).

It is in light of these potential consequences of media misrepresentations that this study seeks to explore the phenomenon to bring into light how factors such as media representations and depictions of minority groups like Muslim women can have adverse consequences.

To understand this phenomenon, two theoretical frameworks -- the framing theory and social identity theory -- will be used to analyze how media framing can affect Muslim women's social-identities. Framing, as a "communications concept, suggests that the "frame" or the way a problem, concern or issue is presented influences the choices that people make in order to handle them" (Weiss 2016, p.19). The theory focuses on frames used by the media to present an issue or topic and how those frames affect people's attitudes and thinking on what is presented. Framing consists of selecting and emphasizing some aspect(s) of an issue in communicating text to promote importance among audiences (Weberling, 2012). Leaper (2011) explained that social identity refers to how individuals perceive themselves based on their affiliation with or membership in a social group.

Study Significance

This study will not only fill the knowledge gap in the literature but will also advocate for better and true representations of Muslim women's identities in the media. Existing theory shows

that media portrayals of minorities have the tendency to affect their identities, and this highlights the significance of the focus of this study on Muslim women, a vulnerable minority population whose identities have been among the most sidelined and distorted in the media. This will also help contribute to policy reforms in public institutions to combat discrimination against Muslim women. Practically, this study can help shape and guide journalists in their portrayals of Muslim women and also help train upcoming journalists who are still in school on how to portray Muslim women their production and circulation of media content. Theoretically, this study will help introduce new frames or contribute to existing media frames on Muslim women and different media effects on social identities. Achieving these will help protect the identities of Muslim women in our precarious society.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

To explore media misrepresentations of minority groups such as Muslim women and the effects of the negative portrayals on such groups, this chapter will highlight existing literature on media representation of minorities, Muslims and Muslim women and why these representations matter.

Minorities and Media representation

Media representations of minorities have always been focused on two aspects. First, minority voices are silenced, hence basically overlooked or invisible (Saeed, 1999). The second applies to misrepresentation or derogatory minority portrayals (IRA & Mt, 2001). Cottle claimed that in presenting, describing and formulating particular discourses that help reflect (and misrepresent) minority groups, the media has a powerful role (Cottle 2000). Broos and Van den Bulck (2011) asserted that the general conclusion of minority representation research is that coverage on minorities is mostly negative, related to crime, abuse, extremism and fundamentalism. Several researchers have indicated the mass media present dominant social norms, philosophies and trends which frequently contribute to misrepresentation or stereotypical depictions of minorities throughout the media (Saha, 2012; Van Dijk, 1991). These acts of developing and reinforcing stereotypes by the media have resulted in providing a framework in which minority members have to reside and respond to subsequent media portrayals of their identities, incidents and majority members' treatment (Brinston & Stohl 2012).

Scholars who have invested efforts to analyze dominant themes and portrayals of minorities in Western media in European countries and the US found out that minorities are usually projected as criminals and threats to their various societies and their associations with numerous drug issues (Hartmann and Husband 1974; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1985). For instance,

Hall (1992a, 1992b) in an analysis of how blacks in the UK were presented in UK media found the dominant images and symbols of blacks as primitive, culturally inferior to whites due to the color of their skin and racial differences. In the US, media rhetoric of African Americans frequently reiterates most white preconceptions of blacks as being criminals, troublemakers, abusive, and drug pushers (Oliver, 1994; Staples, 2011).

6

Media (Mis)representation of Muslims

The period following the 1970s witnessed an upsurge of media coverage about Muslims and the Islamic world. This period was marked by the unfolding of critical geopolitical events that brought the West and the Middle East into intractable confrontation. Beginning with the 1979 Iranian Revolution when Ayatollah Khomeini described the U.S. as the “Great Satan”, other historic defining events have since occurred to shape Western perceptions about the Muslim World and recalibrate relations between the two; the 1979-1981 Hostage Crisis, the 1979 Seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the 1988 Lockerbie Bombing, Saddam Hussein’s occupation of Kuwait in 1990 followed by the 1991 Gulf War, and the rise of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban cumulatively thrust the Islamic World into the media limelight and thereby set the tone for the (re)shaping of Western ideas and perceptions of Islam and Muslims (Kabir, 2004; p. 323).

Given the geopolitical implications of these events, western countries were no doubt affected and subsequent foreign policy decisions featured the Muslim world prominently. Equally significantly, Islam and Muslim received a barrage of Western media reportage which depicted Islam's public image as a key threat and enemy to the West (Kabir, 2006). Accordingly, Ahmed (2012) observed that the subsequent events of 9/11 further intensified the media's

discourse on Muslims and the compatibility or otherwise of Islamic values and precepts with western civilization. Consequently, after 9/11, media representation of mainstream Muslim voices diminished across the U.S. and the world as a whole. What was observed, instead, was the coverage of fringe elements of the Muslim population and portrayal of such groups as being wholly representative of Islam. As Poole and Richardson (2006) averred, such coverage utilizes visuals, depictions and discourses that appear to be negative and hostile in balance. In Britain in particular, after 9/11, Muslims "were increasingly framed in political and public discourse by an almost seamless reiteration of their aberrant cultural traits, which rendered them marginal to British life and made their assertions of embracing British identity ring hollow" (Alam & Husband, 2013, p. 243).

This contention is amply buttressed by Elmasry's (2002) study which provided an account of "the frequent demonic portrayal and misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims." This representation, he contended, "has been one of the most persistent, virulent and socially important sources of anti-Islam sentiments in the Canadian media, particularly after 9/11." (p.23). Similarly, an analysis of the coverage of Islam and Muslims in several Australian newspapers between 2001 to 2004, which results were juxtaposed with findings of in-depth interviews with Muslims revealed that media coverages generally demonized Muslims as terrorists (Kabir, 2008).

In fact, several studies have found that the international media tend to negatively interpret Islam by fringe notions popularized by terror groups, a notable trend that has been on the rise since 9/11 (Winegar, 2008; Zulkifli, 2009). This terrorist tagging and oversimplification, Orbe and Harris (2008) argued, has cultivated and increased unhealthy biases, deep hostilities and attacks against Muslims. Taken collectively, these reportages result in the deliberate

dehumanization and repeated portrayal of Muslims as violent and terrorist (Miles-Novelo & Anderson, 2020).

One way the Western media depicts or represents Muslims is through ‘othering,’ by which Muslims are characterized and depicted as the ‘other’, living outside mainstream European life and culture. This sets Islam and Muslims up as ‘cultural outliers’, as outsiders against Western cultural values, thereby making indigenes of Western countries perceive Islam and Muslims as aliens with incompatible values and ideologies (e.g., Geaves, 2007; Jiwani & Dakroury, 2009; Kabir, 2008). That these portrayals pit or have the tendency to pit culture against culture, nation against nation, and religion against religion cannot be overemphasized. And the Western media enhances such negative depictions by deploying and assigning traits considered generally abhorrent and unacceptable. Indeed, media reportage on Islam are rife and laden with notions of discrimination, oppression, and the religion being generally sexist, inflexible, and contrary to Western cultural moorings (Korteweg, 2008; Mishra, 2007). These media portrayals suggestive of oppositional sides between Islamic values and Muslims and Western cultures have been observed in different Western countries.

Muslims in Britain have, for instance, been portrayed as an immigrant group that has "brought alien values and practices into the U.K. threatening '[their] values'", with 9/11 producing the perfect atmosphere by means of which "the outcomes of neoliberal restructuring of the economy could easily be displaced onto the problems of Muslim integration" (p.30). By this logic, Muslims are not just considered an immigrant group, but as "a drain on resources" (Poole, 2011, p. 59). For Muslims in Canada, their sense of belonging and shared interests in the Canadian culture and values get questioned in public spaces due to the images and texts that portray Islam as incompatible with Canadian cultures and values (Eid & Khan, 2011). Edward

Said (1981) argued in "Covering Islam" that the success of the Western media's negative portrayal of Islam and its impact "could be attributed to the political influence of those people and institutions producing it rather than necessarily the truth or accuracy" of it (p. 169).

Although the events of 9/11 had enormous impact on other Western countries and further informed the way they portrayed Muslims, the media landscape prior to 9/11 was not that much hostile. Researchers observed that before 9/11, discourses in the media that generated discriminations against Muslims in America were not generalized discourses, such that an act committed by a Muslim was not generalized to include all Muslims or tagged as an Islamic trait. Hence, discrimination and media representations of Muslims were based on individual ethnicity or origin rather than religion (Aziz, 2009; Elver, 2012; Lajevardi, 2017). According to Lajevardi (2017), "During this time, Muslims were generally perceived as model immigrants, with high education levels (the second-highest level of education among the major religious groups), low crime rates, and were rarely discussed in the media" (p.12).

In the aftermath of the 9/11 events, a study that examined 11 terrorist events between October 2001 and January 2010 revealed that the dominant themes across most American media represented these events as international terrorism (Powell, 2011). The study also found that the media were using thematic frames which intensified the fear of Islam and Muslims, particularly by reporting an act committed by an Arab or a single Muslim as a terrorist attack by all Muslims and Islam on America and Americans, whereas terrorist acts committed by locals were reported as single acts of individuals with psychological issues. Some scholars argue that the shift in coverage after the 9/11 events were influenced by the U.S. government's rhetoric which framed the U.S. response to the attack as a "war on terror." Used by then President George Bush a few days after the attack, the phrase was adopted and repeated across U.S. cable news and media

channels (Powell 2011; Reese & Lewis, 2009). In a 2013 study, el-Aswad reiterated that much Western scholarship and media, particularly in the United States, that have dealt with Islam or Muslims in the Middle East as well as worldwide, have manipulated the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and have defined such events within contexts of religious extremism, global violence, and the war on terror. This has resulted in negative, fear-inducing, and stereotypical images of Muslims. This further created a deeply discriminatory rhetoric against Islam (i.e., an us versus them dynamic) in the media and public sphere (Powell & Abadi 2003). Similarly, Mughees-Uddin (1994) also observed that the "U.S. media has tried to create conflict and misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity by portraying Christianity as a symbol of tolerance and free-market economy and Islam as a religion of non-tolerant people" (pp. 41-42).

Regarding portrayals of Muslims in America's newspapers, Trevino et al. (2010) examined three elite American newspapers and found that all three papers had the "highest percentages the unfavorable category in their portrayal of Muslims" after September 11 events (p.7). Additionally, the authors noted that "in most negative references the following adjectives were often included to describe Muslims/Islam: terror/terrorist/terrorism, extremist/extremism, fundamentalist/fundamentalism, radical/radicalism, fanatic/fanaticism, bomb/bomber/bombing, kidnap/kidnapping, assassin/assassinate/assassination, murder/murderers/murderous, killers, beheading, militant, jihad and guerilla" (p. 7).

Several years after 9/11, researchers have revealed that Muslims in America are still slandered and portrayed as evil within the public sphere (Dana et al. 2017; Oskooii 2015). Lajevardi (2017) observed, for instance, that polls and research during the 2016 campaign demonstrated a new wave of negative discourses about Muslims in the American media (Lajevardi, 2017). In the same vein, (Lajevardi & Abrajano, 2019) also observed that during the

2016 campaign and the Trump administration, there were increased negative rhetoric about Muslims in the media, following his promise on banning several Muslim countries, a promise which evidently appealed to his fans and political support base. A 2018 summary report on research examining the media portrayal of five significant American minority racial, ethnic, or religious groups (comprising African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Jews, and Muslims) revealed that "Muslims stand out as being both the most frequent and the most negative by a wide margin" (p. 1). Additionally, the researchers observed that the emerging frames in the articles about Muslims were more on conflicts and terrorism themed frames, noting the appearance of "conflict words such as violence, combat, war, or insurgency in 77% of 2018 articles, while terrorism appeared in 45%.". (p. 25). Research reveals that Muslim women are the media's great source of attack when it comes to media portrayals of Muslims.

Muslim Women, Hijab and the Western Media

This section highlights media misrepresentation of Muslim women as a specific group within the broader category of Muslims. Although the previous section considered media portrayals of Muslims in general, the current focus on Muslim women in this section is informed by the fact that this research takes Muslim women as its subjects of study. More importantly, many Muslim women's visibility marked by their veiling practices makes them targets of (mis)representations by Western media outlets in ways that are significantly different from their male counterparts and non-Muslim women (Cainkar, 2011; Haddad et al., 2011; Terman, 2017).

Since some Muslim women wear the hijab/headscarf, their Islamic identities are easily identifiable (Selod & Embrick, 2013). The visibility of the hijab as an identity marker has caused significant debates, most of which led to further stereotyping of Muslim women in the media. Kaya (2007) accurately observed that visible distinctions between Muslim women, such as the

headscarf (hijab), often make them more prone to prejudice and place them at the center of controversy. The hijab and Muslim women are framed within discourses about extremism and terrorism. This identification of Muslim women in the media via traditional Islamic dress has been noted by Begum (2005), who argued that “images of Islamic dress are increasingly used in the media as a visual shorthand for dangerous extremism” (p.6).

One of the pervasive framing of Muslim women in Western media is the (mis)representation of Muslim women as outsiders who do not belong to Western societies irrespective of their citizenship status. In their study of the portrayal of Muslim women in Canadian mainstream media, Bullock and Jafri (2000) argued that media framings of Canadian “nationhood” position Muslim women as foreigners and “distant others” whose ways of being are opposed to Canadian values (p. 35). They noted that this phenomenon is particularly evident in media news headlines that constantly cast Muslim women’s Islamic identities as anti-Canadian. The construction of Muslim women’s identities as foreign and alien to Canadian society and culture is corroborated by other researchers such as Gowlett who asserted that news in print media about Muslim women in Canada typically features in the foreign affairs sections.

Similarly, within the U.S. media, researchers such as Rochelle Terman have analyzed media coverage about Muslim women. In Terman’s 2017 article on Islamophobia and US media portrayals of Muslim women, the author analyzed thirty-five years of news coverage of women abroad by two of America’s prominent newspapers, *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Terman’s findings showed that US media coverage of Muslim women focused extensively on “the issue of women’s rights and gender discrimination at the expense of other topics” (p. 490). More importantly, the author observed that while Muslim women are likely to be covered in US media when their rights are trampled upon, non-Muslim women “appear in the media in contexts

where their rights are respected” (p. 489). This kind of skewed reportage perpetuates an Orientalist logic and discourse that frames Muslim women as victims of oppression, a logic that Edward Said (1979) criticized as being the foundation of Western societies’ unfounded claim of religious, cultural, and political superiority. Terman warned that US media’s “obsession with Muslim women’s rights may, ironically prove counterproductive” if their goal is advocating for gender equality in Muslim communities because such extreme emphasis on the construction of Muslim women as oppressed may be met with “suspicion and incredulity among Muslim men and women alike” (p. 501).

Generally, while there are a plethora of media and communication studies that have shown that media framings of Muslim women tend to perpetuate narratives of oppression, cultural and security threat, and a lack of agency, there are other studies that have demonstrated media representations of Muslim women as individuals with freedom and agency (Ali, 2017; Mansson McGinty, 2014; Vintges, 2012). Mansson McGinty noted that given the heightened visibility of Muslim women post 9/11 and the increased discrimination that they experienced, many Muslim women across the US became politically active, engaging “in anti-war movements as well as public discourse on civil and racial justice, immigrant rights, and integration” (p. 683). Similarly, Ali (2017) observed that media representations of Muslim women during the 2017 Women’s March in the post-Trump election era constructed them as agents of resistance in concert with other women’s movements in America.

Almost every research and discourse about Muslim women has an aspect that discusses the Islamic veil. While this study recognizes the complexity of Muslim women’s identities, the extensive focus on media framings of the hijab in this section is a consequence of massive attention that the Western media pays to Muslim women’s veiling practices (Bullock & Jafri,

2000). In fact, MacDonald (2008) has asserted that the hijab occupies a central role in the American media's preoccupation with oppressive framing of Muslim women.

Although there are different forms of the Islamic veil, "hijab" is a common, generic term that is used to describe the different forms of Islamic veils and styles in which they are worn. Despite the fact that this study also uses hijab to represent the different forms of Islamic veils, before discussing the representation of the hijab in the US and Western media, it is still crucial for the purposes of this study to briefly delineate the types of Islamic veil. Soni (2003) and Iddrisu (2019) noted that there are three common forms of the Islamic veil: hijab, niqab and burqa. Figure 1 below shows images of these common types.



Figure 1. Forms of hijab. Adapted from Soni (2003) and retrieved from <https://www.channel4.com/news/from-hijab-to-burqa-a-guide-to-muslim-headwear>

Iddrisu (2019) explained that the hijab typically covers the entire head of Muslim women except their faces and part of the veil covers their chests. As regards the niqab, the author noted

that it covers the women's entire head and part of the face except their eyes. The niqab is a combination of a lengthy, loose headscarf for the head and body and an additional fabric for the face. The third type, the burqa, "is mainly a single-piece full veil that covers the entire body of the women. It is usually loose and has mesh-like holes in the face area that allows the women to see through" (p. 9).

Within the US media and public discourse, Haddad et al. (2011) observed that the hijab is framed from three dominant perspectives. First, the hijab is perceived as a symbol of an Islamic culture which is inferior to US and Western cultural practices; second, the hijab is conceptualized as a cultural threat to secular ideals; and thirdly, the hijab represents Muslim women's visible expression of religious and identity difference. Taken together, these representations of the hijab in the US media, the authors noted, frame the Muslim women who don the hijab as involved in a "clash of civilizations" that has both "political and social implications" (p. 39). The need to theorize such social implications partly informs the focus of this study on how media representations of Muslims affect Muslim women's social identities.

In addition to the three conceptualizations of the hijab discussed above, Read and Bartkowski (2003) noted that there is a widespread representation of the hijab as a symbol/tool of Muslim women's oppression, a representation that has created a stereotypical image of veiled Muslim women as oppressed in the American and Western public consciousness. Scholars such as Watt (2012) have asserted that constructions of veiled Muslim women as "oppressed, exotic, and threatening" are rife in the news media in the US and other Western countries (p. 34). This misrepresentation of hijab-wearing Muslim women as lacking freedom because they choose to observe the hijab disregards several empirical studies that highlight the fact that most Muslim

women in the US and other Western countries wear the hijab as a matter of choice and in practice of their religion (Iddrisu, 2019; Kabir, 2004).

What is more, the practice of wearing hijab has been constructed as a patriarchal practice imposed upon Muslim women by their men folk (Manley, 2009). Manley noted that within the media, burka is construed as “a pervasive symbol of the misogynistic, patriarchal society in Afghanistan” (p. 68) and many other Muslim majority countries especially in the Middle East. Such representations of the hijab as a symbol of patriarchal oppression dominate feminist, including Muslim feminists, discourses about the hijab in the US and Western media. In this regard, Read and Bartkowski (2003) have asserted that feminists usually challenge traditional interpretations of Qur’anic verses on the hijab by pointing to other verses in the Qur’an that recognize gender equality.

Controversies in the media about the conception of the hijab as an imposition on Muslim women rarely feature the voices of Muslim women who actually wear the hijab. Accordingly, a study by Eid (2015) sought to understand how both veiled and unveiled Muslim women perceived the hijab. The findings of this qualitative research based on in-depth interviews in Montreal, Canada, showed that the 20 veiled and unveiled Muslim women who participated in the study articulated unequivocally that their wearing of hijab was never a masculine or patriarchal imposition on them. The veiled Muslims stated it was their choice to wear it as a way of following the tenets of Islam. Eid asserted that “both veiled and non-veiled informants do not see the hijab as a symbol of male domination. Most endorse gender equality in all spheres of life, and many even draw on religious normativity to justify their belief that men and women are equal” (p. 13). Although the sample size for this study was small and cannot be generalized as representative of all veiled Muslim women’s perceptions of the hijab, the findings are still

important as they show how the Muslim women, both veiled and unveiled, perceived their own veiling practices.

Within media studies scholarship, some media scholars such as Radha Hegde challenge the representation of the hijab and hijab-wearing Muslim women as individuals lacking self-agency. For example, in her critical reading of statements made in the media by former British politicians Tony Blair and Jack Straw about veiled Muslim women, Hegde (2010) argued that many Muslim women especially in Western societies choose to wear the hijab. The scholar noted that in such societies where the hijab is demonized, Muslim women wear the hijab not only as a challenge to dominant expectations of sartorial practices perpetuated by the mega media culture, but also as an expression of agency. By so doing, the veiled Muslim women represent “forms of embodied citizenship that test the limits of the liberal discourses of freedom,” calling “into question the conditions under which the gendered transnational immigrant’s body will be accepted as a legitimate actor in the public sphere” and the media (pp.168-169).

Although the construction of Muslims as violent extremists largely targets Muslim men, in “Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Australian Media, 2001-2005”, Nahid Kabir (2004) demonstrated that veiled Muslim women in particular are also framed as violent and a threat to public security. Kabir noted that after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, several Australian national newspapers produced and circulated images of Osama bin Laden and veiled women holding weapons. In his analysis of media portrayal of a female suicide bomber who donned the veil, Kabir pointed out that the woman was framed as hiding the bomb in her veil as if “She looked pregnant...and then she exploded” (p. 316). This framing presented other veiled Muslim women as potential threats to public safety, making them easy targets of attack in public spaces. Indeed, researchers such as Iddrisu (2019) have noted that the association of the veil with

weaponry has caused some veiled Muslim students to be questioned if they have weapons on them before being granted access to certain public buildings including university offices.

Importantly, Kabir indicated that many of such images in the Australian media that framed the Muslim veil as a site of concealing weapons were devoid of any context.

From the foregoing, it is undoubted that the hijab occupies a site of debate and controversy ranging from identity to violence. Accordingly, Kaya's (2007) observation that Muslim women's visibility indexed by their sartorial practices of veiling engenders public controversies and increases their vulnerability to discriminatory acts. Among such common controversies, Kaya noted, about Muslim women's ways of being relate to issues of religious extremism and terrorism. The social implication of such portrayals is that it makes hijab-wearing Muslim women susceptible to attack – physical and verbal – in the public as a result of their marked visibility. In fact, as I have shown previously in the introductory chapter, a 2017 Pew Research Center corroborates the fact that individuals who are easily identifiable as Muslims experience some form of discrimination in public spaces.

In public places and spaces in the US and Western European countries such as France, the pervasive discriminatory attitudes that many people exhibit towards Muslim women who wear the hijab are rooted in the former's perception of veiling as alien to their "national" culture. In Bying's (2010) critical discourse analysis of 72 stories about Muslims and Islam published in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, the author found that such stories invoked national identity images that highlighted the US, France and Britain as ideologically alike with regard to veiling not being part of women's sartorial practices. Consequently, discriminatory acts that publics in such countries display towards veiled Muslim women is not only an attempt to

pressure the women to assimilate to US and Western ways of dressing, but also a kind of defense of a vague sense of national identity.

Given the influential impact of media messages on people, the question of the social belonging and standing of Muslim women in the US thus becomes a crucial intellectual site that deserves research inquiry to ascertain how Muslim women continue to navigate their identities in a culture that is increasingly hostile to Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. The focus of this study on how media representation of Muslim women affects the women's social identities aligns with studies by other scholars who have attempted to respond to this exigent issue on Muslim women's identity construction in Western societies. For example, Ruby (2004) focused on immigrant Muslim women in Saskatoon, Canada, to identify how they constructed their identities. Ruby concluded that, "The concept of the hijab does not easily mesh with Western lifestyles, and, as a result, participants often struggled to maintain their distinct identities. In negotiating the two worlds, participants were often placed on the margins of a greater Canadian society" (p.19). Although this previous study is in line with the current proposed thesis, the attention of the current study on the extended focus on the role the media plays in shaping Muslim women's distinct social identities will provide relevant insights into our understanding of the impact of the media on a marginalized community such as veiled Muslim women. Researchers have long demonstrated that media framings tremendously shape "common sense understandings" and perceptions on various social issues (Byng, 2010, p. 110). This is particularly important in view of recent historical events such as the election of the first two Muslim women, Representatives Ilhan Omar, who wears a hijab, and Rashida Talib, who does not wear the hijab, to the US Congress and the hysteria that their election created in the US media and public discourse.

It is worthy of note that despite the widespread negative representations of Muslim women and the hijab in the media, some studies have demonstrated that Muslim women do not connect the hijab with abuse, gender inequality or oppression (Bullock 2003; Iddrisu, 2019; Read 2003). In fact, scholars have noted that Muslim women in the USA use the hijab to express and affirm their ethno-religious identity (Bullock 2000; Killian 2003). Read and Bartkowski (2000) report that those who don the hijab use it to negotiate their minority identities and subjectivities, while those who did not don the hijab saw it as a hindrance to their integration. Among Muslim immigrant daughters, Williams and Vashi (2007) posited that such women use the hijab to articulate a Muslim and American identity in the USA. Researchers have also shown that veiling for Western converts to Islam affirms their new identification (Anway 1998; Byng 2004; Franks, 2000).

From the foregoing, it is undoubted that scholars have extensively engaged media representations of Muslim women and the hijab. And it is abundantly obvious that misrepresentations of the hijab and Muslim women is prevalent in the US media and that Muslim women's heightened visibility makes them susceptible to discrimination.

Why Media Representation Matters

Although the world has witnessed and continues to witness a vast innovation, technology and global awareness, most people barely travel internationally. Therefore, the media plays a significant part in presenting images and rhetoric about other countries and religions in different forms to people in different parts of the world (Saleem, 2007). Media representations and portrayals also give relevance and drives attention to certain issues and events by providing a channel for communicating and informing to a large number of viewers on their frame of preference (Bekkers et al., 2011). These acts by the media shape ideas about people, places and

objects about people one hasn't encountered personally (McCombs, 2003). Cohen further explains that "most of us gather our impressions of our countries and societies from the media" (Mughees, 1997, p. 33). This is supported by Severin and Tankard's (2000) findings that heavy TV audiences often have responses that are exactly the way the world is presented on TV.

La Ferle et al. (2005) observed that in a media dominated society such as the United States, people often rely on the media for vivid descriptions and portrayals of events they do not experience for themselves. Scholars have observed that the reliance on these different images and portrayals of other countries and religions has the tendency to influence conceptions or misconceptions about each other's countries (McNelly & Izcaray, 1986). The cultivation theory better explains the effect of media exposure on audiences. The theory is of the assertion that the more people watch television, the more their views of the world reflect the dominant narrative messages transmitted by television; the researchers explained that heavy exposure to TV directly affected people's perception of the real world where exposure to skewed images and untrue stories of other groups causes negative perceptions about the group, and that these negative perceptions transformed into violence in real life (Gerbner et al., 1980).

Entman (1994) asserted that watching the representations of racial/ethnic minorities on television have the potential to skew views about these groups and offer rationalizations as to why these groups should be presented in certain ways. For example, a study that analyzed the influence of television viewing on perceptions about race differences in socio economic success found that heavy watchers of TV news in the US attributed African Americans' failure to achieve higher status to personal efforts and lack of motivation to succeed and not to economic reasons (Busselle & Crandall, 2002). Evidence from several research suggests that whites' viewership and recall of stereotypical presentations of African Americans in the media directly

correlates with negative perceptions and stereotypes of African Americans and reduced support for affirmative action policies (Mastro & Kopacz, 2006; Tan et al., 2000).

Effects of media depictions on attitudes and perceptions extend beyond blacks and African Americans; for example, several researchers have conducted studies with outcomes that show that frequent exposure to news and other media related programs on immigrants influences negative stereotypes and perceptions of immigrants amongst other majority groups. This makes such groups see immigrants as threats who should be feared. These perceptions and stereotypes influence support of immigration related policies (e.g., Igartua & Cheng, 2009; Seate & Mastro, 2015). These results are consistent with analysis of several researchers with the assertion that media portrayals of other groups as violent presents a disturbing picture of the group in the minds of people globally where people begin to develop the beliefs that such groups are violent and aggressive (e.g., Anderson & Carnagey, 2004; Prot et al., 2015; Saleem & Anderson, 2013). For instance, Nellis an Savage observed that the consistent viewership of media portrayals and reporting on terrorists' attacks being ascribed to Islam and Muslims had an influence on Muslims being victimized. The perceived risk of being victimized according to Slone (2000) has an influence on short- term anxiety levels.

What is more, Ahmed (2012) and Ogan et. al. (2013) documented how the frequent linkage of Muslims to terrorism and other terrorists' attacks has the potential to increase discrimination against Muslims regardless of the fact that majority of Muslims do not support terrorists' acts. Consequently, these negative perceptions of Muslims due to frequent negative depictions of Muslims influence support for policies aimed at mounting wars against countries dominated by Muslims as well as policies aimed at preventing entry of Muslims in the US as seen during Trump's presidency (Saleem et al., 2019).

Additionally, people do not only develop negative perceptions about and show support for policies affecting minority groups, but they also acquire and exhibit various behaviors and ways from the images they come across in the media owing to the fact that media serves as strong avenues for social learning where behaviors can be learned through observations (Saleem et.al, 2013). Cognitive theories like Albert Bandura's social learning which considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior better explains these effects (Bandura 1977). This method of learning and habits acquisitions from the media has been studied by several researchers specifically on video games where the enemies are typically framed in stereotypical images that relates to Arabs/Muslims (eg., Dill et al., 2005; Sisler 2008). Examples of these stereotypical images in these video games include loose clothing of Arabs/Muslims, turbans, etc. (Sisler, 2008). Machin et al., (2006) noted that all enemies portrayed in most of these video games have identical features such as facial features and mode of dressing.

Conversely, the heroes in these videos are usually depicted with images of white powerful US soldiers who appear in respectable clothing and seen portrayed to kill the supposed enemies with heavy weapons (Chick, 2003). These have been noted to influence most gun violence and mass shooting targeted towards Muslims. This is supported by a statement by Anderson and Carnagey (2004) that "a person who repeatedly 'learns' through experience or through cultural teachings that a particular type of person is a 'threat' can automatically perceive almost any action by a member of that group as dangerous," which can "easily lead to a 'shoot first, ask questions later' mentality" (p. 173).

Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework

Following from the literature, it is evident from the plethora of research that media portrayals of Muslims specifically Muslim women is not favorable. However, there is a knowledge gap with regard to Muslim women's perceptions of media framings of their identities and the impact of (mis)representations of Muslim women in the media on the women's social identities. Consequently, this study seeks to analyze media framings of Muslim women from these women's perspective by focusing on how Muslim women perceive media framing of hijab and other elements of their identities. Additionally, research on effects of media representations has shown that negative portrayals of groups have the tendency to affect people's attitudes towards these individuals. Although some studies have addressed the effects of negative portrayals on Muslim women's self-identities, there hasn't been an extensive research on the effects of these portrayals on Muslim women social identities. Accordingly, this study seeks to address how media portrayals of Muslim women affects their social identities.

The framing theory and social identity theory will be applied in this research to analyze the effects of media portrayals on Muslim women's social identities.

Framing Theory

The theoretical framework of the framing theory started developing in the 1970s by psychologists specifically by cognitive psychology scholars (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). This framework was later adopted and revised for the field of sociology by Ervin Goffman (1974). Since then, mass communications and communication scholars have adopted the sociological definitions and framework of the framing theory in different studies. According to Ardevol-Abreu "The original meaning of frame expanded from the individual to the collective, from the psychological to the sociological realm, because for Goffman, frames are instruments of society

that allow people to maintain a shared interpretation of reality” (p.428). Framing theory gives us an insight into how the media present issues in a particular way and how such presentations shape people’s views on issues. The theory focuses on ways in which problems or issues are presented to the public. Tankard and Severin (2001) defined a frame as an idea arrangement for news contents that provide context and suggestion of issues that need to be given extra attention through selection, pressure, no involvement and elaboration.

Framing theory posits that how an image or a group is presented in news reports has the tendency to influence how it is received and understood by the audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Depending on the emphasis given to an event associated with a group in the media, a frame shapes how to comprehend the event (De Vreese, 2005). Based on this, Cappella and Jamieson 1997 suggested that frames activate knowledge, stimulate ‘stocks of cultural morals and values, and create contexts’ (p.20). In doing so, frames ‘define problems’, ‘diagnose causes’, ‘make moral judgments’, and ‘suggest remedies. While newsmakers may employ many different frames in their coverage of an issue, scholars agree that this abundance in choice in how to tell and construct stories can be captured in analyses as certain distinctive characteristics. Researchers have identified various stages and characteristics involved in the process of framing; these stages include the frame-building, frame-setting and individual and societal level consequences of framing (d’Angelo, 2002; de Vreese, 2002; Scheufele, 2000).

Frame building refers to the internal and external factors that influence how journalists and news organizations present issues and the qualities of those frames, which mostly constitute conversations between journalists, elites and social movements (Cooper, 2002; Gans, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Snow & Benford, 1992; Tuchman, 1978). Frame settings according to Vreese (2005) “refers to the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior

knowledge and predisposition” (p 52). The individual and societal level consequences of framing pertain to the influence and effects of framing on individuals and societies. The individual levels could consist of a change in attitude towards a group or an issue due to how the issue is presented and the societal level consequence, on the other hand, could consist of policy making and support, political decisions and social movements (De Vreese, 2005).

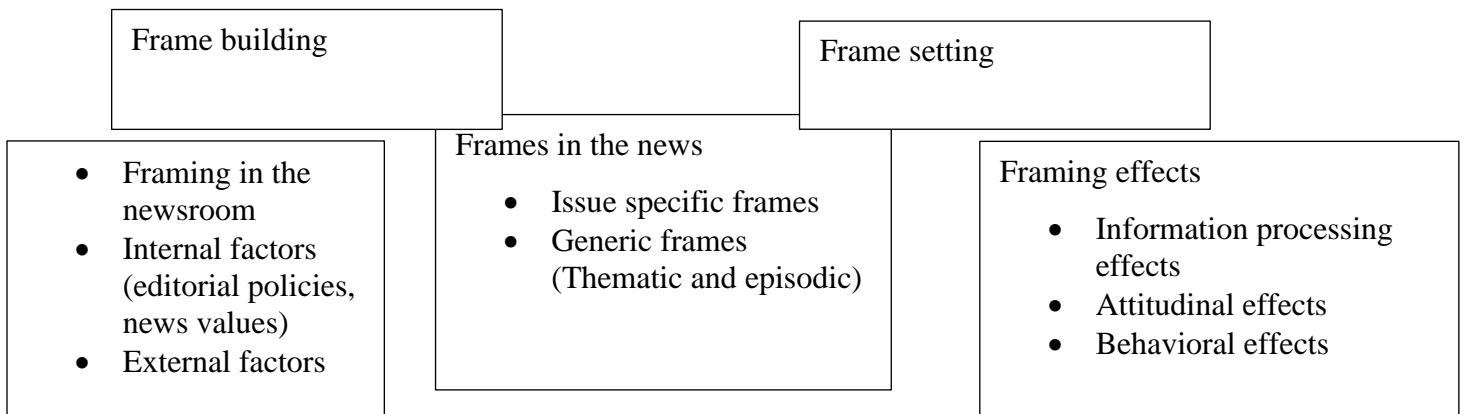


Figure 2. An integrated process model of framing adopted from De Vreese (2005)

Different scholars have highlighted and made suggestions as to what should constitute a news frame when examining various news frames. For instance, Entman 1993 explained that frames in the news can be examined by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (p. 52). Likewise, Shah et al. (2002) suggested analyzing frames by “language choices, quotations, and relevant information” (p. 367). Based on previous research and the different types of new frames suggested by various scholars, several scholars have suggested the need to categorize into issue-specific frames and generic frames (Jamieson, 1992; Roessler, 2000). Issue-specific frames focus on specific issues, topics and events and the salient aspects of issues that were selected and the ones that were ignored by the media.

On the contrary, generic frames inform us about how media covers different topics and issues within different time frames and contexts (Entman et al., 2009). While issue-specific frames allow for “great specificity and detail,” generic frames offer a systematic platform for comparison across issues, frames, and topics” (de Vreese et al., 2001, p. 108). According to Kinder (1987), two set of frames can be measured under generic frames: thematic frames and episodic frames. Thematic news frames “present issues in terms of ‘societal or collective’ outcomes, emphasizing information that highlights particular trends or policy to contextualize a story, where episodic frames “use concrete examples, often through personal experience provided by individuals, to describe issues or events” (Mathews 2015, p.100). In contrast with generic frames, issue-specific frames centre on the recurrent thematic patterns relevant to coverage of a specific issue or news event (de Vreese, 2005).

Researchers have analyzed issue-specific frames across different topics such as women’s movement (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997), and labor disputes (Simon & Xenos, 2001) and terrorist attacks (Papacharissi and Oliveira, 2008; Spencer, 2010). For example, a study that analyzed dominant frames in British news since the 9/11 episode and other episodes associated with 9/11 found that two dominant frames were present, an inevitability and preparedness frame (Mathews, 2015). Similarly, Shah et al. (2002) sought to find out the dominant frames during the final stages of Clinton presidency and they identified the “Clinton behavior scandal”, “Conservative attack scandal”, and “Liberal response scandal” (p.10).

Regarding generic frames, several researchers found that conflict, politics, human interest, religion, morality and economic consequences have been dominant in news stories, either occurring simultaneously or separately (Neuman et al., 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Similarly, other scholars have identified unique set of frames that are prominent to certain

issues or a variety of issues (e.g., Antunovic & Hardin 2013; Huffman et al., 2004; Kian and Clavio 2011).

Much of the literature on framing analyzed frames only presented in traditional media and from the researchers' perspective; conversely, this study seeks to find the dominant frames in both traditional and digital media from the audience's perspective. Additionally, only a limited number of studies have documented nature and coverage of frames employed in the media on Muslim women from the Muslim women's perspective (e.g., The study seeks to address this gap and examine how Muslim women see themselves portrayed in the American media. The use of the theory in this study will not be limited to a specific frame; the frames will be determined by the data emanating from the participants' responses.

RQ1: How do Muslim women perceive US media portrayals of Muslim Women?

RQ2: How do Muslim women perceive US media portrayals of the Hijab?

Social Identity Theory

In identifying the effects of media framing of Muslim women on the women's social identities, this study will apply the social identity theory (SIT). According to SIT, people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories, such as organizational membership, religious affiliation and gender (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Leaper (2011) explained that SIT refers to how individuals perceive themselves based on their affiliation with or within membership in a social group. A social group is a group of individuals who share similar values and principles and who see themselves as members belonging to the same social category (Hogg et al., 2011). The basic idea of social identity theory according to Hogg et al. (1995) is that a "social category (e.g., nationality, political affiliation, sports team) into which one falls, and to which

one feels one belongs, provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category-a self-definition that is a part of the self- concept” (p.259).

Tajfel (1979) suggested four significant processes of SIT based on social groups: social categorization, social comparison, social identity and self-esteem. The social categorization is focused on the idea that individuals are categorized into groups to facilitate social interaction and also to better understand our surroundings (Tajfel, 1971). According to Tajfel and Turner (1979) “Social categorizations are conceived as cognitive tools that segment, classify and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social actions, creating and defining the individual’s place in society” (p.40). Although the social categorization process recognizes different groups, there are significant differences between the groups such that not all groups are of the same importance. Tajfel and Wilkes (1963) argued that the concept of “us versus them” in social categorizations affects the way people see each other which leads to creating a social comparison. Social comparison aspect of SIT is based on Festinger’s (1954) theory of social comparison which assumes that individuals evaluate different groups within their societies by comparing their groups’ (ingroup) capabilities and values to other groups (outgroups).

The self-esteem aspect of SIT explains how individuals derive or attach self-esteem to the social groups they belong to. Tajfel (1972) theorizes that people aim to derive self-esteem after comparing their ingroup with outgroups if the outcome of their comparison is positive. According to Trepte (2006), “Social comparison is expected to lead to positive social distinctiveness and enhance self-esteem” (p. 259). In the comparison process, negative attributions targeted towards one group affects the self-esteem and consequently leads to an identity threat (Al Rafie 2013; Tajfel 1972). This relates to this study’s focus on identifying how

perceived negative or positive attributions targeting Muslim women in the media can affect their self-esteem. Muslim women's comparison of how they are portrayed in the media to how other majority groups are portrayed in the media may lead to identity threats.

Background on Identity Threats

Early researchers and scholars of SIT noted that due to the importance individuals place on having a good self-esteem that stems from belonging to a positive social group, negative experiences relating to their social groups act as social identity threats (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity threats usually result in individuals having the perception that outgroups will not value them due to their ingroup memberships such as religion or race (Steele et al., 2002). Individuals may experience social identity threats through social contexts that make salient the culturally known stereotypes about an individual's ingroup (Appel & Weber, 2017; Davies et al., 2002). Research shows that the stereotyped individual can still get affected even in the absence of believe or rejection of the dominant stereotype about the individual's ingroup (Steele, 1997). Consequently, the fear of being a target of abuse and negative treatment due to those stereotypes about the individual's ingroup, which can be stereotype threats, can affect the individual (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Media Presentations and Identity Threats

The media serves as a strong source through which minority groups learn about their ingroup social identity as well as identities of the outgroups such as people within the majority groups (Berry & Mitchell- Kernan, 1982). Hence, the media plays a great role in intergroup and outgroup comparisons due to the media's position in creating and spreading commonly held perceptions about social groups such as religious groups (Mckinley et.al, 2014). Research reveals that the media's role in promoting negative stereotypes of one group and ignoring the other

groups leads to activating the use of these constructs in subsequent evaluations (Harwood & Roy, 2005).

This is more important because in large and dominant societies, how minorities are portrayed in the media indicates their status in the societies (Abraham & Giles, 2007). As such exposure to negative media representations of minorities creates the perception that their ingroup is not respected and held in high esteem in the larger society; this consequently translates into a social identity threat (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2019). Research by several scholars has revealed that these exposures can result in several effects on minorities including reduced self-esteem, low perceived individual and group worth, lower academic performance, higher perceived discrimination, and increased perceptions of exclusion by the majority group (Appel & Weber, 2017; Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Schmuck et al., 2017). Saeed (2007) found that the heavy scrutiny of Muslims intensified by the mass media and the emergence of Islamophobia has typically impacted Muslim youth's identity adversely.

These media exposures do not only affect minorities questioning their belonging to their ingroups but also affect their association and identification with the outgroup in order to protect their self-esteem (Ellemers et al., 1999; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). For instance, Kraman and Christian (2020) found that all Muslim women on campus were racialized by social segregation strategies and the application of prejudices that produced outcomes that made them feel un-American and/or that they do not belong.

When minorities encounter identity threats, they employ several strategies to cope with these threats (Al Raffie 2013; Saleem et al., 2017; Schmuck et al., 2017). Some of these strategies include individual mobility, collective action, avoidance and ingroup mobility (Kunstman, & Buck, 2011; Major & O'Brien, 2005; Outten & Schmitt, 2015; Saleem et al.,

2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; ;). For instance, Saleem et al., (2017) found that results revealed Muslim American students who were exposed to negative media representations of their religious identity were less likely to desire acceptance by other Americans and more likely to avoid majority members (p. 388).

Similarly, Karaman and Christian proved that, “Some American and international students chose to take off their hijabs or were contemplating it” (p. 11). Additionally, several foreign Muslim women decided to strip off the hijab as a means to become acceptable in the "American community” (Karaman & Christian, 2020). This study also observed that Muslim women take off the hijab as a strategy to distant themselves from Islam in the public due to stereotypes.

It is evident from existing research that negative portrayals of minorities can affect minorities’ social identities. Although there has been some research revealing how the negative portrayals of Muslims specifically Muslim women affect them (Cainkar, 2011; Haddad et al., 2011; Terman, 2017), more research is needed to understand the effects of such portrayals on the women’s social identities and how they cope with identity threats. This study thus responds to such an exigency.

RQ3: How does media framing affect Muslim women’s who are US citizen’s social identities?

RQ4: How does media framing affect Muslim women who are non-US citizen’s social identities?

RQ5: How does media framing affect veiled and unveiled Muslim women’s social identities?

RQ6: How do Muslim women cope with identity threats?

Chapter 4 - Methods

The qualitative approach to gathering data was used for this study. This method was chosen due to the phenomenon that the research questions this research seeks to answer. Marshall (1996) stated that the questions that a researcher seeks to answer must guide the researcher's selection of research methods. According to Rich and Ginsburg (1999) "qualitative methods are designed to study a particular phenomenon, group, or behavior in depth to reach a better understanding of the universal" (p. 372). To understand people's experiences within certain historical, political, and cultural contexts, Brennen (2017) observed that researchers in media studies use qualitative approaches that focus on asking questions and interpreting data in search for meaning. This methodology helped the researcher to gather detailed descriptive narratives as data grounded in the participants' experiences with media framing of Muslim women. This research implored the following method to gather data.

In-depth Semi-structured Interviews

I employed the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews for this study. Kendall (2008) explained semi-structured interviews as a qualitative interview that relies on a predetermined list of questions but also accommodates follow-up questions and dialogue. Researchers typically resort to in-depth interviews in order to study people's lived experiences and as Bower (1973) observed decades ago "the best way to find out what people think about something is to ask them" (p. vi). In-depth interviews were based on predetermined questions guided by the focus of the research. Also, follow-up questions during the interview were shaped by the participants' responses to the initial predetermined questions. In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, Interviews were conducted via zoom.

Sampling

A qualitative sampling method known as purposive sampling was used for this study. According to Etikan et al. (2016), this sampling method “involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest in addition to knowledge and experience” (p. 2). Given that this research focuses on a phenomenon about Muslim women, employing this sampling method helped the researcher to identify and select people who possess characteristics relevant to the research questions.

The sample consisted of only Muslim women living in the US, specifically Manhattan, Kansas, at the time of the study. The participants included U.S. citizens (born and naturalized) and non-U.S. citizens from different parts of the world. These included three US citizens and four non-US citizens. The sample also included three frequently unveiled Muslim women and four frequently veiled Muslim women. The reason behind this was to get experiences from diverse group of people on the research topic. Having Muslim women who identify with different cultures and ethnicities is important for this project to identify different perspectives of Muslim women on the subject of this study. This was also important because most of the studies from the literature reviewed focused on participants from either European countries, Australia or Canada. Involving participants with diverse backgrounds will help gather data from people with different knowledge and experiences on the research topic and that will enrich both the data and insights that will emanate from the data analysis. As suggested by Barbour et al. (1998), “within most projects it is important to include demographic diversity and to make particular efforts to consider the voices which might be excluded” (p. 7).

The sample consisted of people who are 18 years and above. The tragic events on 9/11 significantly shaped the use of different frames (issue specific and generic frames) for Muslim

women and Islam in the U.S media. These frames can result in adverse identity issues such as low self-esteem and disassociation from one's identity. My decision for choosing this age range is informed by the fact that the different ages of the participants may shape their own experiences of media framing of Muslim women and the effects on them over the years.

Participants Recruitment and Research Setting

I recruited participants at the Manhattan Islamic Center in Kansas. The Manhattan Islamic Community Center was established on July 2, 1982. This center features separate prayer halls for men and women, a library, classes for children's Islamic school and a social area. This is a very culturally diverse community with people from different continents. This center is a place where most Muslims meet and pray during the week. There is a special prayer on Fridays called the "jummah" prayers which is attended by a majority of the Muslim community in Manhattan. Also, there is a monthly get together and meetings for the Muslim women in Kansas at the mosque. These two occasions at the mosque usually have high attendance rates for both men and women. Participants were recruited during these sessions through announcements by the mosque and women's leaders.

Data Collection

Interviews were recorded on zoom. During the interviews, I took notes including paralinguistic cues such as facial expressions and gestures. I stopped collecting data or conducting the interview with participants at the point where there were repetitive information and no surprises. According to Small (2009), the point where there are no surprises will help researchers know if they have collected enough data or not during interviews. For example, when specific negative portrayals become repetitive and similar in participants' response, that will be a

signal of saturation. Recorded interviews were transcribed after the interviews. Pseudo names were used for participants.

Positionality

My positionality as a Muslim woman is something I considered very important during this research. Being a Muslim woman with similar experiences about media misrepresentations of Muslim women makes me an insider. Several qualitative scholars are of the assertion that when participants consider the researcher as an insider they easily open up to the researcher (e.g., Bozzoli et al., 1991; McCorkel et al., 2003). For instance, “In the women of phokeng”, the author recognizes how common similarities such as gender of both the interviewer and the interviewee led to strong conversations and intimacy. The interviewer reports how being a woman made the women regard her as a ready listener which gave her the chance to access more experiences from the interviewees (Bozzoli et al., 1991). As a Muslim woman, my insider perspective made it easier for these women to share their experiences with me.

Participants Details

Isha: Identifies as an African-Arab woman in her early 30s. Prior to coming to the US, she lived in a Muslim dominated African country. She came to the US during Trump’s presidency as an international student’s spouse and currently lives in Manhattan Kansas. Nura has lived in the US for three years. This participant doesn’t identify as a US citizen.

Nura: Identifies as an African woman in her mid 20s. Prior to coming to the US, Nura lived in a secular African country. She came to the US when she was in her teens as an international student. She’s lived in the US for five years and currently lives in Manhattan Kansas. She doesn’t identify as US citizen.

Fauzia: Identifies as Arab American woman in her late forties. She moved to the US 20 years ago from a Middle Eastern-Arab dominated country. She has been a naturalized US citizen for 15 years. Fauzia has lived in other states in the US, but currently lives in Manhattan, Kansas.

Fatima: Identifies as an African woman in her late 20s. Prior to coming the US, she lived in a Christian dominated country. She came to the US as an international student and lived in a different State in the US. Fatima currently lives in Manhattan Kansas and works in Kansas State University. She has lived in the US for six years and doesn't identify as a US citizen.

Salima: Identifies as an African American in her mid 20s. Prior to coming to the US, she lived in a secular African country and moved to the when she was in her teens. She came to the US to live with her family and is currently a naturalized US citizen. She's lived in a different state in the US and currently lives in Manhattan Kansas. Salima has lived in the US for 15 years.

Hajara: Identifies as an Arab American in her early 30s. Prior to coming to the US, she lived in a Middle Eastern country which is dominated by Arabs and Muslims. Hajara came to the US to live with her family and is currently a naturalized US citizen. She has been a US citizen for 20 years and currently lives in Manhattan Kansas.

Hafsa: Hafsa identifies as an African woman in her early 20s. Hafsa came to the US when she was in her teens as an international student. Hafsa currently lives in Manhattan Kansas and still identifies as an international student.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis process of analyzing data was used for this study. Thematic analysis has been defined as a “method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (McCorkel et al., 2003). The researcher coded entire data sets paying particular attention to individual data sets. Codes

were generated with research questions and theory as guidance using the experiences mentioned by the participants. Researcher analyzed and categorized the codes into potential themes. All relevant coded data extracts were collated within identified themes based on overall research questions. Themes were grouped into broad and sub themes in relation to the research questions. Data was analyzed with regard to how identified themes relate to the research questions.

Chapter 5 - Results and Discussion

Following my analysis and coding of the data, this chapter highlights the results by categorizing them into themes and subthemes based on the research questions. Subsequently, the chapter discusses these themes and subthemes in answering the research questions.

The first research question (RQ1) focused on how participants perceive American media portrayals of Muslim women. Although these women identify with different races and countries and come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, are exposed to different media channels, and have different media channels they frequently use, there were similarities in their responses regarding the portrayals of Muslim women in traditional and new media in America.

The major emerging themes from the participants' responses for RQ1 can be categorized into:

Lack of Agency

Lack of agency emerged as a major theme in the participants' responses. Al-deen (2019) defined agency as people's capacity to make choices and take action in life. In their experiences, the Muslim women noted that Muslim women are constructed in the American media as lacking the ability to make decisions and take actions independently in their lives. This broader theme manifested in many ways and can be further divided into sub-themes in order to pay careful attention to its various manifestations. The sub-themes are:

Oppressiveness

Lack of voice/voiceless

Submissiveness

Lack of freedom

Victims of patriarchy

In narrating their experiences and observations of media framing of Muslim women, the participants recounted these different experiences in similar ways. I heavily cite them to make their voices present in this study. For instance, Nura indicated that “personally, I feel like everything that I've seen, the news, the movies, social media, different things that is portrayed on social media, is mostly that a Muslim woman is perceived as a person with who has been so oppressed by their own religion. Somebody with no voice... I feel like whenever an American, or the American media thinks about Muslim women, they just think of a very little person with little to no opinion. And what we see in different movies, social media platforms and stuff, it's not portrayed as somebody that's strong with opinions and stuff. We're just people who were supposed to be submissive to their men.” Evidently, Nura highlights sub-themes such as lack of voice, oppression and submissiveness.

Similarly, Hafsa noted that:

Usually what I've found is that when watching shows on Netflix or Hulu or YouTube for shows that are ready-made and very processed, usually what happens is that you get a representation of Muslim Women which is negative. So usually, you would get like a Muslim woman who wants her freedom because she feels oppressed or you're going to get a Muslim girl in her family and her dad is this oppressive person or has this oppressive personality. Usually, the women are very submissive. So usually in the media, it's usually a portrayal of Muslims that fall into two stereotypes.

Citing examples of recent portrayals of Muslim women as lacking agency, Salima referenced a recent movie on Netflix titled *Elite*. Salima stated that “They just included this girl, Nadia who's Muslim, who she goes to school with a bunch of other rich kids and other people. And at home, it's like a father is being oppressive towards her. This girl, Nadia, it shows her father beating her for wanting to be free. She wants to be like everybody else in the school. She

wants to escape with the white boy.” Salima’s observation underscores the portrayal of Muslim women as people who lack freedom and are victims of fatherly abuse. It is worth noting that the other participants recounted similar observations of these themes.

Underrepresentation of Muslim Women in the US Media

In the women’s responses to questions on portrayals of Muslim women, less representation of Muslim women in the media was another major theme that emerged. They indicated that when the mainstream media reports on issues about Muslim women, they hardly interview Muslim women to get their perspectives. In popular culture, Muslim women are just, in the words of Fatima, “passing” characters.

Fatima asserted that “In movies, gosh. I mean, the Muslim woman is probably not going to be on screen for more than five seconds. That is for sure. They're kind of shown in passing. They have probably one sentence, two sentences and it keeps going. They're so scared of showing them on screen. It's very crazy. You don't see them.” Both Hafsa and Fauzia observed respectively that “I think that the Muslim voice is usually silent when it comes to representation in the media” and “I would say we don’t see Muslim women much in the media.”

Victims of Rights

On women’s rights, almost all the participants mentioned that in one way or another, the US media constantly frames Muslim women as victims of abuse. This is particularly profound because the participants are exposed to different media and yet, there was unanimous observation from them on this theme. According to Isha, “So, whenever they report a Muslim woman in the US news, they will show you the daughters and women that are forbidden from going to school, and so on. You know it’s always about the Muslim lady who is prevented from doing something which is her right and it’s just crazy because you see all these other people whose rights are

abused, and the US media suddenly forget their religion.” On her part, Fatima “The US media only knows Muslim women exist you know, when they tell Saudi women not to drive, when I see us in the news. It’s always look, this Arab country prosecuted a woman for not wearing the veil or some Muslim woman somewhere was killed by Muslims because she wanted to stop something Islam is forcing her to do. It’s always like that. They are always on Muslim women’s rights and I don’t understand.”

Marginalization

Further, the participants indicated that Muslim women are portrayed as marginalized members of their own communities and religion. This was evident especially in the responses of three of the participants, Isha, Nura, and Fatima:

Isha: “I don’t know if they really believe we are marginalized in our various societies or that is just the image they choose to believe in. They are always putting images out there to show that Muslim women are marginalized in their countries and societies. Whenever it’s Muslim women, you hear about the image of women being paralyzed by a radical group.”

Nura: “There is this thing that I always see...I don’t know how to say it. what’s the name? Marginalized so, they always try and put it in the news and everywhere anytime Muslim women come up. They present us as being so undermined in our Muslim communities.”

Fatima: “I don’t like to use that word, but the media always shows that we are marginalized by Islam. I don’t know where they always get that notion from. You watch CNN or Fox and when you see a Muslim woman, it is a story about some Muslim men looking down on her or something about marginalization of these women.”

Misrepresentation

The final theme that emerged under general portrayals of Muslim women is misrepresentations of Muslim women in the US media. This is different from the issue of underrepresentation mentioned earlier. On misrepresentation, the participants mentioned that in the very few instances when Muslim women are represented in the mainstream media, they believe that representation was inaccurate.

Hafsa: “Usually what happens is that you get a representation of Muslims and that's made not for Muslims, but for white people or for white Americans. So usually in the media, when it's made by or made for white audiences or maybe not white audiences, so non-Muslim audiences, it's usually a portrayal of Muslims that do not accurately depict the typical Muslim woman. It's totally a wrong representation. The Muslim woman is there, you can see her image in the media or in a movie. But it's never accurate”.

Salima: “For us, and growing up and to this day, there's so much that we can learn from with more Muslims being included in television shows or roles, we're like, "Yay, inclusion." But then again, we see how they're being portrayed. For example, Lone Star 9-1-1, it's a show. And they had this Muslim officer I think they just put her there. Because the way I saw it, it was just like a token inclusion”.

Given scholars' observation that the hijab is constantly tied to Muslim women's identities, RQ2 sought to understand participants' experiences of the portrayal of the hijab in the US media. Under this question, four major themes emerged from the participants' responses. These themes include: lack of agency, need to liberate hijab-wearing women, alien symbol, positive representations;

Lack of Agency

Muslim women's agency was a dominant theme under the first question, and this came up in the second research question as well with regard to the hijab. The participants recounted that the US media constructs the hijab as an imposition on Muslim women and such an imposition shows that they women lack any agency to make sartorial choices. Based on the responses from the participants, the question of lack of agency can be further divided into two sub-themes: oppression and lack of freedom. It is worth noting that, these issues of oppression and lack of freedom are different from the earlier discussion because they pertain to Muslim women's choice or the lack thereof about their dressing.

Isha, for instance, asserted "from what the media put out there about Muslim women [regarding] the hijab, burka, whatever the image is there always looks like this [the hijab] is a sign of oppression especially when you watch the news." She quizzed, "I keep wondering why for me as a Muslim woman, my hijab is considered as a sign of oppression." On her part, Nura said that

"I'm a Muslim woman; I don't necessarily wear a hijab every single time. But I know Muslim hijabi women are the ultimate representation of what American media perceive us as really oppressed. Because, once you see a discussion of hijab on social media and any American news, it's like, 'Oh my God. They are not even free to show their own hair'. So, hijab itself to these media people feels like, 'Oh, you don't get to choose what you want.'" Likewise, Salima noted

"with Netflix, for example, because they are a media company and in shows, for example, like *Elite* or other shows, you would see young hijabis because they're trying to be inclusive of young Muslim hijabis. And then these are people being portrayed in such a way [in

the movie] that they're oppressed. I would say that these women are being forced to cover up; these young girls are being forced to cover up.”

Need to Liberate the Hijab-wearing Woman

Five out of the seven participants indicated there is a constant effort by American media to portray the hijab as a symbol of patriarchy that Muslim women need to be liberated from. Fatima narrated that “This one time I saw a discussion on social media. These women, they are not Muslim women you know, I remember they were white Americans. And in their discussion on the hijab, it was like, there should be laws to free Muslim women from wearing the hijab. The conversations were some sort of a rescue mission ‘like these women need help, they need to be rescued from that symbol.’ I was sitting there saying ‘okay saviors.’” Nura mentioned that most movies that feature a hijab-wearing Muslim woman “will make the hijabi woman take it off at the end so that she's more liberated. And then her character changes. It's so crazy to me.” In this regard, Salima gave a specific example of how a character in *Elite*, Nadia, was portrayed as “wanting to uncover herself and the white boyfriend wanting to help her uncover herself and quit the hijab.” The use of a white male character in this regard is particularly telling as it is consistent with Fatima’s example about the “white American” women who were calling for legislation that bans Muslim women from wearing the hijab.

Alien Symbol

In their responses, four of the women observed that the hijab in the American media is framed as a symbol that is alien to American *culture*. For example, Isha asserted that “There is always a portrayal of the hijab wearing Muslim woman like we have strange values and cultures that will not go with the open-minded values that they [Americans] have.” Hafsa added that “So,

the hijab appears in the media like that different and an odd symbol too. Very odd to American values so to me it feels alien in the media.”

Fatima recalled her experiences with media framing and audience commentary on Congresswoman Ihan Omar saying that “if you see something about her, don't go to comments because 99% of them will be negative comments and bad comments especially on her hijab. Talk about her as sort of this alien human being. First, they don't recognize her as having the right to stand in front of them...unfortunately these are the people who are commenting on her stuff; they see only her hijab. It comes before anything else she does. Before the work she does, before whatever she's standing up for. People see her and see something else.”

Positive Representations

The participants noted that despite the overwhelming negative portrayal of Muslim women and the hijab on mainstream and social media, they have experienced some positive narratives about Muslim women as well. As noted by all the participants, these positive representations of Muslim women and the hijab were mainly found in social media contents generated by Muslim women.

For example, Nura mentioned that “There's different hijabi Muslim Instagram pages that are trying to make sure that all these misconception and biases are gone. They show how the Muslim woman is excelling in different carriers. How the hijab wearing woman is happy with her choice of the hijab and so many positive stuffs.”

Both Hafsa and Hajara narrated similar experiences of how hijabi content creators on social portray the themselves and the hijab positively. Hafsa mentioned that “What I've seen from hijabi women creators usually is that they would just film themselves, being normal humans and I think that's what I really enjoy about following hijabi and Muslim women creators

on twitter, TikTok, Instagram and all this platform is that it really shows that the reality of what it's like to be a Muslim woman and a hijabi. It shows you that they are normal people who live their normal lives like everyone else. Not everyone is oppressed, not everyone takes part in terrorist groups, things like that.” Hajara added that “There are these two sisters who are poets. And I so admire them. I found them on TikTok. They're like twins. I forgot their names. And I love what they've been doing with their platform. They're educative, they put twist on trends, and they make it sort of like in a Muslim way that is relatable to us, Muslim women. And they also have been involved in mental health wellness, which I think is not really talked about in the Muslim community. I think that's pretty good of them to use their platforms” to highlight positive activities that Muslim women engage in.

RQ 3 asked: How does media framing affect Muslim women who are US citizens’ social identities?

Given that the participants identified with different nationalities and social backgrounds, the study sought to understand the impact of media framing on their social identities. RQ3 focused on those who identified as US citizens. They include Salima, Hajara, and Fauzia.

Based on their responses, identity threat was the major theme that emerged. The threats to their identities manifested in three main ways which have been further be sub-categorized as:

Target of Abuse

All three women indicated a perceived threat of being a target of abuse or experiencing abuse due to their identities as Muslim women. Salima narrated that “I think in a distant way, my friends at high school saw how we were being portrayed. And so, they used that as a yardstick to measure us and bully us. So, I was scared to wear anything that makes me look like a Muslim to school because. I did not want to be bullied.” On her part Fauzia indicated that “It’s scary and

not safe especially outside the university walls, because you're working and walking around with different kinds of people, people who maybe have never been exposed to Muslim women, and all they know about a Muslim woman is from the media. They do not understand why women choose to wear hijab. So, you just get scared that somebody will attack you because you're a Muslim woman."

Hajara remembered a day she felt unsafe walking around on the university campus saying "And there was this one time I was there during the summer where the college students have left, gone home; I was just there for research. It didn't occur to me that, "Oh, I'm not in New York City kind of thing." These people are white people who would say they're not exposed to this kind of thing. And I remember walking down and realizing that so many people were looking at me and that was so uncomfortable. I just felt like, "Oh my God." Somebody can just come and hit me; somebody can shoot me, what's going to happen? So yeah, those negative media experiences that other people have had an impact on me. I can never forget that day. I was just walking, and I was scared. Yeah. I was very scared." The repetitive recollection of being "scared" emphasizes her sense of anxiety on that day.

Low Self-Esteem

Two of the women, Hajara and Salima, shared how their self-esteem as Muslim women gets adversely affected by media misrepresentations of Muslim women. Hajara recalled her childhood experience in this way: "Growing up, I would sometimes see Muslim women being shown in the news only when they are going to be persecuted for a terrorist crime or something bad. So, the next day when I would go to school, I feel so shy. I feel shy that I am a Muslim although I didn't do anything. But you know other people's crimes affect my self-esteem as a Muslim woman because the media will generalize and that used to make me look down on

myself as a Muslim, but not anymore.” In a similar vein, Salima narrated that “Some of these portrayals made me feel so bad about myself growing up, I felt very bad for being a Muslim. Because the media and people will make you feel, you are just going to end up like the negative portrayal about your people that you see on screen.”

RQ4 focused on the effects of media portrayal on non-US citizens; it asked: How does media framing affect Muslim women who are non-US citizens’ social identities?

This question is intended to attend potential differences in experiences between US citizens and non-US citizens. Of the seven participants, four participants – Fatima, Nura, Isha, and Hafsa -- identified as non-US citizens. The responses of non-US Muslim citizens to this question had emerging themes similar to that of the US citizens. Three major themes emerged from their responses:

Low Self-Esteem

Similar to the responses given by their US counterparts, all four of the non-US citizens shared experiences that can be categorized as resulting in lowered self-esteem. For instance, Nura mentioned that “So, the way we are portrayed has really impact us in our everyday life in ways that I don't think anybody understands. Like low self- like you start to not value that identity part of you. That Islam identity, you just don't value it.” On her part, Fatima asserted that “There are places I go to and I just don't want people to know I'm a Muslim because of these negative stuffs you see. And that makes me feel I'm looking down on myself and my religion. But I must because I don't want anyone to look down on me because of my religion. So, I'd rather look down on myself.”

Target of Abuse/Discrimination

The participants suggested that they constantly had fears of being targets of abuse or discrimination whenever they were in public. These two responses from Nura and Hajara, who also both identify as black, demonstrate this fear. Nura narrated that “So, I've taken buses that were going into very far away from city places. And I really did not feel safe. I was like, "Oh my God, I don't know who is looking at me with judgments. Being a minority is always hard, but it's harder when you're a minority inside minority because you're always just scared somebody might just shoot you.” Similarly, Hajara asserted that “It's kind of scary to think about because especially in the US. People have this certain view of Muslim women in general because of what they see on their screens and especially if you're a black Muslim person, then you're like others squared. So, yeah. I mean, it's sort of a hyper visibility when you have it [the hijab] on. So, it does make you feel uneasy and sort of scared especially when it comes to job interviews and all that stuff because you have this feeling their personal prejudice might be against Muslim people in general.”

Ingroup Identity Threats

Some of the women expressed concerns about how media portrayals result in ingroup (members of the minority group) identity threats. For those participants, such members in the ingroup were typically people who had been influenced significantly by media portrayals and even dominant cultural influences on them about who/what a Muslim woman is or should be. Nura recalled that “And there are people [Muslims] that don't know enough about their religion and culture beyond what they see in the media. They tend to just take on that. And when you meet somebody and it's like, "Why are you so opinionated? You are supposed to just keep quiet; you're Muslim. That makes you also feel like you are not good enough of a Muslim.”

Still on ingroup identity threats, Isha mentioned that “You know the issue that we are facing, if you are a strong, spoken up, Muslim woman, you are facing double issues. You are facing the issue with the society that is looking down at you, and you are facing the issue with your own people, because some people [Muslims] adopt a different approach of Islam because that makes the woman look like she is sometimes a handicapped person, and she's not able to do anything; she cannot speak for her own, she should not raise her voice and so on. So, you are in the middle [between outgroup and ingroup] and sometimes you will be seen as a liar, trying to make the image of your religion more beautiful because you cannot face the reality. But they don't know that this is not reality, this is, hundreds of years of ignorance.”

Recognizing the differences in veiling practices amongst Muslim women, **RQ 5** sought to theorize how veiled and unveiled Muslim women's social identities are impacted by media framing.

Four major themes emerged from this question. These themes are: Comparison with other majority/minority groups; perceived threat and insecurity; and vulnerability and embarrassment

Comparison with Other Majority/Minority Groups

This was very common amongst the women's responses. Most of the participants cited examples in which they compared the portrayal of Muslim women in the media to majority groups such as Christians and minority groups such as Jews. For instance, Isha noted that “Muslim women are not the only ones that have this aspect of a dressing code that asks for modesty. In the Bible, there are some conservative Christians. Yes, some of them just cover part of their hair but they fully cover their bodies. So, I'm wondering why for me as a Muslim woman, it's considered as a sign of oppression and constantly attacked in the media; and for a Christian or a Jewish woman, it's okay to see them, and for example, for a nun with the same

outfit as ours, the only difference is that there is a cross on that chest. So how is it a sign of oppression?" Likewise, Nura observed that "Like you could decide to be a priest. They don't lose respect for being priest. The media will not say you were forced to be a priest. So, it's sad that Muslim women have to lose respect because they've decided to put on a hijab."

On her part, Fatima narrated her experiences by comparing the generalization or collective responsibility that is associated with Muslims when one Muslim commits a wrongful act. She asserted that "It's not the same thing that happens with people who shoot up schools and they're white and Christian, but no one really goes in depth and looks at, "Hey, did their Christian values guide them to that?" Maybe yes, maybe no, but they never generalize it that way"

It is worth noting that although Isha identifies as a Muslim woman who veils frequently, she had similar responses as Nura and Fatima who indicated that they don't veil frequently.

Perceived Threat and Insecurity

All the women expressed experiences about how they are perceived as threats and how such perceptions make them insecure in public places. For those who did not wear the hijab frequently, the question of threats was particularly profound when they were in hijab and less visible when they were not in hijab. Also, they felt more secure without the hijab and less secure when in hijab. Nura observed that "And you see people, the first thing that they see when they see your hijab, worse than having to explain yourself, they see you as a terrorist sometimes. The minute you pull into McDonald's and they're like, oh my God, she has a hijab on, we're about to get bombed things like that." She added that, "I've felt unsafe so many times when I had my hijab on." Given her experience, Hafsa noted that, "Honestly, I would say that most of my Christian friends think of me as less threatening just because I don't wear the hijab. I mean, I feel

like if I wore it on a regular basis, people would be sort of threatened by me in a way but because I don't do that then they see me as more approachable.” Further, she indicated that “I actually feel safer most of the times because I don’t usually put on the hijab. But to be honest with you. I don’t feel safe when I put on the hijab.”

Fatima recounted an experience that happened to her hijab-wearing friend saying, “I know a friend of mine who told me that she was in full on hijab, and she went to the library and she gave a book to this one person who was working behind the counter and she was returning a book. So, she gave her the book and she was like, ‘Oh, my God. This kid held my book, and she was shaking literally just holding my book.’ And I'm like, ‘Are you kidding me?’ I mean, she's [Fatima’s friend] a tiny little girl. She's not a girl, but she's short. She's not aggressive in any way. You wouldn't be afraid from just looking at her, but because she's full-on wearing hijab and in a dress, and it was I think the black wear, she felt like this person was afraid.”

Vulnerability

The participants suggested that they felt increasingly vulnerable as members of the society by virtue of how the media portrays Muslim women. For some of them, this vulnerability resulted in making them victims of actual verbal attacks. While being emotional, Isha narrated one of such incidents recounting that “Sometimes they say that ‘during 9/11, try not to go out because of your hijab,’ and so on. So, I have already been confrontational with one of those white supremacists; it was in front of the Union. I wasn't aware that on 9/11 each year, some people go with flags, and he started shouting at me and I answered back in front of everybody. He was like ‘You should be proud of yourself,’ and I told him, ‘I'm always proud of myself because I didn't do anything.’ So, that was one of the moments I felt attacked.” The other participants shared similar experiences.

Embarrassment

As social actors who navigate different spaces and places, the participants observed feeling embarrassed whenever they found themselves in public places because of the overwhelming negative media portrayal of their identities. Salima recounted that the negative media portrayals “made me hate walking around with the hijab. It was like, I didn't want to go to school in the hijab. It was embarrassing because of what I see in the media. But if I even sensed the fact that I was wearing it, I would just put in my bag. My mother, she was always wearing her hijab. Maa shaa Allah. She stuck to her values, she came here in 1998, a few months after I was born. And for her to stick to those values when we were not being portrayed in the nice light, I applauded her for it. But I used to always shy when walking with her and she was wearing the hijab. I'll walk 10 steps ahead of her. If like [someone asks], ‘That's your mom?’ Like, “No.” And when walking with my aunty who puts on the hijab, like she stuck to the niqab. It's like, ‘That's your auntie?’ ‘mm-hmm (negative), no. I don't know her. It was embarrassing.’” Aisha mentioned that “Sometimes when I go outside Manhattan, I feel like everybody's looking at me. In the beginning, I was feeling like I'm being watched, and I felt a little bit embarrassed. I don't like to be the center of attention.” These experiences were shared across the board among all seven participants.

The final research question, **RQ6**, sought to investigate Muslim women's coping mechanisms in dealing with identity threats based on the media framing of their identities. It asked: How do Muslim women cope with identity threats?

Based on their responses, six major themes were categorized as: talking back; show up and speak up; turning out; alienating from ingroup; ingroup associations; and avoidance of mainstream media.

Talking Back

The participants used their voices to challenge situations where people sought to superimpose the negative media framings on the participants' identities. Essentially, they talked back. Bell Hooks (1986) describes talking back as "speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion" (p. 123). Isha asserted that "Whenever I face this kind of situation and I become offensive, I speak up for myself and for Islam. So, I had some incidents when I was attacked because of my hijab, and I'm not the kind of person that will be afraid or will just leave. So, I answered back. When this white supremacist told me 'You should be proud of yourself', I told him, 'I'm always proud of myself because I didn't do anything, because there are 1.7 billion Muslims and if all of them were terrorists, you will already be dead.'" Likewise, Salima emphasized "One time I was walking around in my hijab, I did get one comment from a woman telling me to go back to my country and all sorts of hostilities. But I'm not one to keep quiet. If you go on pop up even, Imma give it to you back. Yeah! That's how I cope with all those threats."

Show Up and Speak Up

The other major theme from these women's responses was showing up at places and speaking up. Speaking up, mainly expressing their opinions and not necessarily being defensive, is to be differentiated from talking back. This theme was evident in all seven women's responses. For example, Nura indicated that "If I wear a hijab and enter a meeting, and I am speaking up, then I am leaving a notion behind that Muslim women really can speak up for themselves. They can be opinionated, in a good way. And if I'm peaceful, then I'm leaving a notion behind" as well. Salima encountered an experience in class where she spoke up to positively represent herself as a Muslim and Islam. She narrated that "Last year just before I graduated. We had to do

this final presentation for our human rights class and then this girl, she was talking about Islam and people being executed, blah, blah, blah. And I'm like 'Sis, I'll point out some few things like that. That's not who we are.' And I know it was because I'm Muslim, and you may want to check your facts. I talked about it, me and my experience of being Muslim and it made me feel really proud for the first time. I was just like that one student, with the hijab sitting in class. We are ambassadors for Islam, no matter where you go, you have that moral obligation to represent your religion in such a way that does not exude it in a negative light.”

“Tuning out”

The Muslim women indicated that they adopt an attitude of nonchalance as a coping strategy. That is, they live their lives normally, go to places where they need to, and, in the words of Fatima, “tune out” the negative opinions of others about their way of being and doing. Fatima asserted strongly that “Honestly, when I decide to put on the hijab, ... I tune out whatever else is going to come from it. So, I feel like when I decide to wear hijab, I don't care, unfortunately, but I'm more precautions. I take more precautions, but I don't care about what they think.” Hajara added that “And it doesn't matter the representation that I get in the media. I know that I'm Muslim. I know that I am a good Muslim. I am fallible sometimes, but I'm proud of myself. It doesn't hurt anyone else's opinion on that matter”.

On her part, Isha mentioned that "I go to the gym; I go to the swimming pool with my hijabi swimming suit, so, I just don't care anymore. If they must look, they can look, if they want to ask me a question, they can ask me but, I'm living my life and I'm having the same activities as them with my hijab and it's not bothering me.”

Alienating from Ingroup

Another coping strategy that some of the Muslim women employ when encountered with identity threat is to alienate or disassociate themselves from ingroup identity in public. That is, they distance themselves from symbols such as the hijab that will easily make them identifiable as Muslims. This was a strategy common among all the participants. Salima recounted instances where she distanced herself from her aunty when her aunty who wore the hijab visited her school. She narrated that “There used to be two entrances to our school. My aunty came one time to pay our school fees. I wasn't even the one wearing it [the hijab]. She walks into the school campus and I just took a whole new route. Like I'm avoiding seeing her.” Add one more

Hafsa mentioned that “Sometimes it makes me feel like I want to alienate from my own religion when you do stuff like that. That feeling like you want to alienate.”

Ingroup Association

While some used ingroup alienation, others adopted ingroup association as a coping strategy to identity threats. That is, they associated themselves more with other Muslims. For example, Fauzia stated that “I mean, I guess that's the way I cope with it. I try to expose myself to Muslims just being Muslims and just being normal people. Whether that be watching shows made by Muslim people, watching Muslim YouTubers, having Muslim friends, I don't know, even reading books by Muslims, surrounding myself but that kind of helps, I guess it can because it helps you feel less lonely and less othered.”

Avoidance of Mainstream Media

All seven women indicated avoiding mainstream media and relying more on media especially social media contents generated by Muslim women. This was to guard themselves from experiencing negative portrayals of their identities. Fatima mentioned that “I avoid being

exposed to lots of mainstream media so, I usually cut off myself from most American media due to negative portrayals. But the social media is always there. I was trying to remove people that were exposing me to the kind of information I don't want to hear. So, use social media to follow Muslims for contents that won't upset me." Further, Hafsa added, "Yeah. I mean, honestly for me, I try not to watch movies that portray Muslims in that light. If it's a movie that isn't created by a Muslim person, I don't want to watch it in general. I focus more on TikTok and Instagram by following Muslim influencers and other Muslim content generators."

Discussion

Research on media framing has highlighted the impact of unfavorable media framing of minorities on their identities (Appel & Weber, 2017; Ortiz & Behm-Morawitz, 2015; Schmuck et al., 2017). Although previous studies focused on media framing of minorities in the US have highlighted the highly unfavorable framing of Muslim women in the US media (Byings, 2010), a limited number of studies have documented the nature and coverage of frames employed in the media on Muslim women and their effects on the women's social identities from the Muslim women's perspective. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing how Muslim women perceive media portrayals of their identities, how such portrayals impact the women's identities, and the women's coping strategies.

The results of this study confirm the unfavorable portrayals of Muslim women in US media. Based on the women's perception of US media portrayals of Muslim women, the results show that Muslim women are negatively framed in the US media. Some of the findings from RQ1 such as the construction of Muslim women as victims right of abuse reecho previous findings that US media coverage of Muslim women focused extensively on the issue of women's rights and gender discrimination at the expense of other topics, whereas non-Muslim women

appear in the media when their rights are respected (Terman, 2017). Terman argued that this act by the media is driven by a confirmation bias and has the tendency to shape negative public attitudes towards Muslims and lead to the negligence of abuse of women rights in other non-Muslim countries where women might be facing severe abuse of rights. While issues of rights abuse deserve attention, a continuous media framing of Muslim women as victims of abuse may potentially ignore human rights progress and women's empowerment initiatives in Muslim communities.

On the issue of lack of agency and other related subthemes, the findings from RQ1 as observed by these women confirms findings of previous studies on the role US media plays in portraying frames that show the inability of Muslim women to make individual choices due to forced impositions by Islam and Muslim men (Hammer, 2012; Mishra et al., 2010; Terman 2017; Vintages, 2012). Contrary to previous findings, the qualitative approach employed in this research revealed exciting facts concerning Muslim women's views on the issues of lack of agency and voicelessness. For instance, Nura asserted that "It feels like people think of the entire religion as a religion that puts women down. Women are so undermined and can never really have an opinion on anything, which is not true. In my case, I am a very outspoken Muslim woman who has different passions and everything. I'm not prevented from having a voice in Islam." Isha expressed a similar sentiment. These are critical counternarratives that Muslim women espouse to challenge dominant media framing of their identities. The fact that these women are able to speak for themselves through challenging others in public as the results show is enough evidence to demonstrate the women's agency and self-expression in reconstructing their own identities.

Additionally, while underrepresentation of Muslim women in the media has long been discussed by scholars such as Saeed (1999), the issue of presence of Muslim women in the media and yet misrepresented as found in this study is quite novel. As the participants noted, when US movies feature Muslim female characters in their bid to be inclusive, such characters misrepresent Muslim women's identities and realities. From the participants' perspectives, inclusion of Muslim women in the media cannot compromise on accurate depictions of Muslim women's realities. While Muslim women are not a monolithic group with one and the same realities and experiences, all the participants in this study emphasized how the portrayal of Muslim female characters in movies as individuals in need of assistance, mainly from White characters, to discard their hijab unequivocally misrepresents their desires and aspirations.

Relatedly, the exploration of the hijab question in RQ2 reaffirms previous scholars' observation that the hijab occupies a central role in the American media's preoccupation with the oppressive framing of Muslim women (Bartkowski, 2003; McDonald 2008; Mishra, 2007) and their lack of choice in wearing the hijab (Ahmed, 2017; Navarro, 2010; Perry, 2014). Extensive results provided by participants regarding their perceived lack of agency in wearing of the hijab as framed by the media support other results that highlight the fact that most Muslim women do not regard the wearing of hijab as a lack of choice, but rather as empowerment and expression of agency to practice their religion (Bullock 2003; Iddrisu, 2019; Read 2003).

For example, Nura indicated, "The few times I wear my hijab, I don't always wear it. But when I wear my hijab, I choose to wear a hijab. And I felt very happy and proud to be wearing a hijab...it's a decision that you make in life. Nobody's going to kill you for not wearing a hijab." Given that some of the participants constantly wear the hijab while others do not always wear it, it is worth noting that all the women indicated that their wearing of the hijab was a personal

religious decision. Their diverse backgrounds and transnational identities further suggest that for different Muslim women, the hijab, far from being a patriarchal imposition, is an individual choice that they make their sartorial religious practices. As a Muslim woman who wears the hijab, this fact accurately represents my own reality and as the participants expressed, they are not in need of any rescue or liberation to discard their hijabs.

Unlike previous studies in the literature, this study has revealed that there is an increasingly new portrayal of the hijab in positive lights especially on social media. While this new representation has not yet become rife or present in the mainstream media in the US, four of the participants observed that hijab-wearing Muslim women who are content creators on social media are making efforts to change the negative narrative. This new frame reconstructs the hijab as a symbol of agency and normalizes hijab-wearing Muslim women as, among other things, social actors who are making positive impacts on issues such as mental health.

The findings from RQ3 demonstrate the impacts of media framing of Muslim women in US media on Muslim women who identify as US citizens. The results from RQ3 provide good data on the role media plays in causing Muslim women to attribute a low self-esteem to their social identities. Like previous studies, these findings indicate a threat to the identity of these women (Kaya, 2007). The experience of a low self-esteem as expressed by the participants is consistent with previous findings on how exposure to media can influence minorities in general (Appel & Weber, 2017; Schmuck et al., 2017). However, previous findings on self-esteem due to media portrayals focused on other minorities such as black women and not Muslim women. Accordingly, the current findings extend our understanding of the negative impact that media misrepresentations of Muslim women impact them adversely. Further, the low self-esteem relates to the issue of being targets of abuse in public as expressed by the women. They indicated

that because of the overwhelming framing of Muslim women as victims of abuse, they become moving targets of abuse; that is, some people they encounter in public actually perceive them as weak and bully or attempt to bully them. It is against this background that the women who identified as US citizens asserted that they felt unsafe in their own country just because of their Muslim identities and their visibility in public.

The findings from RQ4, which focused on the effects of media framing on non-US citizens, had similar emerging themes to RQ3 such as low self-esteem and target of abuse/discrimination. An exciting finding, however, from RQ4 was the issue of internalization of low self-esteem. That is, some of the participants such as Fatima indicated that negative portrayal of Muslim women compels them, in the words of Fatima, to “look down on myself” rather than allowing other people to look down on them. Such internalized low self-esteem accounts for some of the participants’ struggle to hide their identities as Muslim women when they come in contact with majority outgroup members. They seek refuge in being invisible as Muslim women.

Among the participants who are non-US citizens, ingroup social identity threat was an important concern that they attributed to media portrayals and cultural influences. Unlike the US citizens who were familiar with a culture of free speech and self-expression even in Muslim communities, the non-US citizens observed that within their own ingroup Muslim community members (i.e., people that they share Islam and national identities with), they were perceived as outliers because of their outspoken characters. That is, such members felt that as Muslim women and in light of their national cultures, the participants were supposed to be voiceless and docile, but they were not. Accordingly, the participants felt threatened as not belonging to such religious and national ingroups.

What's more on social identities due to media framing, the results from RQ5 demonstrate that both veiled and unveiled Muslim women constantly compared the portrayal of identities with majority groups such as Christians in general and Catholic nuns on the issue of wearing a headscarf. The desire of minorities to compare and evaluate their representation in the media with majority groups has been noted by other studies (Harwood & Roy, 2005; McKinley et al., 2014). However, this study has revealed that Muslim women as a minority group in the US do not only compare their framing in the media with majority groups; they also compare that to other religious minority groups such as Jews. For example, Orthodox Jewish women wear headscarves after marriage, but they are not portrayed as threats, oppressed, or victims of patriarchy in the media because that may potentially feed into Anti-Semitic tropes. That is not the case for Muslim women who wear the hijab, a clear demonstration of why and how the Muslim women perceive their social identities as threatened by media framings.

Most importantly, the results highlight the differences between being perceived as security threats with or without a hijab. For example, the participants who did not frequently wear the hijab indicated being perceived as threats when they wore the hijab. Hafsa noted that "Honestly, I would say that most of my Christian friends think of me as less threatening just because I don't wear the hijab" frequently.

Lastly, the findings of this study confirmed that minorities adopt several strategies to cope with social identity threats (Al Raffie 2013; Saleem et al., 2019; Schmuck et al., 2017). In line with previous research, the findings of this study emphasize that one of the coping strategies minorities adopt is to alienate from ingroup identity markers. For instance, like Kraman and Christian (2020), this study has revealed that the Muslim women participants employed a distancing strategy from Islam, specifically by removing their hijabs or distancing themselves

from family members in a hijab, in order to mask and make invisible their Muslim identities. They adopt such strategies in public to avoid being targets of potential attacks and discrimination and not because they actually want to discard the hijab. In fact, they wear the hijab when with ingroup members, within their private spaces with close friends, and when going to the mosque. Although some of these women mentioned alienating from their ingroup identity markers as a coping strategy, others also mentioned ingroup association as another strategy, consistent with Saleem et al. (2019) study on Muslim students' coping strategies.

Avoidance of mainstream media is another coping strategy employed by the participants to protect their social identities. Given their observation of the mainstream media's misrepresentation of their identities, the participants minimized their exposure to content from mainstream media. Some noted that they patronize media contents generated by Muslims on social media because such contents speak to their realities and aspirations accurately. From their standpoint, giving audience to Muslim media content creators is a way of helping such content creators to amplify Muslim women's voices and challenge the dominant negative narratives in the mainstream media.

Additionally, the women amplified their own voices in their individual capacities through showing up, speaking up, and talking back. As highlighted in the results, four of the women—Nura, Isha, Salima, and Nura – asserted that these strategies not only enable them to show that Muslim women have their own voices, but they also help them to normalize the hijab in the sight of others. Taken together, these strategies contradict mainstream media framings of Muslim women as voiceless.

A final coping mechanism adopted by the women is by developing a nonchalance attitude that shields them from the negative media stereotypes and public attitudes they encounter. It is

such an attitude that emboldens them to show up, speak up and talk back. While the women adopted different coping mechanisms, it worth noting that presence of certain patterns across the various strategies. For instance, avoidance of mainstream media was adopted by all seven participants. With regard to veiling practices and citizenship status, it was a common pattern among participants who identify as non-US citizens to take off their hijabs and alienate from Muslims and other Islamic symbols as coping strategies.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion, Implications And Limitations

This final chapter concludes the thesis, highlights the theoretical and practical implications, and contributions of this thesis to the literature. This section also highlights some limitations of this study and suggests areas for future research.

US media portrayals of Muslim women have been focused on three aspects. First, these women's voices are silenced in the media even when the topic focuses on issues affecting their ways of being, doing, and knowing; their voices are not included in such conversations. Secondly, when US media especially the entertainment media attempts to include Muslim women, the women misrepresented in ways that feeds into existing dominant stereotypes. Thirdly, the US media essentially uses unfavorable and negative frames when reporting or portraying Muslim women. The hijab which, according to the participants in this study, is an integral part of their identities as Muslim women, features prominently in the negative framing of Muslim women either as oppressed, victims of abuse, or security threats.

These portrayals have adverse effects on these women's social identities because some of them are compelled to hide their identities as Muslim women for fear of being abused, unable to freely practice their religion, and distance themselves from family members whose visibilities as Muslims are obvious in public. To a large extent, these media framings contribute to Muslim women's sense of insecurity within their communities, especially when donning the hijab, and struggles with low self-esteem. Although, these women indicated adopting strategies to cope with these threats, the fact that some of these strategies include avoidance of mainstream media has its own implications because they could miss out on important national and global information.

There are a couple of aspects that future research can consider. For example, researchers may conduct a study that employs a larger and more diverse sample in a qualitative study. Further, future research could attend to how social media portrayals of the hijab challenge and disrupt the dominant mainstream media portrayals of the hijab. Finally, the long-term implications of the coping strategies such as the avoidance of mainstream media discussed in this study is another area that mass communication and journalism scholars can take up in a longitudinal study.

Theoretical Implications

There are some implications for the theoretical frameworks – framing theory and social identity theory – applied in this study. Theoretically, this research introduces new frames peculiar to portrayals of Muslim women in US media which is absent in the current literature. This thesis adds up to the body of knowledge surrounding the different types of frames in US media on Muslim women. This does not only add up to frames related to mainstream media, but also emerging frames on social media. Most importantly, these contributions are from Muslim women’s own experiences and perspectives.

Secondly, this thesis expands conversations on effects of media framing of Muslim women on these women’s social identities. The addition to theory is the emergent of new themes relating to identity threats which fill a gap not only in the current literature but add up to different identity threats attributable to negative media constructions of a minority religious group. The new identity threats identified in this thesis can be tested on other minority groups. Lastly, an addition to the identity threats theory is the new findings on coping strategies employed by Muslim women when they encounter social identity threats. Taken together, this thesis does not

only add up to the knowledge on framing theory in relation to Muslim women, but also contributes to social identity theory, and coping strategies specific to Muslim women.

Practical Implications

There are some practical implications/suggestions based on the findings of this study. First, there is the need for rethinking journalism education and media practice training in ways that fairly and accurately represents minority populations such as Muslim. Based on the findings of this study, trainers of journalists need to imbibe in upcoming journalists a culture of respect for Muslim women's realities in ways that will compel journalists to verify stories and issues about Muslim women from Muslim women themselves to avoid inaccurate reportage and misrepresentations.

Secondly, it is important for institutions to consider religion as inclusive of diversity when teaching issues of diversity in the media practice. Such an understanding of diversity beyond race, ethnicity, economic and social class, and sexuality will give journalists a broader perspective of diversity that will shape their professional practice. This intersectional orientation to diversity with regard to Muslim women is critical because Muslim women deal with diverse issues beyond religion. In addition to religion, these women deal with issues of race, cultures and also immigration.

Lastly, it is important for mainstream media to include coverage of Muslim women who are making positive impact on the human experience and living normal lives like everyone else beyond the common negative stereotypical images prevalent in mainstream media (movies, news, TV, radio). Taken together, these will have great potentials in changing the decades of misrepresentations and inaccuracies that have characterized US media framing of Muslim women.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study that impacted the findings and which future research can address. First, all the women interviewed in this study are all young women with the eldest woman within the range of 30. Future research could include older women to get their experiences. This will provide insights into whether or not there are patterns of experiences between older women and young women with regard to media portrayals of Muslim women.

All the women in this study are also well-educated (the least has a bachelors degree) and most of them live in a small town such as Manhattan which is a college town. Some of the findings from this study like the issue of feeling safe on campus could be attributed to the fact the most of these women are students at Kansas State University. Future studies could include more women who live in metropolitan or urban cities and are not students.

References

- Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes*. Routledge.
- Abrams, J. R., & Giles, H. (2007). Ethnic identity gratifications selection and avoidance by African Americans: A group vitality and social identity gratifications perspective. *Media Psychology, 9*(1), 115–134.
- Ahmed S (2012) Media portrayals of Muslims and Islam and their influence on adolescent attitude: An empirical study from India. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research 5*(3): 279-306.
- Al Raffie, D. (2013). Social identity theory for investigating Islamic extremism in the diaspora. *Journal of Strategic Security, 6*(4), 67-91.
- Al-deen, T. J. (2019). Agency in action: young Muslim women and negotiating higher education in Australia. *British Journal of sociology of Education, 40*(5), 598-613.
- Anderson, C. A., & Carnagey, N. L. (2004). Violent evil and the general aggression model. In A. Miller (Ed.), *The social psychology of good and evil* (pp. 168-192). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Appel, M., & Weber, S. (2017). Do mass mediated stereotypes harm members of negatively stereotyped groups? A meta-analytical review on media-generated stereotype threat and stereotype lift. *Communication Research, 48*(2), 151–179.
- Ardèvol-Abreu, A. (2015). Framing o teoría del encuadre en comunicación. Orígenes, desarrollo y panorama actual en España. *Revista latina de comunicación social, 70*(70), 423–450.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York, NY: General Learning Press.

- Bartkowski, J. P., & Read, J. N. G. (2003). Veiled submission: Gender, power, and identity among evangelical and Muslim women in the United States. *Qualitative sociology*, 26(1), 71-92.
- Bekkers, V., Beunders, H., Edwards, A., & Moody, R. (2011). New media, micromobilization, and political agenda setting: Crossover effects in political mobilization and media usage. *Information Society*, 27, 201–219.
- Berry, G. L., & Mitchell-Kernan, C. (1982). *Television and the socialization of the minority child*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Billig, M., & Tajfel, H. (1973). Social categorization and similarity in intergroup behaviour. *European journal of social psychology*, 3(1), 27-52.
- Brader, T., Valentino, N. A., & Suhay, E. (2008). What triggers public opposition to immigration? Anxiety, group cues, and immigration threat. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52 (4), 959–978.
- Brennen, B. S. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bullock, K., & Jafri, G. (2000). Media (Mis)Representations: Muslim Women in the Canadian Nation. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 20(2), 35–45.
- Busselle, R., & Crandall, H. (2002). Television viewing and perceptions about race differences in socioeconomic success. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 46, 265–282.
- Byng, M. D. (2010). Symbolically Muslim: media, hijab, and the West. *Critical sociology*, 36(1), 109-129.
- Cottle, Simon 2000. *Ethnic Minorities and the Media: Changing Cultural Boundaries*. Buckingham,UK: Open University Press.

- Davies, P. G., Spencer, S. J., Quinn, D. M., & Gerhardstein, R. (2002). Consuming images: How television commercials that elicit stereotype threat can restrain women academically and professionally. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(12), 1615–1628.
- De Vreese, C.H. (2005). News framing: Theory and typology. *Information Design Journal + Document Design*, 13(1), 51–62.
- Dill, K. E., Gentile, D. A., Richter, W. A., & Dill, J. C. (2005). Violence, sex, race, and age in popular video games: A content analysis. In E. Cole & J. Henderson Daniel (Eds.), *Featuring females: Feminist analyses of the media* (pp. 115–130). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Eid, M. & Khan, S. (2011). A new-look for Muslim women in the Canadian media: CBC’s Little Mosque on the Prairie. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 4(2), 184202.
- Ellemers, N. (1993). The influence of socio-structural variables on identity management strategies. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 4(1), 27–57.
- Entman, R. M. (1994). Representation and reality in the portrayal of blacks on network television news. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 71(3), 509–520.
- Figenschou, T. U., & Thorbjørnsrud, K. (2015). Faces of an invisible population: Human interest framing of irregular immigration news in the United States, France, and Norway. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(7), 783–801.
- Geaves, R. (2007). A reassessment of identity strategies amongst British South Asian Muslims. In J. R. Hinnells (Ed.), *Religious reconstruction in the South Asian diasporas: From one generation to another* (pp. 13–28). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1980). The “mainstreaming” of America: violence profile number 11. *Journal of communication*, 30(3), 10-29.

- Haddad, Y., Smith, J. and Moore, K. (2011). *Muslim women in America*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harwood, J., & Roy, A. (2005). Social identity theory and mass communication research. In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup Communication* (pp. 189–211). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Hegde, R. (2010). Eyeing new publics: Ceiling and the performance of civic visibility. In D. Brouwer & R. Asen (Eds.), *Public modalities: Rhetoric, culture, media, and the shape of public life* (pp. 154-172). The University of Alabama Press.
- Hooks, B. (1986). Talking back. *Discourse*, 8, 123-128.
- Iddrisu, M.S. (2019). *Unveiling Veiled Voices: Understanding the Experiences of Muslim Women Who Wear the Hijab in Public Spaces*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Igartua, J. J., & Cheng, L. (2009). Moderating effect of group cue while processing news on immigration: Is the framing effect a heuristic process? *Journal of Communication*, 59, 726-749.
- IRA, A., & Mt, R. (2001). Representing minorities: Canadian media and minority identities. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 33(3), 99–133.
- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Liebkind, K., & Solheim, E. (2009). To Identify or Not To Identify? National Disidentification as an Alternative Reaction to Perceived Ethnic Discrimination. *Applied Psychology*, 58(1), 105–128.
- Jensen, K. B. (2002). The qualitative research processes. *A handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies*, 235-253. Routledge, London.

- Jiwani, Y., & Dakroury, A. (2009). Editorial: Veiling differences—Mediating race, gender, and nation. *Global Media Journal—Canadian Edition*, 2(2), 1–6.
- Kabir, N. (2006). Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Australian media, 2001 - 2005. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 26(3), 313-328.
- Kabir, N. A. (2004). *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, race relations and cultural history*. Routledge.
- Kabir, N. A. (2008). “The media is one-sided in Australia” Views of Australian Muslim Youth. *Journal of Children and Media*, 2(3), 267-281.
- Kendall, L. (2008). The conduct of qualitative interviews. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D.L. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies*, (133-149). Peter Lang.
- Korteweg AC (2008) The Sharia debate in Ontario gender, Islam, and representations of Muslim women’s agency. *Gender & Society* 22(4), 434–454.
- La Ferle, C., & Lee, W. N. (2005). Can English language media connect with ethnic audiences? Ethnic minorities' media use and representation perceptions. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 45(1), 140-153.
- Lajevardi, N. (2017). A comprehensive study of Muslim American discrimination by legislators, the media, and the masses (Doctoral dissertation, UC San Diego).
- Lajevardi, N., & Abrajano, M. (2019). How negative sentiment toward Muslim Americans predicts support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election. *The Journal of Politics*, 81(1), 296-302.
- Machin, D., & Suleiman, U. (2006). Arab and American computer war games: The influence of a global technology on discourse. *Critical Discourses Studies*, 3, 1–22. =

- Mansson McGinty, A. (2014). Emotional geographies of veiling: the meanings of the hijab for five Palestinian American Muslim women. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(6), 683-700.
- Mastro, D. E., & Kopacz, M. A. (2006). Media representations of race, prototypicality, and policy reasoning: An application of self-categorization theory. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 50, 305-322.
- Matthews, J. (2015). Framing alleged Islamist plots: a case study of British press coverage since 9/11. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 8(2), 266-283.
- McCorkel, J. A., & Myers, K. (2003). What difference does difference make? Position and privilege in the field. *Qualitative sociology*, 26(2), 199-231.
- McKinley, C. J., Mastro, D., & Warber, K. M. (2014). Social identity theory as a framework for understanding the effects of exposure to positive media images of self and other on intergroup outcomes. *International Journal of Communication*.
- Media Portrayals of Minorities Project (2019) Report on Media Portrayals: 2018 Newspaper Coverage of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Jews, and Muslims. Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont.
- Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, & Katherine M. White. (1995). A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 58(4), 255–269.
- Miles-Novelo, A., & Anderson, C. A. (2020). 4 The effect of media on public perceptions of Muslims in the United States. In Abe W. Ata (E.), *Muslim Minorities and Social Cohesion: Cultural Fragmentation in the West* (pp.59-66). New York: Routledge.
- Mishra S (2007b) Saving Muslim women and fighting Muslim men: Analysis of representations in the New York Times. *Global Media Journal* 6(11): 1–20.

- Mishra, S. (2008). Islam and democracy: Comparing post-9/11 representations in the U.S. prestige press in the Turkish, Iraqi, and Iranian contexts. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 32(2), 155–178.
- Mughees-uddin. (1994). Many voices-one chorus: Editorial framing of Islamic movements in Algeria and Palestine, FIS in the U.S. elite press. *The Islamic Quarterly*, xxxvii (4), 238–250
- McNelly, J.T., & Izcaray, F. (1986). International news exposure and images of nations. *Journalism Quarterly*, 63(3), 546-553.
- Nellis, A. M., & Savage, J. (2012). Does watching the news affect fear of terrorism? The importance of media exposure on terrorism fear. *Crime & Delinquency*, 58(5), 748–768.
- Nurullah, A. S. (2010). Portrayal of Muslims in the media: “24” and the ‘Othering’ process. *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 7(1), 1020-1046.
- Ogan, C., Willnat, L., Pennington, R., & Bashir, M. (2014). The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States. *International Communication Gazette*, 76(1), 27-46.
- Orbe, M.P. & Harris, T.M (2008) *Interracial Communication: Theory and Practice*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Ortiz, M., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2015). Latinos’ perceptions of intergroup relations in the United States: The cultivation of group-based attitudes and beliefs from English- and Spanish language television. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(1), 90–105.
- Oskooii, K. A., Dana, K., & Barreto, M. A. (2019). Beyond generalized ethnocentrism: Islam-specific beliefs and prejudice toward Muslim Americans. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 1-28.

- Oskooii, K. A. (2016). How discrimination impacts sociopolitical behavior: A multidimensional perspective. *Political Psychology*, 37(5), 613-640.
- Parrott, S., Hoewe, J., Fan, M., & Huffman, K. (2019). Portrayals of immigrants and refugees in US news media: Visual framing and its effect on emotions and attitudes. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*, 63(4), 677-697.
- Poole, E. (2011). Change and continuity in the representation of British Muslims before and after 9/11: The UK context. *Global Media Journal—Canadian Edition*, 4(2), 49–62.
- Poole, Elizabeth and John Richardson (Eds) 2006. *Muslims and the News Media*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Powell, K. A. (2011). Framing Islam: An analysis of US media coverage of terrorism since 9/11. *Communication Studies*, 62(1), 90-112.
- Prot, S., Anderson, C. A., Gentile, D. A., Warburton, W., Saleem, M., Groves, C. L., & Brown, S. C. (2015). Media as agents of socialization. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization* (2nd ed., pp. 376-400). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Reese, Stephen D., and Seth C. Lewis. 2009. Framing the war on terror: The internalization of policy in the US Press. *Journalism* 10, 777–97.
- Saeed, A. (1999). The media and new racisms'. *Media Education Journal*, 19-21.
- Saha, A (2012) Beards, scarves, halal meat, terrorists, forced marriage: Television industries and the production of race. *Media, Culture and Society* 34(4): 424–438.
- Said E (2008). *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Random House.
- Saleem, M., & Anderson, C. A. (2013). Arabs as terrorists: Effects of stereotypes within violent contexts on attitudes, perceptions, and affect. *Psychology of Violence*, 3, 84-99.

- Saleem, M., & Ramasubramanian, S. (2019). Muslim Americans' responses to social identity threats: Effects of media representations and experiences of discrimination. *Media Psychology, 22*(3), 373-393.
- Saleem, M., Prot, S., Anderson, C. A., & Lemieux, A. F. (2017). Exposure to Muslims in media and support for public policies harming Muslims. *Communication research, 44*(6), 841-869.
- Saleem, N. (2007). US media framing of foreign countries image: An analytical perspective. *Canadian Journal of Media Studies, 2*(1), 130-162.
- Schmuck, D., Matthes, J., & Paul, F. H. (2017). Negative stereotypical portrayals of Muslims in right-wing populist campaigns: Perceived discrimination, social identity threats, and hostility among young Muslim adults. *Journal of Communication, 67*(4), 610-634.
- Seate, A. A., & Mastro, D. (2017). Exposure to immigration in the news: The impact of group-level emotions on intergroup behavior. *Communication Research, 44*(6), 817-840.
- Severin, W. J., & Tankard, J. W. (2000). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.
- Sisler, V. (2008). Digital Arabs: Representation in video games. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 11*, 203-220.
- Slone, M. (2000). Responses to media coverage of terrorism. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 44*(4), 508-522.
- Soni, D. (2013, October 22). From hijab to burqa-A guide to Muslim headwear. Channel 4 News. Retrieved from <https://www.channel4.com/news/from-hijab-to-burqa-a-guide-to-muslim-headwear>

- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of Black Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 797-811.
- Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype and social identity threat. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 34, pp. 379-440). London, England: Elsevier.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 224-237.
- Terman, R. (2017). Islamophobia and media portrayals of Muslim women: A computational text analysis of US news coverage. *International Studies Quarterly*, 61(3), 489-502.
- Trevino, M., Kanso, A. M., & Nelson, R. A. (2010). Islam through editorial lenses: How American elite newspapers portrayed Muslims before and after September 11, 2001. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 3(1-2), 3-17.
- Van Den Bulck, H., & Broos, D. (2011). Can a charter of diversity make the difference in ethnic minority reporting? A comparative content and production analysis of two Flemish television newscasts. *Communications*, 36(2), 195–216.
- Van Dijk T (1991). *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.
- Zulkifli, K. (2009) Air mata di Gaza. *Millenia*. 79, 16-18.
- Winegar, J. (2008) The humanity game: art, Islam and the war on terror. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 81, 651 – 682

Appendix A - Interview Guide

As noted earlier, the in-depth semi-structured interviews was guided by a planned list of questions. Below are some of the questions that the researcher included in the interview guide: These questions are informed by the research questions and theories that I will be using in this study.

RQ1: How do Muslim women perceive US media portrayals of Muslim women?

- In your experience, how are Muslim women portrayed in the media? Could you give me some examples? Can you think of a specific portrayal that you saw recently? What was it? How did you encounter it? How did you feel about it?
- Why do you think Muslim women are portrayed in that way?

RQ2: How do Muslim women perceive US media portrayals of the Hijab?

- How is the hijab portrayed in the media? Could you give me some examples of what you have seen/heard/read about the hijab?
- What are your thoughts on what you see about the portrayal of the hijab? Can you think of a time recently when you saw a hijab portrayed in media? How was it portrayed? What were you thinking as you observed the portrayal?
- Why does the media portray the hijab in that way?

RQ 3 and RQ4: How does media framing affect Muslim women's who are US citizens and non citizens social identities?

RQ5: How does media framing affect veiled and unveiled Muslim women's social identities?

- How does what you see on the media affect your self-perception or how you see yourself as a Muslim woman? Could you give me an example? Could you tell

me about a time when exposure to media affected your identity as a Muslim woman? What happened? How did you feel?

- How do you see the veil or hijab as a Muslim woman? Could you give me an example?
- How do you feel walking around in your veil? Can you think of a time when you felt x, y, or z walking around in your veil? What happened? Could you walk me through it?
- How do you feel walking around without your veil? Could you give me an example/tell me about a time when you walked around without your veil? What happened? How did you feel? What thoughts were going through your mind? Who was there? When was this?
- How do you feel knowing it is easier for people to identify you as a Muslim? How do you think people identify you? What gives you that impression? How do you feel about that?
- Why do you feel that way?

RQ6: How do Muslim women cope with identity threats?

- How do media portrayals of Muslim women make you feel? How do you cope with the effects of media portrayals on you? Could you give me an example of ways through which you cope with those effects?

Appendix B - IRB Approval



TO: Nancy Muturi
Journalism & Mass Comm
Manhattan, KS 66506

Proposal Number IRB-10657

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 04/01/2021

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, “
How the Portrayal of Muslim Women in American Media Affects Muslim Women’s Social Identities.”

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for three years from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 04/01/2021

EXPIRATION DATE: 03/31/2024

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

No more than minimal risk to subjects

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Electronically signed by Rick Scheidt on 04/01/2021 11:03 AM ET