THE (MIS)REPRESENTATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND ITS PEOPLE IN K-8 SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS: A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS

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Critical examinations of cultural groups and the ways in which they are presented in schools are missing from current elementary and middle school curricula. Issues of this nature often fall under the umbrella of “multicultural education” or “cultural pedagogy,” but this rhetoric is dismissive in nature. Constructing the non-Western child as “culturally deprived,” “culturally disadvantaged,” or “at-risk” perpetuates an “us/colonizer” versus “them/colonized” mentality. The purpose of this study was to examine critically how the Middle East and its people are represented in U.S. social studies textbooks. Through the use of qualitative content analysis, 10 elementary and middle school social studies books from Florida, Texas, and Virginia were analyzed. Drawing largely from the postcolonial Orientalist work of Edward Said (1978/2003), this study unveiled the ways in which American public schools other children, specifically children of Middle Eastern or Arab descent.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Drawing largely from the postcolonial Orientalist work of Edward Said (1978/2003), this study unveiled the myriad of ways American public schools other children. Othering occurs anytime an institution in power constructs a certain reality for a marginalized group of people. This constructed reality generates a base of knowledge for those in power, as well as for those who have become powerless. This accepted knowledge base, with its rules, regulations and assumed truths, is instilled in the members of the colonized society.

This study was concerned with constructed educational knowledge in the United States, public school curriculum, which as Apple (1992) stated, is by no means neutral knowledge. School curriculum has many forms, but one goal, which is to (re)produce a specific, and often narrow, way of looking at the world. This (re)production of knowledge is transmitted to students in a variety of ways and school textbooks serve as an important method for the dissemination of information.

Textbooks provide public school children with a wealth of information, which is aligned to state learning standards and federal education initiatives. Grade-level specific criteria are worked and reworked and may take months or even years to come to fruition as educational leaders wrestle with how much knowledge to offer children. Other curricular issues to consider include the sequence with which to present information, as well as what knowledge is of the most worth.
This system undoubtedly creates a power division as a few are given power to educate the masses. Rather than focus on what specific knowledge is being produced, a more relevant focus is exactly whose knowledge is being produced. Research suggests dominant groups legitimize their power through the standard school curriculum (Anyon, 1982; Camicia, 2009). Camicia (2009) furthers this idea by suggesting school textbooks foster the “dominant cultural norms and promote nation-bound metanarratives by limiting the number of perspectives in the curriculum” (p. 28).

1.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine critically how the Middle East and its people were represented in U.S. elementary and middle school social studies textbooks. Historically, othering has occurred for a host of groups, most notably Native-Americans, African-Americans, women, and children. However, the underlying concern of this study was not to delineate a linear history of when and how Middle Eastern and Arab people have been subjugated. A postcolonial perspective is more concerned with the continued, everyday, ways in which the Other is placed in an inferior position.

Specifically, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How was the Middle East represented, textually and visually, in elementary and middle school social studies textbooks?

2. What discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people were present in elementary and middle school social studies textbooks?

3. How was the Orientalist ideal of “difference” perpetuated in elementary and middle school social studies textbooks?
1.3 Rationale for Study

This study has selfish significance. I was born in Lebanon in the 1970s and to escape the political strife plaguing the country at the time, my parents immigrated to the United States. Thirty years later, I am still here, as is my family, although their intent was never to stay. Two siblings and several residences later, I am as American as one can imagine, but struggle daily with living between two cultures. As Arabic was my first language, I understand most conversations, but can speak almost nothing in my native language, although to this day, Arabic is spoken in my family’s home. My father traveled to Lebanon every other year for months at a time; this made it easier for me and my siblings to retain aspects of our Middle Eastern culture as they continued to be visible in our home. Friendships and associations in my early years were strictly with families who were also Lebanese. School came easy to me, but even at a young age, I was aware of the difference between my White peers and me.

These differences were most notable within the context of school. I rarely recall affirmation of my heritage by my teachers or seeing images of “others” in my classrooms. School curricula strongly favored White America; in fact, mentions of “others” were embedded within historical power struggles of resistance. These topics were restricted to discussions of African Americans beginning with the Civil War and continuing through the Civil Rights era, Asian Americans and their impact on World War II, and the atrocities committed to the Jews. My only recollection of discourse on the Middle East was in high school and involved a brief mention of the 1975 hijacking of Trans World Airlines flight 847. There were likely other instances in which my teachers spoke of the Middle East, but the impact of that discussion, and the accompanying
photograph of the pilot leaning out the cockpit window, held by gunpoint by a terrorist, solidified in my mind the educational “othering” of an entire group of people.

I hesitantly share my story (because research does not typically allow for such a divergence), but my desire to make sense of my reality directly stems from my earlier experience with school and society in general. Not until I went away to college did I become aware of the stratification of society and the way certain groups of people are privileged over others. My experiences mirror those of Chatterjee (1992), who recounted, “Orientalism was a book which talked of many things I felt I had known all along but had never found the language to formulate with clarity” (p. 192).

This study also has educational significance. To begin, critical examinations of cultural groups and the ways in which they are presented are missing from current early childhood school curricula. Issues of this nature often fall under the umbrella of “multicultural education” or “cultural pedagogy,” but this terminology is dismissive in nature. Although many groups of people have been privileged over time, and therefore others have been oppressed, their histories and experiences are so varied. Grouping these lived experiences into a singular understanding of culture is demeaning, subjugating, and oppressive. Research about the specific mechanisms by which a people’s history and culture are objectified and amalgamated in the schooling process is legitimate because as Kleibard (1992) suggested, what is taught in schools becomes an artifact of our culture and society.

Secondly, as Rivas (2005) suggested, Western regimes of knowledge equate most non-Western groups with terms such as “culturally deprived,” “culturally disadvantaged,” or “at-risk.” This rhetoric implies non-Western culture is deficient
and/or that actualization of culture is only attainable by majority group members. Such terminology also perpetuates an “us/colonizer” versus “them/colonized” mentality.

Thirdly, because this study employed a postcolonial theoretical framework, a final educational rationale related to the unveiling of power, which is a key component of Said’s *Orientalism*. Too often in classrooms, knowledge is transmitted to students, who are not able to question the material at hand. This power imbalance exists not only in textbook production, but also in curricular content, and teacher discourse.

A final rationale for this study related specifically to the Middle East and Arab cultures, which have failed to receive critical attention in the educational arena. The Civil Rights era served as the impetus for social and political reform, but most of the cultural studies that followed focused largely on the Black/White dualism and more recently, on Latino immigration. Discourse focused on the Middle East and its people did not take center stage until the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, which undoubtedly framed the Middle Easterner and/or Arab as a dangerous Other to be mistrusted and feared.

1.4 Philosophical Perspective

Postcolonial analysis was utilized as the key theoretical approach of this study for a variety of reasons. To begin, a postcolonial lens brought to light the unique issues of the oppressed, rather than drawing attention to the colonizing powers (Young, 2001), which have all too often taken center stage in United States classrooms (Apple, 1992). A unique characteristic of postcolonialism is the perspective does not claim to provide answers or absolute authority. Rather, the focus is to give voice (Ashcroft, Griffiths, &
Tiffin, 1995), making the perspective an ideal fit for a study of this magnitude. Finally, the approach assumes traditional Eurocentric constructions of culture are dismissive. The world is not always seen through the eyes of those in power; in fact, the world, and all its global phenomena are multifaceted (Loomba, 1998).

A key component of postcolonial perspective lies in the colonizing practice of representing “others.” Throughout our world’s history, those in power have constructed an image of all things different. Over time, and because structural systems in place have perpetuated control, these representations become realities, not only for those in power, but also for those being colonized (Said, 1978/2003).

Postcolonial systems, albeit no longer physical, exist in modern-day institutional form. One of these institutions is the public school classroom, where children are presented with Eurocentric information and images of culture (Apple, 1992). Therefore, the use of postcolonial theory as a tool for studying privilege, oppression, and the representation of difference are vital to the arena of education.

1.5 Organization of Study

Chapter II provides a review of literature focused on postcolonial theory, as well as common ways the Middle East and its people have been constructed. An understanding of the Middle East, its geographic, as well as its cultural borders is provided. The impact of media is a key focus of this chapter, as are historical, although not linear, perspectives of postcolonial thought. This chapter specifically addresses the unique circumstances of the Middle East and her people. Edward Said’s (1978/2003) seminal work, Orientalism, is offered as a framework for understanding the many
discursive ways in which the Middle East and its people are negatively constructed by Eurocentric thought. A discussion of Orientalism is also necessary to explore the power relations monopolizing the education system in the United States, with specific attention paid to the use of social studies textbooks in elementary and middle school classrooms.

Chapter III details the qualitative methodology employed in this study. A content analysis was conducted on elementary and middle school social studies textbooks from three states utilizing state adopted textbooks. The three states were Florida, Texas, and Virginia. Rationale for the use/selection of these states for the study is further outlined in this chapter. The content analysis employed both inductive and deductive approaches and utilized a categorization matrix; a visual analysis was also conducted on the maps, photographs, and images located in the textbooks. The overarching research goal of the current study was to uncover how the Middle East is represented to young children via the public school system.

Chapter IV provides the results of the study. Through the use of content analysis, results are provided on each of the 10 textbooks sampled. Because both history and geography books were analyzed, the content analysis is divided accordingly within this chapter. Intersections of information are presented to determine patterns of representation found within social studies curricula in the United States. This chapter also presents the many discursive themes that foster an image of the Middle East as different and/or as other. Chapter V provides an overview of the study’s findings, as well as implications of the findings. The need for increased postcolonial assessment of school curricula is emphasized, as is the idea that textbooks serve as a colonizing practice which (re)produces difference.
1.6 Educational Possibilities

It is relevant to discuss the limitations of such a study. As Rivas (2005) indicated, “postcolonial theory, as any other theoretical approach, has conceptual boundaries and limitations (p. 10).” A large majority of postcolonial work comes from those areas of the globe that have been decolonized and therefore, emerged from imperialism. Said’s (1978/2003) work has been criticized for the emphasis the perspective places on the role of colonizer and not the agency of the colonized.

This dissertation assumes a critical stance toward the institution of American public schooling. This is not to say school as a social institution is inherently bad, but rather, educational practices need to take into account the varied realities of students. Western constructions assume absolute truths and seek to instill in children nationalistic ideals of patriotism, privilege, and production. This study provides a reflective lens with which to reassess the manner in which these truths are constructed and whether they should be constructed at all.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Postcolonialism is a theory focused on the dismantling of oppressive systems through an activist methodology. Early childhood and elementary programs in the United States have typically perpetuated the larger social structures of inequality and marginalization of non-White children. Due to continued discontent between the Western world and the Middle East, this issue is vitally relevant for all students. This literature review provided a postcolonial overview of how the Middle East and its people are represented in the American public education system, most notably in school textbooks.

The review of literature consists of three large sections. The initial section of this chapter presents an overview of postcolonialism and addresses prominent postcolonial perspectives, most notably, Said’s (1978/2003) seminal work *Orientalism*. The role of imperialism and the formation of empire are also emphasized in this section. Although not intended to be a linear presentation, the second section reflects on the modern-day institutional colonization of the Middle East and its people, which was exacerbated following the tragic events of September 11th, 2001. Although postcolonial thought does not concern itself with definitions or absolute truths, relevance lies in the examination of geographical, cultural, and social boundaries of what the West terms the Middle East, which is ultimately a colonizing and representative practice. The final section of the literature review focuses specifically on the (mis)representation of the Middle East and
its people in several American arenas, most notably television and film, but more importantly, in school instructional materials, specifically textbooks. This section is of utmost significance as the literature review shapes the research methodology of the present study.

2.2 Postcolonial Perspectives

Postcolonialism is focused on the dismantling of oppressive systems through an activist methodology. Historically, postcolonialism has resulted in a transformed historical situation in which a previously colonized land celebrates the (physical) end of imperial rule (Young, 2001). Colonialism and imperialism are acts of social injustice simply because they perpetuate imbalances of power, which result in privilege and inequity. The use of postcolonialism as an interpretive lens highlights the unique issues of the oppressed, rather than privileging the colonizing powers. The postcolonial critique is an “emancipatory narrative” (Young, 2001, p. 61) taken from the position of the victims, not the perpetrators. Postcolonial perspectives offer a vital and appropriate way to investigate the injustices of oppressive systems that continue to plague the global arena today. These systems, albeit no longer physical, exist in modern-day institutional forms.

When using a postcolonial lens, history is both crucial and nonlinear. Equal weight is given to the historical context “and to the ways in which those circumstances are experienced by postcolonial subjects” (Young, 2001, p. 58). The postcolonial perspective is concerned with colonialism, but instead celebrates the triumph over colonizing practices and the demise of oppressive control. Postcolonial analysis also,
ironically, focuses on identifying everyday power structures that continue to foster oppression (Young, 2001).

Postcolonial perspectives are immensely diverse and heterogeneous. The phenomenon existed long before the defining term was coined. The field has resulted in numerous concepts, debates, issues, and theories. Topics include, but are by no means limited to migration, immigration, slavery, oppression (Young, 2001), resistance, representation, difference, “othering” (Said, 1978/2003), liberation (Freire, 1970), place, agency, knowledge, and power. These have been addressed in a wealth of articles, books, discussions, and essays from scholars located on every major continent. Postcolonialism draws strength from a variety of academic disciplines, including anthropology, feminism, cultural studies, Marxism, geography, philosophy, and sociology (Young, 2001).

A unique characteristic of postcolonialism is that the perspective does not claim to provide answers or absolute authority. Rather, the focus is to give voice to the formerly colonized. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) suggest, postcolonial perspectives represent “an amorphous set of discursive practices” (p. xv), which continually result in deconstructing and reconstructing. The postcolonial perspective concerns itself with contextual and historical cultural strategies. Postcolonialism combines imperial language with local experience.

A definition of the term *postcolonial* typically encompasses a set of beliefs intent on the dissolution of colonial and dehumanizing practices between the West and the rest of the globe. Clearly, this struggle is challenging. Postcolonial theorists provide new and unique ways of looking at the atrocities of the past, the struggles of the
present, and the potential for the future. Through a postcolonial lens, current dominant representational practices are challenged (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2005).

2.2.1 Orientalism

Edward Said’s (1978/2003) *Orientalism* is largely regarded as the catalyst and founding movement of postcolonial thought. As Gandhi (1998) indicates, the text is a classic and has had a profound influence on a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, and sociology, in both the West, but more importantly in the postcolonial non-West. Simply stated, Said’s work brought the issues of colonialism and empire to the global forefront of cultural studies (Barker, Hulme, & Iversen, 1994).

Orientalism occurs when any person of European or Western descent chooses to represent the “non-Western” world. Orientalist thought is a perspective based on the dichotomous power distinction between the constructions of the Orient (the East) and the Occident (the West). For centuries, this thought has been used to define East and West, Black and White, European and non-European, oppressor and oppressed, men and women, and us and them. For centuries, Orientalism has been played on the world stage to construct difference and promote “othering”, or as Said (1978/2003) himself indicated, Orientalism is, “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3).

The term Orientalism, although broad in nature, is a direct result of the post-Enlightenment era and the European colonization that swept many parts of Asia and Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Consequently, the British, French, and
American empires were able to manage these parts of the world politically, militarily, socially, structurally, and ideologically and until the end of the World War II, the imperial powers dominated the Orient, and therefore Orientalism. These powers helped produce the literature known as Orientalism (Said, 1978/2003).

Orientalism explores the historical disequilibrium between the Middle East and the imperialist powers of the West and asserts that the fundamental practice of imperialist rule was (and still is) to dominate, subjugate, and marginalize groups of people who are assumed to be incapable of representing themselves. Orientalism is the term given to the continued project of representing the “other,” and Gandhi (1998) suggests this has historically been the underlying goal of the imperialist movement.

This practice therefore becomes the accepted manner in which to regulate anything produced about the Orient. The Orient, or East, was partly a European construction full of romance and seduction, breathtaking landscapes, and exotic individuals. The locale does in fact have a rich and unique history, full of diverse traditions, peoples, and lands. This is ironically what has given the practice such a large presence in the West. The two areas are not mutually exclusive; one cannot exist without the other. In this sense, the two parts of the world support and reflect each other.

The Orient has a unique place in European and Western history with the most prominent image being that of “other.” The Orient has helped to define Europe and the Western world as a place of difference with conflicting ideals. Consequently, the imperial nations impart a continued sense of urgency on their citizens to uphold the civil
society, and rebuke any society of difference. This superior hegemony constitutes a key component of Orientalist thought (Clifford, 1988; Said, 1978/2003).

There remains a considerable investment in the promotion of Orientalist thought. The "othering" of individuals exists today in scholarly discourse, but most notably in media representations through newspaper (Al-Hajii & Nelson, 1997), television and film (Shaheen, 1989), video gaming (Sisler, 2008), and news programming. Although Orientalism was initially a European (Western) creation, the framework is not something that can simply be uncreated. The unfortunate reality is the West cannot give credence to the specific histories, customs, and ideals of the East; therefore, the tenets of Orientalism are created and recreated over and over again (Said, 1978/2003). The overarching goal of a postcolonial perspective is that "othering" be avoided at all costs.

As Kassab (2010) indicated, what is considered normative in colonized societies is founded on selective constructions of the group in power. The colonizer defines what one ought to be in relation to what one is. The West is seen as inevitably progressive and imposes "itself as the ultimate standard for authentic culture" (p. 6). An underlying pressure exists to emulate the values and institutions of the West. The West also subscribes to a mentality of quick analysis and numeric generalized models in which rank is synonymous with success, a strategy that contradicts a qualitative, as well as a postcolonial perspective.

2.2.2 Imperial Impact

Western imperialism occurred at various times and in various forms throughout world history. Imperialism, as Williams (1991) suggested is the "use and abuse, and
ignoring, of other people for one’s own welfare and convenience” (p.72). In The Wretched of the Earth, Fannon (1963) provided a historical account of the social issues that resulted from Western imperialism, such as violence, degradation, exclusion, exploitation, silence, and oppression. The empire planned for some of these occurrences; others arose as a result of counter cultural resistance from colonized people.

The United States is often confused about its role in colonization; the country was the first nation in history to realize a status as an imperial power at the same time the nation was ceasing to be one. One of the goals of imperial colonization was to transport Western culture to indigenous and native groups with the intent of making the colonized land more “civilized.” The repetition of such a practice ultimately served as a reminder that civilization was solely located within imperial nations. Simply put, European/American became synonymous with Western, which became synonymous with universal. Another goal (or misconception) of this colonization was to impart wisdom to what was believed to be an uneducated group of people (Mitchell, 1992). Following World War II, the term “Euro-American” became synonymous with the term “Western civilization,” perpetuating a continued global notion of an “us” versus “them” mentality (Kassab, 2010). The West has not been shy regarding concern with the East; in fact, the West has an inherent desire to promote all things Western.

As previously indicated, the goal of postcolonial work does not concern itself with specificity or a desire to prove absolutes. Rather, the attention paid to history here offers a narrative account of how imperial reality was constructed as a normative reality (Spivak, 1993). Postcolonial discourse instead concerns itself with issues of cultural
critique and cultural identity. Although the focus of this study suggests a continued colonialism of Arabs and Middle Eastern groups in the United States, the issue is not specific to this geographic area alone. The topics of preoccupation and the antecedents of colonialism have been major points of discussion for the nation of India, as well as several South American and Latin countries. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, the topic has continued to be a point of contention for Europe and the United States as well. The global state of affairs following the terrorist tragedy of September 11th demands a postcolonial response. Following this attack on United States soil, the political presence and investment in Middle Eastern nations, particularly those of the Third World, cannot be overestimated.

Decolonization is not simply the termination of imperial rule. Rather, the process results from struggles of violence (Fannon, 1963), consciousness raising, the resurgence of cultural identity, and the desire for new perspective. Decolonization results from an empowering consensus to alter the expected destiny of a group of people.

2.2.3 Locating “Post” Colonization

Postcolonialism is not a result of colonization. Rather, the term is used to designate the totality of colonizing practices, including imperial contact, political independence, and present day social structures. In fact, one cannot discuss the present-day impact of postcolonial practices “without considering its antecedents and consequences” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995, p. 2).
Within postcolonialism, a critical idea is only as important as its strategic location in history. The term is not meant to offer a generalized and global account of the issues at play. The intention is not to provide rationality or to solve a problem. The “post” in “postcolonial” is not meant to indicate a linear aftermath. Instead, the term is used to describe the far-reaching and present-day consequences of imperial rule (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2005).

Colonialism is not a solitary acquisition of territory. Rather, colonialism is precipitated by a belief that certain groups of people need and require control and management in order to thrive, that certain groups of people cannot function without domination. Time and place are critical determinants of research. Text cannot be applied outside the social realm of its creation; research of this nature is attached solely to the historical moments of their production (Said, 1983).

Most postcolonial movements throughout history were a direct result of European imperial rule, which began in the late 15th century (Fanon, 1963). On American shores, the movement can be traced to Columbus’ discovery of the new world in 1492. European imperialism continued until 1945, and therefore shaped much of the modern world in which we live today.

Historically, imperialism concerned itself with promoting order and progress, and by 1914, European imperialism had colonized more than half of the world’s land and more than a third of the earth’s people, which equated to approximately 72 million square kilometers and 560 million people. This imperial rule was commonly established through violent and dehumanizing tactics. Decolonization constitutes a highly relevant struggle not solely unique to groups of color. Beginning with the transatlantic slave
industry, Europeanization initiated a significantly racist and sexist set of beliefs that continue to be ingrained today (West, 2005).

2.3 Modern Colonial Struggles of the Middle East

The colonization and marginalization of non-dominant groups is not a phenomenon of the past, nor are matters of colonialism specific to race and ethnicity. Modern-day colonial struggles exist for a variety of groups, most notably the LGBT community and women. Sharing similar political, cultural, and social agendas, the feminist movement may also be understood as a postcolonial movement. Young (2001) suggested movements of this nature have been termed as anti-theoretical because of their focus on the victim (gays and women), rather than the oppressing power (White, Eurocentric men). Decolonization is also largely present today in those areas of the world constructed as belonging to the so-called Third World (West, 2005). Beginning in the 1950s, similar issues plagued other groups in the United States. For present-day American Muslims, the broader climate of insecurity and distrust was similar to that experienced by Japanese Americans during World War II, suggesting that racism is a dynamic construction, which is continually reconstructed and historically specific (Majid, 2003; Rizvi, 2005).

Unfortunately, the terrorist events of September 11th reignited the need for violent imperialist action in the Middle East (Sleeter, 2005). The postcolonial idea of surveillance is ultimately relevant with Middle Eastern and Arab people living in the United States. The use of surveillance to ensure correct behavior and as a tool to curb criminality speaks to the assumed need for the dominant group to unquestionably
control and judge others, in this case, those who claim an ethnic association with the Middle East.

2.3.1 Locating the Middle East and Its People

Although true qualitative work deemphasizes the use of definitions, exploring what it means to be from the Middle East and what it means to be Arab are highly relevant. The geographic definition of the Arab world refers to the land spanning the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf and also from the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Under these guidelines, the Arab world encompasses African and Asian countries. However, one could view the creation of the term Middle East as a Western construction (The Arab World, 1989).

The Arab world consists of countries in the Arab east, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf, and all three sub-regions vary dramatically socioeconomically, politically, historically, religiously, and culturally (Kassab, 2010). The geographic Orient has expanded as a result of Western (American) political and economic roles in the Middle East. Initially, the Orient was exclusive to imperial ideals about who, what, and where was Oriental. More recently, Oriental has come to mean those areas of the world in which the West has considerable military investment. As one might expect, this fluid determination has resulted in complication, not only for the West, but more importantly, for the East (Said, 1978/2003).

The term Middle East, then, is ironically a source of debate, as the definition of the region is not a geographical area or a cultural association, but rather, a Western notion pertaining to the current economic and political climate. For many, the Middle
East contains those countries involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict and/or those countries of the Persian Gulf rich oil resources. In the academic arena, the term shifts to include the countries of North Africa, the Arab countries of Asia, the non-Arab countries of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, and finally, the nation of Israel (The Arab World, 1989; Rizvi, 2005). Simply stated, the sheer fact that the area has a plethora of “definitions,” suggests its construction is not cultural or indigenous in nature, but rather, a Western socially constructed one.

In fact, in 1997, the United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) revised the federal classification system of race and ethnicity, indicating a lack of consensus regarding the definition of the Arab ethnic category. In 2007, the Census Bureau commissioned a qualitative research project to understand the first-generation Asian and Arab-American population. The stated aims of this research were to identify (1) levels of knowledge regarding the census, (2) previous behavior related to the census, (3) motivations and barriers to completing the census, (4) privacy concerns about responding to the census, and (5) feelings toward the Census Bureau. As one may expect following the tragedy of September 11th, the primary barrier identified by Arab-Americans was mistrust of government and the war on terror (United States Census Bureau, 2007).

Several assumptions permeate the thinking of Westerners. The first of these is that Arabs are synonymous with Islam. Not all Arabs are Muslim. In fact, the Muslim world is larger than the Arab world and extends throughout Africa and into India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. A second common assumption fails to address the great diversity found within the Islamic faith. When the Muslim world is depicted in the
West, devout worship is not the image; instead, Westerners are bombarded with images of religious zealots, polygamy, and violence (Rizvi, 2005; Shaheen, 1985).

Not all Middle Eastern countries are Arab countries either. Although the countries of the Middle East remain a fluid Western construction, the countries of Turkey and Iran are often considered as belonging to the Middle East. However, both countries are geographically also part of Persia. The official language of both countries is not Arabic, but Farsi, which shares several characteristics with Western languages more so than with Arabic. During the Iran hostage crisis, this representation was magnified, and once again, Arab became synonymous with Muslim. All Muslims, and consequently all Arabs, were viewed as militants and terrorists (The Arab World, 1989). How then does one study a group of people if a common association cannot be drawn?

2.3.2 The Impact of September 11th

American and European opinions of Arabs and Muslims were problematic to say the least well before 2001. Following the tragic events of September 11th, American Muslims found themselves in a precarious dilemma. One could argue these horrific terrorist actions had the most impact on Muslims living in the United States (CAIR, 2006b; Majid, 2003). Americans wanted revenge, were fearful, angry, and in a state of shock and disbelief. All of these emotions were likely held by local Muslims as well, but were coupled with feelings of shame, distress, and humiliation. Every single American, man, woman, and child, was affected in some way or another by the atrocities of that day. Fearing violent action, some Muslim families reported keeping their children out of school for more than three months.
Despite a decade-long rhetoric by both the Bush and Obama administrations, anti-Muslim discontent remains strong in the United States. Both Presidents, in televised addresses to the nation, repeatedly denounced the War on Terror as a War on Islam. After September 11\textsuperscript{th}, blatant forms of anti-Muslim discrimination increased significantly, no doubt fueled by continued media coverage (Rizvi, 2005). The American education system also began including the study of Islam in their curriculum. This purposeful inclusion was infused into all aspects of social studies, including studies in religion, history, economics, civics, and colonialism (Moore, 2006).

2.3.3 The Right to Representation

The polarity of opinion regarding the East/West debate is simply a political construction as those in power produce and reproduce an image of difference (McLeod, 2000). Over time, these productions of difference innately continue without recollection to the historical context in which they were created. Current political discourse in the United States is focused, not on narrowing the gap between East and West, but instead on widening the gap to the point of absolutist and dichotomous terms. Such practice furthers international misunderstanding and perpetuates the oppressed group as “other,” which halts any already-delicate attempts to work cooperatively in the face of difference (Rizvi, 2005).

2.4 Arenas of Middle Eastern Representation in the United States

Immigration of Middle Easterners in large numbers to the United States began in 1890. Like many immigrants of the time, Middle Easterners arrived with the hope of
forging a better life for themselves and their family members; however, they were typically uneducated and had few industrial skills. The second wave of Middle Eastern immigration began in the 1940s and included well-educated families. Immigration since has followed a political trend. In times of civil unrest and national turmoil in their respective homelands, Middle Easterners have immigrated to the United States, most notably following the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon (The Arab World, 1989). Since 1970, immigration of Middle Easterners to the United States has risen significantly, with the most dramatic increase taking place beginning in 1990 (Brittingham & de la Cruz, 2005).

2.4.1 Historical and Political Representation

Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain and France promised to support the creation of an independent and united Arab state, but the imperial powers failed to keep this promise. Consequently, their intervention resulted in further colonialism of the Arab nations. This colonialism, with its false promise to aid in the development of Arab independence, perpetuated for two centuries (Kassab, 2010).

Because of these continued sociopolitical concerns, Arab scholars have brought to light the need to address the antecedents of colonialism in the Middle East. Kassab (2010) asked the following: How does a group reconstruct its history when others have created that history? How does a group recapture its pride and cultural legacy when for centuries, others have discredited the group’s existence? How does a group reclaim its cultural spirit in the aftermath of colonialism?
An Arab cultural renaissance took place from the mid-19th to 20th centuries, which paved the way for contemporary cultural debates in the region. Known as the *Nahda* or “rise” in Arabic this event concerned itself with a cultural renewal of the Arab people. Many Arab scholars suggest the Arab people are in the midst of a second *Nahda* and have been since the defeat by Israel in 1967 (Kassab, 2010). This modern renaissance concerns itself with creating an environment of empowerment under the current adverse situations plaguing the Arab world, which speaks to the need for postcolonial work in the Middle East/Arab world.

Throughout history, the representation of Arabs and people from the Middle East has shifted due to war, which resulted in altered political alignments. Over the years, allies became enemies and vice versa. Supporters of Zionism, a movement for the reestablishment of an independent Jewish state, initiated the belief that Arabs were unwilling to make political compromises. Arabs were represented as irrational, ill tempered, and selfish. Consequently, the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948, 1967, and 1973 furthered already strong animosity towards Arabs by the nation of Israel (Hasian, 2002).

2.4.2 Islamic Representation

Even though the Muslim world numbers approximately 1.6 billion individuals and encompasses more than 50 countries (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2006a), the stereotypical Western image of a Muslim typically originates from the Arab Middle East, more specifically, from those nations engrossed in political hostilities with the West. This narrow view fails to take into account the cultural specificities of the Muslim world. Just as variances in Christianity exist, so do ones in the practice of Islam. As
Majid (2003) stated, “There has never been a monolithic Islam, just as there has never been one America speaking with the same voice” (p. B11). Rizvi (2005) reported that although only 25 percent of Muslims hail from Arab countries, they solely frame the negative and unpopular image of Muslims in American eyes. Simply stated, all Muslims are seen as violent, but Arab Muslims are seen as the most violent.

Rizvi’s (2005) finding was supported in a survey by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR, 2006b), which indicated, that only 40% of American Muslims hail from the Arab world. Those with ancestral ties to countries in South Asia and Africa, such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan are often assumed to be less hostile than those from the Arab Middle East. CAIR (2006a) also reported the majority (55%) of American Muslims believe the War on Terror is synonymous with a war on Islam, with slightly more foreign-born than U.S.-born Muslims echoing this call. The overwhelming majority (77%) of American Muslims stress the need to emphasize similarities between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. CAIR (2006a) reported 59% of Americans favor this and believe the practice would decrease the ambivalence many have towards Islam.

CAIR reported education was the key concern Muslim parents living in the United States have for their children, followed by civil rights and foreign policy concerns, which have dominated the Islamic discourse since 9/11. Three years following 9/11, CAIR (2006) reported that one-fourth of Americans consider anti-Muslim stereotypes to be true. More than 1,000 individuals completed phone interviews to uncover how Americans felt about Muslims and the results confirmed the current political discourse of the nation. Although 60% of those interviewed reported knowing little regarding Islam, one-fourth of those interviewed believe Islam to be a violent religion that teaches
children to hate. One-fifth also agreed the civil liberties of Muslims should be restricted in the light of national security. As CAIR reported, 17% stated “It’s okay to lock up Muslims, just in case they are planning terrorist acts” (p. 5).

Other concerns reported by American participants included: (1) the status of Muslim women, (2) condemnation of terrorism by American Muslim groups, and (3) increased efforts by American Muslims to improve the image of the Middle East. Furthermore, the CAIR (2006) summarized 2,000 interviews and suggested one in five Americans “maintain a strong anti-Muslim attitude” and that Islamophobia is a very real problem.

Although use of the word has increased significantly in recent years, Islamophobia, the promotion of hatred and hostility towards Muslims, has permeated Western thought for centuries. In fact, the association of Arab as aggressor and barbarian during the Crusades perpetuated the dualism of the Arab Muslim world (the East) and the European Christian world (the West). Historical representations, although false in nature, have paved the way for a new “racialized discourse (p. 172)” of Arabs and Islam. Subsequent events, including the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq, as well as political turmoil in several Middle Eastern countries since 9/11, has only given credence to the colonialist ideal of Western (American) hegemony. A moral panic ensues as Americans feel legitimized in their quest for nationalism (Rizvi, 2005).

Consequently, the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in Western media has become increasingly exaggerated (Said, 1981/1997). Popular Western representations of Islam are ill-fated; they continue to depict Muslims as disloyal and dangerous. Such a practice not only silences the voices of Muslims, but also perpetuates “othering”. Often,
Islam is portrayed as synonymous with terror and violence. The issue is magnified when the stereotype centers on the religious, and not the political, assumptions of Islam. Rizvi (2005) suggested this false representation is a media conspiracy.

2.4.3 Census Representation

Arab-Americans and American Muslims do not feel supported by the United States government. Following 9/11, the Department of Justice was vigilant in its pursuit of suspected terrorism and ties to Islamic fundamentalism. Some Muslim organizations, at a loss for accurate representation, expressed concerns of civil rights violation and racial profiling (Rizvi, 2005).

Because Arab Americans are classified as Caucasian or White on American government census forms, their only representation as an ethnic group is through the optional ancestry question. Therefore, exact numbers of Arab Americans remain difficult to determine; an estimated 2 to 2.5 million Arab Americans reside in the United States (Arjouch, 2000; Moradi & Hasan, 2004). Although skin color affords certain groups a higher status in American society, many Arab American youth continue to distinguish themselves from the White majority by identifying with positive aspects of their culture. Making classification of this group even more difficult is the culturally and religiously diverse backgrounds of its members. A great deal of diversity exists with regard to ethnic affiliation, social class, educational attainment, level of acculturation, and so on (Moradi & Hasan, 2004).
2.4.4 Media Representation

In the early 1990s, pan-Arab fear had taken the place of communism as the key international threat to the safety of the Western world (Collier, 1994). By the end of the decade, Arabs continued to be constructed as other with sole media representation as aggressor, barbarian, and terrorist. This image almost always associated the Arab with violence, international threat, and war, furthering the media-induced stereotype (Lind & Danowski, 1988).

Whose reality is being represented? The representation of people from the Middle East is not a new phenomenon brought to light by a resurgence of postcolonial thought. Rather, Middle Easterners have had to deal with false representation and cultural stereotyping in American media for almost a century. This representation has persisted in all forms of Western media. The image of Arab as other had been solidified in the minds of viewers in the United States. Shaheen (1984) reported all three major television networks have continued to represent Arabs as “aggressive, violent, primitive, and unreasonable people” (p. 7). This is also true with regard to news programming and documentaries about people from the Middle East, which offers “broad and erroneous generalizations (p. 12).”

When Middle Easterners are portrayed on television and in film, 10 stereotypes persist. These stereotypes have been developed by a number of researchers, such as Shaheen (1989), Rehman, (1992), and Hasian (2002). They include:

- All Arabs are extremely wealthy.
- OPEC consists only of Arab nations.
- Muslims condone slave trading.
• Arab men are polygamous and have large harems.
• Arabs are rulers of desert kingdoms with mysterious powers.
• Muslim people are primitive and have severe laws.
• Muslims are violent and war loving.
• All Palestinians are terrorists.
• Arab families are self-destructive.
• Muslims are the enemy and denounce peace-loving peoples.

2.4.4.1 The Television and Film Arab

Many argue the film industry is an innocent form of entertainment in which the consumer must suspend belief in a certain reality. Nevertheless, the discriminatory and implied message of films involving people from the Middle East is almost always the same, which is deal with terrorism now or risk an apocalyptic-like future where Arab and Muslim terrorists rule the world (Hasian, 2002). Therefore, terrorism is endemic to the Middle East.

No one can argue that the subsequent aftermath of any terrorist action is anything but horrific; however, the line between "real" terrorism and media representations of that reality often become blurred. Media representations are not authentic disseminators of cultural information. In fact, they perpetuate a false reality that only further alienates Arab people living in the United States.

The representation of people from the Middle East as terrorists or villains mirrors the current political and economic alliances of the United States. Throughout U.S. history, many racial and ethnic groups have been cast in an unfavorable light, including Native Americans, Germans, Japanese, African Americans, and Russians. The
construction of a group of people as enemy helps justify the choices the United States makes on the domestic and international fronts (Goodstein, 1998). Terrorism “has enjoyed a prevalence and acceptance in the Muslim Middle East that has no parallel elsewhere” (p. 58). As long as the reality of terrorism exists, so does the stereotypical image in viewers’ minds (Muravchik, 1999).

Western assumptions of the Arab or Middle Easterner are fabricated on film as well as on television and not just on primetime shows, but also with children’s programming and with daily news accounts and broadcasts. Jack Shaheen (2009), an American-born Lebanese professor, reported extensively on the representation of Arabs in television and film for more than 25 years. His analysis was presented in Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People. His content analysis of more than 800 films depicted the Arab as comical companion, wealthy kingdom-ruler, seductive lead, and more often than not, as terrorist, or as Shaheen indicated, as “billionaires, bombers, and belly dancers” (p. 4). These were virtually the only images Westerners have ever seen of Arabs and people from the Middle East. A summary of Shaheen’s (1984; 2009) findings are presented in the following section.

Western representations of Arabs on television perpetuated four basic myths: (a) Arabs were wealthy with an endless barrage of finances; (b) Arabs were barbaric and lack culture; (c) Arabs were obsessed with sex and sexual domination; and (d) Arabs continually resorted to acts of terrorism. A different type of seduction replaced the portrayal of the polygamous and seductive sheik previously seen on film. The television Arab was portrayed as a seducer of not only women, but of business, real estate, and
most importantly, government officials. More often than not, the character was male, hedonistic, and shameless (Shaheen, 1984; 1992).

2.4.4.2 The Arab as Villain

Representations of Arabs and people from the Middle East as uncontrollable beings that resort to terrorism on a whim were sanctified on Western television. What these programs failed to depict were the more than 100 specific cultures, languages, and customs in Arab countries and in the Middle East. More often than not, Westerners lumped this collective and diverse group of people together and assigned them a singular media image. This can be seen throughout film, television, and children’s programming. In interviews with television executives, Shaheen (1984) reported on the dismissive nature of those in charge. Executives failed to research “others” simply because an already successful formula of sensationalism existed. As one producer indicated, stereotyping of “others” saved the writer from having to think. The Western world needed someone to blame and if the Western world needed a universal villain then, “the villain of choice today is the Arab” (p. 11).

Much like the Middle East was (and continues to be) a Western construction, so then too was (is) the choice of media villain. Shaheen (1985) suggested the commonplace practice of skewed political or news headlines created an “other;” this Other then became the face of all things un-American. Consequently, several emotions become synonymous with the face of the “other,” such as anxiety, fear, and hatred (Apple, 1992).
2.4.4.3 Gender Constructions of Arabs

According to Shaheen (1984), another common (mis)representation in framing “the other,” was to portray the outsider as exotic and uncivilized. Television often depicted the Middle East as the Orient with its people living in exotic and lavish kingdoms. Arabs and Middle Easterners were also living amid an unstable and often self-destructive family. Negative gender roles were heightened; women, if not belonging to a harem, were dominated by men, including their fathers, brothers, and cousins. If a woman appeared too progressive, she was viewed as dismissive of her heritage. Men appeared as inept and uncivilized creatures that care only for wealth and kingdom. Once again, this unique group of people was skewed to fit a Western ideal, when in fact, close family ties, as in most collective societies, prevail in the Middle East.

The overarching assumptions many Westerners had (have) about the Middle East is Arabs were (are) the world’s enemy and terrorism, the only viable profession. No other assumption speaks to the framing of “the other” more than this one. As a Western construction or reality, the idea of evil was equated with the Arab, when in reality, Arab men and women, serve their region and the world in a number of roles, such as diplomats, farmers, professors, business owners, artists, and teachers.

In summary, Shaheen’s (2009) longitudinal content analysis discussed Western television as a powerful medium that has the ability to create and mold what is deemed acceptable and normal behavior. Television is essentially a distributor of popular culture (Apple, 1992). The United States broadcasts programming well beyond its borders. In fact, the country is television’s largest exporter. Shaheen further suggested television and film have the greatest potential to curb negative stereotyping and
promote understanding among people throughout the world. Unfortunately then, television also has the potential to harm just as many people as it may benefit.

2.4.4.4 Differing without Differentiation

Invalidated images of the Middle East in American media assume to (re)present the majority; popular media, including news programming, television, and film blatantly sensationalized Muslim extremists. Rizvi (2005) suggested the repetition of this imagery resulted in Western assumptions of conformity; if this is the visual message day in and day out, assumptions of all Muslims as extremists abound. The horrific actions of a few are generalized to an entire faith, a faith with members numbering in the millions (Shaheen, 1984).

What Western television programming continually failed to depict were the cultural contributions “others” have made to the world and to civilization. The Middle East gave many a religion, Islam, and gave the Western world a language, an alphabet, and invented the clock, just to name a few. For centuries, the Middle Eastern countries have given the world scholars, theologians, doctors, scientists, architects, and musicians, but these accomplishments are rarely ever shown on Western screens (Shaheen, 1985).

2.4.4.5 Disney does Difference

Targeted directly at young children, the most prevalent visual representation of the Middle East and its people appeared in Disney’s 1992 animated feature film Aladdin. The film was immensely popular and has grossed more than 500 million
dollars (IMDB, 2011) and was the first of its kind to feature an Arab hero. But, the film was not without its faults. The two protagonists in the film, Aladdin and Jasmine, were both light-skinned with exaggerated Anglo/European physical features and accents. The prominent evil character in the film, Jafar, was dark-skinned and spoke with a strong Arabic accent. He was depicted as frightening and cruel with grotesque facial features (Wingfield & Karaman, 2002).

A vitally relevant (mis)representation in *Aladdin* was found in its opening song when an Arab character sings, “Oh, I come from a land, from a faraway place, where the caravan camels roam. Where they cut off your ear, if they don’t like your face. It’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home” (Clements & Musker, 1992). To the viewer, the people of the Middle East were represented as exotic, different, violent, and inhuman from the onset of the film. Prior to its release, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) demanded The Walt Disney Company alter the lyrics of the opening song. The ADC suggested, “It’s flat and immense, and the heat is intense. It’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home” (Wingfield & Karaman, 2002, p. 133), but the studio failed to comment, and in 1993, *Aladdin* won two Academy Awards, both for achievement in music (IMDB, 2011). Although the changes suggested by the ADC were less violent, the “othering” of the Middle East and of the Arab people was still emphasized.

Arabs have continued to be misrepresented in children’s programming, most notably in animation. Cartoons and comic books were infamous for portraying the Arab as villain (Shaheen, 1984). The negative stereotyping did not end with visual media. Arab-themed costumes, for children and adults, were (and still are) common during Halloween, with stereotypical clothing, masks, and props ranging from large noses and
facial hair to oil cans, moneybags, genie lamps, and swords (Wingfield & Karaman, 2002). These faulty images continue to perpetuate difference and the “othering” of an entire region of the world. They are reified daily in children’s programming and reduce the complex landscape of the Middle East and its people to a few simplistic and often inaccurate images.

2.4.5 Children as Consumers

Television is a cultural phenomenon with its strongest impact on young children (Apple, 1992; Shaheen, 1984). With select, often contradictory messages presented in Western popular culture, how then do children from the Middle East construct beliefs about the world and a positive identity? Significant debate continues to exist between traditional and postcolonial scholars on children’s identity formation. Traditional developmental theory suggests children are captivated by repetitive media images and because children are not born with prejudicial thought, images they view shape and perhaps alter their reality, which may be problematic for some young children. Who they are and who they can become is therefore defined by the images they see (Derman-Sparks, 1989). Postcolonialism points to the child as consumer with the ability to create dynamic multiple realities of images they see and the materials they read (Hughes & Mac Naughton, 2001).

Both developmental and postcolonial scholars agree young children construct their identity through observation of and interaction with society. However, child development theory suggests the formation of identity is a passive process in which children unthinkingly absorb media messages from their world (Kostelnik et al., 2009).
This simplistic approach implies that if children are presented with the right messages, their knowledge and identity formation will be positive; if they are presented with negative messages, the result is a negative identity. On the other hand, postcolonial theorists believe the child has an active role in forming his or her identity and exposure to negative cultural images may or may not result in a negative ethnic/racial identity. The child actively constructs and reconstructs his or her identity. As Hughes and Mac Naughton (2001) further suggested, the child’s identity may correspond with a particular media message, but not always. The child is active, rather than passive. The child is in control, not the message.

This theory is supported by Apple (1992), who suggested students apply their own classed, raced, and gendered realities to material they read and images they see. Apple believed the child has enough agency to construct meaning actively within text; the overarching problem, however, is that the institution of school is more concerned with factual learning and achievement, rather than cultural incorporation.

2.4.6 School as a Socializing Agent

Public schooling continues to serve as a key socializing agent in the lives of children today. From its inception in the late 19th century, and despite its egalitarian agenda, public schooling thwarted the educational advancement of children of color and others who did not conform to the White standard of economic achievement (Banks, 2005). Colonized groups, educated in the United States, produced varying attitudes toward achievement; these attitudes were typically at odds with American established norms (Morgan, 2002).
Within Western racialized society, schools often serve to further messages of “othering.” They serve as a “socializing agent” (Brown, Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown, & Ezell, 2007, p. 23) in the transmission of information regarding ethnicity and race. The terminology used in Western society and within its educational system is offensive in itself; the term “minority” immediately implies disparity and inequality. Therefore, schools merely reproduce a prejudicial agenda and way of thinking (Solomon, 2001). Children spend approximately 17,000 hours of their life in school (Cordry & Wilson, 2004), during which time they are exposed to a constant barrage of worldviews that are dismissive and perpetuate hegemony, leading some authors to argue that the U.S. public school system undeniably perpetuates a form of institutionalized racism (Lewis, 2003).

2.4.6.1 Multicultural Education

Curricular approaches designed to tackle the issue of multiculturalism in schools traditionally followed three strategies (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2005). Initially, discussions of culture and identity in the classroom focused on a singular interpretation. Culture and identity were conceptualized as a result of geography; students were taught people from certain parts of the world acted in certain ways. Physical borders defined the boundaries of belief systems. Simply stated, people were labeled and scrutinized according to their location on the globe.

The second curricular approach related to multiculturalism was the sporadic sprinkling of cultural content into the standard Eurocentric curriculum. Individuals of color and their contributions to society were celebrated at calendar-specific times of the year. A similar curriculum strategy used in early childhood programs across the nation
was critiqued by Derman-Sparks (1989) as a type of tourist curriculum, in which only a number of cultural groups served as the curricular focus for a predetermined amount of time. Such an approach was not only replete with misrepresentation, but the approach enforced simplistic generalizations about people and furthered the "othering" of individuals. This approach still constitutes a significant portion of early childhood social studies curricular objectives in states such as Texas.

Finally, Eurocentric curricula assumed only people of color truly comprehend, or need to comprehend, the struggles "others" have experienced, and so there was no need to include the material or reflect on the White role in history (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2005; Rizvi, 2005). As Sleeter (2005) suggested following her two-year study with pre-service teachers, “White people usually seek to explain persistent racial inequality in a way that does not implicate White society” (p. 246).

There remains a disconnect between the philosophical and practical applications of cultural pedagogy. Traditionalists desire curriculum that would further core democratic values; they recognize the need for diverse voices, but only at specific times throughout the school year and always within minimal time allotments. On the other hand, postcolonial scholars demand the continued and repetitive integration of majority (colonizer) and minority (colonized) voices each and every day of the school year. Subsequently, the narrow and rigid boundaries of culture and identity would become blurred, fluid, and determined by the minority or colonized (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2005).

A criticism of multicultural education was that its use promoted absolutes by failing to acknowledge the vast differences located within cultures, as well as the
intersecting inequalities class and gender brings to the issue (Rizvi, 2005). Human beings construct the world in a variety of ways. These views of the world are therefore linked to ideas of privilege and power, which get translated into classroom practice (Rizvi, 2005), most notably through the use of textbooks.

2.4.6.2 (Mis)Representation in instructional materials

Acculturation and assimilation have been used as mechanisms to educate the influx of multiracial youth in American schools (Sassler, 2006). Furthering this premise, Junn (2004) suggested the main role of schools was to quickly socialize diverse children into American mainstream culture. Previous practices included instilling immigrant and so-called minority children with the patriotic ideals of conformity and obedience. More recently, social skill development and discourse on civic education have replaced traditional curricula. However, in such programs, the “American experience” is still emphasized (Apple, 1992).

In the nation’s most diverse and populous states (and interestingly, the states with the largest Middle Eastern concentrations of people), including California, New York, and Texas, the continued use of traditional and standardized curricula is doing the most harm. The educational agenda continues to be strongly skewed towards a “White is right” mentality, even though White students are a numeric minority. In the face of globalization, when children of color are the numerical majority in some classrooms, the goal is to conform to, rather than to alter pedagogy.
2.4.6.3 Representation in School Textbooks

Within the classroom, representation of difference is often transmitted via the use of textbooks. Textbooks serve as a primary source of information for the student, and often, for the classroom teacher as well (Apple, 1992). Textbooks have been relied on heavily in American classrooms for more than half a century (Fitzgerald, 1979); Siler (1990) estimated 80% to 90% of content knowledge available to students comes from school textbooks. Simply stated, textbooks provide structure for a vast amount of textual and visual information (Smith, 2011). Most importantly, texts introduce students to Other areas of the world (Podeh, 2000) and information and images found in social studies textbooks become “symbolic representations” of a distant group of people (Jarrar, 1976, p. 2). Authors, editors, and publishers work for months and often times years to develop an “unbiased” work, although this work is often laden with value judgments (Romanowski, 2003). When information is presented in an appropriate and relevant manner, understanding of culture is furthered. When groups are misrepresented and difference is emphasized, negative attitudes abound (Marek, 1983). Podeh (2000) further suggested if texts are biased in nature, negative attitudes towards the group in question are likely to occur.

Smith (2011) contended, “Textbooks represent not just pedagogical power, but also symbolic power” (p. 4). This is especially true in the arena of social studies and history. The use of textbooks in social studies is so familiar that students often do not question their information and accept their accounts with less criticism than in other subject areas, such as math and science. In fact, this reliance on print and text often
substitutes for the well-trained teacher (Fitzgerald, 1979). In some instances, students may interact with their textbook more than they do with their teacher.

As Woodward, Elliot, and Nagel (1988) suggested, there has been a slow, but steady increase in the number of studies of textbooks in the past four decades. A natural consequence of the social turmoil plaguing the United States during the Civil Rights era, scholars, especially those of color, were critical of the poor representation of minority groups and began to emphasize equal-opportunity education for all students (Banks, 2005). Thousands of studies of textbooks followed (Apple, 1992), but a minimal amount focused on culture and/or social studies content. The following sections will provide a review of key studies of textbooks focused on the Middle East. Because the impetus for increased analysis of school textbooks began in the 1970s, this review will commence with that era. Siler (1987) also noted that prior to the 1960s, research on social studies textbooks was uncommon. Although the aim of the current study is focused on the representation of the Middle East and its people, recent studies of other cultural groups will be provided to lend support for the purpose of the study, especially beginning in 2000.

2.4.6.3.1 Representation Studies from 1970-2000

The first large-scale study centered on the Middle East was conducted by the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). This study was the driving force for future research later in the decade by, most notably, Griswold (1975) and Jarrar (1976). Years later, little had changed, shown in studies by Barlow (1994) and Morgan (2008),
who both reported on the continued misrepresentation of Middle Eastern people in textbooks in subsequent decades.

In 1971, MESA created the eight-member “Committee on the Middle East Image in Secondary Schools” to review 80 American geography, social studies, and world history textbooks (Griswold, 1975). William J. Griswold, a committee member, later reported the majority of these secondary-level textbooks perpetuated negative stereotypes of the Middle East, erred in content, and oversimplified historical issues. Through the use of frequency counts and subsequently, a numbered coding system, the researchers prepared a list of acceptable texts from the 80 reviewed, which were member-checked by a group of secondary school teachers. Of the forty-six secondary level world history textbooks, 29 were found to be completely unacceptable.

The study found accurately defining the physical boundaries of the Middle East was problematic because the area was often referred to as the “Near East” (p. 29). In an analysis of the visual material, beautiful, but unrealistic images of the deserts of the region were a common finding, as were inaccurate images of the region’s people, who were often depicted as backwards farmers and nomadic Bedouins, dressed in indigenous clothing, riding camels to their desert homes. Other data found to be dismissive or distorted included the distribution of wealth (or lack thereof), religious stereotypes, and political hostilities with the United States (Griswold, 1975).

Other findings related to the amount of information presented on the Middle East. Compared to other areas of the world, the region received less coverage. “Cursory coverage in a text often means cursory coverage in the classroom” (Griswold, 1975, p. 25). More specifically, the pro-Western nations of the Middle East are mentioned less
often than those deemed to be anti-Western, thus furthering the idea that the teaching of difference, rather than of commonality, is more important to children.

The most negative and erroneous representation was found on the topic of Islam. The religion was labeled as “medieval,” “strange,” “peculiar,” and “extreme” (Griswold, 1975, pp. 13-17). Its distinctions from Christianity and Judaism were overemphasized, with no mention of the similarities the three religions have in common (Jarrar, 1976).

Jarrar (1976) sought to determine how dominant secondary (grades 7-12) social studies textbooks represent the Arab culture. His study was based on two specific research questions: (1) How is the image of the Arab presented, and (2) What value judgments are constructed as a result? Unfavorable images of the Middle East and of the Arab people were present in 43 dominant textbooks. His content analysis found American textbooks, dating back to 1889, were replete with negative stereotypes, complacent over-generalizations, omissions, and imbalanced information, as well as numerous references to isolated examples of extremist action by Muslim groups. Specifically, Jarrar’s (1976) study stated the following:

Instead of providing the conditions to open up new horizons to children and youth, educational institutions are offering instruction which is parochial and nationalistic, and does not do justice to the multicultural character of the nation. United States secondary schools do not provide adequate instruction in international understanding and appreciation of the multi-ethnic character of the American society. This applies particularly to the Arab culture. (p. 6)

This study was conducted using mixed methods, specifically content and assertion analysis in which books were evaluated for their coverage of Arabs. Assertion analysis
allowed the researcher to assign quantitative measurement to evaluative terms embedded in the text (Jarrar, 1976); scores were then assigned to the evaluative terms and frequency accounts of their usage were recorded. Counts were member checked and findings were cross-referenced with the qualitative content analysis findings.

Although not an academic review, Sewall (1992), with sponsorship from the American Textbook Council (ATC), reviewed three 6th grade and three high school textbooks to determine their coverage of Islamic ideals, particularly the concept of jihad. Unfortunately, very little information was provided regarding textbook selection, but researchers considered only one of the six texts to be acceptable in its coverage and representation of Islamic ideals.

Barlow’s (1994) content analysis of 80 state-adopted high school textbooks in geography, world history and American history supported previous studies and found an overreliance on the Bedouin stereotype, Eurocentric ideals, pro-Israel bias, and crude violent distortions of Islam. While Europeans were labeled as “reformers,” Muslims were categorized as “fanatical.” Barlow’s most significant finding pointed to the fact that many textbooks failed to mention the impact colonialism had on the Middle East. The Middle East, she argued, “…is not viewed in its own terms but only from a skewed Eurocentric or Americanistic perspective” (p. 18).

2.4.3.6.2 Representation Studies Beginning in 2000

The new millennium, coupled with the terrorist attacks of September 2001, brought about resurgence in textbooks studies, not only for people from the Middle East, but also for a variety of cultural groups. In 2004, Sewall reviewed three middle
and four high school textbooks and found that, “in order to meet demands for scope, diversity, and readability, world history textbooks abandon narrative and complexity” (p. 4). Sewall worked in conjunction with the American Textbook Council (ATC), which was established in 1989 as an independent research organization to advance the quality of textbooks in the United States. The council consists of historians, teachers, and international relations experts, as well as experts in the field of Islamic relations. Every four years, the council is tasked with reviewing widely adopted social studies textbooks. (Sewall, 2008). However, because the ATC’s reviews are not academic in nature, a detriment of each is that very little information, if any, is provided on how the textbooks are selected or on the research approach/strategy used (Smith, 2011).

For the 2002-2003 school year, social studies books were chosen from California and Texas as these two states dominated the national market at the time. Again, little information is provided as to the research methodology, but representational concerns were found with regard to (a) 20th-century political history, (b) the Islamic religion, (c) African social and cultural achievements, (d) the tenets of the Industrial Revolution, and (e) the Cold War. The council went on to state that the chosen textbooks are…

…lost in a procession of trivia designed to satisfy competing demands for inclusion, diversity, and multiple perspectives. What should be central topics and themes are compressed to make room for new topical material, some of it ideologically loaded…the nation’s leading world history textbooks provide unreliable, often scanty information and provide poorly constructed activities. (Sewall, 2008, p. 4)
A subsequent study conducted by Sewall (2008) reviewed ten widely used junior high and high school U. S. history textbooks. The review focused on the representation of Islam in textbooks before and after September 11th. More specifically, the study sought to identify how information concerning the foundations of Islam were presented to students, as well as what the current discourse was on terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and concerns of global security.

Erroneous information regarding the Islamic faith was found more often in junior high texts than in high school texts and misinformation presented before September 11th has persisted and grown worse. Sewall (2008) suggested, “…the deficiencies in Islam-related lessons are uniquely disturbing. History textbooks present an incomplete and confected view of Islam that misrepresents its foundations and challenges to international security” (p. 5).

The earlier findings of Griswold (1975) and Barlow (1994) were used by and supported in Morgan’s (2008) longitudinal review of middle school and high school textbooks published between 1898 and 1994. This review is of utmost significance due to its longitudinal nature, which suggests the issue of mis(representation) has plagued this region of the world for more than 100 years.

A key finding of Morgan’s study was an emphasis on American nativism, the belief that northern and western Europeans should lead the world. This theme dominated school textbook discourse and was a contributing factor in the 1924 Immigration Act, which placed limits and quotas on the immigration of southern and eastern Europeans, as well as Asians, to the United States. Nativism also perpetuated the enforcement of anti-miscegenation laws in the United States, which prohibited
marriages between Blacks and Whites and which were not abolished until 1967 (Omi & Winant, 1986). Nativism was most common at the turn of the 19th century, but its ideals remained in textbooks published as late as the mid-1990s.

The distribution of wealth (or lack thereof) in the Middle East was a common finding in Morgan’s (2008) review. Arabs were depicted as lacking initiative and having disdain for Western resources, or as lavish millionaires living amidst desert oases. The Arab middle-class was not represented, with little or no information presented on the millions of people living in metropolitan and urban areas. Many textbooks also implied the economic issues of the region could be remedied by Western modernity. One textbook reviewed by Morgan blamed the Arab people and their culture for the continued lack of progress; he went on to suggest the assumed lack of progress was a direct result of European oppression. This sentiment was the underlying theme in Freire’s (1970) seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which suggests colonial progress depends on the oppression of the colonized.

The only consistency found in Morgan’s review related to cartographic representations of the Middle East. Textbook maps, in each of the decades surveyed presented the geography of the Middle East accurately. With regard to colonialism of the region, a 1927 textbook credits the French with teaching the Arabs about modern industry and implies the Arabs welcomed the leadership. What the book does not discuss is the colonization of northern Africa, most notably by the French, who assumed the Arab people of the area were incapable of running their own countries (Morgan, 2008). Morgan’s textual analysis surveyed the time periods of 1898-1920, 1920-1940, 1945-1965, and 1970-1994. As he concluded, “In general, the later the time-period, the
better the chance a reader is likely to find a more accurate and favorable portrayal of the Middle East” (p. 329).

Also in 2008, Morgan and Walker studied four middle school state-adopted textbooks used in Mississippi public schools to determine the accuracy of Middle Eastern representation. Using textual and visual content analysis, textbooks published in 2004 and 2005 were reviewed for accuracy of the political, cultural, religious, and pictographic representations of the Middle East. Although improvements from earlier studies were found, “inaccuracies that misrepresent the culture, religion, and politics of the region still occur” (p. 91). Consistent with previous research, the most damaging representation came from the photographic portrayal of the Arab people with an emphasis on nomads, deserts, and veiled women. As the researchers suggested, these images were assumed to represent all people in the region, when in fact they represent only a small portion.

Using a mixed-methods analysis, Smith (2011) specifically studied how the Arab-Israeli conflict was depicted in high school U.S. history textbooks. A qualitative content analysis was used; titles chosen for this study were compiled from state adopted textbook lists dating back to 1950, as well as from widely adopted lists published by the American Textbook Council. Following the content analysis, a comprehensive topic matrix depicting line and bar graphs was used to further delineate (a) the amount of textbook coverage given to the topic, (b) the inclusion of key events and leaders, (c) frequency counts of terms.

Smith’s (2011) study was significant for a number of reasons. The study is one of the most recent textbook studies focused on the representation of the Middle East.
and its people. The scope is specific in nature and addresses one, albeit highly relevant, aspect of the discontent in the region, the Arab-Israeli conflict. The study is longitudinal in nature and reviews textbooks since the 1950s to identify major patterns of representation over time. The study implores 10 textbooks from the top three textbook publishers in the United States.

Significant trends were noted in Smith's (2011) study of U.S. history textbooks. On a positive note, textbooks appeared more neutral with each decade. Whereas textbooks in the 1950s highlighted the unquestionable greatness of America, subsequent decades, while although, still erroneous in nature, allowed for more inclusion of multicultural issues. Regarding the Arab-Israeli Conflict specifically, frequency counts depicted a steady increase in information through the 1990s, and then a sharp decline in the 2000s. Few terms steadily increased through all decades reviewed; the term “Arab” also rose sharply through the 1990s and then declined sharply in the 2000s.

A major finding of Smith’s (2011) study was that Arabs are represented one dimensionally in world history textbooks and have been since the 1950s. Also relevant was that few reasons are given for why conflicting events occur in the Middle East. Simple and factual statements are provided, but critical discussion as to why these conflicts occur is overlooked.

Accurate representation of the Middle East and of the Arab people is of paramount importance (David & Ayouby, 2008). Prior to September 11th, information presented to children was generally inaccurate, stereotypical, disorganized, and limited to specific grade levels (Wingfield & Karaman, 2002). Ten years after the tragic terrorist
events, the same is true, but the information is now tainted with political negativity and discriminatory language. This representation perpetuates “othering” by pitting the cultural differences of the Arab world against the Eurocentric views of the United States. To lend support to the global significance of this issue, a brief review of the (mis)representation of varying marginalized groups is presented in the following section.

2.4.3.6.3 (Mis)Representation of Others

Misrepresentation in school textbooks is hardly unique to the Middle East (Bennett, 2007). Content analyses focused on African-Americans (Brown & Brown, 2010; Clawson, 2002), Native-Americans (Grant & Grant, 1981; Grant & Tate, 1995; Lindsay, 2003; Roberts, Dean, & Holland, 2005; Zogry, 2011), Latinos (Beese, 2004; Cruz, 2002; Field, Bauml, Wilhelm, & Jenkins, 2012; Rodriguez & Ruiz, 2000), and to a lesser extent, Asian-Americans (Yokota, 2009; Yokota & Bates, 2005), support the findings of Middle Eastern textbook studies and provide evidence to the realities of continued colonization of those deemed different. In short, non-White groups have historically been presented, textually and visually, in a faulty manner in school texts.

Women and girls have also been misrepresented in schools (Sadker & Sadker, 2001; Smith, 2011), appearing less often than their male counterparts in textbooks (Grant & Tate, 1995) and in the text and pictures of recent Caldecott-winning children’s books (Davis & McDaniel, 1999). As both Griswold (1975) and Morgan (2008) suggested in their analyses of textbooks, the issue was not the presentation of misinformation. The issue was the impression the text leaves in the reader’s mind. Because textbook writers assume young children cannot understand terms such as
“colonialism” and/or “imperialism,” the accurate histories of oppressed groups are omitted from textbooks. The resulting issues are numerous, as children may appear dispassionate, devoid of empathy, and lacking complicity for the struggles of other groups.

2.4.6.4 Supplemental Instructional Materials

The need for a study of this magnitude is clear and can be best articulated by Morgan (2010) who indicates, “By documenting the ways that people from the Arab world are often misrepresented in school materials and the popular media and by offering suggestions and guidelines for teachers, educators can lead students to more accurate perceptions of Arab Americans” (p. 32). The following sections review the use of supplemental instructional materials and school practices to lend support for the continued misrepresentation of the Middle East and its people in American public schools.

2.4.6.4.1 Curricular Materials

Inaccurate messaging about Arabs and the Middle East were found in supplementary elementary school materials (Morgan, 2010). In a critique of post-9/11 curriculum materials, David and Ayoub (2005) identified three areas of concern found in educational materials focused on Arabs and the Middle East. For the purpose of this study, curriculum materials included websites, which contained standardized narratives or storied depictions, endorsed by prominent Arab-American organizations in the United
States. The areas of concern found included: (1) conflating, (2) essentializing, and (3) normalizing.

Conflating occurred when distinct labels were used interchangeably, resulting in the overgeneralization of information. Consistent with previous research, a common type of conflation regarding the region of the Middle East was its association as the sole home of the Arab people. Such an assumption resulted in the misrepresentation of Arabs and of Middle Easterners (who may or may not hail from Arab countries). Another common type of conflation was the assumption that Arab is synonymous with Muslim and that the two are interchangeable constructs. A final conflation, and perhaps the most popular, was the interchanging of the terms Arab, Arabs in America, and Arab-Americans. The reader is led to believe these three groups are identical in nature, when in fact they are quite distinct (David & Ayouby, 2005).

“Essentializing has a long history in work and research on the Arab world” (David & Ayouby, 2008, p. 16). Essentializing occurs when a lack of differentiation is used to describe people of Arab ancestry or when the reader reduces Arabs to a fixed group of traits and qualities. An emphasis is placed on the dichotomy between Arab culture (assumed to be backwards) and American culture (assumed to be modern). Consequently, because Arabs have been immigrating to the United States for more than a century, this view fails to account for successive generations of Arabs living in America, who are likely to be assimilated into American culture and who fail to identify with the term Arab. Finally, normalizing referred to the increased, albeit slow and sporadic, rehabilitation of the Arab culture into mainstream (American) culture,
specifically in educational materials. When normalizing occurred, Arab Americans were viewed as American and embodied positive traits (David & Ayouby, 2008).

Additionally, literary devices are used in schools to stereotype the Middle East and its people. Norton (2009) reported many children’s books portray Arabs stereotypically and these are typically used in early childhood and elementary school classrooms. Common misuses included clichéd character names, inaccurate illustrations of Arab and Muslim practices, storylines promoting cruel behavior, and the depiction of Arab groups as lazy and/or violent.

2.4.6.4.2 School Celebrations

Textbooks are only one way difference is transmitted in the public school system (Apple, 1992). Today, school children are not immune from the patriotic vigor sweeping the United States. In many American schools, assemblies are had, flags are flown, banners are hung, and ribbons are worn, all in the name of national solidarity (Wingfield & Karaman, 2002). While representations such as these are celebratory in nature, they encourage children to band together against all things unpatriotic, furthering an “us” versus “them” mentality.

2.5 Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, prior textbook studies focused on the Middle East suggest the following:

1. The definition of the Middle East is a static construct and even today, establishing its geographical, political, and social boundaries remains difficult.
However, postcolonial work does not concern itself with absolute truths and/or definitions, and so although this finding speaks to the continued misrepresentation of the region in school textbooks, the aim of the current research is not to provide a definition.

2. Representation of the Middle East and its people has been prone to inaccuracies and overgeneralizations in many school textbooks. In many cases, the negative stereotyping is a direct result of Eurocentric and colonial thinking.

3. The most relevant sub-topic of the Middle East and of Arabs concerns that of Islam. Terminology regarding Muslims is replete with negativity and equated with fundamentalism and terrorism. Texts offer little clarification regarding the terms; the reader may assume all Arabs are Muslim, which is not the case.

4. Although some studies have attempted to curb the issue of misrepresentation of ethnic/racial groups in the United States, little has been done systematically concerning the treatment of Arabs.

5.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Guided by Edward Said’s (1978/2003) formative work, this study sought to deconstruct the manner in which Eurocentric thinking permeates social studies content in American elementary and middle school classrooms. To illustrate the multitude of ways orientalism was (re)produced in textbooks, five criteria were developed to analyze how textbooks depict the Middle East and its people: (1) constructions and representations of the “Other,” (2) discourses of colonization, (3) discourses of
inclusion/exclusion, (4) discourses of power/hegemony/oppression, and (5) construction of difference.

The analytical framework, including descriptions of the five criteria and their guiding research questions, are presented in the following sections:

2.6.1 Constructions and Representations of the Other

This criterion was specifically concerned with how the Other is framed in text. Questions guiding this portion of the analysis included:

1. How did textbooks construct the “Other?” How did they construct the subject/colonizer? What terms were used in each of these constructions?
2. How did textbooks explain the role of the Other in socio-political change and industrial development?
3. What discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people are presented in textbooks?

2.6.2 Discourses of Colonization

This criterion addressed the salience of American colonialism in text. Guiding questions included:

1. How was colonization addressed? Was it described as a civilizing need?
2. How were the colonial struggles of the Other described?
2.6.3 Discourses of Inclusion/Exclusion

A key determinant of content analysis relates to who, what, and how often topics appear in text. To uncover this discourse, the following guiding questions were developed:

1. Who was included and/or excluded in the explanation of modern historical events?
2. What was included and/or excluded in the explanation of geographical information?
3. How were cultural and/or industrial contributions of the “Orient” silenced?
4. How were specific countries represented?

2.6.4 Discourses of Power/Hegemony/Oppression

According to Said (1978/2003), Orientalism is a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3). Therefore, power is intrinsically linked to hegemony, and consequently, to oppression. To determine discourse of this nature, the following guiding questions were developed:

1. How was power constructed in textbooks? What terms were used to describe the group in power?
2. How was hegemony addressed? Was it described as a necessary consequence of colonization?
3. How was oppression addressed? Were certain groups identified as oppressed?
2.6.5 Constructions of Difference

Ultimately, postcolonial perspectives are concerned with constructions of difference; therefore, questions for this portion of the analysis included:

1. How was the Orientalist idea of difference perpetuated in textbooks?
2. How did textbooks reify stereotypes about the Middle East?

As Rivas (2005) indicated, “Clearly, race/ethnicity is the most common assumption that history has constructed and research perpetuated (p. 79).” American school textbooks are not immune from this trend. Textbooks serve as the primary method of transmission of information to schoolchildren throughout the United States (Apple, 1992). Although the use of textbooks in classrooms is commonplace in elementary schools, few studies have focused specifically on their content (Field, Bauml, Wilhelm, & Jenkins, 2012). Furthermore, most studies centered on the representation of cultural groups have analyzed high school texts; even fewer have focused on textbooks in middle school (Griswold, 1975; Jarrar, 1976; Morgan, 2008; Morgan & Walker, 2008). The need for an analysis of K-8 textbooks cannot be over emphasized. Therefore, this study identified discursive and oppressive themes perpetuated in state-adopted K-8 social studies textbooks using a critical postcolonial lens.
CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodological framework used in this study employed a postcolonial perspective and focused on the deconstruction of assumed truths which are often (re)produced and reified in Western texts. The study specifically concerned itself with the postcolonial concept of othering (Said, 1978/2003). As Rivas (2005) indicated, this phenomenon is vitally relevant to postcolonial theory because othering represents “the multiple ways that difference or diversity has been delineated and acted upon by the dominant social structures of colonialism/imperialism” (p. 78).

Subsequently, the process of othering is perpetuated to young children in a variety of ways. Young children are inundated with a barrage of images and messages from birth, as discussed and exemplified in the review of literature in Chapter II. When pieced together, these construct a specified foundation of knowledge. That is, dominant social structures, including political and educational groups, assuming the role of colonizer/ruler and imparting specific and often false representations of others to the public. This cyclical process harms not only the colonized, but further privileges the colonizer.

3.2 Revisiting the Theoretical Framework

The people of the Middle East were among the first to experience marginalization as a direct result of colonizing practices. As Said (1978/2003) indicated in his seminal
work, *Orientalism*, the Middle East has been, is, and continues to be, subjugated each time the region is (mis)represented textually and visually. The current study was based on the postcolonial assumption that the Middle East and its people continually experience an *othering*, in which the Orient (the East) is represented as insufficient, while the West is presented as superior.

Guided by Edward Said’s (1978/2003) formative work, this study’s analytical framework deconstructed the manner in which Eurocentric thinking permeated social studies content in American elementary and middle school classrooms. To illustrate the multitude of ways *orientalism* was (re)produced in textbooks, five criteria were developed: (1) constructions and representations of the *Other*, (2) discourses of colonization, (3) discourses of inclusion/exclusion, (4) discourses of power/hegemony/oppression, and (5) construction of difference. The criteria used in this study were modeled after the work of Kim, Moon, and Joo (2013) and their postcolonial analysis of South Korean world history textbooks. The analytical framework, including descriptions of the five criteria used and the guiding research questions, are presented in the following sections.

3.2.1 Constructions and Representations of the *Other*

This criterion was specifically concerned with how the *Other* is framed in text. Questions guiding this portion of the analysis included:

1. How did textbooks construct the *Other*? How did they construct the subject/colonizer? What terms were used in each of these constructions?
2. How did textbooks explain the role of the *Other* in socio-political change and/or industrial development?

3. What discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people were presented in textbooks?

### 3.2.2 Discourses of Colonization

This criterion addressed the salience of American colonialism. Guiding questions included:

1. How was colonization addressed? Was it described as a civilizing need?

2. How were the colonial struggles of the *Other* described?

### 3.2.3 Discourses of Inclusion/Exclusion

A key determinant of content analysis relates to who, what, and how often topics appear in text. To uncover this discourse, the following guiding questions were developed:

1. Who was included and/or excluded in the explanation of modern historical events?

2. What was included and/or excluded in the explanation of geographical information?

3. How were cultural and/or industrial contributions of the *Other* silenced?

4. How were specific countries represented?
3.2.4 Discourses of Power/Hegemony/Oppression

According to Said (1978/2003), *Orientalism* was a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p. 3). Therefore, power is intrinsically linked to hegemony, and consequently, to oppression. To determine discourse of this nature, the following guiding questions were developed:

1. How was power constructed in textbooks? What terms were used to describe the group in power?
2. How was hegemony addressed? Was it described as a necessary consequence of colonization?
3. How was oppression addressed? Were certain groups identified as oppressed?

3.2.5 Constructions of Difference

Ultimately, postcolonial perspectives are concerned with constructions of difference; therefore, questions for this portion of the analysis included:

1. How was the Orientalist idea of difference perpetuated in textbooks?
2. How did textbooks reify stereotypes about the Middle East?

3.3 Textbook Selection

As discussed in Chapter II, textbooks, as Shorto (2010) stated, “are still the backbone of education (p. 2).” Preliminary research regarding the selection of textbooks began in August 2011. In order to narrow the focus of the current research project, textbooks were chosen according to specified criteria. This sampling criteria
included (a) level of textbook adoption, (b) state census reports of Middle Eastern populations, (c) curricular content and state learning standards, and (d) textbook marketing states. Rationale for these criteria is provided in the following sections.

3.3.1 Level of Textbook Adoption

"States use one of two methods to select the textbooks used in their schools (Zinth, 2005, p. 1)". To date, 20 U.S. states are termed *adoption states* in which a State Board of Education (SBOE) or State Department of Education mandates the textbooks all districts within that state use. The remaining 30 states are termed *open territory* states. In these, textbook selection is determined by local school administration. Open territory states must align their curricula to meet specific grade-level learning standards (Association of American Publishers, 2011), but schools within the same district may utilize different textbooks. Because a more uniform view of representation was desired, the current study focused only on states utilizing state-adopted textbooks. The number of textbooks each state adopts depends on a number of factors, most notably grade specific content and state learning standards.

3.3.2 State Census Reports

Census 2000 findings were reviewed to determine where Middle Eastern people were concentrated in the United States. The number of individuals reporting Arab or Middle Eastern ancestry was significant (more than 40,000) in 11 states. These states included California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia (de la Cruz & Brittingham, 2003).
Demographic information for Florida, Texas, and Virginia, the three states included in this study are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Demographic Information for Florida, Texas, and Virginia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Arab Population</th>
<th># of Regular Public School Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>15,982,378</td>
<td>77,461</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>20,851,820</td>
<td>63,046</td>
<td>1032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>7,078,515</td>
<td>41,230</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.3.3 Curricular Content and State Learning Standards

Active United States involvement in the Middle East began immediately following World War II. A number of factors led to this neo-colonialism. Fellow imperial powers France and England needed assistance to combat Arab nationalism, which was on the rise following the influx of Jewish immigrants into Arab countries, most notably, Palestine. Increased access to oil in the region, coupled with the United Nations recommendation in 1947 to divide the nation of Palestine, resulted in American intervention (Fawcett, 2013; Chomsky, 2005).

Although imperial powers had maintained a presence in the Middle East for centuries, this study was concerned with modern-day imperialism and neo-colonization in the region, specifically by the United States. Consequently, the analysis
concentrated only on events pertinent to the United States and the Middle East. Choosing this path gave credence to the overarching goal of the study, which was to deconstruct American textbooks using a postcolonial framework.

In most states, curricular standards are developed at each grade level to provide a framework for content and learning (Association of American Publishers, 2011). The intended focus of the current study was to deconstruct elementary school textbooks. However, this proved challenging simply because content on the Middle East was not a curricular focus at the elementary level in most states; therefore, middle school textbooks were also analyzed.

3.3.4 Textbook Markets

Shorto (2010) reported on the immense power California and Texas yield in the marketing of school textbooks. Texas’ school board is commonly regarded as the most influential in the nation, producing an estimated 48 million textbooks annually, and as a result, the textbooks the state selects, are used by many smaller states. Essentially, the books and standards Texas uses guide the education of students throughout the country, and Texas was second only to California as the nation’s largest textbook market (Blake, 2010). Therefore, the economic monopoly California and Texas have on textbook markets was of paramount significance to their inclusion in the current study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

To narrow the number of states chosen for the current study, the researcher first identified states utilizing state-adopted textbooks; this decision resulted in a list of 20
states. The researcher then determined which of these states also reported significant (at least 40,000) numbers of Arab and/or Middle Eastern people on the 2000 Census. Four states met the aforementioned criteria. They were California, Florida, Texas, and Virginia. Next, the researcher surveyed the state learning standards of each of the four states. In California, topics of modern history are not covered in the elementary or middle school years, and so it was excluded from the current study. This exclusion serves as a form of negative case analysis because original ideas for the study were modified after data were tracked (Seale, 1999). Table 3.2 provides a summary of the grade-level specific social studies content for the three states chosen for the study, Florida, and Texas, and Virginia.
### Table 3.2

**Social Studies Learning Standards for Florida, Texas, and Virginia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Name of Standards</th>
<th>Adoption Year</th>
<th>K-8 Grade Level Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Florida       | Sunshine State Standards¹  | 2010          | Kindergarten- “Living, Learning, and Working Together”  
Grade 1 - “Our Community and Beyond”  
Grade 2 - “Who We Are as Americans”  
Grade 3 - “The United States Regions and Its Neighbors”  
Grade 4 - “Florida Studies”  
Grade 5 - “United States History”  
Grade 6 - “World History”  
Grade 7 - “Civics”  
Grade 8 - “United States History through Reconstruction”  
Kindergarten- “Self, Home, Family, and Classroom”  
Grade 1 - “Classroom, School, and Community”  
Grade 2 - “Community, State, and Nation”  
Grade 3 - “Communities Here and Around the World”  
Grade 4 - “Texas Studies: Influences of the Western Hemisphere”  
Grade 5 - “United States History”  
Grade 6 - “Contemporary World Societies”  
Grade 7 - “Texas Studies”  
Grade 8 - “United States History through Reconstruction”  
Kindergarten- “Patriotism, Courage, and Kindness”  
Grade 1 - “American Leaders and their Contributions to the United States”  
Grade 2 - “World Contributions: China, Egypt, and the American Indians”  
Grade 3 - “World Contributions: Greece, Rome, and West Africa”  
Grade 4 - “Virginia Studies”  
Grade 5 - “United States History to 1865”  
Grade 6 - “United States History: 1865 to Present”  
Grade 7 - “Civics and Economics”  
Grade 8 - “World History and Geography to 1500 A.D.” |
| Texas         | Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills² | 2010          | Kindergarten- “Living, Learning, and Working Together”  
Grade 1 - “Our Community and Beyond”  
Grade 2 - “Who We Are as Americans”  
Grade 3 - “The United States Regions and Its Neighbors”  
Grade 4 - “Florida Studies”  
Grade 5 - “United States History”  
Grade 6 - “World History”  
Grade 7 - “Civics”  
Grade 8 - “United States History through Reconstruction”  
Kindergarten- “Self, Home, Family, and Classroom”  
Grade 1 - “Classroom, School, and Community”  
Grade 2 - “Community, State, and Nation”  
Grade 3 - “Communities Here and Around the World”  
Grade 4 - “Texas Studies: Influences of the Western Hemisphere”  
Grade 5 - “United States History”  
Grade 6 - “Contemporary World Societies”  
Grade 7 - “Texas Studies”  
Grade 8 - “United States History through Reconstruction”  
Kindergarten- “Patriotism, Courage, and Kindness”  
Grade 1 - “American Leaders and their Contributions to the United States”  
Grade 2 - “World Contributions: China, Egypt, and the American Indians”  
Grade 3 - “World Contributions: Greece, Rome, and West Africa”  
Grade 4 - “Virginia Studies”  
Grade 5 - “United States History to 1865”  
Grade 6 - “United States History: 1865 to Present”  
Grade 7 - “Civics and Economics”  
Grade 8 - “World History and Geography to 1500 A.D.” |
| Virginia      | Standards of Learning³     | 2008          | Kindergarten- “Living, Learning, and Working Together”  
Grade 1 - “Our Community and Beyond”  
Grade 2 - “Who We Are as Americans”  
Grade 3 - “The United States Regions and Its Neighbors”  
Grade 4 - “Florida Studies”  
Grade 5 - “United States History”  
Grade 6 - “World History”  
Grade 7 - “Civics”  
Grade 8 - “United States History through Reconstruction”  
Kindergarten- “Self, Home, Family, and Classroom”  
Grade 1 - “Classroom, School, and Community”  
Grade 2 - “Community, State, and Nation”  
Grade 3 - “Communities Here and Around the World”  
Grade 4 - “Texas Studies: Influences of the Western Hemisphere”  
Grade 5 - “United States History”  
Grade 6 - “Contemporary World Societies”  
Grade 7 - “Texas Studies”  
Grade 8 - “United States History through Reconstruction”  
Kindergarten- “Patriotism, Courage, and Kindness”  
Grade 1 - “American Leaders and their Contributions to the United States”  
Grade 2 - “World Contributions: China, Egypt, and the American Indians”  
Grade 3 - “World Contributions: Greece, Rome, and West Africa”  
Grade 4 - “Virginia Studies”  
Grade 5 - “United States History to 1865”  
Grade 6 - “United States History: 1865 to Present”  
Grade 7 - “Civics and Economics”  
Grade 8 - “World History and Geography to 1500 A.D.” |


### 3.5 Content Analysis

In order to determine themes relevant to the Middle East and its people, a content analysis was conducted on social studies textbooks. Qualitative content analysis is a cyclical approach aimed at generating categories of meaning within text. Examination of data results in the development of categories and themes, which are
continuously analyzed to identify patterns of discourse within the text (McGee-Brown, 1995). Messinger (2012) identified content analysis as the study of socially constructed artifacts, such as books, art, and media. The data from social artifacts is made more manageable by selecting a unit within the artifact, such as a book chapter.

Weber (1990) stated, “There is no simple right way to do a content analysis. Instead, investigators must judge what methods are most appropriate for their substantive problems” (p. 17). Schwandt (1997) summarized the approach as “a generic name for a variety of means of textual analysis that involve comparing, contrasting, and categorizing a corpus of data” (p. 8). The approach developed in the mid-1920s as a tool to examine propaganda (Weber, 1990) and gained momentum in the 1960s with the impetus of the Civil Rights era (Siler, 1987). Although initially employed as a positivist/quantitative approach focused on the discovery of grounded theory and generalizability, content analysis in qualitative studies concerns itself with naturalistic inquiry and the fluid categorization of text (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Content analysis explicitly involves the division of material into units of meaning, or conceptual chunks (Wilson, 2011). Description, inference, and classification are the major tenets of the method (Smith, 2011). Furthering this idea, Holsti (1969) contended the key component of qualitative content analysis is the systematic development of applied rules, which are continually revisited and reworked throughout the research process. Because pictures and their accompanying captions offer representational insight (Smith, 2011), visual material, such as textbook diagrams, maps, and photographs were also analyzed and categorized to provide a more holistic
representation of the Middle East and its people. A coding chart was developed which resulted in 20 codes of maps, photographs, and diagrams and is provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3
Visual Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candid Photograph</td>
<td>CP</td>
<td>A photograph in which the person or people are presented informally or not posed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posed Photograph</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>A photograph in which the person or people are positioned in a specific manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Photograph</td>
<td>LP</td>
<td>A photograph of natural or man-made features without human subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic Photograph</td>
<td>SCP</td>
<td>A landscape photograph that involves candid or posed human subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerial Photograph</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>A landscape photograph taken from an elevated position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite Photograph</td>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>A photograph of an image on Earth taken from space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact Photograph</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A photograph of a handmade item or object.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Photograph</td>
<td>OP</td>
<td>A photograph or picture that does not meet any of the above criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Map</td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>A map detailing the land or natural features of a region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Map</td>
<td>POL</td>
<td>A map detailing the national or regional boundaries of an area or phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Political Map</td>
<td>PPM</td>
<td>A map that includes physical landforms, as well as labeled national boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Map</td>
<td>POP</td>
<td>A map detailing the population of a specified area or region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Map</td>
<td>CM</td>
<td>A map detailing the climate of a specified area or region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Map</td>
<td>RM</td>
<td>A map detailing the economic activity or resource production of a specified area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Map</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>A map or topographical representation that does not meet any of the above criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagram</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A figure created to explain a specific phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>DR</td>
<td>A graphic representation of an object or item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A graphical representation of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>A numerical representation of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Any remaining visual image not described above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content analysis is well suited for qualitative inquiry simply because the goal of the method is not to attribute cause or to solve a problem (Wilson, 2011). Although the process identifies themes, patterns, connections, and omissions of data (Romanowski, 2009), one must note the use of content analysis does not equate written text with student comprehension (Porat, 2006). One cannot assume textbook material to be internalized by the reader. Children construct their social understanding of the world through a variety of means; reading print is simply one of the ways this may occur.

According to Elo and Kyngas (2007), two approaches to content analysis exist, inductive and deductive. The inductive process allows for open coding, abstraction, and the creation of categories, whereas the deductive method utilizes a matrix of analysis based upon a pre-existing theory. The current study employed both types of analysis and utilized “an unconstrained categorization matrix” (p. 111), in which themes and categories were developed based on the tenets of postcolonial theory.
3.6 Analysis

Further research regarding the selection of textbooks began in February 2012 and involved successive steps. Initially, an Internet search of currently used state adopted elementary and middle school textbooks in Florida, Texas, and Virginia resulted in a list of more than 50 titles. This search was conducted by first visiting each state’s Department of Education website. Links to additional sites, such as those involving state instructional materials and textbook publishers were also employed during this portion of the search.

The second step involved narrowing the list to include only those grade levels focused on world topics. This was done by using the K-8 Learning Standards outlined in Table 3.2. This search resulted in a list of 26 titles. The third step involved limiting the list to include widely used textbooks focused on United States involvement in the Middle East and/or on modern history following World War II. Subsequently, the current study resulted in a list of 10 titles and included: (a) three social studies textbooks from Texas, (b) five geography textbooks from Texas, (c) one world history textbook from Virginia, and (d) one geography textbook from Florida. To make the initial process more manageable, a researcher-developed worksheet was used to record basic information on each textbook; a sample form is provided in the appendix.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Issues related to validity, reliability, and generalizability, typically have little significance in qualitative research (Carcary, 2009; Seale, 1999). On the other hand,
trustworthiness presents the methodological proficiency of the research and so alternative methods to confirm the rigor of the current study were utilized and are presented in the following sections. These include (a) peer debriefing, (b) authenticity, including educative (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), ontological (Seale, 1999), and catalytic (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008), and (c) transparency and the physical audit trial.

3.7.1 Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing allows for an external review of the research process, either through individual sessions or through formal presentation. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, the peer debriefer serves as a sounding board and provides the researcher with a reflective voice regarding the methods and findings of the study. This process also “provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by identifying with the researcher’s feelings” (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008, p. 4). To ensure trustworthiness in the current study, the findings were presented at a national qualitative conference and informal debriefing sessions were conducted with two individuals. The first was Aisha, a Pakistani doctoral student and former elementary public school teacher; the second was Mona, an American Yemeni Muslim woman and faculty member working in a teacher education program at a local university.

Aisha agreed that there was confusion surrounding a clear definition of the Middle East, but also of the Islamic world in general. She commented, “The largest concentration of Muslim people lies outside the traditional Middle East in Indonesia. People need to realize that” (personal communication, March 2014). Aisha spoke to the
misconceptions textbooks portray, both textually and visually, of Islamic women. “When you only portray women in burkas, you create a value of difference” (personal communication, March 2014). She also questioned the grouping of countries in the textbooks and indicated the inclusion and/or exclusion of some countries was random and needed justification (personal communication March, 2014). Mona agreed with this sentiment, “On one hand it is commendable that they [the textbooks] address tough issues, current events, conflict, wars, poverty, scarcity of water, etc. On the other hand, there seems to be a lack of individualizing of the [Middle Eastern] people in these countries” (personal communication March, 2014).

3.7.2 Authenticity

Three types of authenticity pertain to the current study. These are catalytic authenticity, educative authenticity, and ontological authenticity (Seale, 1999). The first of these, catalytic authenticity refers to any action taken, on the part of the researcher or the peer debriefer. If new constructions and appreciations develop as a result of interaction with the data, then catalytic authenticity has occurred (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2008; Seale 1999). In the current study, this was achieved by both the researcher and by Aisha, who stated, “I don’t know how you can work with something so emotionally heart wrenching” (personal communication, March 2014).

Educative authenticity exists when an individual gains understanding and appreciation for “the constructions of others outside their stakeholding group” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 248). When members appreciate the viewpoints of people other than themselves, educative authenticity has occurred (Seale, 1999). This type of authenticity
occurred by the researcher and first peer debriefer as well. The final type of authenticity is ontological authenticity, which occurs when an individual’s conscious experience of the world becomes more informed and sophisticated. Through the peer debriefing sessions, ontological authenticity became more prominent when Aisha spoke to her anger and frustrations when she reviewed the findings.

3.7.3 Transparency and the Physical Audit Trail

Simply stated, the audit trail documents “the course of development of the completed analysis” (Carcary, 2009 p. 15). The physical audit trail details each stage of the research study and enables the reader to follow the researcher’s steps. The implementation of an audit trail, originally developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), makes the key decisions of the researcher transparent. When an audit trail is used:

An auditor or second party, who becomes familiar with the qualitative study, its methodology, findings and conclusions, can audit the research decisions and the methodological and analytical processes of the researcher on completion of the study, and thus confirm its findings. (Carcary, 2009, p. 15)

The audit trail used in the current study involved many stages. These are outlined below and modeled after Carcary (2009).

1. Identification of research problem. The researcher discovered that although content analyses of textbooks had been done at the middle school and high school levels, little had been done at the elementary level regarding the study of the Middle East and its people. Also, no previous study specifically employed a postcolonial perspective.
2. Development of research proposal. Based on the research problem, a proposal was developed that delineated the purpose of the study, the rationale of the study, its overarching goals, and its research questions.

3. Review of existing literature. A review of literature was conducted that provided an overview of postcolonial theory, the Orientalist ideas of Edward Said (1978/2003), modern colonial struggles of the Middle East and Arab people, arenas of Middle Eastern representation, including television and film.

4. Development of theoretical framework. In conjunction with my committee chair, a framework was developed using specific postcolonial tenets. Criteria and explicit research questions were created. Based on existing literature and the overall intent of the study, the researcher determined a critical content analysis of the data would be the most appropriate research methodology.

5. Selection of textbooks. Several factors went into the selection of texts used in the study. Purposeful sampling was used and resulted in a list of 10 popular elementary and middle school textbooks from the states of Florida, Texas, and Virginia.

6. Collection of textual data. This portion of the study involved several steps. Initially, the researcher reviewed the table of contents of each textbook to determine which chapter(s) to use. The selection of textbooks was narrowed to include only those social studies topics that pertained to contemporary world issues; geographic constructs of “the Middle East,” or to those relating to “Southwest Asia” and/or “North Africa” were used. To make this process
more manageable, a researcher-developed worksheet was used to collect 
basic information; a sample of this worksheet is provided in the appendix. 
Secondly, the researcher scanned and printed each relevant book chapter to 
unitize its material (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using an unconstrained 
categorization matrix, unitized information was coded and resulted in four 
broad categories/themes.

7. Analysis of visual material. The analysis of visual material, such as 
photographs, maps, diagrams, drawings, and other images located alongside 
the text, was necessary and lent support to the (mis)representation of the 
Middle East and its people. The components of the visual analysis are further 
defined in Chapter IV.

3.8 Summary

In short, this study’s textual and visual content analysis provided insight into the 
discursive themes encircling the Middle East and its people and how these themes were 
presented to elementary and middle school children through textbooks. This study 
employed a critical focus and utilized a categorization matrix to delineate patterns of 
(mis)representation of the Middle East through a postcolonial lens. The use of a 
postcolonial perspective allowed the researcher to uncover those themes that were 
reified and (re)produced within state-specific public school curricula.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from the critical content analysis. The purpose of this analysis was to deconstruct the ways the Middle East and its people are textually and visually (mis)represented in K-8 social studies textbooks used in public schools in Florida, Texas, and Virginia. The analysis of data will be presented in three parts. The first part presents the thematic findings of elementary and middle school history textbooks. Four themes emerged during this portion of the analysis; these included (1) the importance of oil, (2) conflict and war, (3) religion, and (4) Western involvement and globalism. The second part of this chapter focuses on how specific Middle Eastern countries are represented in geography textbooks. This separation is necessary for two reasons. Elementary school curricula spans seven years and a number of topics are presented to children. In the lower grades, information is presented on concrete phenomena, such as geography; in later years, as children’s thinking becomes more abstract, topics on history become more relevant. Additionally, although both are social studies topics, history curriculum tends to be presented in a chronological and linear fashion, whereas geography curriculum tends to be presented topically.

The final portion of this content analysis examined the visual representations of the Middle East and its people. In this section, images in both history and geography textbooks were quantified to present a more holistic view of the region. The analysis of
images is relevant, especially at the elementary level, to provide support to the overarching goals of the study.

4.2 Content Analysis of History Textbooks

The analysis of history textbooks addressed the following six research questions from the study’s theoretical framework:

- What discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people are present?
- How is colonization addressed? Is it described as a civilizing need?
- Who is included and/or excluded in the explanation of modern historical events?
- How is power constructed in textbooks?
- What terms are used to describe the group in power?
- How do textbooks reify stereotypes about the Middle East?

Four overarching themes emerged from the analysis of these texts. These included (1) the importance of oil, (2) conflict and war, (3) religion, and (4) Western involvement and globalism. The interconnectedness of these four themes cannot be over-emphasized; each exists in its own discrete space, but each contributes to the discourse of the other themes. Each theme also produced discourse related to power, a fundamental tenet of postcolonial theory.
4.2.1 Oil

The most common theme was related to oil and its importance, not only to the Middle East, but also to the world’s global economy. Consequently, each time the theme of oil was introduced in text, discourses on power, conflict, wealth, and the global economy soon followed. As one 6th grade textbook indicated:

The world depends upon the oil and gas resources found here. Because of this situation, many nations have more reasons than usual for watching closely the events in these oil-rich countries. Achieving peace in this region is of global importance. (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 99)

Later in the text, Boehm et al. (2003) continued:

With its rich supplies of oil, the Middle East lured both the United States and the Soviet Union. . . . Throughout the Middle East wealth from the oil industry fueled a growing conflict between traditional Islamic values and modern Western materialism. (p. 874)

Notably, each of the 6th-8th grade textbooks analyzed mentioned OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Information included the goal of the organization, which is to provide scientific and economic aid for oil production. The textbook also emphasized that several members of OPEC are Middle Eastern countries (Berson & Bednarz, 2003).

4.2.2 Conflict

The theme of conflict and its impact on Western policy were prominent within the content analysis. Discourse on conflict often resulted in discussions of war and
included such terminology as *revolutionary* and *fundamentalist*. Throughout history, conflict has plagued the Middle East. As Kracht (2003) indicated, “In modern times, political boundaries and ethnic differences have intensified regional conflicts between groups and countries in Southwest Asia” (p. 476). Since the end of World War II and the creation of Israel, a number of wars have ravaged several countries in the Middle East. These conflicts have occurred within and between nations. When war was mentioned, three conflicts dominated the discourse; these were (a) the Arab-Israeli Conflict, (b) the Iran-Iraq War, and (c) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The most salient discourse related to war involved the division of Palestine following World War II. As one textbook suggested, this single act, “made the Middle East a hotbed of competing nationalist movements” and continues to threaten the stability of the region today (Beck, 2012, p. 901).

Regarding the war between Iran and Iraq, the following was presented in Beck (2012), an 8th grade textbook; although the statements were concise and simplified, they detailed the violent nature of the conflict:

In no country did the clash between cultures erupt more dramatically than in the former Persia, or Iran. War broke out between the two countries in 1980. . . . For eight years, Muslim killed Muslim in a territorial struggle. Caught in the middle, the United States secretly sold weapons to Iran in an effort to get their hostages released. A million Iranians and Iraqis died before a U.N. ceasefire ended the hostilities in 1988. (pp. 874-875)

Information on the Iran-Iraq War often allowed for discourse on Ayatollah Khomeini and his rise to power in Iran. There was also significant mention of Khomeini’s view of the
United States and of westernization, as well as his desire to return Iran to a traditional Islamic nation at all costs:

Adherence to Islam ruled Khomeini’s domestic policies. But hatred of the United States was at the heart of his policies. . . . That year [in 1979], with the Ayatollah’s blessing, a group of young Islamic revolutionaries seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. They took more than 60 American hostages. Most of the U.S. hostages remained prisoners for 444 days before they were released on January 20, 1981. During their 14-month captivity, the hostages were blindfolded and paraded through the city streets. (Beck, 2012, p. 874)

A third mention of war in the Middle East involved the post Cold War tension between the United States and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Once again, this discourse related to the importance of oil in the region, as well as to globalism. Beck (2012) stated:

The United States had armed the [Afghan] rebels because they considered the Soviet invasion a threat to the rich Middle Eastern oil supplies. . . . U.S. President Jimmy Carter sternly warned the Soviets that any attempt to gain control of the Persian Gulf would be “repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” (p. 875)

4.2.3 Religion

The Middle East was described as the birthplace of the world’s three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Kracht, 2003); the theme of religion was commonplace throughout the content analysis, both textually and visually. In Boehm et
al. (2003), similarities and differences between the three religious groups were emphasized:

- All three religions are examples of monotheism, or the belief in one supreme god.
- All three look to the ancient city of Jerusalem as a holy site. We know about the early history of the Jewish people and their religion from their holy book, the Torah.
- The holy book of the Christians is the Bible.
- The Muslim holy book, the Quran (Koran), contains revelations from God to Muhammad.
- All three religions share the message of helping others. (pp. 88-92)

The Boehm et al. (2003) text continued with similarities related to holidays:

- Judaism has several important holy days, including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- Christians around the world mark important events in the life of Jesus.
- Ramadan is a very important holiday on the Muslim calendar.
- Muslims observe Ramadan by fasting from dawn to sunset and refraining from any acts that take their attention away from God. (pp. 90-93)

Throughout the content analysis, information on Islam and the Muslim people monopolized the discourse on religion. Common topics of this sub-theme included (a) the Five Pillars of the Muslim faith, (b) Mecca, and (c) the hajj (Boehm et al., 2003).

The influence of Islam on the people of the Middle East was emphasized most heavily in Harcourt Horizons World Regions. In this text, Berson and Bednarz (2003) delineated the Five Pillars of the faith, which are:

1. Stating the faith
2. Praying five times a day
3. Giving to charity
4. Fasting during Ramadan
5. Making a pilgrimage to Mecca

As well as how the faith influenced daily rituals, including dress. Terms such as kaffiyeh, a scarf men wear around their heads, djellaba, a long hooded
robe worn by men and women, hijab, a hair and clothing cover for women, and burnous, a long, loose-fitting robe worn by Berber men were introduced.

4.2.4 Western Involvement

A final theme present in the content analysis was related to social, political, military, and economic involvement by the United States and other Western nations. This theme, more than any other, spoke specifically to the overarching goal of the study, that of continued colonization of the East by the West. When the ideas of modernization are mentioned in text, they are presented as synonymous only with Western nations. An example of this is presented in Beck’s (2012) analysis of American intervention in Iran. “With U.S. support, the [Iranian] shah westernized his country. By the end of 1950s, Iran’s capital, Tehran, featured gleaming skyscrapers, foreign banks, and modern factories” (p. 874).

A second example of this phenomenon was found in Kracht (2003) and highlights the dichotomy created between traditional and modern, and consequently East and West. This 6th grade textbook indicated:

Like other parts of the world, North Africa has felt the influence of Western culture in recent decades. Some North Africans are concerned that their countries are becoming too Western. More people are wearing Western clothes, buying Western products, seeing Western films, and adapting Western ideas. (p. 387)

The theme of Western involvement and globalism is significant for two reasons. First, there is increased mention of the Middle East as a region of global importance due to its
vast reserves of oil and natural gas. Secondly, although westernization was depicted as "socially and morally corrupting" (Beck, 2012, p. 874), notably many of the region’s conflicts culminate in intervention by the United Nations.

Western ideals have also influenced social and leisure aspects of the Middle East. As Berson and Bednarz (2003) indicated in a 6th grade textbook:

In recent years western styles of literature have influenced writers in Southwest Asia. Also, growing Internet use is exposing the Arab people to western literature and western news media more than ever before. Western music and movies have also advanced the region. (p. 385)

Only Harcourt Horizons World Regions, edited by Berson (2003), specifically allotted a chapter to the topic of colonization. The final chapter on the Middle East in this textbook was entitled, “Present-Day Concerns” and addressed how colonial legacies from the 1800s through World War II have influenced the various governments and economies of present-day North Africa (p. 422).

Berson and Bednarz (2003) began this focus with, “Following World War II, all of North Africa gained independence as colonialism came to an end. After wars of independence, the North African countries had to create new governments” (p. 423). Although Europe's control over North Africa ended with colonialism, its influence on the region's laws remains.

Regarding discourses of colonization, one of this study’s guiding questions related to the manner in which colonization is addressed in text. Specifically, is it described as a civilizing need for the people of the Middle East? A few passages answered this question. The 6th grade Berson and Bednarz (2003) text stated:
Many groups of people have taken their cultures and ideas to North Africa. Some went to trade while others came to settle. Still others went to conquer. Over time, the cultures of the early North Africans merged with the cultures of newcomers. Customs and ideas from parts of Europe, Asia, and Central Africa blended with Berber and Egyptian traditions and customs. . . . When Europeans claimed North Africa, they added their languages. (p. 416)

According to this text, the people of the Middle East were lacking in political and economic systems. For example Berson and Bednarz (2003) indicated:

Before Europeans arrived in North Africa, the region had no national economies. . . . When Europeans established colonies in North Africa, they made all of the decisions. . . . They wanted North Africans to export as much as they could to Europe. . . . European companies turned the raw materials into finished products. The products were then sold in both Europe and North Africa. The finished products were worth far more than the raw materials, so the Europeans made tremendous profits. (p. 425)

This passage speaks directly to the ideas of Western imperialism, as well as physical and institutional colonization. Students are given information on the immense power European companies had over the colonized people of North Africa. Economic and capitalist tenets permeate this passage, as the colonized are put to work for the group in power. The idea of Western involvement is also relevant here as the passage suggests the European companies were responsible for the production of goods, which silences the contributions of and excludes the relevance of the colonized group.
4.3 Content Analysis of Geography Textbooks

The analysis of geography textbooks addressed the following five research questions from the study’s theoretical framework:

- How do textbooks construct the Other and the subject/colonizer?
- How is colonization addressed? Is it described as a civilizing need?
- How are colonial struggles of the Other addressed?
- Who is included in the explanation of geographical information?
- How are specific countries represented?

This section is presented in two parts. The first part specifically addresses the question of how textbooks construct the Other, as well as the subject/colonizer, more specifically, how geography textbooks define the Middle East. The second part summarizes content on each of the region’s 16 countries.

4.3.1 Defining the Middle East

As indicated in Chapter II, a clear definition of what constitutes the Middle East is missing from scholarly discourse. Although the intent of critical qualitative work dismisses the relevance of definitions, a uniform understanding of where the region is located is imperative for the elementary and middle school student.

An introductory paragraph in the 6th grade text *Glencoe Our World Today: People, Places, and Issues* indicated the following:

The term Middle East is often used to refer to countries in Southwest Asia. The term Middle East is Eurocentric, meaning that it is based on the European perspective of the “east.” Southwest Asia was called the Middle East, since it
The idea of the Middle East as a cultural hub of trade was reiterated in more than one textbook. As Kracht (2003) indicated in World Explorer: People, Places, and Cultures:
Throughout history, it [North Africa] has been a hub of trade with Europe, Asia, and other parts of Africa. Wars, too, affected culture as one empire would conquer another. Thus, North Africans have influenced, and been influenced by, the cultures of many different places. (p. 387)

Similarly, emphasis on the region as the “crossroads of the world” was supported in Berson and Bednarz (2003) with the passage:

Europeans have often thought of themselves as being in the West and Asia as being in the East. Because it is between Europe and Asia, however, they called Southwest Asia the Middle East. Many people today still refer to the region as the Middle East. . . . It is the place where the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe meet. (p. 364)

Berson and Bednarz (2003) attributed the diversity of the Middle Eastern people to a number of factors:

Migrations, wars, invasions, religion, and trade have brought to the region people from Africa, Asia, and Europe. Some came to set up colonies and build empires. . . . During the last two centuries, wars, treaties, and European colonization carved many separate nations out of Southwest Asia. (p. 380)

While this construction of the Middle East sheds a somewhat positive light on the culture of the region, the framing of difference is still present, as is the reliance on wars, invasions, and religion. The terms used in this passage lend support to the thematic findings of this study, which suggest the region is defined by its conflict and religious struggles.
4.3.2 Representation of Countries

A key determinant of content analysis relates to who, what, and how often topics appear in text. To uncover this discourse, a portion of the analysis focused on discussions of inclusion and exclusion. The following sections detail how specific countries are represented, included, and/or excluded in literature on Southwest Asia and North Africa.

4.3.2.1 Southwest Asia

A prominent theme when describing the geography of Southwest Asia was the region’s desert topography and climate. As Berson and Bednarz (2003) indicated in their opening statement on the area, “Southwest Asia is one of the driest regions in the world” (p. 364). Later, the authors discussed the scarcity of water. “Fresh water is a rare and precious resource for the people of Southwest Asia. To many, it is a resource far more precious than oil” (p. 368). The theme of a desert region was prominent in the text, as the opening passage of one section indicated, “People in desert countries greatly value hospitality. Large parts of the countries you will read about in this section are made up of desert” (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 110). In another text, the opening section of the chapter provided basic information on the region’s physical geography, including the Jordan River Valley, the Dead Sea, and the Syrian Desert. Also mentioned were the varying climates and resources, such as farming and minerals. “The people who live in the Eastern Mediterranean region have needed irrigation and other technology to adapt to the land” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 435).
Once again, the region is constructed as a land of difference; the desert climate is presented as a detriment. There is no mention of the technology, wells, and/or canals the people of the region have successfully been using for centuries. Consequently, these passages support the notion of how excluded material can negatively frame the Other.

4.3.2.1.1 Turkey

In both Glencoe Our World Today: People, Places, and Issues and Holt People, Places, and Change: An Introduction to World Studies, Turkey was presented as a thriving and beautiful country with a unique geographic location on two continents. A strong cultural tie to Europe was also emphasized. Additional demographic information on Turkey included the country’s scenic waterways, enjoyable climate, and farming and mining industry. Historic information focused on Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, followed by mentions of Istanbul and the Ottoman Empire. These texts also brought to light the struggles of the Kurdish people, albeit the information was minimal (Boehm et al., 2003; Kracht, 2003; Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003):

Tourism is a growing industry, thanks to the country’s beautiful beaches and historic sites. . . . The city [Istanbul] served as the brilliant capital of a powerful Muslim empire called the Ottoman Empire. At its height, this empire ruled much of southeastern Europe, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. . . . The Turkish government has tried to turn the Kurds away from the Kurdish culture and language. Unwilling to abandon their identity, the Kurds have demanded their own independent state. Tensions between the two groups have resulted in violent clashes. Ultimately, the Kurds of Turkey are seeking to unite with other
Kurds from Iraq, Iran, and Syria to form an independent homeland called "Kurdistan" in the heart of southwest Asia. (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 106)

Holt People, Places, and Change: Introduction to World Studies began their unit on Southwest Asia with an account of an American exchange student living in Turkey. Though her story attempted to personalize the experiences of the Turkish people, the account is still based on the postcolonial idea of representation. In fact, the opening statement read:

Sara Lewis was an American exchange student in Turkey. Here she describes how teenagers live… The people of Istanbul are very traditional and family-oriented, but today’s Turk also has European-style tastes. Turkish teens go dancing and hang out in coffeehouses. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 405)

This opening passage created a dichotomy between old and new, traditional and modern, and consequently between East and West. Attention is given to the Eurocentric ideas of the Turkish culture and ironically, voice is given to an American exchange student, rather than to a native Turkish student.

Turkey’s sweeping modernization following World War I, led by Kemal Ataturk was a focus of Holt People, Places, and Change: An Introduction to World Studies, a 6th grade textbook and speaks directly to the postcolonial idea of equating power and industry with the West, while silencing the East:

He [Ataturk] believed that to be strong Turkey had to westernize. He banned the fez, the traditional hat of Turkish men, and required that they wear European-style hats. The Latin alphabet replaced the Arabic one. The European calendar and metric system replaced Islamic ones. Women were encouraged to vote,
work, and hold office. New laws made it illegal for women to wear veils. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 439)

This passage supports the postcolonial idea that modernization is a Western phenomenon and supports the thematic findings of this study that indicate a pervasiveness of Western involvement on Middle Eastern society. Also, because the information has been simplified, the voice of the Turkish people during this resistance has been excluded, which is a key tenet of Said’s (1978/2003) Orientalist ideals. Regarding the thematic finding of religion, following a brief explanation of Turkey’s secular rule, this statement was emphasized, “[For example] the religion of Islam allows a man to have up to four wives. However, by Turkish law a man is permitted to have just one wife” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 439). This single statement creates a dichotomy between East and West, between what is accepted and taboo. This dichotomy is manufactured and reified by the authors of the text, who choose to focus on a religious difference, rather than on any similarities between Turkey and the United States.

4.3.2.1.2 Israel

“Israel and the Occupied Territories” received its own chapter section in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003). Once again, a theme of conflict was emphasized from the start. An opening sentence read, “For thousands of years there has been conflict surrounding present-day Israel and the Occupied Territories” (p. 442).
The creation of the state of Israel was a significant topic throughout the content analysis; however the material is often simplified with little or no mention of the complexities that preceded the event:

After World War II, the United Nations recommended dividing Palestine in Arab and Jewish states. This plan created conflict among the peoples there. Fighting broke out between Israel and surrounding Arab countries. The Israeli forces defeated the Arabs. Many Palestinians fled to other Arab states, particularly to Jordan and Lebanon. Some used terrorist attacks to strike at Israel. Israel and its Arab neighbors also fought wars in 1956, 1967, and 1973. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 443)

However, Berson and Bednarz (2003) allowed for increased explanation of the impetus for the Arab-Israeli Conflict, as well as the reasoning behind the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), but was quick to state, “The PLO has used both peaceful and violent means” to achieve the goal of a Palestinian homeland (p. 390). Notwithstanding, a single sentence detailing the three subsequent wars between these two groups is the only information provided.

Regarding Israel’s government, the following statement also appeared in this text. “Israel has built a strong military for protection from the Arab countries around it. Terrorist attacks have also occurred” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 443).

Regarding the migration of Jews:

Since Israel took control of the West Bank, more than 100,000 Jews have moved into settlements there. The Palestinians consider this to be an invasion of their land. This has caused tension and violence between Arabs and Israelis. Control
of Jerusalem is a difficult and often emotional question for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. . . . The future of the peace process is uncertain. Some Palestinian groups have continued to commit acts of terrorism. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 445)

The struggles of the Palestinian people are excluded from the conversation and explanation of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the above passage. Given this brief and simplistic account, it is difficult for 6th grade students to make sense of the varied realities of the on-going struggle. Similarly, a single paragraph mentioned the ongoing cultural conflict between the Jews and Palestinians:

Israel is the most industrialized country in Southwest Asia. It has been helped by large amounts of aid from Europe and the United States. Israel’s skilled workforce produces electronic products, clothing, chemicals, food products, and machinery. . . . The area that today is Israel has been home to different groups of people over the centuries. The ancient traditions of these groups have led to conflict among their descendants today. (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 108)

Yet again, the two prominent themes of conflict and Western involvement permeate this discourse. The simplified information excludes the agency and role the Israeli people had in modernizing their country, which furthers a colonial mentality.

4.3.2.1.3 Syria

In Glencoe Our World Today: People, Places, and Issues, topics included Syria’s land features, a cultural emphasis on hospitality, Arab food, and a brief mention of Bedouins. A key focus of this section was on Syria’s restrictive and hostile government.
A few [of Syria’s 17.1 million people] are Bedouins, nomadic desert peoples who follow a traditional way of life. . . . Group meals are a popular way of strengthening family ties and friendships. The most favorite foods are lamb, flat bread, and bean dishes flavored with garlic and lemon. . . . It [Syria’s government] does not allow many political freedoms. As of May 2002, Syria was one of several nations named by the U.S. government as being “state sponsors” of terrorism. This means that the United States believes that these countries help organize terrorist attacks by providing money or a base of operations” (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 111).

4.3.2.1.4 Lebanon

Geographical topics included the country’s small size, coastal and mountain regions, and densely wooded cedar trees. Additionally, the information presented in this section was disconnected, minimal, and simplistic. The section contained one-sentence mentions of the Lebanese people, the capital city of Beirut, the Arabic language, local foods, and the French colonization of the nation until 1940. Although the section on Lebanon was one of the smallest presented in the text, there was a strong focus of its civil war and on-going conflict between Muslim and Christian groups: Today, however, Beirut is still rebuilding after a civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990. . . . Many lives were lost in the war, many people fled as refugees, and Lebanon’s economy was almost destroyed. Israel invaded Lebanon during the civil war. (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 112)
An opening sentence on Lebanon in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) read, “It [Lebanon] is home to several different groups of people. At times these different groups have fought each other” (p. 447). This was followed with brief information of Lebanon’s history and people, followed by the country’s civil war:

Ethnic and religious groups armed themselves, and in the 1970s fighting broke out. Warfare between Lebanese groups lasted until 1990. Tens of thousands of people died, and the capital, Beirut, was badly damaged. During the 1990s Lebanon’s economy slowly recovered from the civil war. The refining of crude oil brought in by pipeline is a leading industry. (p. 448)

The information presented on Syria and Lebanon also speaks strongly to the postcolonial idea of othering and the framing of difference. The multi-faceted people from these two countries are relegated to mentions of conflict, terrorism, food, and Bedouins. Without an accurate representation of the countries or of their people, it remains impossible for students to empathize with the native and colonial struggles of the people there.

4.3.2.1.5 Jordan

The emphasis on turmoil continued when Jordan was discussed. “Jordan’s short history has been full of conflict. . . . The country has few resources and several powerful neighbors” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 448). Once again, information on the country’s history, government, economy, and resources followed:

At the time of its independence, Jordan’s population was small. Most Jordanians lived a nomadic or seminomadic life. After each of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948
and 1967, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arab refugees came to live in Jordan. These immigrants strained Jordan’s resource. . . . Jordan is a poor country with limited resources. . . . Jordan depends on economic aid from the oil-rich Arab nations and the United States. . . . A crucial resource issue for Jordan is its shortage of water. (pp. 448-449)

Geographical topics on the country of Jordan included the nation’s varied land features, lack of resources, farming industry, manufactured goods, and constitutional monarchy.

Jordan lacks water resources. Jordan also lacks energy resources. The majority of its people work in service and manufacturing industries. . . . From 1952 to 1999, King Hussein I ruled Jordan. He worked to blend the country’s traditions with modern ways of life. He was helped in his work by his American-born wife, Queen Noor. Since 1978, Queen Noor has played a major role in promoting Arab-Western relations. (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 112).

The section on Jordan is problematic. The demographic information is again disconnected. Minimal amounts of information are presented on several topics, and so the reader is left with an incomplete picture of the country.

4.3.2.1.6 Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula

The first section of this chapter focused on the physical geography of the ten countries that comprise the Arabian Peninsula region. Brief attention was paid to a variety of physical features, including the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Hindu Kush mountain range, and the Rub’ al-Khali desert. The importance of the Tigris and
Euphrates Rivers and their classification as exotic rivers, those that begin in humid regions and flow through dry areas was emphasized (Berson and Bednarz, 2013). A second focus was Southwest Asia’s desert climate and the variance in temperatures during day and night. A final focus of this section detailed the resources of the region, with a strong emphasis on oil:

This region holds about half of the world’s known reserves of oil, or petroleum. . . . Water is an important resource everywhere, but in this region it is crucial. Many desert regions are visited only by nomads and their animal herds. . . . The countries of the region are not rich in resources other that oil. (pp. 415-417)

With regard to content on Saudi Arabia, a key topic was that of Islam and its role in the daily life of the Saudi people:

The history of the Arabian Peninsula is closely linked to Islam... Islam provides a set of rules to guide human behavior. . . . There are also religious divisions within Islam. Followers of the largest branch of Islam are called Sunnites. Followers of the second-largest branch of Islam are called Shia. . . . These two groups disagreed over who should lead the Islamic world. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 418)

Generalizations regarding the Islam faith followed:

Islamic culture helps to unite Muslims around the world. For example, all Muslims learn Arabic to read the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam. Muslims are also expected to visit the holy city of Mecca at least once. These practices and many others help make Muslims part of one community. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 419)
Information on Saudi Arabia was focused on (a) oil and the resulting power and money it brought to the country and (b) the strong influence of the Muslim faith in the daily lives of the Saudi people. There was also a brief mention of the country’s desert climate. As Boehm et al. (2003) indicated:

Vast deserts cover this region. . . . Saudi Arabia has no rivers or permanent bodies of water. . . . Saudi Arabia holds about 25 percent of the world’s oil. . . . Oil has helped Saudi Arabia boost its standard of living. Money earned by selling oil has built schools, hospitals, roads, and airports. . . . In recent years, oil wealth has brought sweeping changes to Riyadh [the capital and largest city]. Once a small rural town, Riyadh is now a modern city with towering skyscrapers and busy highways. (pp. 113-114)

Kracht (2003) reiterated the emphasis of oil wealth on the Saudi people:

Oil wealth has allowed Saudi Arabia to modernize its cities, build networks of transportation and communication, and educate its people, though at the same time maintaining tradition. . . . Oil reserves changed the fortunes of Saudi Arabia. . . . Saudi Arabia has the most important oil economy in the world. Under its deserts lie more than 250 billion barrels of oil, about one fourth of the world’s supply. No other country on the Earth exports more petroleum. (pp. 527-528)

The themes of oil and modernization are highly correlated within this content analysis, and nowhere are this more apparent than in Saudi Arabia. Each of the textbooks analyzed brought to light the sweeping economic boom after oil was discovered there in
the 1930s. Infrastructure developed, education improved, and life was made easier for the people of the nation (Berson and Berdnaz, 2003).

The marginalization of Saudi women received considerable attention throughout the analysis. As Boehm et al. (2003) indicated:

Saudi customs concerning the roles of men and women in public life are stricter than in most Muslim countries. Saudi women are not allowed to drive cars. They may work outside the home, but only in jobs in which they avoid close contact with men. (p. 114)

The colonization of women continued (almost identically) in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003), where the authors stated, “Saudi laws and customs limit women’s freedoms. For example, a woman rarely appears in public without her husband or a male relative. Women are also not allowed to drive cars” (p. 420).

In Kracht (2003), information on the unequal roles of men and women continued. “Many laws in Saudi Arabia deal with the role of women, protecting them in certain ways, but also forbidding them to do some things. . . . At home, women stay in the part of the house designated for them if guests are visiting” (p. 529).

Regarding Saudi Arabia’s government and economy, simplified information was offered regarding the Saud family monarchy, as one text indicated, “most government officials are relatives of the king” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 419). There was a strong emphasis placed on oil in Saudi Arabia, with mention of the country as a leader of OPEC and the role OPEC has in influencing the price of oil globally. “Oil and related industries are the most important part of the Saudi economy” (p. 419). There was also brief mention of the international workforce in Saudi Arabia.
A two-page insert entitled, “Saudi Arabia: How Oil Has Changed a Country” highlighted the role oil has had on this country since its discovery in the mid-1930s. Topics included the impact oil has had on the Saudi economy, standard of living, infrastructure, literacy rate, and even military. “Today, Saudi Arabia is a wealthy country. This wealth has come almost entirely from the sale of oil. Saudi Arabia is currently the world’s leading oil exporter. Oil provides about 90 percent of the government’s export earnings” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 425).

With regard to the Saudi people and their customs, the following sentence appeared in one text, “Most Saudis now live in cities, and a stable middle class has developed” (p. 420). This statement is confusing simply because no preceding information exists regarding the class system in Saudi Arabia. Is the reader to assume the development of a middle class in this country is an improvement, and if so, an improvement from what? Or, is the reader to associate Saudi Arabia as a low class nation simply because of its location in the Middle East?

Another common theme regarding Saudi Arabia related to the role of Islam in daily life:

Islamic practices are an important part of Saudi Arabia’s culture. . . . Muslims pray five times each day. Because Islam encourages modesty, Saudi clothing keeps arms and legs covered. Men traditionally wear a loose, ankle-length shirt. They often wear a cotton headdress held in place with a cord. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 420)

While information on Saudi Arabia dominated much of the discourse on Southwest Asia, its neighboring countries were not as well represented.
4.3.2.1.7 Countries of the Arabian Peninsula

In Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003), the key identifier of the six small Islamic countries comprising the Arabian Peninsula was their dependence on oil and the economic power it affords: “Oil is a major part of each country’s economy. However, possession of differing amounts of oil has made some countries much richer than others” (p. 420).

4.3.2.1.7.1 Kuwait

With regard to Kuwait, Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) indicated, “Oil, which was discovered in the 1930s, has made Kuwait very rich. The invasion of 1990 caused massive destruction” (p. 421). The theme of power was also present in a mention of Kuwait’s government, “[In 1992, however] Kuwait held elections for a legislature. Less than 15 percent of Kuwait’s population was given the right to vote. These people were all men from well-established families” (p. 421).

4.3.2.1.7.2 Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates

The importance of oil and its power was also emphasized for the countries of Bahrain, Qatar, and The UAE. “Oil was discovered in Bahrain in the 1930s, creating wealth for the country. . . . Qatar has sizeable oil reserves and even larger reserves of natural gas, some of the largest in the world” (p. 422). Regarding the UAE, “This country also has great reserves of oil and natural gas. Profits from these resources have created a modern, comfortable lifestyle for the people of the UAE. The
government has also worked to build up other industries” (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks 2003, p. 422).

4.3.2.1.7.3 Oman and Yemen

This textbook painted a different picture for the countries of Oman and Yemen. “[However] Oman does not have the oil wealth of Kuwait or the UAE . . . “Political corruption and internal conflicts have threatened [Yemen’s] young democracy. . . . Today, Yemen is the poorest country on the Arabian Peninsula. Oil was not discovered there until 1980. It now generates a major part of the national income” (pp. 422-423). Although Kuwait and the UAE are highly industrialized, notably, they received minimal information. In fact, many of smaller countries of the Arabian Peninsula were excluded from the discourse all together. This finding contradicts earlier textbook studies that found more-Westernized nations received increased mention. However, this previous finding was not supported within this text.

4.3.2.1.6.8 Iraq

Brief topics of focus on Iraq included the alluvial plain located between the historical Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and mention of Iraq’s industry and exports. Considerably more attention was paid to the topics of the Iraqi people, the role of Islam in daily life, oil, and conflict with the United States, as was presented in Boehm et al. (2003):

The Islamic religion strongly influences life in Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Government and religious leaders seek to influence people’s behavior through laws and policies. . . . This region has experienced turmoil throughout history
and even today. . . . Since then [1958], military leaders have governed Iraq as a dictatorship. The current leader, Saddam Hussein, rules with an iron hand. (pp. 122-123)

The following passage provided some detail on the Iran-Iraq War, as well as on subsequent Western involvement:

In the 1980s, Iraq, with aid from Western and Arab countries, fought a bloody war with its neighbor Iran. The fighting cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars in damage to cities and oil-shipping ports in the Persian Gulf. In 1990, partly because of a dispute over oil, Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait. By April 1991, at the end of the Persian Gulf War, a United Nations force led by the United States pushed Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. This operation was known as “Desert Storm.” (Boehm et al, 2003, p. 123)

This final passage is problematic. Yet again, the information is minimal, simplistic, and does not take into account the varied cultural consequences of the conflict. No reason is given for the 1980 war with Iran, but an emphasis is placed on damage to oil-shipping ports, furthering the idea that power and importance is afforded to the exchange of oil. The same is true regarding the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Desert Storm. The United States is portrayed as a hero to the Kuwaiti people.

In Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003), the section on Iraq opened with the statement, “The United States has used both economic and military action against Iraq in the 1990s and early 2000s” (p. 426). From the onset, this portion of the textbook is plagued with the all-encompassing theme of conflict and again, simplified and minimal information is presented. The section continued with:
In 1980 Iraq invaded Iran. . . . The Iranians fought back, however, and the Iran-Iraq War dragged on until 1988. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed on both sides. Each side tried to attack the other’s oil tankers and refineries. Both countries’ economies were damaged. (p. 426)

Another overarching theme, globalism and involvement by the United Nations, was relevant here as well. The following passage, also cited in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) was provided regarding Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait:

In 1990, Iraq invaded the small, oil-rich country of Kuwait. . . . Many Western leaders believed that Iraq should not be allowed to conquer its neighbors. They were also concerned that Iraq would control such a large share of the world’s oil. Also, Iraq had missiles, poison gas, and perhaps nuclear weapons. With United Nations authorization, an alliance of countries led by the United States and Great Britain sent troops, tanks, and planes to Saudi Arabia. In the Persian Gulf War of 1991 this alliance forced the Iraqis out of Kuwait. (p. 426)

Consequently, the remaining information of this section highlighted the devastating impact the Persian Gulf Wars had on the Iraqi economy, including the oil embargo placed on Iraq by the United Nations. The findings on Iraq speak to the interconnectedness of the four themes found in the content analysis, as it is difficult to separate the role of power, conflict, oil, and Western involvement. Unfortunately, these messages and themes are continuously reified, and as a result, a construction of difference is perpetuated.
4.3.2.1.6.9 Iran

Brief demographic content on Iran focused on oil, industry, and the lack of water and its impact on farming. Slightly more attention was paid to the diverse Iranian population:

Iran’s 66.1 million people differ from those of other Southwest Asian countries. More than half are Persians, not Arabs or Turks. They speak Farsi, or Persian, the official language of Iran. . . . Iran is also home to about 2 million people from Iraq and Afghanistan who have fled recent wars. Nearly 98 percent of Iran’s people practice some form of Islam. . . . Followers of religions other than Islam have been persecuted. Many Western customs seen as a threat to Islam are now forbidden. Like Syria, Iran has been accused by many Western governments of supporting terrorists. (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 124)

More attention was paid to Iran in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003). There was information presented on the nation’s theocratic government, as well as Iran’s support of terrorist groups in neighboring countries. A significant mention related to Iran’s call for the destruction of the state of Israel. With regard to the country’s economy, emphasis was placed on Iran’s oil reserves and the production of woven carpets. Regarding people, diversity was a theme presented in connection with the Iraqi people, as Arabs, Persians, and Kurds call the nation home. The concluding statements in this section related to Iraqi customs, “Iranian food features rice, bread, vegetables, fruits, and lamb. Strong tea is a popular drink among many Iranians” (p. 430).
However, themes of conflict and war dominated the discourse. An opening passage in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) read:

A revolution in 1979 made Islam the guiding force in Iran’s government. . . .

Soon afterward, relations with the United States broke down. A mob of students attacked the U. S. embassy in Iran’s capital, Tehran, in November of 1979. They took Americans hostage with the approval of Iran’s government. More than 50 Americans were held by force for a year. The Iranian Revolution itself was soon followed by a long, destructive war with Iraq beginning in 1980. (p. 430)

4.3.2.1.6.10 Afghanistan

Afghanistan’s content had a strong theme of conflict and war. Brief mention of Afghanistan’s landlocked features, the Hindu Kush and Khyber Pass, were presented, as was the diversity of the Afghani people. “The country’s almost 27 million people are divided into about 20 different ethnic groups” (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 125). Two passages found in Boehm et al. (2003) were of utmost relevance here, both of which provided information on the war in Afghanistan and the role of the Taliban.

During the 1980s, the Afghan people fought against Soviet troops who had invaded their country. When the Soviets pulled out in 1989, the Afghan people faced poverty, food shortages, and rising crime. The country collapsed into civil war. Many people turned to the Taliban, a group of fighters educated at strict Islamic schools in Pakistan. By 1996, the Taliban had taken control of the capital, Kabul, and about 80 percent of the country. They set up very strict laws based on their view of the religion of Islam. For example, men had to wear
beards and women had to cover themselves in public and could not hold jobs or go to school. (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003, p. 125)

Although information on Afghanistan was relegated to half a page, the theme of conflict and war permeated the discourse:

In the north, a group known as the Northern Alliance continued to battle with the Taliban but with little success. In October of 2001, after the attack on the World Trade Center, the United States accused the Taliban of supporting terrorists and began bombing Taliban forces. The United States also sent aid to the Northern Alliance. By mid-November, the Taliban government had collapsed and the Northern Alliance had captured Kabul. The United Nations began working with local leaders to create a new government for Afghanistan” (Boehm et al., 2003, p.125).

Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003), in their section on Afghanistan, began with, “The nation of Afghanistan has been involved in many conflicts in recent history” (p. 429). The authors continued with a simplistic account of the war in Afghanistan:

Turmoil continued, and in the mid-1990s a radical Muslim group known as the Taliban arose. Its leaders took over of most of the country, including the capital, Kabul. The Taliban ruled Afghanistan strictly. For example, they forced women to wear veils and stop working outside the home. In 2001, Taliban officials came into conflict with the United States. Investigation of terrorist attacks on September 11 on Washington D.C., and New York City led to terrorist Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network, based in Afghanistan. U.S. and British forces
then attacked Taliban and al Qaeda targets and toppled the Taliban government.

(p. 431)

This narrow focus does not allow for critical discourse on other aspects of Afghanistan, such as their diverse history and people.

4.3.2.2 North Africa

The section on North Africa’s physical geography in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) included a two-page case study entitled, “The Suez Canal: A Strategic Waterway,” which detailed the development and importance of the canal. This is relevant due to its parallel to colonization and globalization:

The history of the Suez Canal is closely linked to the growth of world trade and ocean shipping. Before World War II, the canal linked Great Britain to its colonies in East Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Beginning in the 1930s, the development of the oil industry in the Persian Gulf made the canal even more important. It became a major shipping route for tankers carrying oil to Europe and North Africa. (p. 480)

The final chapter in Holt People, Places, and Change: An Introduction to World Studies by Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) focused on the countries of North Africa, which included Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. The physical geography of this area was the focus of the first section of the chapter; emphasis was given to the vast expanse of the Sahara Desert, the Nile River, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Suez Canal. “It [the Sahara] is so big that nearly all of the United States would fit into it” (p. 472). The region’s climate, vegetation, native animals, and resources also received
mention. The following section focused on North Africa’s history and culture. Of key significance in this section was mention of European control and colonization. “In the 1800s European countries began to take over the region. By 1912 they controlled all of North Africa… During World War II the region was a major battleground” (p. 477). With regard to the region’s culture, attention was paid to the similarities between nations, including commonalities in language, religion, food, festivals, art, and literature. In Berson and Bednarz (2003), emphasis was given to three North African nomadic groups who live in the Sahara Desert, the Bedouins, the Tuaregs, and the Berbers.

4.3.2.2.1 Egypt

The opening statement on Egypt in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) read, “An ongoing debate in Egypt is the place of Islam in society and the government” (p. 482). Information focused on the country’s economy, the Egyptian people, and the variance between Egypt’s rural villages and Cairo, its capital city. “Today Cairo is a mixture of modern buildings and small, mud-brick houses. People continue to move there from rural areas. Many live in makeshift housing. Traffic and pollution are serious problems” (p. 483).

The final topic on Egypt pertained to its economic and societal challenges, most notably in education, poverty, and farming. “In addition, Egyptians are divided over their country’s role in the world. Many want their country to remain a leader among Arab countries. However, others want their government to focus more on improving life for Egyptians at home” (p. 484). A final challenge for Egypt, which was directly related to this section’s opening statement, was the role of Islam in the country. “Some
supporters of an Islamic government have turned to violence to advance their cause. Attacks on tourists in the 1990s were particularly worrisome. A loss of tourism would hurt Egypt’s economy” (p. 484).

In both Kracht (2003) and Berson and Bednarz (2003), the issue of overcrowding in Cairo was reiterated, but with dramatic flair. “Others [in Cairo] live on the streets, on rooftops, or on boats. One large community of people lives in a huge cemetery called the City of the Dead, where sultans are buried. (Berson & Bednarz, 2003, p. 419).” The Kracht (2003) text stated:

As a result [of migration to Egypt], Cairo is very crowded. There are traffic jams and housing shortages. Some people live in tents that they have set up on rowboats on the Nile. Others live in homes they have built in the huge graveyards that are considered suburbs of the city, and the government has provided the graveyards with electricity. (p. 403)

The closing statement in the section on Egypt in Kracht (2003) emphasized the relevance of Islam in the lives of the Egyptian people. The author stated, “Whether living in a city or in a rural area, most Egyptians hope that renewing their Muslim faith every day will help them to maintain traditional values and customs in a modern age” (p. 404). This sentence speaks directly to the theoretical framework of this study as it incorporates the overarching themes of religion and modernization.

In summary, Egypt received more attention than the other African countries of the Middle East. Common topics regarding Egypt included (a) the importance of the Nile River and Aswan Dam, (b) its desert climate, (c) the Suez Canal, (d) overcrowding in its capital city, Cairo, and (5) its economy (Boehm et al., 2003; Kracht, 2003).
4.3.2.2.2 Libya

In Boehm et al. (2003), Libya was presented as a desert country with a terrorist government:

The Sahara covers more than 90 percent of Libya. During the spring and fall, fierce dust-heavy winds blow from the desert, creating temperatures in coastal areas as high as 115 degrees. . . . Poor soil and a hot climate mean Libya has to import about three-fourths of its food. (pp. 101-102)

4.3.2.2.3 The Maghreb

The remaining African countries of the Middle East were often grouped together when presented. “Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco form a region known as the Maghreb. Maghreb means ‘the land farthest west’ in Arabic. These three countries make up the westernmost part of the Arabic-speaking Muslim world” (Boehm et al., 2003, p. 102).

In Boehm et al. (2003), information on Tunisia was relegated to two paragraphs with a focus on the country’s industry and the ancient city of Carthage. Three paragraphs were dedicated to Algeria with attention paid to the nation’s struggling economy and high poverty rate. The country’s colonization by France and the 1990 civil war between the Algerian government and Muslim groups accounted for a large portion of the information. Four paragraphs were paid to Morocco. A tourist industry and strong economy were emphasized, coupled with mention of the nation’s close proximity to Spain via the Strait of Gibraltar. This section concluded with mention of Morocco’s 1970 colonization of Western Sahara, which resulted in a war and a United Nations sanction (pp. 102-104).
Kracht (2003) was the only text that allowed for a separate section on Algeria. Main ideas of the section reiterated information found in other geography textbooks, such as the impact the desert climate has on the people and earlier French colonization, but additional emphasis was paid to the nation’s ethnic groups, the Berbers and the Arabs. Detail was provided on the daily rituals of these two groups, such as farming and communal family roles (p. 407).

The countries of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco received three pages of text collectively in Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003). Similar to other geography textbooks used in this content analysis, these countries were referred to as the Maghreb and emphasis was placed on the region’s desert topography and lack of suitable farmland, as well as on the close ties the region has with Europe as a result of colonial ties between North Africa and Europe. Once again, the theme of oil, as well as the power it afforded, was prominent. “Oil, mining, and tourism are important industries in these countries. Oil is the most important resource, particularly in Libya and Algeria. Money from oil pays for schools, health care, other social programs, and military equipment” (p. 486). This chapter concluded with challenges faced by the countries of the Maghreb, which included economic and political freedoms, education, violence, the role of Islam, and health care.

4.4 Content Analysis of Visual Material

A visual analysis of textbook images was also conducted to lend support to the textual portion of the study. Whereas the content analysis of texts focused on discourses of colonization, power, hegemony, and oppression, the visual analysis
revealed how textbooks construct difference. The following research questions from the study’s theoretical framework were addressed in the examination of visual material:

- How was the Orientalist idea of difference perpetuated in textbooks?
- How did textbooks reify stereotypes about the Middle East?

Ball and Smith (1992) detailed a method for visual analysis, which included “formulating an explicit set of coding rules” (p. 23) and the use frequency counts. In the analysis of photographs, the following coding rules were developed; these were delineated in Chapter III: CP (candid photograph), PP (posed photograph), LP (landscape photograph), SCP (scenic photograph), AP (aerial photograph), SAP (satellite photograph), A (photograph of an artifact), and OP (other type of photograph). The results are presented in Table 4.1.1.
### Table 4.1.1
*Frequency Counts of Photographs Found in Textbooks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook Information</th>
<th>Photographs</th>
<th>Textbook Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Horizons People and Communities (Berson, 2003)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glencoe: Our World Today (Boehm, 2003)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holt People, Places, and Change (Sager, Helgren, &amp; Brooks, 2003)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice Hall World Explorer (Kracht, 2003)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Horizons World Regions (Berson &amp; Bednarz, 2003)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDougal Littell - World History</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>267</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Code Frequencies**

|          | 23% | 4% | 16% | 16% | 7%  | 1%  | 10% | <1% |

In the analysis of maps, the following codes were developed: PM (physical map), POL (political map), PPM (physical-political map), POP (population map), CM (climate map), RM (resource map), and M (other type of map). Descriptions were provided in Chapter III; the results are provided in Table 4.1.2:
Table 4.1.2
Frequency Counts of Maps Found in Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook Title</th>
<th>Maps</th>
<th>Textbook Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PM</td>
<td>POL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Horizons People and Communities (Berson, 2003)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glencoe: Our World Today (Boehm, 2003)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holt People, Places, and Change (Sager, Helgren, &amp; Brooks, 2003)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice Hall World Explorer (Kracht, 2003)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Horizons World Regions (Berson &amp; Bednarz, 2003)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDougal Littell - World History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Totals</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the analysis of other images, the following codes were developed: D (diagram), DR (drawing), C (chart), T (table), and O (other types of images). Again, specific definitions are provided in Chapter III; the results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.1.3
Table 4.1.3  
Frequency Counts of Other Images Found in Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook Title</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Textbook Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Horizons People and Communities (Berson, 2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glencoe: Our World Today (Boehm, 2003)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holt People, Places, and Change (Sager, Helgren, &amp; Brooks, 2003)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice Hall World Explorer (Kracht, 2003)</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harcourt Horizons World Regions (Berson &amp; Bednarz, 2003)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDougal Littell - World History</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code Totals</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>267</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code Frequencies</strong></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings of the visual analysis support previous representation studies before and after 2000 (Griswold, 1975; Jarrar, 1976; Morgan, 2008), in which visual emphasis was paid to landscapes and candid pictures of traditional people, such as nomads and Bedouins dressed in indigenous clothing. Within the current study, the most common type of photograph was the candid photograph, in which the person or people are presented informally or not posed. Landscape and scenic photographs were also common and more often than not, depicted desert imagery, oil fields, or images of Islam, such as the city of Mecca. Also popular were beautiful pictures of the exotic buildings and scenery of the region. The most common type of map was the physical
map, which outlined natural land features of the region, as well as borders of the many countries of the Middle East. And finally, charts and tables permeated the category of other images and often provided the reader with a graphical representation of specified data.

Smith (2011) indicated that pictures and their accompanying captions offer insight into how the Middle East and its people are represented. Because children construct their understanding of the world through a variety of means, the analysis of visual material, such as diagrams, maps, and photographs was highly relevant in the construction of difference. In textbooks, pictures lend support to curricular content and may provide the student with an alternative method of understanding a specified phenomenon. Simply stated, images tell a story and capture students’ attention. They serve as a simple way to construct a certain reality; they define and amplify the corresponding textual material (Nodelman, 1989).
5.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to provide a postcolonial critique of K-8 textbooks in the United States. The use of Said’s (1978/2003) seminal work, *Orientalism* as a theoretical framework allowed for (a) the deconstruction of textbook content and (b) discourse on how the Middle East is presented to students. *Orientalism* brought to light the many ways the West (the Occident) sustains colonial power over the East (the Orient). This continued discrimination occurs most notably in larger contexts, such as the media (Shaheen, 1984) and politics (Chomsky, 2005). This analysis had a narrower, albeit equally relevant, focus, that of discrimination in the text and visual images of school textbooks (Rivas, 2005).

A postcolonial lens allowed for a space to identify and deconstruct how non-Western groups were (re)presented in American public school textbooks (Rivas, 2005); simply stated, this study privileged the Middle East and its people. As a postcolonial culture, the lived realities of Arab and Middle Eastern people should not be trivialized or reduced to a handful of ideas and images, especially to children who are educated within a global context.

This chapter provides a summary of the main themes and discourses found in the content analysis. The first part of this chapter discusses the findings of the content analysis of 10 elementary and middle school history and geography textbooks within the context of a postcolonial theoretical framework. The second part allows for discourse
on the issues surrounding textbook content in the United States in general. The third part provides insight into the study’s implications, as well as avenues for future postcolonial research in K-8 curricula.

5.2 Review of the Study

The critical research agenda addressed several postcolonial criteria, which included: (a) constructions and representations of the Other, (b) discourses of colonization, (c) discourses of inclusion/exclusion, (d) discourses of power/hegemony/oppression, and (e) constructions of difference. Specific research questions pertaining to these criteria included:

1. How did textbooks construct the Other? How did they construct the subject/colonizer? What terms were used in each of these constructions?
2. How did textbooks explain the role of the Other in socio-political change and/or industrial development?
3. What discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people were presented in textbooks?
4. How was colonization addressed? Was it described as a civilizing need?
5. How were the colonial struggles of the Other described?
6. Who was included and/or excluded in the explanation of modern historical events?
7. What was included and/or excluded in the explanation of geographical information?
8. How were cultural and/or industrial contributions of the Other silenced?
9. How were specific countries represented?

10. How was power constructed in textbooks? What terms were used to describe the group in power?

11. How was hegemony addressed? Was it described as a necessary consequence of colonization?

12. How was oppression addressed? Were certain groups identified as oppressed?

13. How was the Orientalist idea of difference perpetuated in textbooks?

14. How did textbooks reify stereotypes about the Middle East?

The following sections discuss the findings within the context of Said’s (1978/2003) *Orientalist* framework used throughout the study.

5.2.1 Constructions and Representations of the Other

This criterion was specifically concerned with how the Other is framed in text and what discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people were presented in textbooks. The first three research questions related to this criterion.

5.2.1.1 Question 1

How did textbooks construct the Other? How did they construct the subject/colonizer? What terms were used in each of these constructions? Throughout the analysis, the region of the Middle East was divided into two representations, *Southwest Asia* and *North Africa*. In fact, the term *Middle East* was rarely used. A second construction of the region was that of a cultural hub and a “crossroads of the
world” (Berson, 2003, p. 364). The geography texts overwhelmingly portrayed the region as an area covered by desert. While this may be true, the information presented a misleading image of the region and in line with previous representation studies on the Middle East, was wrought with overgeneralizations (Griswold, 1975; Jarrar, 1976; Morgan, 2008; Morgan & Walker, 2008).

5.2.1.2 Question 2

How did textbooks explain the role of the Other in socio-political change and/or industrial development? Quite often, the countries and people of the Middle East were depicted as lacking initiative and in need of Western intervention. When themes of conflict were presented, the conflict often resulted in intervention by the United States and/or the United Nations. Regarding industry, the discovery of oil was portrayed as the sole catalyst for industrial and economic development in the region. A strong dichotomy was established as authors painted a disconsolate picture of the region before the discovery of oil and a modern one afterwards.

5.2.1.3 Question 3

What discursive themes regarding the Middle East and its people were presented in textbooks? This question was an overarching goal of the study, and as was presented in Chapter IV, the analysis produced four overarching themes of (a) oil, (b) war, (c) religion, and (d) Western involvement. These four topics dominated the discourse in both the history and geography texts; the themes were applied to many of the 14 research questions found in this study’s theoretical framework.
5.2.2 Discourses of Colonization

This criterion addressed the salience of American and European colonialism and applied to research questions 4 and 5.

5.2.2.1 Question 4

How was colonization addressed? Was it described as a civilizing need? Kracht (2003) suggested colonization was a necessary result of war as empires conquered each other and new groups of people settled. This was supported by Berson (2003), who reported on the French colonization of Libya and Algeria. Because the current study focused on modern history and specifically on United States involvement, physical colonization by the United States was not addressed in this criterion. However, institutional colonization continued to exist in many forms. For example, intervention by the United States and/or the United Nations following foreign conflict often resulted in a new form of government for the colonized Middle Eastern country. The most notable model of modern colonization presented in the text was the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

5.2.2.2 Question 5

How were the colonial struggles of the Other described? Unfortunately, this question was lacking in viable examples. Although colonization was addressed in the textbooks, the information presented simplified accounts of the reasoning behind Western involvement, which supports the postcolonial notion of the West as the ultimate source of global power, a finding of previous representation studies as well (Griswold,
There was little to no mention of the societal outcomes of colonization, nor was attention paid to how the intervention was received by the native group. In sum, the lived experiences of the colonized group as a colonized group did not emerge in the textbooks analyzed in this study.

5.2.3 Discourses of Inclusion/Exclusion

A key determinant of content analysis relates to who, what, and how often topics appear in text. Research questions 6-9 refer to discourses of inclusion and exclusion.

5.2.3.1 Question 6

Who was included and/or excluded in the explanation of modern historical events? Previous representation studies of the Middle East suggested that Westernized nations received increased coverage (Griswold, 1975; Jarrar, 1976). The findings of this study mirror studies conducted before and after 2000 as the modern countries of Turkey, Israel, and Jordan received increased mention. Also in line with earlier work, countries with a large Islamic population received significant mention, as did countries engaged in ongoing conflict with the United States. For example, Saudi Arabia received more attention than other nations due to (a) its large reserves of oil, and (b) its cultural and religious restrictions on women. Similarly, the nations of Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, which were often grouped together, received increased mention, especially with regard to conflict and war (Griswold, 1975; Morgan, 2008; Smith, 2011).
5.2.3.2 Question 7

What was included and/or excluded in the explanation of geographical information? Of particular interest with this topic was the exclusion of the smaller countries on the Arabian Peninsula, which were often grouped together. For example, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Oman received minimal attention. Each country received approximately two paragraphs of text each when mentioned, whereas Saudi Arabia received several pages of content (Sager, Helgren, & Brooks, 2003). The same was true for the North African countries referred to as the Maghreb. The countries of Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Western Sahara were grouped together in each instance of the analysis. When overgeneralized grouping occurred, it resulted in the exclusion of content (Sewell 2008; Smith, 2011).

5.2.3.3 Question 8

How were cultural and/or industrial contributions of the Other silenced? History textbooks allowed for little mention of the cultural contributions of the region; the topic was afforded slightly more coverage in the geography textbooks. In the 6th grade textbook World Explorer: People, Places, and Cultures, Kracht (2003) commented on the customs of the region with, “The culture, or way of life, in a society is influenced by different ethnic groups that may share common bonds, such as religion, language, and the influence of neighboring societies (p. 385).”

In large cities...people live with a mix of the traditional and modern ways of life. Some weave carpets or sell baskets. Others are scientists or sell computers in
The peoples of North Africa live vastly different lives, yet almost all consider themselves to be Muslims. (Kracht, 2003, p. 387)

Of key significance with this topic was the overwhelming mention of carpets as a cultural emblem of the Middle East (Shaheen, 1985). Carpet weaving was discussed not only as an export of the Middle East, but also as a form of art for several countries. For example, (Boehm et al., 2003) stated, “For thousands of years, people have been making the hand-knotted floor coverings sometimes called Persian or Turkish rugs. Valued for their rich color and intricate design, these handmade rugs are unique works of art” (p. 109).

This research question speaks specifically to two of Said’s (1978/2003) Orientalist ideas, the silencing of voices and the misrepresentation of the East by the West. Although the production and exportation of rugs from this region is intrinsically tied to its culture, and therefore a viable topic of discussion, little to no mention of other Middle Eastern cultural contributions existed (Sewell, 2008). In Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003), some attention was paid to the influence of calligraphy on Islamic life as well as on the diverse music in the region, but these mentions were minimal.

5.2.3.4 Question 9

How were specific countries represented? As was detailed in Chapter IV, individual countries received varying amounts of coverage. Within the context of the four overarching themes, it was evident countries with larger reserves of oil received more attention, as did those involved in ongoing conflict with the United States. Larger
countries, such as Saudi Arabia, also received increased attention in the geography texts.

5.2.4 Discourses of Power/Hegemony/Oppression

According to Said (1978/2003), Orientalism was a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (p. 3). Therefore, power is intrinsically linked to hegemony, and consequently, to oppression. Questions 10-12 allowed for discourse on this criterion.

5.2.4.1 Question 10

How was power constructed in textbooks? What terms were used to describe the group in power? The construction of power was tantamount with Western ideals and modernization. For example, industrialized countries, such as Turkey, Israel, and Jordan were afforded more coverage. The overarching theme of oil also allowed for discourse on power; Chapter IV outlined the relevance oil had on the industry and societal infrastructure of many Middle Eastern countries, most notably Saudi Arabia. Also relevant in this discourse was the creation of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, in 1960. In sum, power was constructed as synonymous with oil, industry, and modernization.

5.2.4.2 Question 11

How was hegemony addressed? Was it described as a necessary consequence of colonization? Although the term hegemony was never used in the textbooks,
Hegemonic ideas were presented throughout the content analysis of textbooks (Kracht, 2003). This research question related specifically to the overarching theme of Western intervention and involvement in the Middle East. Hegemony refers to the manner in which the dominant group asserts power over the state (Williams, 1991). This study supports the notion that the Middle East continues to be institutionally colonized by Western forces; therefore, themes of hegemony were uncovered within the content analysis of textbooks. Intervention by the West was presented as the only necessary conclusion to conflict (Beck, 2012). This was supported by previous studies as well (Griswold, 1975).

5.2.4.3 Question 12

How was oppression addressed? Were certain groups identified as oppressed? Similar to hegemony, the term oppressed was not found in the content analysis. However, discourses uncovered oppressive themes, especially concerning the role of women in Islamic countries, most notably in Saudi Arabia.

5.2.5 Constructions of Difference

Ultimately, postcolonial perspectives are concerned with constructions of difference; this criterion was presented throughout the content analysis. Questions 13 and 14 address issues of difference.
5.2.5.1 Question 13

How was the *Orientalist* idea of difference perpetuated in textbooks? According to Said (1978/2003), the *Orientalist* practice of differing was the accepted manner in which to regulate anything produced about the Orient, and current textbooks mirrored this trend. Little attention was paid to the similarities that existed between the United States and the Middle East. The reader is then left with the idea that this region is defined by its conflict, reliance on oil, and cannot thrive without Western involvement. These ideas contrast the individualistic mentality of the United States, and consequently, difference is perpetuated (Griswold, 1975).

Although not necessarily a theme, the idea of dichotomies also emerged from the content analysis. This theme was presented in several contexts and also perpetuates the *Orientalist* idea of difference. For example, when ideas of modernization were mentioned, they were quickly followed with mention of traditionalism. “By the end of 1950s, Iran’s capital, Tehran, featured gleaming skyscrapers, foreign banks, and modern factories. Millions of Iranians, however, still lived in extreme poverty (Beck, 2012, p. 874).”

5.2.5.2 Question 14

How did textbooks reify stereotypes about the Middle East? This research question was answered in the analysis presented in Chapter IV. According to Shaheen (1985), stereotypical images of the Arab and of the Middle East have persisted for over a century. Through the use of television and film, this repeated misrepresentation creates an image in the reader’s mind. As Said (1978/2003) indicated the Orient, or
East, was partly a European construction full of breathtaking landscapes and exotic individuals. In Chapter IV, the content analysis of visual material was presented and landscapes and candid photographs were found to be the most common form of reifying assumed truths regarding the Middle East.

5.3 Issues with Textbook Content

A point of interest regarding this research study related to the inclusion of geography textbooks in the content analysis. Geography textbooks were included for a number of reasons. To begin, Florida, Texas, and Virginia focused on this social studies subject in the elementary years. Secondly, because representation of the Middle East was an overarching goal of this study, it was highly relevant to include geography textbooks in order to present a holistic picture of the region. This idea was also presented in the 6th grade textbook *Holt People, Places, and Change: An Introduction to World Studies* by Sager, Helgren, and Brooks (2003) with the statement, “History and geography can hardly be separated” (p. 454). In summary, the inclusion of geography texts allowed for a more complete analysis of the region. The use of geography lent support to the content analysis of visuals, as geography texts tended to contain more photographs than history texts.

Of key significance with regard to geography was the increased mention of the Middle East as a desert region. For example, “Much of North Africa and Southwest Asia is desert, and the cultures have adapted to the desert way of life” (Bohem et al., 2003, p. 100). In the analysis of geography texts, attention was paid to the mention of
individual countries. While the region is home to 16 countries, there was strong variance in how and how often countries were presented.

5.3.1 Simplicity of Information

In line with earlier studies of textbook content, simplistic accounts of information were present in textbooks used in lower grades. A glaring example came from a 3rd grade textbook with this single mention of the Arab people:

Many ethnic groups make up Paterson’s [New Jersey] population. There are immigrants from a number of countries in Europe and Asia. Many people speak Arabic, so some shops in Paterson have Arabic signs. There are stores where immigrants can shop for food, clothing, and other items imported from their home countries. (Berson, 2003, p. 257)

There was a plethora of hidden misinformation in this passage. To begin, it was unclear why the city of Paterson, New Jersey was chosen as a focus. Accompanying the text was a photograph of a butcher shop storefront with Arabic signage. Are we to assume a large population of Middle Eastern and Arab people resides in Paterson? Secondly, the passage implied the everyday Arab living in Paterson shops specifically at stores indicative of their home country, furthering the idea of difference. Finally, immigrants were (re)presented as a generalized population; no credence was afforded to the varying groups within the Arab culture. The only other mention of the Middle East was presented a few pages later, “There are those who follow Christianity and others who follow Judaism. Still others follow the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam” (Berson, 2003, p. 265).
The focus of 3rd grade social studies content in Texas is centered on “Communities Here and Around the World” (Texas Education Agency, 2010). However, in a textbook spanning 450 pages, information on the Middle East and its people was reduced to 6 sentences on 2 pages. Consequently, the information presented was simplistic and lacking viable information on the region. Without appropriate information, the student engaging with the text cannot connect to the intended content.

With regard to the overarching theme of religion, a section entitled “Religions of the Middle East” in Our World Today: People, Places, and Issues, a 6th grade textbook by Boehm et al. (2003) furthered the finding of simplistic misinformation. Although the three major religions were presented, the reader is left with a minimal amount of information reminiscent of trivialized multicultural education, which focused solely on holidays, food, and clothing (Sleeter & McClaren, 1995; Banks, 2005).

Notably latent ideas were presented within the discourse on religion (Boehm et al., 2003). To begin, global contributions of Judaism and the Jewish people are emphasized, but Islamic practices are inconsequential. “Jewish scholars, writers, artists, and scientists have greatly increased the world’s knowledge” (p. 89). A few pages later the author stated, “Muslims exchanged ideas with those they conquered. Muslim knowledge in art and architecture, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, geography, history, and other fields was greatly increased” (p. 93). These statements painted Jewish scholars in a positive light as a group responsible for a number of global contributions, but it appears Muslim scholars acquired their knowledge only after conquering their neighbors. This may or may not have been the intent behind the written word, but due to the simplistic nature of the text, it is difficult to gauge.
Increased attention was paid to the contributions of Christianity as well in this 6th grade textbook:

The spread of Christianity was achieved primarily through the work of individuals and missions. The teachings of Jesus were carried to far parts of the globe by missionaries who built churches, schools, and hospitals to minister to, or take care of, new Christians. For hundreds of years, the Christian church shared power with the rulers of many of the nations of Europe. The most famous universities of Europe were begun by Christian scholars. (Boehm et al., 2003, pp. 91-92)

Latent content was also present in the above passage. To begin, the contributions of Christians received more space in the chapter section than do the other two religions. Secondly, power is ascribed to Christians as they are paired alongside European rulers and scholars. Finally, Christians are (re)presented as hardworking, educated, able-bodied, and caring.

In Boehm et al. (2003), a five-page insert entitled, “Time Reports Focus on World Issues: The Arab-Israeli Conflict.” The question posed on the title of the magazine insert read, “Will words replace violence in the Holy Land’s quarrel?” The accompanying photograph on the cover of the insert depicted two men, one of them armed, angry and yelling at each other. Four stories were provided in the insert. First, the magazine detailed the meeting of an Israeli family and a Palestinian family who both lost children in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The magazine also provided for a more detailed account of the reasons behind the on-going Arab-Israeli conflict. The second story, entitled, “Conflict on Holy Ground,” provided information of the 2000 al-Aqsa Intifadeh, a
bloody riot which occurred on the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The final story in the magazine detailed an interview with a 13 year-old Palestinian teenager living in a refugee camp in Bethlehem in the West Bank. “I expect to die at any moment by a stray bullet from an Israeli soldier” (p. 119) is one statement made by the girl. In the final story, readers were introduced to Seeds of Peace, a camp in Maine that brings Muslim and Jewish teenagers together every summer.

While there was increased content afforded to the region, the majority of the information presented in the *Time Magazine* insert related to conflict, war, death, and suffering. The reader was provided with a much more detailed account of several factors surrounding the world issue, but yet again, the theme of conflict superseded all others. On the other hand, this insert may allow for increased discourse on the social issues involving the Arab-Israeli conflict. For example, the magazine concludes with several questions and peace-building skills for students to explore the issue further (Boehm et al, 2003).

5.3.2 Intellectual Oppression

Deconstruction of colonial thinking cannot exist until educators acknowledge that textbooks (re)produce difference. The American classroom perpetuates a systematic power imbalance and textbooks serve as a key tool to intellectual oppression. The issue is exacerbated when minority groups are presented in text, as they are merely replicated constructs of the group in power. As Rivas (2005) suggested, “even when minorities are granted a voice and conferred with about the findings, the question
remains as to who benefits from the research and to what extent is participation equal and democratic” (p. 219).

Rivas (2005) indicated the issues with a colonialist mentality are threefold. First, a colonialist paradigm negates the lived experiences of indigenous groups. Secondly (and consequently), this paradigm furthers the ethnocentrism of the group in power. Finally, the colonialist paradigm results in the dominant group as the ultimate producer of knowledge and truth. In relation to the current study, the Middle East was portrayed as a problematic region of the world and its people as futile and hostile, as was shown with the increased mention of conflict and war (Jarrar, 1976).

The colonialist paradigm creates an alterity between the dominant group and the oppressed group. “Alterity stands for the state of difference/diversity where the construction of the self is inherently tied to the construction of the other” (Rivas, 2005, p. 208). Per Said (1978/2003), the East and its people forever exist in an inferior space in relation to the West and its dominant culture, furthering the ideal of alterity.

The Middle Eastern person is placed against a Western backdrop; consequently, all things different, including clothing, food, religion, holidays, and profession, are held to the constructed Western standard. The Middle East and its people are forever positioned in relation to the dominant culture and the colonized must adapt their reality to survive. In sum, the Middle East deviates from the norm and is therefore, in need of analysis. Ironically, such a practice only further oppresses and marginalizes the group in question.
5.4 A Constellation of Representations

The findings of this study resulted in, to borrow a term from Rivas (2005), a “constellation of representations” (p. 209). The term constellation is appropriate because it allows for an image of distinct interpretations, but when fused together, results in a larger representation, albeit an undesirable one.

This constellation of representations brings to light several considerations. To begin, the many distinct representations assert the dominant group as the marker of difference. Consequently, the representations position the subjugated group in an inferior position. Furthermore, the West is presented as “knowable and measurable” (p. 211), signifying the East as a group in need of knowledge, definition, and research. And finally, this inferior position results in the colonial mentality that these subjugated groups are a problem population in need of saving (Rivas, 2005). The assumed position of inferiority allows for discourse on Western involvement, a key theme found in the study.

Because the East is inferior, it cannot function without the West.

5.5 A Tool of Resistance

The findings of this study will not solve the problem of social studies education in American classrooms. Rather, the findings bring to light the discursive representations of the Middle East and its people. More often than not, these representations depicted the region as vast, desolate, and lacking resources; its people are presented as backwards, hostile, and in need of saving.

However, as Rivas (2005) suggested, research of this nature serves as a “tool of resistance” in that it allows for deconstruction of the “conceptual systems that produce
knowledge about the Other and exposes the configurations of knowledge/power/Western culture” (p. 220).

5.6 Implications

Suggestions based on this study’s implications are directed towards pre-service teachers, classroom teachers, teacher education programs, and textbook publishers. These groups are vitally important in challenging hegemonic regimes and identifying the ways schools and curricula privilege and oppress certain groups of people.

5.6.1 Implications for Pre-Service Teachers

Pre-service teachers should concern themselves with how difference is perpetuated in their discourse and in their curricular materials. Future educators need to understand how salient textbook information is, especially within a social studies context. One method to accomplish this is deconstruction of textbook content through the use of case studies. Through deconstruction, pre-service teachers can become aware of the various theoretical frameworks surrounding social studies content.

Misrepresentation is not an issue unique to the Middle East. Because textbooks are produced within a Western context, erroneous information plagues majority and minority groups (Griswold, 1975). Therefore, continued critical engagement with textbooks and supplemental teaching materials is necessary so that pre-service teachers retain the tools of deconstruction and challenge assumed truths.
5.6.2 Implications for Classroom Teachers

Though increased access to media has its benefits in the classroom, in-service teachers must be cognizant of how the media permeates children’s thinking (Shaheen, 1985), as well as how it influences educational policy. Globalization, which McCarthy et al. (2005) described as “the intensified and accelerated movement of people, images, ideas, technologies, and economic and cultural capital across national boundaries,” is transforming schools (p. 155). The use of technology and media in the classroom has far-reaching positive and negative implications for students in all corners of the world.

However, the use of media in the classroom is not free from false representation, as these images are likely constrained and selected to enforce dominant ways of thinking and doing. Although popular culture is relevant in the lives of children, traditional school programs promote homogeneity, and so classroom teachers must challenge current curricular practices. They must also acknowledge that students are stakeholders in the learning process and enter the classroom with a constructed knowledge of how groups exist in society. These ideas may also challenge curricular content, and these voices should be heard.

Finally, classroom teachers must understand that the position of educator affords them power over their students. Because the postcolonial intent of this study was to deconstruct power relations in school classrooms, this implication is vitally relevant. The classroom teacher is not immune from this privilege and may, unknowingly, perpetuate a colonizing mentality.
5.6.3 Implications for Teacher Education Programs

Regarding avenues for future deconstruction of school curricula, it is important to identify the university as a Western construction (Rivas, 2005). Therefore, the researcher is privileged in the sense that he/she has the authority to determine the path of the research. The classroom teacher, as a product of the university, is awarded a position of power due to her relationship with the university as teacher education programs serve to further colonialist thinking. Therefore, constructions of power must be addressed within teacher education programs. Additionally, supplemental materials must be incorporated; textbooks cannot be emphasized as the predominant curricular resource. Teacher education programs should provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to locate, engage with, and critique textbooks and ancillary materials, including videos, biographies, poetry, and fictionalized histories. Integrating diverse literature and multiple perspectives into the lives of students is essential to curbing the issue of *othering*.

Non-traditional approaches should be employed in university social studies methods courses so that future teachers have opportunities to reflect on their own biases with cultural groups and history. Social studies is a content-driven subject; teacher education programs must focus on connecting future teachers to ideas and themes, rather than to the memorization of facts, dates, and individuals. This is also true for early childhood teacher education programs where an anti-bias approach may be emphasized.
5.6.4 Implications for Textbook Publishers

The publishing of textbooks is directly tied to capitalist markets (Shorto, 2010) and likely the most difficult arena to challenge. Publishers of textbooks have the power to determine the content and direction of printed material used in classrooms and so deconstruction of this group is of utmost relevance. The textbook marketing system undoubtedly creates a power division as a few are given power to educate the masses. Rather than focus on what specific knowledge is being produced, a more relevant focus is exactly whose knowledge is being produced. Camicia (2009) suggests that school textbooks foster the “dominant cultural norms [and] promote nation-bound metanarratives by limiting the number of perspectives in the curriculum” (p. 28).

The media also (re)produces difference and contributes to the colonialist power structure. Therefore, deconstruction of the media is necessary in the struggle for social justice. As was indicated in Chapter II, the process of *othering* is perpetuated to young children in a variety of ways (Shaheen, 1985). Young children are inundated with a barrage of images and messages from birth. Challenging hegemonic regimes is, in itself, one form of deconstruction. However, systems in power continue to construct and maintain ideas of difference. At the center of this failed ecological system is the child, who is receiving vast amounts of information from those in power. Over time, this information becomes knowledge, which becomes truth, which becomes reality.

5.6.5 Final Thoughts

It is my hope that this study will promote continued conversation on the Middle East and its people in elementary and middle school classrooms. As an Arab woman,
this topic is vitally important to me and warrants the deconstruction of current educational practices (Cannella, 1997). As a previous classroom teacher and university teaching fellow, this topic resonates with me as I realize I may have contributed to constructions of difference while in the classroom. Ultimately, I hope I have raised important critiques regarding how school textbooks portray the Middle East and her people.
APPENDIX

TEXTBOOK WORKSHEET
**Textbook Information**

Title of Textbook: 

Year of Textbook: 

State Using Textbook: 

Publisher of Textbook: 

Location of Publisher: 

Grade Level of Textbook: 

Number of Chapters in Textbook: 

Number of Pages in Textbook: 

**Chapter Information**

Title of Chapter Relevant to the Middle East: 

Number of Chapter: 

Inclusive Page Numbers of Chapter: 

**Basic Questions for Textual Analysis**

How is the chapter divided? 

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What titles are given to the specific chapter sections? _______________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

**Basic Questions for Visual Analysis**

How many of each of the following is provided within the chapter?

1) Photographs ________________________________
   a) Of people ________________________________
   b) Of artifacts ________________________________
   c) Of landscapes ________________________________

2) Maps ________________________________

3) Diagrams/Drawings ________________________________

4) Other ________________________________
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