

American Students' Perception of the Portrayal of Arabs in Political Cartoons

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Abstract

This study deals with the perceptions that American students have of the Arab image as portrayed in the editorial cartoons of three major American newspapers.

Previous studies by various researchers have found a distinct bias against the Arab world depicted in editorial cartoons. This study uses American students as evaluators to determine their attitudes of the characterizations of Arabs during five major events from 1973 to 1990 as portrayed in these newspapers.

Through stratified sampling, 77 cartoons from the Boston Globe, the Washington Post and the San Francisco Chronicle were evaluated by the students. The students were asked to rate the positive or negative aspects of the cartoons, whether they were realistic or unrealistic, favorable or insulting, and to give their open-ended interpretation of the Arab depictions. The findings showed that there has been a gradual and positive change in the portrayal of Arabs in these political cartoons over this period. One important improvement shifting was away from being insulting and unrealistic toward a more neutral portrayal in recent years. Such encouraging findings may be attributed to the shifting political trends in the Middle East since 1973, as well as a greater willingness of the Western media to offer objective news coverage.

Introduction

Many minorities or ethnic groups feel aggrieved when any form of mass media tends to shape images of their cultural or racial background in a negative or misleading way. Denis McQuail stated that "[mass media] often provide the material for us to form perceptions of other groups, organizations and events... The offence of such images varies, in any case, to be entirely dependent on the mass media for information and impression..."¹ Agreeing with McQuail and focusing the attention on the press, Teun Van Dijk explains that ethnic minorities and ethnic events are often presented in the press from the point of view of the majority.² Van Dijk noted that:

Even when the media do not formulate negative opinions themselves, they provide a definition of the ethnic situation that makes such negative inferences not only possible but also plausible. In this way, they both preformulate prejudice and reinforce the partial models of the ethnic situation that are acquired by personal experiences, hearsay, and socialization.³

To combat such negative stereotyping, Arab-Americans as a minority and an ethnic group living in the United States have been actively trying to have their image represented in a fair and realistic way. Many observers, some of Arab descent and some pure Westerners, have discussed this issue in hundreds of books and articles. Often the authors of these publications give details about how absurd the Arabs in popular literature, novels, movies, textbooks, and news media — including political cartoons — have been portrayed.⁴ The views of those pro-Arab authors are valid and present a counterpoint to the negative characterizations, but the widespread impact of editorial cartoons in major newspapers should not be underestimated. Craig MacIntosh, cartoonist for the *Minneapolis Star*, said that

...both ignorance and an editorial cartoonist's habitual employment of exaggeration, caricature and stereotypes lead to a depiction of the Arabs in editorial cartoons that can be described as racist.⁵

For among the various media channels in which Arabs have been depicted for many years, the editorial page political cartoons of American newspapers may be the most important. Scholars in the past who have concentrated on this area of research have found a presence of defamatory images that have offended Arabs and Arab culture.⁶ This study is an attempt to get a valid view on how Americans view major Middle Eastern events that have happened over the last 17-years, 1973 until 1990. In other words, how major Arab-related conflicts have been portrayed in American newspapers editorial political cartoons as judged from the points of view of those who are more or less typical of the majority of Westerners.

Arab Stereotype in the U.S. Media

Scholars have frequently paid close attention to the way Arabs are presented in the Western world and have often found traces of anti-Arab stereotypes in the mass media. Their general view tends to be that media often reflect false understanding of Arabs due to a negative stereotype ingrained in American society.

Traditions, values and cultural differences are known to be a tempting bait for the

sensation-minded media. In fact, its audience thrives on the exotic and the unusual. For example, the coverage of political events, such as the invasion of Liberia, Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf crisis have not only spotlighted an awareness of military movements and equipment but also new (and especially exotic) customs and life-styles that are practiced in these regions, giving the American public a fresh awareness of people's modes and social traditions in these regions and societies. The media during the Gulf crisis, for example, have contributed heavily to a greater understanding of Middle Eastern life because more than half a million Americans were stationed in Saudi Arabia. The print and television press carried almost daily some mention of the cultural values and traditions of the Arab people. It seems likely that this learning to interpret this culture might very well influence the way reporters perceive a new culture and may color their attitudes toward it. When Western reporters, for example, faced unaccustomed conditions in a country such as Saudi Arabia, where the roots of the culture and tradition are Islamic, the reporters' work could be highly influenced to reflect greater understanding of Arab society.

In his book, *Split Vision*, Edmund Ghareeb pointed out five major reasons why American media fail to thoroughly cover the Middle East: "1) Cultural bias; 2) the thinkalike atmosphere within the media; 3) the Arab Israeli conflict; 4) media ignorance of the origins and history of the conflict; and 5) the determined, sophisticated Israeli lobby."⁷

Discussing the years between 1975-1977, Ghareeb mentioned that "Arabs are portrayed as either desert-dwelling Bedouins or millionaires; little attention is paid to the strong urban and rural origins of the vast majority of the Arab world."⁸ Later in his book, when he discussed the years between 1979-1982, Ghareeb noted that "American media coverage of the Arab world has undergone a perceptual change. This change, however, has been both limited and slow..."⁹

However, following Ghareeb's study, events have unfolded with lightning swiftness in recent years in the Middle East. Some of these events have had a major impact on Western attitudes. Therefore the Western news media can no longer operate within the previous ethnocentric views of the past, simply because the differences and similarities are becoming clearer between the West and Mideast. One result of the recent crisis may be a new-found feeling of acceptance and mutual insight between the two cultures.

It is through the close examination and analysis of political crises and economic issues that Americans may begin to understand how the mass media manipulate the Arab image. Moreover, as all nations see a shrinking world around them, of necessity the old image of traditional enemies should be reinvented. For instance, the modern political cartoon, according to Charles Press, need to reexamine the time-worn formulas and stereotypes.

The old cliches are no longer appropriate since their falsity is readily apparent. This includes all of the high-blown sentiment and simple-minded ultranationalism more common in the past, as well as the trite liberal opinion that sees us every day in every way getting better and better.¹⁰

The unfortunate hostility that existed in some of the Western press for the Arab nations in the past no doubt had strong roots in the Cold War between the Soviets and the United States. Now that struggle has apparently been laid to rest, there is room for greater understanding and, perhaps, shared vision.

American Perceptions of the Arabs

Scholars have pointed out that American knowledge of the Middle East is limited, which may have a detrimental effect on media portrayals. In the book, *Split Vision*, Edmund Ghareeb said "Americans picture Arabs as backward, scheming, fanatic terrorists who are dirty, dishonest, oversexed and corrupt."¹¹ Ghareeb added that:

... American popular attitudes are largely fashioned by the media's news and commentary, any change in those attitudes will be difficult to accomplish if the media continue to provide a distorted picture of the people, culture and politics of the Arab countries.¹²

Nevertheless, with increased exposure to Arab cultures, some improvement may be on the horizon. For instance, Jack Shaheen wrote: "Perceptions of the Middle East by today's journalists are becoming more balanced. But the ugly 'Arab image' in popular culture remains."¹³ Shaheen also claimed in his book *The TV Arab*, that:

The present-day Arab stereotype parallels the image of Jews in pre-Nazi Germany, where Jews were painted as dark, shifty-eyed, venal and threateningly different people. After the holocaust, the characterization of Jews as murderous anarchists or greedy financiers was no longer tolerable. Many cartoonists, however, reincarnated this caricature and transferred it to another group of Semites, the Arabs. Only now it wears a robe and a headdress instead of a yarmulke and a Star of David.¹⁴

Michael W. Suleiman wrote about the implication of Americans who hold negative stereotypes about the Arabs. He said that: 1) reporters in the media will not be able to report objectively. 2) Politicians will re-enforce their negative opinion about the Arabs by showing their support to Israel in order to get elected. 3) Arab investors in the United States will be dealt with suspicion. 4) Palestinians became a "non-people."¹⁵

It is worth mentioning the other side of the coin, however, on how Arab media view the American image. In a study by Adnan Abu Odeh, *The American Image in the Arab Mass media*,¹⁶ the author points out that media deal with the superpowers in relation to the actual political reality of the Arab world, i.e. Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁷ The author claims that the American image in the Arab media consists of both negativeness and positiveness.

The positive aspect, on one hand, is credited to the cultural and technological direction. Democracy, freedom and individual rights in addition to scientific achievement signify the positive image. The positive image could be seen more in films than in the press.

The negative aspect, on the other hand, appears to be the dominant one in the current opinion — the author was referring to the year 1983. Such an attitude by the Arab media, Abu Odeh claimed, is due to American political behavior. The author noted that such direction of opinion is effectively reflected, with strong visual impact and wit, in the cartoons that appear in the Arab press.¹⁸

Abu Odeh provided some factual elements that created and continued the negative image. Among them are: 1) American policy toward the Palestinian question. 2) American support for the aggressor — Israel; 3) American imbalanced policy in the Middle East conflict.¹⁹

Background to the Editorial Cartoons

One of the strongest weapons a newspaper uses to forcefully state a point of

view is its editorial cartoons. Cartoonists enjoy more leeway than those who write the editorial pages, since writers are obligated to present their thoughts dealing with all sides of an issue, while the cartoonists are hampered by no such restrictions.

Lance Bennett wrote "A picture may not be worth a thousand words but it can convey a strong impression when placed in context by a few selected words."²⁰ Laurence Michalak agreed:

Political cartoons offer the advantage of being quick and easy to understand. Where a book, an article, or an editorial may be complex, a political cartoon by its very nature must be obvious and unmistakable in intent — pure opinion expressed in images and unencumbered by much fact.²¹

Expressing a similar idea, J.D. Weaver described the editorial cartoonist as "an impudent, irreverent, highly opinionated individualist who flourishes only in an environment hospitable to dissent."²² In another study, Stone said the chief roles cartoonists attributed to themselves were critic, artist, and opinion leader.²³ Hence, exaggeration and fabrication are integral parts of the political cartoon, and form strong components of the image. Without them the cartoon's impact would be almost completely insignificant.

Brief History of the Political Cartoon

The development of caricature dates back to the fifteenth century. Printed wooden-engraved blocks were used by the Dutchman Laurent Coster in 1420 to make several copies of religious images, a process that is referred to as iconography. Two inventions that followed were Gutenberg's movable type and Durer's metal engraving technique.²⁴ These inventions and the growth and spread of art and artists along with the social and political conflicts that took place in Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and other parts of Europe during the Renaissance and Reformation period, all offered fertile conditions for the emergence of caricature.

It was Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century religious leader and founder of Protestantism in Germany, who first used the political prints in pictorial propaganda on a large scale for the purpose of his revolutionary movement.²⁵ The Netherlands in the seventeenth-century, however, became not only a center for skilled engravers and artists who enjoyed a considerable freedom from persecution, but also it was "a general place of refuge for political malcontents and religious dissenters [French and other Europeans]."²⁶ The Netherlands became "the launching station for satirical prints directed largely against Louis XIV and his policies."²⁷

Yet with all the independence and usage and popularity that caricatures in the Netherlands had established during the seventeenth-century, professional caricaturists did not make a full appearance until the nineteenth century. In 1830, Charles Philipon, a French journalist and lithographer founded *La caricature*, a journal dedicated to satire which was banned in 1835 after a series of legal battles. *La caricature* was replaced by the same founder with another similar publication, *La charivari* and later another publication called *La caricature provisoire*. The success of Philipon's publications encouraged similar projects in the 1840s in Europe and the United States.²⁸

The U.S. Civil War and its aftermath provided unique opportunity for the emergence of caricature in the United States. Among the famous caricaturists of that

period is Thomas Nast, whose drawings for the *Harper's Weekly* left an enduring legacy of political symbols, including the Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey that still represent the two major American political parties.²⁹

The birth of daily editorial cartoons was claimed by some to have appeared in the New York *Daily Graphic* in 1873. But according to Charles Press, it was not really until the 1896 political campaign that newspaper political cartoons caught on. And as time rolled on, the number of editorial cartoonists and their quality of work have been in accord with the audience-demand cycle. By the turn of the century, there were as many as 500 political cartoonists working in U.S. newspapers. Their number, however, was reduced due to the growing movement of syndication. And by the end of World War I, many cartoonists had moved to the comics.³⁰

Statement of the Problem

To ask for objective political cartoons is quite certainly an illogical request. Yet, seeing a change in the portrayal of the Arab image has long been hoped for by the Arab community in the United States. Cartoonists frequently seize upon current problems and use satirical stereotypes means to reflect thoughts and feelings. The problem is perhaps most elaborately described by Dr. Laurence Michalak, a cultural anthropologist, who argued that since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the use of the anti-Arab stereotype in political cartoons was often practiced and became standard fare on the editorial pages of American newspapers. He added that the portrayal of Arabs in these editorial political cartoons has been "unbelievably negative."³¹

This portrayal process often vilifies, or brings discredit upon the Arab community in the United States and makes its members feel that they are being portrayed unfairly. It is, therefore, important to investigate how Americans actually see such portrayals as related to major recent events related to the Middle East.

This study uses a group of American students to determine whether political cartoons have changed in the portrayal of Arabs over the major events that occurred in the last 17 years. The *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* were the newspapers chosen for this investigation. The researchers focused on the negative, positive, unrealistic, realistic, or insulting portrayal of the Arabs. The results may add an extra dimension to the findings of previous scholars.

Brief Background to the Events in the Study

This study focuses on the past 17-years — 1973 to 1990 — during which the Arab world witnessed numerous events that may have left major marks on media portrayals of the Arabs. These five events are: 1) The 1973 Arab oil embargo; 2) Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977; 3) the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982; 4) the Palestinian uprising or Intifada in 1987; and 5) the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. As illustrated on the following page (Figure One) details are given on the newspapers that are considered in the study and also the five major events considered for the study covering the period of three months during which political cartoons were searched. Also given are the times between each event and the total cartoons of each event in each of the newspapers.

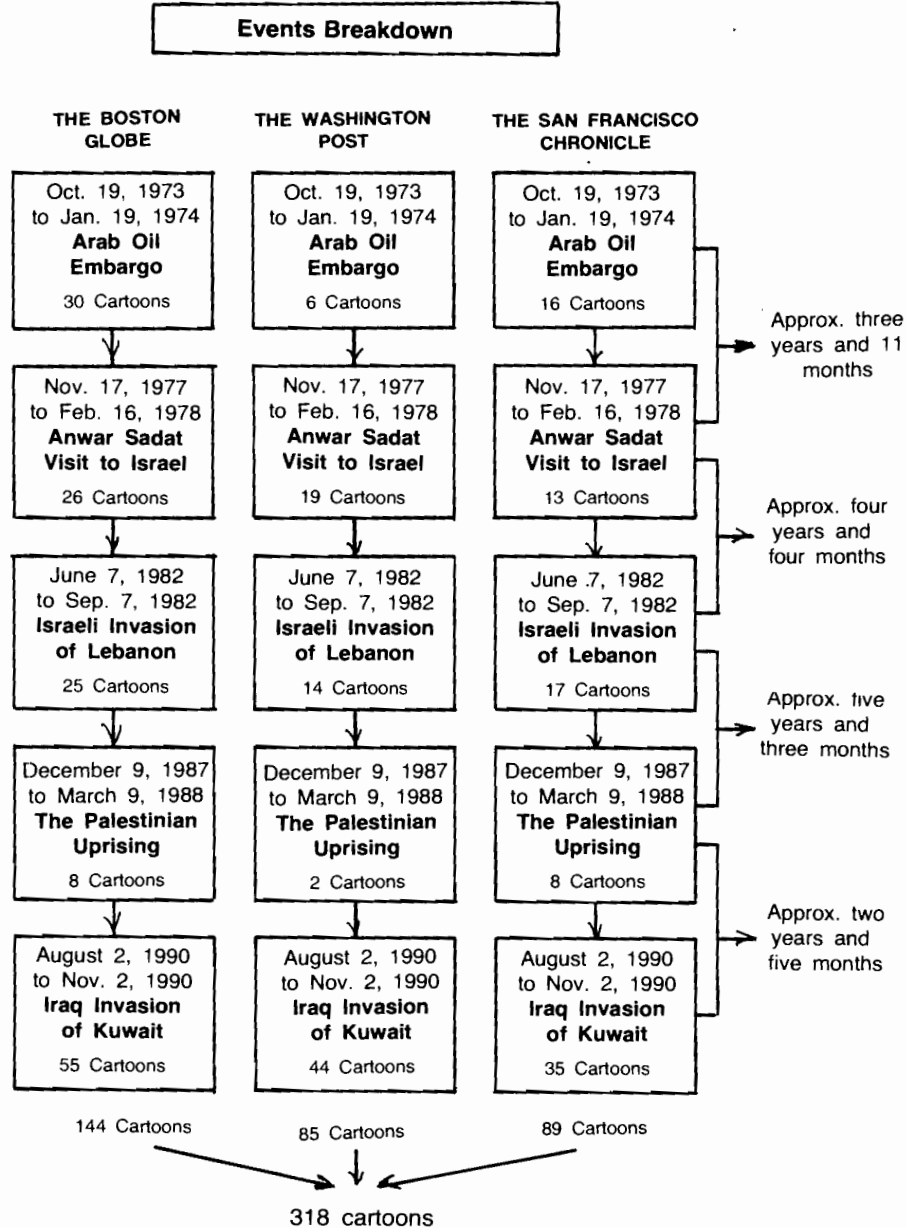


Figure one

The following is a brief look at these five major events:

1) **The Arab Oil Embargo:** (October 17, 1973)

On October 19, 1973, eleven days after the war broke out between Egypt and Syria against Israel — the October War — Saudi Arabia announced that it was cutting its oil production by 10 per cent immediately and threatened to halt completely the flow of oil to the United States unless Washington ceased its military aid to Israel. During the Saudi announcement, which came from a decision of oil ministers who had met in Kuwait on October 17, 1973, the Arabian Gulf sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi announced it was cutting in half the oil exports to the United States, and in Tripoli, the Libyan news agency called upon all Arab countries to stop all oil supplies to the United States and to withdraw their deposits from American banks.

On October 20, 1973, Saudi Arabia announced that it had decided to curtail total oil deliveries to the United States because of American arms shipments to Israel. Saudi Arabia and Algeria became the third and the fourth of the six major Arab oil-producing states to halt the flow of oil to the United States. Kuwait and Iraq followed shortly afterwards.

A front page article of the Washington Post, published on December 31, 1973 stated that the 770 million gallons of oil that had leaked out of the Arab world and into the United States since the embargo began had come from all the Arab countries with the possible exceptions of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.³² Regardless of this leakage, the oil embargo achieved its aim and continued causing a severe gasoline shortage in Europe, Canada and the United States.

2) **Anwar Sadat Visits Israel:** (November 19, 1977)

On November 15, 1977, Menachem Begin, the Israel prime minister at that time, formally invited the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to visit Israel. On November 19, 1977, Sadat arrived in Israel carrying proposals for peace between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbours. In the trip Sadat affirmed that Egypt would never go to war and that Egypt welcomed Israel to the region. But he also said that the process of peace must include a full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories, including "Arab Jerusalem" and the acceptance of Palestinian rights.

Although the demand of Sadat was for the benefit of all Arab countries, there was both criticism and praise for Sadat's move. Throughout the Arab world, angry Arabs, including some Egyptians, marched on Egyptian embassies, burning Egyptian flags and denouncing the Egyptian president as a traitor to the Arab cause.³³

3) **Israeli Invasion of Lebanon:** (June 6, 1982)

On June 6, 1982, Israeli troops and tanks invaded southern Lebanon under cover of air and naval strikes and reported the capture of a major position from which guerillas of the Palestine Liberation Organization had shelled the northern Israel panhandle.³⁴

4) **Palestinian Uprising:** (December 9, 1987)

On December 9, 1987, angry Palestinians in the occupied territories besieged Israeli soldiers, hurling stones or whatever came to hand. These riots which are commonly known as *Intifada*, are considered the worst in the 20 years of Israeli rule of the territories captured during the Six-Day War, in 1967.³⁵

The rioting that took place in Gaza Strip and the West Bank focused world attention on the dissatisfaction of Palestinians under the Israeli rule of the occupied territories. As a result, the Israeli government placed certain stringent restrictions on journalists. In fact, some of the areas of the West Bank were closed to reporters. Israel's harsh response created criticism even among its allies.

The Intifada has been so influential that it has affected the general public opinions toward Israel as well as that of the editorial or political cartoonist. The uprising has continued until now but at a milder level and with no solution in sight for the Palestinian problem.

5) Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: (August 2, 1990)

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait after talks broke down over oil production and debt repayment. Days later, the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, annexed Kuwait and declared it as Iraq's 19th province, while the United Nations Security Council gave the U.S. and other allied nations the right to enforce the embargo by force. Within a month the United States deployed combat aircraft and troops in defense of Saudi Arabia and effected military buildup to ultimately free Kuwait.

The military build up of the U.S. created a strong reaction in the United States among some factions. Some even coined the catchwords "No blood for oil" to try to alter public opinion. Nevertheless, the U.S. and its allies prepared for an imminent war which probably was perceived as the most popular war in the U.S. media since WW II. Kuwait was finally liberated on February 26, 1991.

Review of Literature

Despite an abundance of published works dealing with Arab-image problems in the United States mass media, almost none was found that deals with the issue of Arab portrayals in political cartoons and American perception. In addition to the major studies discussed above, several other works treat political cartoons.

For instance, one writer, Joanne B. Modlin in 1987, looked at the trends over time. She examined cartoons, editorials, and headlines from six American newspapers. She did extensive analyses on the cartoons, including an examination of the symbols and images of the main actors. She also examined the frequencies of political leaders used to represent the actors in the cartoons, and headlines were compared.

Modlin found that cartoons focused on effective dimensions, written editorials emphasized the U.S. role and policy concerns, and headlines tended to report actual events. Modlin said that political cartoons present a more effectively oriented view of political events than headlines and editorials.

In the 1983 work by George H. Damon, Jr., *A Survey of Political Cartoons Dealing with the Middle East*,³⁶ he found that editorial-page cartoons come from the boiled-down information in editorial pages, which statistically constitute the most widely-read pages of a newspaper. The political cartoons analyzed in Damon's study are from four American newspapers: the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The author chose political cartoons that covered four time spans corresponding to the four most intense periods of the several Middle East conflicts from 1948 to 1973.

Damon found that each of the newspapers had a different approach in dealing with Arab issues. He concluded that cartoonists felt free to use the Arab stereotype at a time when tolerance was rising toward other ethnic groups. This implied a weakness on the part of the Arab-American community to manage or change such an image in the mass media in general.

Damon confirmed that if the pejorative Arab stereotype is to be changed to a more realistic image, strong efforts must be made to demand a more balanced position in the written editorials regarding the "essence" of the problem in the Middle East and offer an objective stand on Arab-Israel/Arab-U.S. problems.

Neal G. Lendenmann's 1983 study,³⁷ *Arab Stereotyping in Contemporary American Political Cartoons*, which covers the period between 1978 until 1982, points out that these cartoons depict themes or caricatures that would be clearly unacceptable if they were made toward, say, Blacks, Orientals, Irish, or Italians, but were not yet perceived as inappropriate if the subject was the Arab people or their culture. Lendenmann added that a change can happen if "the general public is sensitized to the unfair stereotyping and defamation of Arabs in the American media..."³⁸

Also Lendenmann found some evidence of Arab blackmail in the work of some cartoonists including the Arab Scam, "Abscam." This term Abscam which became a major news story in 1980 could be identified from Lendenmann in the conclusion of his study. He explained:

These cartoons have appeared with alarming frequency since the revelation that several congressmen and a Senator had been caught in illegal activities by FBI agents posing as 'Arabs.' Even though no Arab was involved in the FBI investigation, the word 'Abscam' gained popular usage and the political cartoons dealing with the affair became for the most part unwriting, but nevertheless potent vehicles for disparaging Arabs and, by unintended implication, Arab-Americans.

Lendenmann added that,

The iniquity of the whole Abscam affair and its attendant political cartoons was its contribution to the growth of a general perception that Arab 'perfidiousness and intrigue' was insinuating itself into the very corridors of the U.S. Government even though no Arab had had anything to do with Abscam... As such, even where political cartoons employing figures dressed as Arabs were meant to criticize the FBI, the use of such figures merely emphasized and perpetuated anti-Arab stereotypes that would not be tolerated were other ethnic groups the victim.³⁹

Since 1970, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) also have shown major interest in the portrayal in the American media. Among their various publications is *The Uprising in Cartoons*.⁴⁰ This collection of cartoons selected from American newspapers depicted what was described as "empathetic rendering of Palestinians as victims struggling for self-determination have highlighted both the Western and Israeli-left response to the Intifada."⁴¹ The claim was made that the depictions of the Intifada in American and Canadian newspaper editorial political cartoons signaled a shift in the press and public sympathy. In the introduction, Don Betz said that only a few of those that depict the uprising perpetuated the tired old stereotype. "The majority [of the cartoons] replaced negative, brutish portrayal of Palestinians with drawings of a suffering but not indomitable people striving to secure essential human rights,"⁴² Betz wrote. The author says that this positive representation of these political cartoons is a small but significant step toward developing a more accurate view of

Palestinians in the minds of the people of North America.

To sum up, past research has indicated that cartoons have shown a definite presence of pejorative stereotyping of Arabs. These studies, nevertheless, have not been updated until now. This study will investigate if landmark events have brought about a positive influence of the American mind. It also looks at how Americans feel about the hanging images of Arabs and Arab life as reflected in editorial cartoons over the past 20 years.

Methodology

Using previous studies of editorial cartoon portrayals of Arabs as a comparison, this study focused on three major newspapers. Using a group of American college students as evaluators, it was postulated that the findings would indicate a change in public attitudes reflected in these portrayals.

First, cartoons were collected from the *Washington Post*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Boston Globe*. These cartoons were any — either in-house or syndicated — that dealt with Arab issues and were published on the editorial pages within the desired period. These cartoons covered the five major political events that occurred in the Arab world over the period of the last 17-years, namely: 1) the Arab oil embargo; 2) Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel; 3) Israeli invasion of Lebanon; 4) the Palestinian uprising; and 5) the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The *Boston Globe* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* were selected because they were shown by Damon to be the most biased among the four newspapers he chose for his study up to 1973. The third newspaper that was examined is the *Washington Post*, which, according to Lendenmann, has maintained a steady negative position in the way its editorial political cartoons portray Arabs.

With the consideration that the characteristic of the population has been specified into subgroups, i.e. oil embargo, Sadat's visit to Israel, etc., that are to be represented in the sample, stratified sampling assures that all considered subgroups or *stratification variables* will be represented in the final sample. Unlike the simple sampling and the systematic sampling, the stratified sampling can generate a sample that has a more balanced representation across all three newspapers and the five events. Also, Stratified sampling techniques "have a smaller sampling error than either simple random or systematic samples of a comparable size."⁴³

The following formulas⁴⁴ are used to determine the total sample needed to get accurate results from the population which consists of 318 cartoons.

Approximate sample size required to estimate p with a bound B on the error of estimation:

$$n = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^L N_i^2 p_i q_i / w_i}{N^2 D + \sum_{i=1}^L N_i p_i q_i}$$

where w_i is the fraction of observations allocated to stratum i , p_i is the population proportion for stratum i , and

$$D = \frac{B^2}{4}$$

This formula gives the total number of cartoons to be sampled which then can be subdivided into 15 subgroups — five events multiplied by three newspapers — to give the number of cartoons from each subgroup. This number of cartoons was then randomly selected from the total available cartoons in the subgroups to get the cartoons which eventually were evaluated.⁴⁵ This procedure ensured that personal bias would not be introduced by selecting only cartoons considered biased toward a certain group. The confidence level of .1 or 90% accuracy was decided upon since it reduced the total number of cartoons — at (.05) or 95% of the total numbers of cartoons needed to be evaluated is 178, while at (.1) or 90% confidence, only 77 cartoons were needed.

In order to measure the perceptions, 76 American students studying at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah were willing to participate in the pretest-post test measurement. These students were majoring in history, international relations, Near Eastern studies, political science and other majors were pre-tested. The pre-test, which took approximately 15 minutes to complete, would not guarantee them to participate in the post-test unless they score 80% or above.

Out of the 76 respondents, only 36 students scored 80% and above, which was the minimum limit set for participants in the evaluation process. Two of the 36 were not included in the study because one of them was of Middle Eastern origin and the second one's schedule was too full to participate.

THE PRE-TEST: This test was designed to assess the knowledge that students possessed about the Middle East. It featured questions related to political personalities of Arab countries and Israel, along with historical events related to the Middle East.

The researchers believed that only those who know some facts about that part of the world would be able to provide a valid judgment when they did the evaluation.

THE INSTRUMENT: This study instrument was a packet that contained 77 editorial political cartoons. A new cartoon was placed in each page of the packet followed by four questions with different scales. The questions were as follows:

1. To what degree does the cartoon portray a positive or a negative image of Arabs?
 - Extremely negative
 - Quite negative
 - Somewhat negative
 - Neutral
 - Somewhat positive
 - Quite positive
 - Extremely positive
2. Do you believe the above cartoon is an insult to the Arab world?
 - Definitely yes
 - Probably yes
 - Uncertain
 - Probably no
 - Definitely no
3. Do you consider this cartoon to be?
 - Unrealistic — — — & Realistic
4. What is the theme of the above cartoon? (15-20 words maximum)

Question four, which was open-ended, was included in order to gain additional insights as to how Americans interpret these cartoons.

The instrument was divided into three sections. Each section represented one newspaper. The first section, which was the *Boston Globe*, contained 34 total cartoons. There were seven for the Arab oil embargo, six for Sadat's visit to Israel, six for the Israel invasion of Lebanon, two for the Palestinian uprising and 13 for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The second section, that of the *Washington Post*, contained 22 cartoons. There were two for the Arab oil embargo, five for the Sadat visit to Israel, three for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, one for the Palestinian uprising and 11 for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The last section was the *San Francisco Chronicle* and contained 21 cartoons. There were four for the Arab oil embargo, three for the Sadat visit to Israel, four for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, two for the Palestinian uprising and eight for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

THE PROCEDURE: Thirty-four of the American evaluators with scores of 80% and above were contacted on January 24, 1992. All were scheduled for an appointment between the days of January 28, 29, 30 and 31, 1992. Evaluators were promised ten U.S. dollars for the time they spent evaluating. It was explained to them that the average person required some two hours to finish. They were permitted to take a break any time during testing.

The evaluators were instructed on how to respond to questions concerning any cartoon. Three examples in the first pages of the instruments were inserted for such a purpose. The evaluators were told about the five major events that they were going to evaluate and were also reminded that during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, there were two wars in the world, one between Iraq and Iran, and the second in the Falklands.⁴⁶

Out of the thirty-four evaluators, four were eliminated from the study because it took them an average of only one hour and 15 minutes to finish. This period was considered by the investigators to be insufficient to give the proper reflection needed to evaluate all 77 cartoons.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS: This study used the statistical package SPSS 4.0 released for the Macintosh and developed by SPSS Inc. With the use of Mac IIcx computer, both descriptive statistics and multiple sample Chi-square tests along with contingency table analysis to analyze the data generated in order to find differences in the portrayal of the Arab image in editorial political cartoons over the years. Cross-tabulations from the data on selected variables were also produced.

Chi-square statistical tests determined whether significant relationships existed between two or more independent groups. This was done by comparing the expected probability assuming no change with the sample probability which we observed.

Findings

Based on the five major events that have happened over the last 17-years and the three newspapers mentioned, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Do these cartoons characterize Arabs in a negative, neutral, or positive way?
- 2) Do these cartoons portray realistic or unrealistic images about the Arabs?

- 3) Are the cartoons that appear in these editorial pages considered by (college students) to be insulting?
- 4) What type of interpretation did the evaluators give to the most negative, the most positive, the most unrealistic, the most realistic and the most insulting?

Based on the above questions, the following facts were found:

Negative, Positive or Neutral:

Table One

Degree of Positive or Negative Portrayal of the Arab Image with Types of Events

Events \ Portrayal	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Missing	Row Total
Arab Oil Embargo	307 78.8%	78 20%	4 1.1%	1 .3%	390 16.9%
Sadat's visit to Israel	216 51.5%	131 31.2%	70 16.7%	3 .7%	420 18.2%
Israel Invasion of Lebanon	245 62%	131 33.6%	12 3.1%	2 .5%	390 16.6%
Palestinian Uprising	30 20.1%	51 34.2%	68 45.7%		149 6.5%
Iraq Invasion of Kuwait	494 51.4%	457 47.6%	8 .8%	2 .2%	961 41.6%
Column Total	1291 55.8%	848 36.7%	162 7%	8 .3%	2310 100%

Chi-Square	Value	DF	Significance
Pearson	646.82692	32	.00000

The percentage in Table One shows the degree of "positive or negative" portrayal of Arabs in general. Pearson Chi-square statistics were significant at the 0.1 level. This indicates that there has occurred a significant change relationship between the degree of "positiveness" and "negativeness" among the five major events.

Table One also shows that the "neutrality" level in the portrayal of Arab image in editorial political cartoons in all newspapers has steadily increased by more than two times from the Arab oil embargo to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The Table also shows that the "negative" portrayal is on the decrease.

Realistic Vs. Unrealistic

Table Two
Editorial Political Cartoons Portrayal of Realistic Level
Toward the Arab Type of Event

Portrayal Event	Very Unrealistic	Slightly Unrealistic	Neutral	Slightly Realistic	Very Realistic	Missing date	Row Total
Arab Oil Embargo	32 8.2%	101 26%	96 24.7%	128 32.9%	27 6.9%	5 1.3%	389 16.8%
Sadat's visit to Israel	15 3.6%	59 14%	77 18.3%	191 45.4%	76 18.1%	3 .7%	421 18.2%
Israel Invasion of Lebanon	19 4.9%	43 11%	89 22.8%	183 46.9%	55 14.1%	1 .3%	390 16.9%
Palestinian Uprising	2 .7%	13 8.1%	16 22.8%	84 47%	33 21.5%	1 .7%	149 6.5%
Iraq Invasion of Kuwait	33 3.4%	137 14.3%	169 17.6%	443 46.1%	173 18%	6 .6%	961 41.6%
Column Total	101 4.4%	353 15.3%	447 19.4%	1029 44.5%	364 15.8%	16 .7%	2310 100%

Chi-Square	Value	DF	Significance
Pearson	122.64903	20	.00000

Table Two showed that 34% had said that the cartoons during the Arab embargo of 1973 were "very to slightly unrealistic", but only 12.7 said the same about the Iraqi invasion. Also, 40% of the evaluators said that cartoons for the Arab embargo were "very to slightly realistic". The percentage increased to 64% for cartoons published during the invasion. This noticeable "decrease of unrealism" and "increase in realism" indicates that cartoonists are becoming more accurate and realistic in their depiction of the Arab world. Chi-square statistics also were significant at the 0.1 level.

Insulting Depiction or Not

Table Three

Editorial Political Cartoons Portrayal as an Insult to the Arab World by type of Event

Portrayal Events	Yes	Uncertain	No	Missing	Row Total
Arab Oil Embargo	236 60.6%	71 18.3%	81 20.9%	1 .3%	389 16.9%
Sadat's visit to Israel	168 39.9%	70 16.6%	181 43%	2 .5%	421 18.2%
Israel Invasion of Lebanon	188 48.2%	76 19.5%	125 32%	1 .3%	390 16.6%
Palestinian Uprising	18 12.1%	24 16.1%	106 41.1%	1 .7%	149 6.5%
Iraq Invasion of Kuwait	326 33.9%	158 16.4%	477 49.6%		961 41.6%
Column Total	936 40.5%	399 17.3%	477 42%	5 .2%	2310 100%

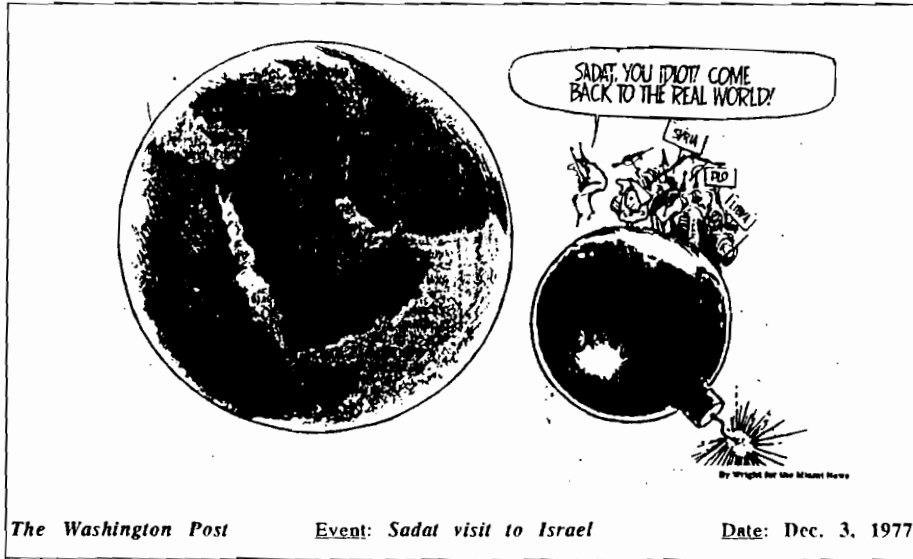
Chi-Square	Value	DF	Significance
Pearson	228.21944	20	.00000 -

When asked if they believed that the cartoons portrayed an "insulting message" vis-a-vis the Arab world, Table Three data showed that 61% said yes for the cartoons of the Arab oil embargo. Only 34% or close to half of the respondents agreed that cartoons of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait portrayed an "insulting message" to the Arabs. The same table also showed that 50% of the respondents said that the cartoons of the Iraqi invasion "do not insult" the Arab world compared to only 21% who said the same for the oil embargo of 1973. Chi-square statistics also were significant at the 0.1 level.

Evaluators Interpretations

Part of the purpose of this study was to elicit a response from the American students regarding their *perceptions* of the cartoons that were chosen to be the most negative, most positive, most unrealistic, most realistic and the most insulting. The open-ended question included in the test allowed for comments that interpreted their feelings about the portrayals represented in the cartoons. Although their answers showed a variety of opinions, at the same time there was a general agreement among them as to the main theme of each cartoon.

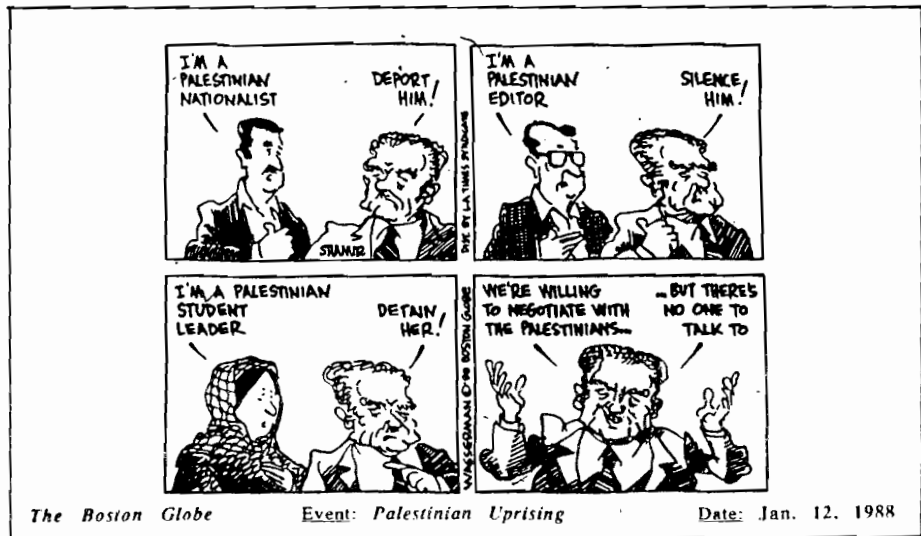
In response to the cartoon below that got the highest negative marking (that is, that agreed by evaluators as the most negative portrayal of Arabs), the students interpreted the theme of the cartoon. This was a portrayal of Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977. Note the negative tone of the evaluations:



- Most Arab nations live on a time bomb unwilling to make peace or to compromise with the West and Israel.
- The rest of the Arab world is mad at Sadat for being realistic.
- Sadat was for peace and went after it. The rest of the Middle East was not.
- The rest of the Arab world is upset at Sadat for abandoning their "common cause".
- The lack of support Sadat received from the rest of the Arab world.
- The other Arab countries refuse to support Egypt's discussion with Israel.
- Sadat was the only leader smart enough to get away from the self-destructive past.
- The Arabs are mad at Sadat and want him to return to the resentment the others have of Israel.
- The Arab world is violent, unstable,.....
- The Arab world runs only on violence and to negotiate is stupid.
- The Arab disapprove of peace — they are war mongers.
- Sadat is making peace while other Arab countries are trying to destroy it.
- Arabs unwilling to accept peace.
- Only Sadat was bright enough to make peace.
- Sadat's depart from conflict in an effort at peace.
- Egypt was a rational country and the rest of the Arabs were freer soon to be destroyed.
- The Arab countries are not too happy with Sadat but their situation isn't that well off.

- Arabs don't want peace.
- Arabs want to continue fight against Israel.
- Arabs feel Sadat must be out of his mind for going to Israel.
- Sadat has to come back to the real world.
- Sadat is the only sane one of the Middle East
- Other Arabs were living in their own world that would soon blow up.
- All other Arab nations are unwilling to recognize Israel and creating a time bomb because of it.
- Arabs live in their own world—a bomb about to explode—a world based on violence. They are unwilling to negotiate.
- Arabs are not interested in peace only violence.
- The Arabs are going to self-destruct.

By 1988, the tone of many of the cartoons had changed. In response to the cartoon below that got the highest positive marking (that is, that agreed by evaluators as the most positive portrayal of Arabs), the American Student interpretations were as follows:



- Palestinians are willing to negotiate — Israel plays underhandedly.
- Palestinians aren't free to negotiate with the Israelis.
- Israel refuses to recognize any Palestinians — won't negotiate.
- Israel says one thing but actually does another.
- Israel was hypocritical dealing with the Palestinians.
- Israeli Bullheadedness unwillingness to negotiate.
- Israeli manipulating everything in Palestine.

- Israel does away with all opposition, but claim to be willing to talk with the opposition.
- Israel is a bully pushing around Palestinians.
- Shamir talked peace but acted hostilely.
- Israelis' treatment of Palestinians in Israel, and silencing Palestinian dissent.
- The problem is with Shamir not with the Palestinians.
- Israel not willing to negotiate freely with the Palestinians.
- Israel is unfair in Palestinians' human rights.
- The Israelis are unreasonable and inhuman in dealing with the Palestinians.
- The Israelis are too much in control of the situation to talk to anyone.
- Israel ignoring all Palestinians willing to work for peace.
- The Palestinians are capable people, except the Israelis refuse to listen to them.
- The Palestinians are willing to talk, but Israel will only talk under its own conditions.
- Israel unwillingness to negotiate over occupied Palestinian territories.

In response to the cartoon below that got the highest realistic appeal (that is, that agreed by evaluators as the most realistic portrayal of Arabs), the student interpretations were as follows:



- Each nation was waiting for the other to do something first in regard to peace.
- Neither Israel or Egypt is willing to make the next move.
- Both countries want peace, but they were waiting for the other to make the first move.
- Sadat and Begin approach peace but not... unwillingly....
- The stalemate — no one was willing to move.
- The lack of dialogue between Israel and Egypt.
- That each country wants the other to move first so can respond — don't want to be...

- Israel and Egypt are willing to talk, but not really trusting each other.
- Sadat and Begin were both willing to move if the other one went first.
- The peace talk were very hard to negotiate.
- An accurate depiction of the circumstances.
- Sadat and Begin were neither willing to really compromise.
- Shows how hard it was for Egypt to negotiate.
- Each side unwilling to make concessions.
- Difficulty in getting things done in negotiation.
- Both countries don't want to talk further action after their initial moves.
- Peace process often in deadlock in the Middle East.
- The gridlock of the peace process.
- Neither one wants to make the next risky move.

In response to the cartoon below that got the highest unrealistic appeal (that is, that agreed by evaluators as the most unrealistic portrayal of Arabs), their interpretations were as follows:

- The Arabs are violent camel-riders who plotted to destroy the world economy.
- The oil embargo effect on various type of automobile purchases.
- Purpose of the embargo was simply to get rich in order to indulge in wasteful consumerism.
- Arabs are buying fancy things from the embargo.
- The Arabs were very pleased with their actions.
- Arabs getting wealthy by exploiting non-Arabs.
- Arabs conspiring against the American Public.
- Arab oil nations deliberately affecting the economy of the U.S.
- OPEC nations were conspiring for economic gain.
- Arabs are greedy, evil economy destroyer.
- The Arabs made gas-guzzling cars impossible to own because of oil prices.
- The glee exhibited by greedy Arabs after raising the prise of oil and sticking it to the American market.
- The Arabs spend the oil wealth foolishly.



- The Arab conspired against the West to their economic advantage.
- That by the oil embargo, the Arabs are able to fulfil their own purposes (silly, selfish whims).
- A stereotyping.
- Arab oil embargo hurt wealthy Americans.
- By keeping the oil to themselves, the oil rich countries now had money and oil for Cadillacs.
- The Arabs created the oil embargo only to create profit for themselves.
- The Arab oil embargo was put into place so Arabs could get wealthy.
- The effect of the oil crisis had on American companies.
- Very unrealistic
- Arabs are rich from oil and spend the money on luxuries
- The "joy" the Arabs gain from making an impact on the U.S. market.
- Bedouin stereotype of rich Arabs buying out the U.S.

and finally, in response to the cartoon that got the highest insulting rating (that is, that one agreed by evaluators as the most insulting portrayal of Arabs), they all agreed that the most insulting cartoon was the same as the one chosen to be the most negative. The reader may refer to the respondent's interpretations for the negative cartoon shown previously.

Discussion and Conclusion

From the interpretations that the American students provided, it seems that evaluators all agreed that cartoons in 1973 were more negative than the ones from the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They agreed that during those 17 years these cartoons became more realistic and fair. They also agreed that these cartoons became less insulting than the ones from the 1973 period.

Jack Shaheen noted in his 1984 book *The TV Arab* that he was looking forward to changes in the portrayals of the Arabs in the media. According to this study conducted by the authors working with American students, the changes hoped for by Shaheen are already well underway. As reflected by the interpretations of American cartoons and the results of the data, it appears that a major shift of American opinion has taken place over the past two decades in regard to the presentation of the Arab nations. Obviously many negative and unfair attitudes still persist, and stereotypes continue to appear in the American media. Nevertheless, the authors found it encouraging that the students were sophisticated enough about Middle East matters that they were able to distinguish between propaganda and fact.

The evaluators' comments reveal their awareness of the positions of the parties in conflict in the Middle East. And they are aware of the unjustified negative portrayals of Arabs. Such awareness reveals that stereotypes in political cartoons of the Arab culture is only a typical ingredient in the art of caricaturization.

This study seems to indicate that most readers of American editorial pages make

since 1973 have brought about changes in the portrayals of Arab people and the Arab world. This encouraging view has accompanied an improvement in world tensions. The hope is that the changes reflected in editorial cartoons will be accompanied by Arab portrayals in the other mass media that are so important in the formulation of public opinion.

Notes

- Denis McQuail, *Mass communication Theory: An Introduction*, (London: Sage Publications, 2nd ed. 1989), p. 52.
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3. Ibid., p. 46.
4. See, for example, the publications of American-Arab Anti-Discrimination, (ADC), Washington, D.C.
5. Cited from Harld R. Piety's article, "Bias on American Editorial Pages," in E. Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983), p. 134.
6. See, for example, George H. Damon, Jr., "A Survey of Political Cartoons Dealing with the Middle East," and Neal G. Lendenmann, "Arab Stereotyping in Contemporary American Political Cartoons," both in Edmund Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983).
7. Edmund Ghareeb, *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983) p. 19
8. Ibid., p. 22
9. Ibid., p. 194
10. Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon*, (U.S.A.: Associated University, 1981), p. 327.
11. Ghareeb, op. Cit. p.7.
12. Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.
13. Jack G. Shaheen, "The Arab Image in the American Mass Media" in Edmund Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council), p. 335.
14. Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV Arab*, (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), p. 12.
15. Michael Suleiman, "The Effect of American Perception of Arabs on Middle East Issues," in Edmund Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council), pp. 338-342.
16. Adnan Abu Odeh, "The American Image in the Arab Mass Media," in Edmund Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council), pp. 355-368.
17. Ibid., pp. 355-356.
18. Ibid., p. 357.
19. Ibid., pp. 358-359.
20. Lance Bennett, News: *The Politics of Illusion*, (U.S.A.: Longman, 2nd edition, 1988).

21. Laurence Michalak, *Cruel and Unusual*, (Washington, D.C.: ADC Issue Paper No. 15, ADC Research Institute, 1988), p. 8.
22. Cited from Audrey Handelman, *Political Cartoonist As They Saw Themselves*, by J.D. Weaver, **Drawing Blood: Political Cartoonists**, (Holiday, August 1965), p. 72.
23. Gerald Stone, *Examining Newspapers*, (USA: Sage Publication Inc., 1987), p. 37.
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25. Lawrence Streicher, "Caricature", *International Encyclopedia of Communications*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Volume 3, 1989), p. 234.
26. Ibid., p. 235.
27. Ibid., p. 235.
28. Ibid., 236.
29. Ibid., p. 238.
30. Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon*, (U.S.A.: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1981), pp. 263-267.
31. Laurence Michalak, *Cruel and Unusual: Negative Image of Arabs in American Popular Culture*, (Washington, D.C.: ADC Issue Paper No. 15, ADC Research Institute, 1988), p. 10.
32. The **Washington Post**, October 19, 1973, p. 1.
33. Thomsd Lippmann, *The Washington Post*, November 20, 1977 p.1.
34. The *Boston Globe*, June 7, 1992.
35. This war is also known as 1967 War.
36. See George H. Damon, Jr., "A Survey of Political Cartoons Dealing with the Middle East." pp. 143-153.
37. Coordinator of Research and Information Programs for the National Association of Arab-Americans.
38. Neal G. Lendenmann, "Arab Stereotyping in Contemporary American Political Cartoons," in E. Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, (Washington, D.C.: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983), p. 3 53.
39. Ibid., 351.
40. Don Betz, *The Uprising in Cartoons*, (Washington, D.C.: ADC Issue Paper No. 21, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 1988).
41. Ibid., p. 1.
42. Ibid, p. 3.
43. Mary J. Smith, *Contemporary Communication Research Methods*, (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 82-83.
44. Richard Scheaffer, William Mendenhall and Lyman Ott, *Elementary Survey Sampling*, (Boston, PWS-KENT Publishing Company, Fourth Edition, 1990), p. 119.
45. Refer to Figure One for details.
46. The reason for such a reminder is because there were some cartoons in the research instrument that refer to Iraq and Iran war and the Falkland war.