

Challenging Stereotypes

How the stereotypical portrayals of Muslims and Islam
are challenged through the enemies in *Homeland*

Gunhild-Marie Høie



A Thesis Presented to the
Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages in partial
fulfillment of the Requirements for the MA degree

University of Oslo

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Abstract

Following the terrorist attack on 9/11, actions and practices of the United States government, as well as the dominant media discourse and non-profit media advertising, contributed to create a post-9/11 climate in which Muslims and Arabs were viewed as non-American. This established a binary paradigm between Americans and Muslims, where Americans represented “us” whereas Muslims represented “them.” Through a qualitative analysis of the main characters in the post-9/11 terrorism-show, *Homeland*, season one (2011), as well as an analysis of the opening sequence and the overall narrative in the show, this thesis argues that this binary system of “us” and “them” is no longer black and white, but blurred, and hard to define. My analysis indicates that several of the enemies in the show break with the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as crude, violent fanatics. Instead, these characters add insight, depth and complexity to the contemporary stereotypical image of the Muslim enemy. This is most evident with the main character in the show, Sergeant Nicholas Brody, a white, U.S. marine who, after eight years in captivity in the Middle East, converts to Islam. Brody’s character connects Muslim and Islam to positive qualities, such as freedom, openness and kindness. His character also sheds positive light on Muslims and Islam in that he uses his newfound religion to cope with his everyday life as a returning marine, dealing with the pressure both from his family and from society. Through the persistent theme of family and fathering, and the reiteration of conservative family values, Brody’s character reveals that Muslim values are indeed comparable to American values. The common denominator, family, becomes what fills the gap between “us” and “them,” making “the otherness,” what is foreign and unknown, become familiar and known. This portrayal indicates signs of acceptance and challenges contemporary stereotypes of Muslims and Islam in a genre where the norm historically has been the opposite.

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Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

1.1 Introduction and thesis statement

In the early morning on September 11, 2001, the 110-story twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City collapsed after having been struck by two hijacked aircraft. The terrorist attack, which claimed the lives of 2,973 civilians, was, up to that point, the deadliest attack that has occurred on U.S. soil. Nineteen members of the terrorist group al Qaeda, which claims to practice the religion of Islam, and whose leader, Osama bin Laden, sought refuge in Afghanistan where Islam is the dominant religion, were responsible for the attacks. For Muslims all over the world, therefore, the terrorist attacks represented a dividing line in American history, as well as in their own collective history. The tragic events also created a division between American Muslims and Americans.¹

In a speech addressed to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush explicitly distinguished the religion of Islam from the actions of the terrorists by saying that “the enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.”² At the same time, a series of laws, including the U.S. Patriot Act³ of 2001, the purpose of which was to deter and punish terrorist acts worldwide, resulted in major changes in areas such as immigration law, government surveillance and the definition of terrorism.⁴ Because of the government’s anti-terror campaign, thousands of Arabs and Muslims were questioned, arrested, detained, deported or monitored, and members of religious and ethnic minority communities were barred from boarding airplanes solely

¹ Lori Peek, *Behind the Backlash. Muslim Americans after 9/11* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 7.

² U.S. Department of State, *Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress*, September 20, 2001, http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf (accessed April 23, 2014).

³ The Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act.

⁴ Nancy Kassop, “The War Power and Its Limits,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2003): 514, <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed February 3, 2014).

based on their names, appearance or country of origin.⁵ The policies of the U.S. government resulted in “a rise of anti-U.S. sentiment across the Islamic world and in the growing alienation of Muslim Americans inside the United States itself.”⁶ Hence, in the immediate 9/11 aftermath, governmental actions and practices as well as the dominant media discourse and non-profit media advertising, contributed to create a post 9/11-climate where Muslims and Arabs were viewed as non-American, thus establishing a binary paradigm between Americans and Muslims.⁷

In the years following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, American crime dramas and terrorism-shows have “increasingly drawn on themes of political violence and homeland security, developing narratives that deal with actual, threatened, and suspected terrorist acts.”⁸ In crime dramas and terrorism-shows such as *Law & Order* (1990-2010), *24* (2001-2010), *Without a Trace* (2002-2009), *Num3rs* (2005-2010), *NCIS* (2003-) and *Bones* (2005-) the enemies are linked to Islam, Arab nationals living in the United States and/or Americans of Middle Eastern descent.⁹ One can therefore argue that during the 2000s, the binary opposition in American popular culture has been, and still is, between Americans and Muslims, where Americans represent “us” whereas Muslims represent the foreign threat, “them.”¹⁰

Ten years after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Muslims are still being portrayed as the enemy in much of American popular culture, including the Golden Globe-nominated terrorism-show *Homeland* (2011- ongoing), starring Damian Lewis and Claire Danes. However, with *Homeland* there is one notable difference: the binary system between “us” and “them” is no longer black and white. This thesis argues that at least *one* of the characters in *Homeland*, Sergeant Nicholas Brody, a white, Christian marine who converts to Islam, breaks with the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as crude, violent fanatics who present a threat to U.S. soil, by portraying him as a complex character who operates on both sides. Through analyzing the enemies in the show, the aim of this thesis is to look at how Muslims and Islam are portrayed by asking the following question: *How does Homeland challenge the stereotypical Muslim enemy in American terrorism-shows post-9/11?*

⁵ Peek, 7.

⁶ Geneive Abdo, “Islam in America: Separate but Unequal,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2005): 17, <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed February 12, 2014).

⁷ Evelyn Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity through Nonprofit Advertising Post 9-11,” *American Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 1 (2007): 594, <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed January 9, 2014).

⁸ Yvonne Tasker, “Television Crime Drama and Homeland Security. From Law and Order to “Terror TV,”” *Criminal Journal*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2012): 44, <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed January 9, 2014).

⁹ Tasker, 44.

1.2 Primary sources

The main primary source used in this thesis is the terrorism-show *Homeland*, season one (2011). Parts of season two (2012) are also used, but only where they add depth or a broader understanding of the material in season one. There are two main reasons why I have chosen to focus mainly on the first season. First, considering the space limits set for this thesis, it is not possible to conduct a thorough analysis of a larger amount of material than season one provides. Second, the storyline and content in season two are evolving into a domestic drama of family that focuses less both on terrorism and on religion. Thus, in light of my thesis statement, most of the material in season two is not relevant for this thesis.

In season one, “The War on Terror” frames the show’s storyline. An American war hero, Sergeant Nicholas Brody¹¹, returns home after eight years in captivity in Iraq. The plot revolves around Brody’s return: Has he been “turned” by the enemy, the leader of a Middle East terrorist organization, Abu Nazir, while being held in captive, or is he really the war hero he is claiming and, at first, is also perceived to be? Throughout season one Brody is shifting between two worlds: on the one hand, we have an American war-hero, a rising political star who is admired by the local community, with a devoted wife and children who love him. On the other hand, we have the Brody who has converted to Islam and who is practicing his religion in secret, a religion that he shares with a terrorist leader who is counting on Brody’s loyalty. At the end of season two, it is still not clear which side Brody belongs to.

The reasons I have chosen to analyze *Homeland* in particular are first, because I find the show thrilling, exciting and entertaining. This makes the empirical data interesting to analyze. In addition, *Homeland* is fairly new, has received critical acclaim and won several awards, including the 2011 and 2012 Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series. This indicates the show’s significance, relevance and possible influence in American popular culture. The third and most important reason why I have chosen this show as my primary source is that I believe that *Homeland* challenges a contemporary trend of stereotyping Muslims, and the religion of Islam, as exclusively negative. Although stereotypical portrayals are present in *Homeland*, my claim is that the show adds something new to the genre of terrorism-TV by presenting a new type of enemy, and that it is therefore worth analyzing.

¹¹ I will from this point on, mainly refer to him only by his last name Brody, as this is what he for the most part is called by the other characters in the show.

1.3 Method

Because the aim of this thesis is to look at how the religion of Islam is presented through specific characters, and to explore how one or several of these characters challenge the stereotypical representation of Muslims and Islam, I have chosen a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world,” and consists of a set of “interpretive, material practices that make the world visible.” When using a qualitative approach, then, the aim is to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.”¹² In this thesis, the aim is to interpret the aspects of religion and stereotyping through analyzing specific characters in a terrorism-show.

My practical approach is based on Giorgi’s phenomenology analysis, the purpose of which is to build a bridge between empirical data and results by organizing the data and then analyzing it.¹³ The method was applied as described in the following four steps: first, I watched *Homeland* (season 1 and 2) a couple of times to get an overall impression of the series, and to see if there was a correlation between the show and my desired approach. Second, I identified the meaningful units, placed them in a scheme by chronological order, and color-coded them, according to the category they belonged to. The categories included the main foreign enemy Abu Nazir, and the partial enemy Sergeant Nicholas Brody, the other enemies in the show, religion (Muslim and/or Islam) and politics. Third, I abstracted the content in the meaningful units to bring about certain themes, and finally, I summed up the meaning of the various themes.

The strength of qualitative research is that it tries to say something about why things might be the way they are through exploring and uncovering people and their experiences in depth. However, qualitative research has also been criticized for being unscientific, subjective, or exploratory because it does not generate “hard evidence.”¹⁴ It is unquestionable that the interpretation of any given film or TV-show will be influenced by contextual factors, such as the spectator’s social identities and positions including age, race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and class.¹⁵ Therefore, an analysis of *Homeland*, a terrorism-show where part of the plot concerns an American marine converting

¹² Denzin K. Norman and Yvonna S. Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research,” in *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, ed. Denzin K. Norman and Yvonna S. Lincoln (The U.S.: Sage Publications, 2008), 4.

¹³ Amedeo Giorgi, “Sketch of a Psychological Phenomenological Method,” in *Phenomenology and Psychological Research*, ed. Amendo Giorgi (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 10-19.

¹⁴ Norman and Lincoln, 10-11.

¹⁵ Filmreference.com, “Reception theory” and “Reception theory: Methodology,” <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Reception-Theory.html> and

to a minority religion, will be read differently by me, a Norwegian female in my mid-twenties, belonging to the majority ethnic group and religion in my country, than by someone considering himself or herself a member of an ethnic or racial minority. Although my aim is to analyze the empirical data as objectively as possible, setting aside preconceived notions and assumptions, since “any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity,” there are “no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed.”¹⁶ By acknowledging this, I take into account that both personal and contextual factors will likely influence how I will read and create meaning when analyzing the show. I also acknowledge that the result of my analysis does not generate “hard evidence” that can “prove” whether or not there has actually been a shift in the way Muslims and/or Islam are portrayed in American terrorism-shows, or if *Homeland* only serves as an exception to the contemporary norm. However, it is my belief that by using the methodical approach described above, the result of the material analyzed will provide meaningful insight into how Muslims and Islam are portrayed, and how this portrayal challenges contemporary stereotypes.

1.4 Defining terms

Media and public officials often use the terms “Arab” and “Muslim” interchangeably, implying that all Arabs are Muslims and that all Muslims are Arabs, when in fact, only one-third of all Arab Americans are Muslim (the rest are Christian).¹⁷ For instance, of all foreign-born Muslims, 37% come from Arab speaking countries.¹⁸ Because the aim of this thesis is to look at how Muslims and Islam are portrayed in the terrorism-show *Homeland*, and to look at how the show challenges stereotypical depictions of Muslims, it is first necessary to define what is meant by the various terms. This section, therefore, presents a clarification of the terms Muslim, Arab and American Muslim, terrorism and terrorism-TV. I will also discuss the term “stereotype,” because, to argue that something or someone challenges stereotypical images, it is necessary to establish what the stereotypical images are and have been historically.

<http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Reception-Theory-METHODOLOGY.html> (accessed January 14, 2014).

¹⁶ Norman and Lincoln, 29.

¹⁷ Peek, 11.

¹⁸ Peek, 11.

1.4.1 Muslim, Arab and American Muslim

Muslim is “an identifier used to describe those who believe in the religion of Islam, and thus Muslims can come from any nation and be of any racial or ethnic background.”¹⁹ Arabs, on the other hand, “represent a heterogeneous ethnic population that shares a cultural and linguistic heritage and includes people who live in or trace their ancestries to countries in northern Africa and southwest Asia where the primary language is Arabic.”²⁰ Thus, there is no given correlation between being an Arab and belonging to the Muslim faith.

Originally, Muslim immigrants in the United States were primarily Lebanese and Syrians. They arrived in the U.S. toward the end of the 19th century, and formed isolated enclaves in the industrial cities of the Midwest.²¹ Even though a larger and more ethnically diverse group of immigrants, including Turks, Tartars, Yugoslavs and Albanians arrived in the inter-war period, it was not until the early 1950s that the Muslim population in America experienced noticeable growth.²² Because of factors such as the founding of the Federation of the Islamic Association of the United States and Canada (FIA), the construction of and the inauguration of a second mosque, and the arrival of students from Muslim countries, there was an “Islamic awakening on the American continent.”²³ Consequently, the Muslim population in America increased from approximately 10 000 in the late 1940s to 30 000 in the mid-1950s.²⁴

In 1963, the Muslim Student’s Association of the U.S. and Canada (MSA) was founded. The organization, whose initial agenda was to “stimulate the revival of Islamic learning and to articulate the maintenance of an Islamic identity in the new environment,” began “the laying down of the foundation of an Islamic presence in North America.”²⁵ Together with the liberalization of immigration laws during the 1970s and 80s, a substantial number of students and skilled and professional workers from lands with predominantly Muslim inhabitants arrived.²⁶ To a large extent, “the Muslim population today reflects this reality.”²⁷

¹⁹ Peek, 11.

²⁰ Peek, 11.

²¹ Ghulam M. Haniff, “The Muslim Community in America: A Brief Profile,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 2 (2003): 303, <http://www.tandfonline.com/> (accessed February 10, 2014).

²² Haniff, 304.

²³ Haniff, 304.

²⁴ Haniff, 306.

²⁵ Haniff, 305.

²⁶ Haniff, 305.

²⁷ Haniff, 305.

American Muslims, then, probably constitute one of the most ethnically diverse communities in America, including newly arrived immigrants, later-generation descendants of immigrants, and converts to the faith.²⁸ Immigrants make up about two-third of the Muslim American community, including individuals from at least 68 countries. Muslims from 80 nationalities and many more ethno-cultural groups compose the Islamic population in America. In 2001, the three largest ethnicities were South Asian (32%), Arab (26%) and Afro-American (20%).²⁹ However, since the U.S. government is prohibited from collecting census data on people's religious affiliations, there are no official statistics on the Muslim minority population in the U.S.³⁰ Estimates of their numbers vary from four to eight million. The media usually operates with seven million.³¹

The terrorist attacks on 9/11 had substantial impact on American Muslims and Arabs, their religion and communities.³² Following the attacks, Arabs and Muslims became targets of crime, harassment, government surveillance, backlash violence and government-sanctioned discrimination.³³ The hostility was often directed towards both Arabs and Muslims, or anyone mistaken to belong to either group. In addition, public opinion data reveals an increasingly negative attitude towards Muslims and the religion of Islam after the attacks. In 2004 and 2005, two national surveys commissioned by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), whose purpose was to measure public sentiment on Muslims and Islam, concluded "about one in four Americans harbors prejudice against Muslims."³⁴ A 2006-study based on public opinion data, also measuring public sentiment concerning Arabs and Muslims, concludes that even though the initial response in the immediate 9/11-aftermath indicates a more favorable attitude toward Muslims, Americans possessed "lingering resentment and reservations about Arab and Muslim Americans."³⁵ In the years following the

²⁸ Peek, 11 and 142 and Haniff, 309.

²⁹ Haniff, 309.

³⁰ Birgitte L. Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna, *Fueling our Fears. Stereotyping, media coverage, and public opinion of Muslim Americans* (The U.S.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. 2007), 5. Nacos and Torres-Reyna, 5.

³¹ Haniff, 306.

³² Moustafa Bayoumi, "Between Acceptance and Rejection: Muslim Americans and the Legacies of September 11," *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2011): 17. <http://www.maghis.oxfordjournals.org/> (accessed February 12, 2014).

³³ Peek, 22-3.

³⁴ Peek, 13.

³⁵ Costas Panagopoulos, "Arab and Muslim Americans and Islam in the Aftermath of 9/11," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 4 (2006): 608, <http://www.jstor.org/> (accessed January 20, 2014).

terrorist attacks, Americans have held increasingly negative attitudes of Islam.³⁶ The numbers rose from 39% in 2001, to 46% in 2006, and increased to 49% in 2010.³⁷

Several factors have contributed to shape these increasingly negative attitudes toward Arabs, Muslims, American Muslims and Islam. First, because humans intentionally induced the 9/11 terrorist attacks, there was a desire to assign some degree of blame and to punish the guilty for their actions.³⁸ Thus Muslims and Arabs (without rightfully distinguishing the two groups) were pointed out as the prime suspects shortly after the attacks, and were therefore more likely to be blamed.³⁹ Second, “excessive levels of hostility, prejudice, and mistrust directed toward Muslim and Islam” characterized the social and political context preceding 9/11.⁴⁰ For instance, in the year prior to 9/11, “voices alleging American Muslim and Arab support for terrorism were twice as common as those rejecting this allegation.”⁴¹ In 2010, 31% of textual depictions of American Muslims and Arabs were negative, whereas 44% were neutral or ambiguous. Third, a combination of lack of familiarity and knowledge, or incorrect belief about the faith of Muslims, together with the media’s biased coverage of the events, might also have contributed to heightened negative attitudes toward Muslims after 9/11.

Before 9/11, Islam was rarely considered an American religion.⁴² After 9/11, however, American Muslims have become “popular topics of conversation in television news and talk radio shows, subjects of investigations by research institutes, reasons for people to organize and demonstrate, and the concern of law enforcement and government policymakers.”⁴³ Fear of terrorism is commonly associated with fear of Islam, and this is being usurped by a popular fear of Muslims in general.⁴⁴ Islam is the fastest growing religion in the U.S. today, but it has been argued that the “subsequent hostile stereotyping may have impacted it negatively.”⁴⁵

³⁶ Bayoumi, 16.

³⁷ Bayoumi, 16.

³⁸ Peek, 167.

³⁹ Peek, 168.

⁴⁰ Peek, 168.

⁴¹ John Sides and Kimberly Gross, “Stereotypes of Muslims and Support for the War on Terror,” *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 75, no. 3 (2013): 584, <http://journals.cambridge.org/> (accessed February 2, 2014).

⁴² Bayoumi, 16.

⁴³ Bayoumi, 16.

⁴⁴ Bayoumi, 18.

⁴⁵ Haniff, 306.

1.4.2 Stereotypes

A stereotype is a “preconceived idea that attributes certain traits, behaviors, tastes, or other characteristics to a group of people.” They are

the images we carry around in our minds, which may be positive or negative, about most or all persons of a particular race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or age, to name a few. Stereotypes may or may not emerge from some kernel of truth, but they always involve widely held overgeneralizations that do not take individual difference into account.⁴⁶

To stereotype is a way to categorize “other individuals as members of groups and assume that the perceived characteristics of those groups, the stereotypes, characterize those individuals.”⁴⁷ A consequence of stereotyping, therefore, is not to differentiate groups like al-Qaeda from Islam at large, assuming that those who believe in the religion of Islam also share the policies of al-Qaeda.⁴⁸

The stereotyping of specific groups depends on “whether specific events, political debates, and issue frames “provide information that links a given group to a particular policy.”⁴⁹ For instance, prior to World War I, American attitudes towards Germans and Italians were related to support for intervention in Europe, and during the Cold War, “the more Americans perceived the Soviet Union as threatening and untrustworthy, the more they favored militaristic foreign policy and containment of the Soviet Union.”⁵⁰ Thus, because the portrayal of terrorism in the news and entertainment media frequently depicts violent Muslims, the influence of stereotyping is greater when there is a link between the content of the policy and the stereotype.⁵¹ The policies in the “War on Terror” implicate concerns about Muslims, because “the portrayal of terrorism in the news and entertainment media frequently depicts violent Muslims.”⁵² This can perhaps explain why Arabs and Muslims today are directly associated with traits as “war-mongering, terrorism and hatred of peace-loving peoples, especially the West.”⁵³

⁴⁶ Peek, 43.

⁴⁷ Sides and Gross, 584 and 589.

⁴⁸ Sides and Gross, 583.

⁴⁹ Sides and Gross, 589.

⁵⁰ Sides and Gross, 589.

⁵¹ Sides and Gross, 589.

⁵² Sides and Gross, 589.

⁵³ Michael W. Suleiman, “Islam, Muslims and Arabs in America: the other of the other of the other...,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1999): 35, <http://www.tandfonline.com/> (accessed February 12, 2014).

Stereotypes of Muslims as “the bearded Muslim fanatic, the oppressed, veiled woman, the duplicitous terrorist who live among ‘us’ to bring about destruction,” have emerged with new force since 9/11.⁵⁴ These images, painting Muslims as a “homogeneous, zombielike body, incapable of independent thought and liable to be whipped into a frenzy at the least disturbance to their unchanging backward worldview,” are far from being accurate or neutral.⁵⁵ Yet research has uncovered that it is particularly common to stereotype Muslims and American Muslims as violent and untrustworthy.⁵⁶ In the TV-program *America’s Most Wanted* (1988 – present) viewer attention is directed toward the images of the various terrorists, not the patterns of similarity that define their actions.⁵⁷ The effect is to “naturalize the popular association between Middle Eastern ethnicities, Islamic religious practices, and terrorist propensities” by defining suspicious behavior as “being brown and practicing Islam.”⁵⁸

Muslims, Arabs and American Muslims are still being conveyed in “every imaginable form to the public through the mass media and especially in the entertainment industry, which has both fostered and re-enforced the image of Muslims/Arabs as villains.”⁵⁹ At the peak of the 21st century, mass media continue to present negative images, confirming unfavorable stereotypes of Muslims in America and their religion, reinforcing the “worst stereotypes about Islam – that is a violent, primitive, and imminently hateful religion.”⁶⁰ The danger with these negative connotations associated with the terms Muslims, Arabs and American Muslims is that “the concepts and ideas, the groups and the people associated with these terms are viewed as alien and beyond a threat; they are also seen as a threat to American society and government.”⁶¹

Muslims, Arabs and American Muslims are a vital part of the American nation, a nation that is known for having a reputation for embracing diversity. According to a memorandum outlined by the Homeland Security in 2008, there is no “us versus them.” Muslims are an “integral part of America and the West.” They are not “outsiders” looking

⁵⁴ Peter Morey and Anna Yaqin, *Framing Muslims. Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 3.

⁵⁵ Morey and Yaqin, 1-2.

⁵⁶ Sides and Gross, 583.

⁵⁷ Stacy Takacs, *Terrorism TV. Popular Entertainment in Post-9/11 America* (The U.S.: University Press of Kansas 2012), 45.

⁵⁸ Takacs, 45.

⁵⁹ Suleiman, 35.

⁶⁰ Peek, 13 and Suleiman, 43.

⁶¹ Suleiman, 37.

in.⁶² Using terms such as “us” and “them,” and “the East” and “the West,” therefore, might “reinforce the notional homogeneity.”⁶³ Because the aim of this thesis is to look at how Muslims and Islam are portrayed in *Homeland*, it is therefore important to emphasize that these terms are used in a critical way, and that they function as a tool when analyzing the context in which they are used.

1.4.3 Terrorism and terrorism-TV

Terrorism is “an ‘ancient’ enemy with roots in many cultures” that has been used by a wide variety of individuals and groups as an instrument of state policy, directed against both autocratic and democratic regimes.⁶⁴ It has been a “favorite tactic of national and religious groups, individuals whose ideologies fall on both the left and the right of the political spectrum, and nationalist and internationalist movement.”⁶⁵ Moreover, it has been an instrument both for movements of national liberation, whose political attempts to change the system have failed, or deliberately chosen by such movements “before other political options have been attempted.”⁶⁶ Because “terrorism” too often is used in a way where it is attached as a label to specific groups, it is necessary to define the term. According to Cynthia C. Combs, Professor in political science at the University of North Carolina, terrorism is a “synthesis of war and theatre, a dramatization of the most proscribed kind of violence – that which is deliberately perpetrated on civilian noncombatant victims – played before an audience in the hope of creating a mood of fear, for political purposes.”⁶⁷

The mixture of religion and politics in the commitment of terrorism today is not new, and can be traced back to ancient times when terrorism, carried out by rulers, was not uncommon.⁶⁸ In medieval times, terrorism was carried out for religious reasons, when Muslim extremists, under the leadership of Hassan I Sabah, “justified their actions by their desire to hasten the arrival of the Imam, ‘the heir to the Prophet, the Chosen of God, and the sole rightful leader of mankind, who would establish a new and just society.’”⁶⁹ The role of religion as a guiding force when committing acts of terrorism, then, is not a modern

⁶² U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Terminology to define the terrorists: recommendations from American Muslims*, January, 2008, http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs_crcl_terminology_08-1-08_accessible.pdf (accessed April 23, 2014).

⁶³ Morey and Yaqin, 6.

⁶⁴ Cynthia C. Combs, *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (The U.S.: Pearson Education, 2013), 2-3.

⁶⁵ Combs, 2.

⁶⁶ Combs, 2.

⁶⁷ Combs, 5.

⁶⁸ Combs, 19.

⁶⁹ Combs, 43.

phenomenon, as religious zealots have been “willing to take the lives of innocent people to bring about radical religious goals” for centuries.⁷⁰ However, religious zealots who carry out acts of terror “in the name” of their religious beliefs denote extremism. Thus, “their religious beliefs do *not* reflect the beliefs of the vast majority of those who share the basic faith.”⁷¹ Hence, the religions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity are not fundamentally violent, but can be “cited by extremists to justify violent acts.”⁷²

Even though political violence has claimed fewer lives during recent years than annual traffic accidents on U.S. highways, the drama of terrorism and terrorist-directed events attract enormous attention in the press and on the television worldwide.⁷³ According to Professor at the University of East Anglia, Yvonne Tasker, “terror TV” is not a genre, rather, it is a phrase that encapsulates “a set of themes operating across a number of genres and formats, from news to crime and espionage, and summoning up a nexus of concerns with the post-9/11 policing of national borders and the securing of the nation’s urban spaces.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, terrorism-TV makes use of “existing conventions to respond to the heightened awareness which has characterized the 2000s.”⁷⁵ Although terrorism-TV, and thus terrorism-shows, might not be a specific genre, I have chosen to denote *Homeland* as a terrorism-show because it fits the above description, by staging “political violence and official attempts to tackle that violence.”⁷⁶ In addition, terrorism is the primary preoccupation of the special unit portrayed, and is, for the most part, also what the action-oriented show is centered on.

Because scholars have argued to find a common definition of the term “popular culture,” for the purpose of this context, it is understood as an entirety of ideas, perspectives, attitudes and images that is not “fixed but negotiated, the subject of dialogue and creativity, influenced by the contexts in which it is produced and used.”⁷⁷ Any given culture (or a given context within a culture) has its own specific arrays of representing the social world.⁷⁸ A television show such as *Homeland*, therefore, reflects the U.S.’s current cultural and social trends, as well as reinforcing and shaping these trends. In the next section, I will discuss how

⁷⁰ Combs, 44.

⁷¹ Combs, 44.

⁷² Combs, 44.

⁷³ Combs, 1.

⁷⁴ Tasker, 46.

⁷⁵ Tasker, 47.

⁷⁶ Tasker, 46.

⁷⁷ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2002), 17.

⁷⁸ Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice. New tools for critical discourse analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24-5.

Muslims and Islam have been portrayed in American popular culture (primarily TV-shows and films), and how certain events have helped framed Muslims and Islam in a negative light.

1.5 Historiography

In her dissertation thesis, “Framing the enemy”⁷⁹, Lisa W. Holstein argues that the events that serve as a major topic in a country affect the shape of the images that are presented, and that popular culture helps reinforce these images.⁸⁰ According to Holstein, the frame of the Cold War (1961-1991), for instance, created a black and white binary system between “us” (the democratic West) and “them” (the rest).⁸¹ During the Cold War, films and TV-shows warned against the danger of communism. In the TV-series *I Spy* (1965-1968), starring Robert Culp and Bill Cosby, for instance, a pair of intelligence agents chased villains and spies around the world.⁸³ They have shared this mission with many protagonists in shows throughout the following decades, such as secret agent Angus MacGyver, who in the first episodes of season one of the action-adventure TV-show *MacGyver* (1985-1992), is on a mission in Hungary to retrieve valuable intelligence information about Russian spies.⁸⁴

With the U.S.’s involvement in the Middle East in the 1990s and 2000s, including the Gulf War (1990-91), operation Desert Fox (1998), the invasion of Afghanistan (2001-present), and the Iraq War (2003-2011), the framing events have changed, and with that, so has the enemy. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, there emerged an ideological movement that defined U.S. citizens as “diverse and united in the ‘War on Terror,’ over and against Arabs and Muslims, who were represented as un-American, terrorists, enemies.”⁸⁵ Whenever Middle East conflicts have heated up, “violence against Arab and Muslim Americans has also

⁷⁹ Full name: “Framing the enemy: Changing U.S media images of China and the U.S.S.R. at the end of the Cold War.”

⁸⁰ Lisa W. Holstein, “Framing the enemy: Changing U.S media images of China and the U.S.S.R. at the end of the Cold War” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2002), 2.

⁸¹ Holstein, 4.

⁸² The French philosopher Michel Foucault’s writings on discussions of race could be interesting to explore in this regard. Although Foucault is most known for his theories on the relationship between knowledge and power, he has also made extensive observations about race. In two of Foucault’s College de France lectures from 1976, Foucault declares that society is divided into two parts: “them” and “us.” He argues that certain races are described as good and others as inferior, and that this domain of life is under the control of power. One understanding of these observations, according to Chloe Taylor, therefore, is that to overcome racism, one would need to understand the technologies of power.

⁸³ IMDb, “I Spy,” http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0058816/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2 (accessed February 10, 2014).

⁸⁴ IMDb, “MacGyver: Episode list,”

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088559/episodes?season=1&ref_=tt_eps_sn_1 (accessed February 10, 2014).

⁸⁵ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 595.

increased.”⁸⁶ Hence, a country’s social and political climate influences how mass media portray various ethnic and religious minorities:

Authors know today, after watching the evening news and reports of bombed American embassies, kidnapped or killed diplomats, and the latest exploits of religious fanatics, the public will readily read about Middle Eastern conspirators and that books about the area will sell.⁸⁷

Following the Oklahoma City bombings on April 19, 1995, for instance, “negative and hostile reporting and hate crimes against Muslim/Arabs immediately surfaced – even before it was established who was responsible for the heinous crime.”⁸⁸ Immediately after the attacks, news organizations were quick to identify Middle Easterners as suspects, reporting that the FBI was specifically looking for two men with dark hair and beards.⁸⁹ *The New York Times* alluded to a connection between the bombings and the Middle East, because Oklahoma City was the “home to at least three mosques.”⁹⁰ The one responsible for the attacks, however, was Timothy McVeigh, an American with European ancestors.⁹¹ After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Muslims, Arabs and American Muslims were again identified as the perpetrators. Following the terrorist attacks, they experienced frequent and intense backlash of anger and hostility, and the negative portrayal increased dramatically.⁹²

During the 20th century, in particular, the American media, including the press, American literature, movies and TV-shows, have played a major role in contributing to the presentation of a negative image of Muslims and Arabs.⁹³ According to Dr. Michael W. Suleiman, Arab American professor of political science, Americans have been “bombarded with derogatory images of Muslims in film and television. On the big and the small screen, the Islamic faith is regularly linked with the oppression of women, holy war and terrorist attacks.”⁹⁴ Moreover, “violence and war-mongering, terrorism and hatred of peace-loving peoples, especially in the West, are traits usually attributed to Muslim/Arabs in movies and on television.”⁹⁵ At a time where the threat of terrorism was highly prominent, 24 (2001-

⁸⁶ Suleiman, 39.

⁸⁷ Nacos and Torres-Reyna, 2.

⁸⁸ Suleiman, 40.

⁸⁹ Nacos and Torres-Reyna, 1.

⁹⁰ Suleiman, 40.

⁹¹ Nacos and Torres-Reyna, 1.

⁹² Combs, 1.

⁹³ Suleiman, 35.

⁹⁴ Suleiman, 35.

⁹⁵ Suleiman, 35.

2010), the quintessential post-9/11 terrorism-show, spell-bound a nation.⁹⁶ The most frequent recurring threat to America in the series came from Muslims, mainly Arabs and susceptible Arab Americans.⁹⁷ In season two, agent Jack Bauer is chasing Islamist terrorists who have planted a nuclear bomb somewhere in Los Angeles. This suggests that

true ‘Americanness’ and American values are distinguished from those of the villains via a process of racialization wherein all threatening elements become, in a sense, ‘Muslimized’- expelled from the bosom of the nation, which is here conceived as an extension of the white, blond, Protestant family.⁹⁸

Other shows, such as *Sleeper Cell* (2005 -) and *Traitor* (2008) have also depicted ordinary Muslims as terrorists, “ready and willing to follow their charismatic leader in attacking United States citizens.”⁹⁹ Together with *Threat Matrix* (2003-2004), *The Grid* (2004) and *The Agency* (2001-2003), Professor at Oklahoma University Stacey Takacs, claims that the way these shows construct their terrorist villains and patriotic heroes helps “normalize the state of emergency and promote acceptance of policies of surveillance, detention, and interrogation that were fundamentally antidemocratic.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, television helps “construct and disseminate common sense assumptions about the nation, its peoples, its values, and its position in the world.”¹⁰¹

Even though the dominant narrative of Muslim Americans in both crime-shows and terrorism-shows has depicted them in a negative light, there have been TV-series and films that have portrayed Muslim Americans’ life in the U.S. through broader lenses. Several episodes in the family drama *7th Heaven* (1996-2007) challenge negative stereotypes of Muslims. In the episode “Getting to Know You” where the action takes place only weeks after 9/11, Reverend Camden and his wife Annie, want to host a party for a family that has just moved into the neighborhood. When the other neighbors find out that the family is Muslim, they refuse to attend. However, after Reverend Camden convinces the neighbors that the Muslim family is just as much a part of the community as the rest of them, everyone shows up at the party, clearly ashamed of their prejudices and preconceived notions.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Bayoumi, 17.

⁹⁷ Morey and Yaqin, 145.

⁹⁸ Morey and Yaqin, 145.

⁹⁹ Bayoumi, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Takacs, 26.

¹⁰¹ Takacs, 26.

¹⁰² “Getting to know you,” in *7th Heaven* (episode 7, season 8, 2003), online video, directed by Harry Harris (The U.S.: The WB Television Network, 2003), from Project-Free TV, <http://www.free-tv-video-online.me/internet/> (accessed May 5, 2014).

Ridley Scott's 2005 movie *Kingdom of Heaven* is another example of a more sympathetic approach to Muslims and Islam during a time of widespread hostility and distrust toward Muslims. It won plaudits for not "showing the Islamic army of Saladin as merely bestial or motivated by bloodthirst."¹⁰³ The comedy show *Aliens in America* (2007) is about the life of a Pakistani exchange student in Wisconsin during the "War on Terror," and in the independent feature *The Visitor* (2007), the realities of immigration detention is sensitively depicted.¹⁰⁴ These examples serve as positive signs of acceptance of Muslims and Islam in American popular culture post-9/11.

The above examples are not from shows that can be categorized as terrorism-shows. The terrorism-show *Homeland* (2011 – ongoing), therefore, might represent a more recent continuation of this positive trend that also applies to the genre of terrorism-TV. In her review of *Homeland*, "Homeland: Islamophobic Propaganda or Progressive Masterpiece," Julianna Aucoin argues that although *Homeland* portrays Muslims as synonymous with terrorists and connects Islam with terrorism, it also "presents a more progressive outlook on Islam."¹⁰⁵ She argues that the show brings depth to Islam by "showing both the comfort that the religion brings to Brody and highlighting the prejudiced nature of American thought toward Islam." Aucoin also claims that Brody, "a deeply troubled character," adds a perspective different from Islamophobia, because "he is most at peace in his prayers."¹⁰⁶

Some scholars, however, have argued that Muslims, Arabs or Muslim/Arab Americans cannot be presented in a "good light or as heroes so long as the dominant and persuasive image which American society has of them is negative."¹⁰⁷ At the forefront of this view is Evelyn Alsultany, associate professor at the University of Michigan. She argues that a more sympathetic portrayal of Muslims in a post-9/11 climate where the public sentiment towards Muslims and Islam has become increasingly negative has occurred "in order to project the United States as an enlightened country that has entered a post-race era."¹⁰⁸ Alsultany refers to this sympathetically portrayal of Muslims as a "simplified complex representation," where Muslim characters and Islam are represented as seemingly complex,

¹⁰³ Morey and Yaqin, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Bayoumi, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Review of *Homeland*, by Julianna Aucoin, *Harvard Political Review*, February 28, 2014, <http://harvardpolitics.com/books-arts/homeland-islamophobic-propaganda-or-progressive-masterpiece/> (accessed January 9, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Aucoin.

¹⁰⁷ Suleiman, 38.

¹⁰⁸ Evelyn Alsultany, "Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11: Representational Strategies for a 'Postrace' Era," *American Quarterly*, vol. 65, no. 1 (2013): 162, <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed January 9, 2014).

yet in a simplified way.¹⁰⁹ When an Arab/Muslim terrorist is portrayed in a positive light, she argues, it is only to subvert the stereotype of the terrorist, or to justify discriminatory policies.¹¹⁰ Alsultany uses stories of oppressed Muslim women to illustrate her point. When sympathetic narratives of these women are told, she claims, it is only to “justify withholding sympathy for Muslim men because they presumably deserve to be in Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib.”¹¹¹

According to Alsultany, this representational mode, to balance a negative representation with a positive one, has become standard since 9/11. Television producers and writers use various strategies to accomplish these types of representations when “the plot involves an Arab or Muslim terrorists, but [they] are a new standard alternative to (and seem a great improvement on) the stock ethnic villains of the past.”¹¹² The usage of patriotic Arab or Muslim American characters that assist the U.S. government in its fight against terrorism is one strategy that is being used. In the TV-series *Sleeper Cell* (2005), for instance, the “good” Muslim is the lead African American character, Darwyn Al-Sayeed, “an undercover FBI agent who proclaims to his colleagues that terrorists have nothing to do with his faith and cautions them not to confuse the two.”¹¹³ To portray Arab or Muslim Americans as the unjust targets of hate – as victims of violence and harassment - is another strategy. In an episode of the TV-series *The Practice* (1997-2004), an Arab American who is barred from entering an airplane leads to a debate in court about what rights airlines have to “discriminate in a post-9/11 world in which Arab and Muslim identities are considered a security threat.”¹¹⁴ A third strategy, to “flip” the enemy’s identity, involves leading the viewer to believe that the presumed Arab or Muslim enemy is not Arab or Muslim after all. During the second season of *24*, which aired in 2002, the enemy that the Counter Terrorism Unit agent Jack Bauer is tracking down is not who he thought it would be. Instead of the suspected terrorist from the Middle East, the real enemy is a Euro-American businessman.¹¹⁵ In addition, it has also become increasingly common to leave the nationality and ethnicity of the villain blank or ambiguous to eliminate potential offensiveness. In the fourth season of *24* (2004), the terrorist family is from an unnamed Middle East country, and in the TV-series *The West*

¹⁰⁹ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 162.

¹¹⁰ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 163-4.

¹¹¹ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 166-7.

¹¹² Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 162.

¹¹³ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 163.

¹¹⁴ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 163.

¹¹⁵ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 164.

Wing (1999-2006), the terrorists plot from the fictional country “Qumar.”¹¹⁶ Alsultany’s argument is that although the above strategies are embraced to counteract potential charges of stereotyping by challenging or complicating earlier stereotypes, because these strategies too often appear in a narrative that justifies discrimination against Muslims and/or Islam, they contribute only to a multicultural or post-race illusion of a society that no longer discriminates.¹¹⁷

Although television helps “construct and disseminate common sense assumptions about the nation, its peoples, its values, and its position in the world,” it can also provide opportunities for viewers to process events in new ways by “entertaining ethical questions and inciting viewers to assume responsibility for resolving them,” thus “constituting viewers as active witnesses of history, responsible for making sense of what they see and what they can’t or won’t see.”¹¹⁸ In the following chapter, therefore, I argue that *Homeland* challenges the stereotypical Muslim enemy in American terrorism-shows post-9/11 because the narrative complexity, blending together the present and the past, encourage multiple viewings in that events and characters are presented in more than one way. This forces the viewers to reconsider everything they have seen, and invites them to construct their own interpretation.¹¹⁹

1.6 Thesis structure

In this chapter, I have given an introduction and a presentation of my thesis statement, and some background information about the social and political climate in which *Homeland* aired. In addition, I have also outlined the primary sources used, the method I applied when analyzing them, definitions and clarifications of important terms, and a historiography where I have discussed what scholars have said about the representation of enemies in American popular culture, and how Muslims and Islam have been portrayed in crime and terrorism shows post-9/11.

Because the content, themes and characters in the show are extremely intertwined, this thesis will consist of one large internal chapter that is divided into smaller sub-sections. The chapter consists of an analysis of the opening sequence of the show, and a discussion on how it reflects the central themes in the show. I will also discuss how the opening sequence

¹¹⁶ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 164.

¹¹⁷ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 162-8.

¹¹⁸ Takacs, 26 and 29.

¹¹⁹ Norman and Lincoln, 6 and Jason Mittell, “Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television,” *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 58 (2008): 35, <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed March 1, 2014).

fits with *Homeland's* overall narrative and how this narrative supports my claim that the line between “us” and “them” is no longer black and white, challenging the viewers’ notion of the stereotypical enemy. In the next sub-section, which is the main part of the internal chapter, I will discuss how *Homeland* portrays Muslims and Islam through the main character in the show, Sergeant Nicholas Brody. I will also look at how the representation of this character, a white, Christian, U.S. marine, challenges stereotypical portrayals of the Muslim enemy in post-9/11 terrorism-shows. In addition, the chapter will discuss the same questions in light of some of the other enemies in the show, Abu Nazir, Raquim Faisel, Aileen Margaret Morgan and Mansour Al-Zahrani.

The thesis will end with a conclusion in which I sum up my main points and where I discuss my findings in light of a broader context. In the conclusion, I will also present some suggestions for future research, based on the results of my analysis.

Chapter 2: The portrayal of Muslims and Islam in *Homeland*

2.1 The opening sequence of *Homeland*

The American terrorism-show *Homeland* is based on the Israeli TV-series *Hatufim*, which aired from 2009 to 2012. The title is Hebrew and means “the abducted.”¹²⁰ A quick Google search on the word “homeland” defines it as “one’s native land” or as “a state, region, or territory that is closely identified with a particular people or ethnic group.”¹²¹ If we use the first definition, “homeland” can be interpreted as Sergeant Nicholas Brody’s native land, his one true home. When using the second definition, however, one can interpret “homeland” as the land that belongs to a particular people, for instance, Caucasian, Christian Americans, a land where Brody, who has converted to Islam, can no longer feel at home. After 9/11, “homeland” became a rhetorical marker, an “attempt to build a conceptual line around a domestic sphere that had to be defended from an external, threatening world.”¹²² However, in the terrorism-show *Homeland*, the threat that the U.S. faces, is both domestic and foreign. Thus, the title plays on the plot around which the show revolves: what side does Brody belong to, “us” (the U.S.), “them” (the terrorists from the Middle East) or both?

In addition to the show’s title, the opening sequence of *Homeland* also plays on the show’s plot. The intro, which is about a minute and a half long, is a mixture of fragments and utterances from key moments and scenes from the show and real-life events. Starting with the image of a little girl sleeping, the introduction switches between displaying images of various terrorist attacks and utterances from news reporters and American presidents, with images of the main characters, who walk around alone and confused in a labyrinth.

¹²⁰ The English title of *Hatufim* is *Prisoners of War*.

¹²¹ The Free Online Dictionary, s.v. “homeland.”

¹²² Mary L. Dudziak, “How 9/11 Made History,” *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 25, no. 3 (2011): 6, <http://maghis.oxfordjournals.org/> (accessed January 8, 2014).

The fragmented sequence, displaying pictures, images, live scenes and people speaking that often only last no more than a second, is a skillful use of the concept of montage. Montage, “a method of editing cinematic images,” creates the sense that “images, sounds, and understandings are blending together, overlapping, forming a composite, a new creation.”¹²³ By using brief images to create a clearly defined sense of urgency and complexity, the concept of montage invites “viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as a scene unfolds.”¹²⁴ To make sense of the opening sequence, therefore, one needs to put the fragmented parts together into a meaningful unity. The use of montage can “create and enact moral meaning,” by moving from “the personal to the political, from the local to the historical and the cultural.”¹²⁵ This creates a dialogical text, which presumes an active audience.

Although the opening sequence is fragmented, the order in which the fragmented parts appear is chronological in time. The intro starts with an image of a little girl sleeping while we hear the voice of Ronald Reagan saying: “Air and naval forces of the United States launched a series of strikes against facilities,” followed by a short glimpse of Reagan live. Right after Reagan stops talking, the girl is awake, watching the news on a black-and-white TV. While the girl watches TV, we hear the voice of a news reporter saying that “Pan Am Flight 103 crashed into the town of Lockerbie,” referring to the bombing in 1988 when an airplane, headed from London to New York, exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all of the 243 passengers.¹²⁶ The little girl sleeping could be a symbol of an innocent nation that needs to wake up, or has been awakened by acts of terrorism conducted by someone from a foreign country, whereas the image of the girl watching TV could symbolize a nation that, while slowly waking up, is acquiring information about what goes on in the world. The news, displayed on the black-and-white TV might indicate that the news is biased: there are no uncertainties about who the victims and the enemies are. This is reflected through one of the main protagonists in the show, Carrie Mathison¹²⁷, a case officer assigned to the Counterterrorism Center in the CIA. Throughout most of the first season, she insists that

¹²³ Norman and Lincoln, 6.

¹²⁴ Norman and Lincoln, 6.

¹²⁵ Norman and Lincoln, 7.

¹²⁶ About.com: 20th Century History, <http://history1900s.about.com/od/1980s/a/flight103.htm> (accessed: March 19, 2014).

¹²⁷ I will from this point on, refer to Carrie only by her first name, as this is what she is called by the other characters in the show. I am aware that using only Carrie’s first name when most of the male characters are called by their last name confirms stereotypical gender issues, but this is a topic that I do not have the space to discuss any further in this thesis. For the same reason, I have also chosen to call the other female characters in the show by their first name.

Brody is the enemy, a turned terrorist, working for a terrorist organization in the Middle East. Not until new information indicates otherwise does she let go of her conviction.

The next images of the girl show her practicing the trumpet in her bedroom and watching TV. This time, the TV is in color, suggesting that we are closer to the present time. While seeing these images of the little girl, we hear the voices of both Reagan and Clinton saying that “This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait (...) his relentless pursuit of terror (...) the U.S.S.Cole was attacked while refueling (...) we will make no distinction (...) this was an act of terrorism.” While hearing these utterances, accompanied by glimpses of the former presidents that last no longer than a second, we see the little girl in a dress, wearing a lion mask. First, we see a glimpse of the girl with the lion mask running around in the labyrinth. In the next clip, she is watching TV. The TV is no longer black and white, but in color.

That the TV is in color might indicate that the news displayed is more nuanced than the news on the black-and-white TV. Even though moving from a black and white to a color TV might be a way to underline that time has passed by, it is interesting to note that when we hear the voice of Reagan speaking, the TV screen is black and white, although color TV was very common at the time (the sales of RCA color TV in the U.S. began in 1954). This might indicate that news historically, has been presented in a simplified and partial way, without the nuances needed to get a complete picture of various incidents. When the little girl watches TV during Clinton’s presidency, the TV is in color. The shift from black and white to color TV, then, might symbolize modernization and media development, in that the media have started to portray news stories in a more thorough way, acknowledging the complexities of every story.

When the little girl is watching the news on the color TV, she is also wearing the mask. This might suggest that even though the news has become more complex, the nation is still living in a world where they cannot see beyond the truth as presented by the media: simplified, biased and fragmented. The image can also be interpreted to suggest that people are unable to see behind the surface (symbolized by the mask) of what is right in front of them. They see what they want to see, or what they think they are expected to see. For instance, when Brody returns home to his family after eight years in captivity, he is first perceived to be a war hero, both by his family and by society. They view him the way they want him, or expect him, to be, without seeing, or wanting to see, who Brody really is.

Following the image of the girl with the lion mask is an image showing a pair of eyes that open. Right after this image, Carrie opens her eyes. At the same time, we hear Clinton’s

voice saying, “It was a despicable and cowardly act.” What follows is a mixture of images showing eyes that are shut, and eyes that open, women dressed in nikabs, voices speaking in Arabic and Frank Sinatra singing, while hearing words of fragmented sentences. We then see someone jump from a military helicopter, while at the same time hearing Carrie’s voice saying, “I’m just making sure we don’t get hit again.” Then, what seems to be a most vivid, live video of the streets on September 11 is displayed, while the police radio chatter: (Man): “We’ve got a plane crashed into the World Trade Center.” We see smoke and people running. (Man 2): “...thousands of people running...” The next image shows President Barrack Obama, while holding a speech: “We must, and we will remain vigilant at home and abroad.” The eyes that open might suggest that the nation has finally opened its eyes, and is able to see beyond the surface of the news, images or persons they are being presented. The following mixture of images might indicate that once the nation has opened its eyes, what it sees is not a simple picture of “the truth.” The truth is complex and complicated. It is not a given that one knows what the truth is, even though one recognizes that it is not always what one first perceives it to be.

The last part of the intro displays the main characters in *Homeland*. We see a picture of Brody and his family right after his return from Iraq. In the next clip, Brody is standing in the labyrinth looking confused. While we see this image, we hear Saul Berenson, Carrie’s boss, whisper: “What the fuck are you doing?” In the next clip, we see the image of Brody when he was first found, while we hear Carrie saying: “Fuck. I missed something once before. I won’t – I can’t let that happen again.” Then we see a short glimpse of Carrie in the labyrinth, followed by Brody, and then the both of them standing in the labyrinth. They both look confused, but they are standing in positions that make them unable to see each other. That the girl, and/or Carrie are walking around in the labyrinth, struggling to open her eyes, can perhaps allude to the fact that Carrie is confused about what side Brody plays on. Her intuition tells her that he works for the enemy, yet her judgment is clouded by her feelings for him. She needs to open her eyes, and see beyond the surface to be able find the truth, and to see who Brody really is. Moreover, she needs to open her eyes in order to capture the terrorists, in order to save her country from getting attacked.

Although the little girl is not a character in the show, there are indicators that point towards the little girl being a younger version of Carrie. For instance, the little girl is playing jazz music when practicing her trumpet. When Carrie is stressed out, or when she is trying to figure something out, she listens to jazz. Assuming that the little girl and Carrie are the same person, the little girl can serve as an image of how a person develops in accordance with how

society changes. This development can also be transferred to the development of a nation: with time, experience and knowledge, a nation can learn from history when making new decisions, expanding its view, and adding new perspectives. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, the dividing lines between nations and their peoples become smaller and harder to define. This can also be applied to the characters in the show, in that the line between “us” and “them” is slowly wiped out.

Almost the whole opening sequence is in black and white. The exceptions are the screen on the second TV that the little girl watches and the labyrinth, which the little girl, Carrie and Brody walk around in. The labyrinth can illustrate that although things might seem black and white to the various sides (“the good” vs. “the bad,” “the enemies” vs. “the heroes”), the path one walks on is colored. It might be difficult to find the right way to go or know what the right direction is. The choices one makes when deciding where to go might be confusing and hard because the world is not black and white. In *Homeland*, both Brody and Carrie have a hard time deciding what choices to make and what path to take.

These exceptions, the color TV and the green labyrinth, can give an indication in the way politics are portrayed in the show. For instance, there are no “good guys” or “bad guys” in the show. Furthermore, there are no heroes, only the anti-hero Brody, who, at times is very hard to like. The closest one gets to what might represent “the good guys” are Carrie, a white, single woman, who suffers from a bipolar disease, wearing a wedding ring so she is exempted from any commitment with her one-night stands, and her boss Saul, a middle-aged Jewish man whose marriage with an Indian woman of darker skin, is falling apart. Even though both Carrie and Saul are characters who are portrayed sympathetically, they too are complex individuals with visible faults. In episode one, Carrie breaks twelve federal laws when, based only on a hunch, she sets up surveillance equipment all over Brody’s house.¹²⁸ She also breaks protocol when she starts an affair with Brody, despite his being under the surveillance of the CIA. Although Saul condemns Carrie’s illegal surveillance of Brody, he too, uses questionable methods. For instance, once Carrie convinces Saul that Brody should be considered a suspect, Saul blackmails a judge in order to get a FISA-warrant so that they can continue to monitor Brody legally.

In *Homeland*, the enemies in the show are both foreign and domestic, thus alluding to a policy that is two-sided: Through the foreign enemies, mainly Middle Eastern terrorists, their regime and religion are criticized. Through the domestic enemies, including an

¹²⁸ “Pilot,” in *Homeland* (episode 1, season 1 2011), DVD, directed by Michael Cuesta, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 20-21.

American marine, the Vice President William Walden, and the Deputy Director of the CIA, David Estes, the show criticizes affairs that belong to the domestic sphere. In addition, the show also questions the way both the FBI and the CIA operate. In episode eight, the FBI Agent Hall justifies the death of two Muslims who were killed during their morning prayer in a mosque:

So, my men followed an armed terrorist suspect based off Intel provided by your people, at zero dark 30 into a fucking building that they don't even know is a mosque. In seconds, a member of the team thinks he has a clear shot at bringing down a terrorist, and he takes it. Accidentally, he drops two civilians in the crossfire. Shit happens. But if you think that I or the Bureau, are gonna let the CIA come in and throw any of my guys under the bus, you're fucking high.¹²⁹

Here, Agent Hall is refusing to take the responsibility for a mission that went wrong, even though seven eyewitnesses, including the Imam of the mosque, claim that the terrorist suspect who was chased by the FBI, "didn't even shoot or even raise a weapon at them," and that the FBI officials, therefore, made a mistake when opening fire.¹³⁰ Through Carrie's enquiry and subsequent reaction, Agent Hall's attitude and actions are questioned. Her reaction, recording what Agent Hall has just said and threatening to use it against him, condemns Agent Hall's stand, that casualties must be expected during operations that involve chasing down terrorists who present a threat to national security.

In another instance, it is the CIA that is criticized. During the end of season one, Saul has gotten gold off interrogations tapes. The tapes reveal that Walden and Estes justify the drone attacks that killed 83 civilians, mainly school children, to get closer to catch Abu Nazir:

Walden: "If Abu Nazir is taking refuge among children, he's putting them at risk, not us."

Walden (giving orders on the phone): "It's our joint opinion that the potential collateral damage falls within current matrix parameters."

Saul: "Good God. Someone actually came up with that language."¹³¹

When defending these actions two years ago, Estes argues that Saul has missed a central point: "The world has changed, Saul, right under your nose (...) we're about projecting

¹²⁹ "Crossfire," in *Homeland* (episode 9, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Jeffrey Nachmanoff, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 16-18.

¹³⁰ "Crossfire," 16.

¹³¹ "Marine One," in *Homeland* (episode 12, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Michael Cuesta, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 1:02:00-1:03:00.

American power now, degrading al-Qaeda military. You want to play softball spy games, go join the German or the French.”¹³²

To conclude, the opening sequence in *Homeland* sums up the whole show: confusion, fragmented pieces, the past and the present, fiction and reality. Although the sequence establishes the binary system between “us” and them,” “us” being American citizens while “them” are terrorists attacking the U.S., the exceptions discussed above, and the politics these exceptions portray, support my argument that in *Homeland*, the binary system between “us” and “them” is no longer black and white. The nation, symbolized by the little girl, who comes to stand for all that is good, pure, righteous, and rational, needs to wake up and open its eyes, both to what happens outside of the country, and also to what goes on within the country. The girl moving around in the labyrinth, wearing a mask, might symbolize that the nation needs to “unmask” itself, see what it really is (take responsibility), and find the right path (make the right choices) in order to get favorable results. The fact that both Carrie and Brody are in the labyrinth at the same time might suggest that the differences between “us” and “them” are not as big as one should think, and that the line between right and wrong is blurry and hard to define.

The overall narrative in *Homeland* reinforces this interpretation of the opening sequence. During much of season one, the narration of Brody’s character consists of two things. First, during the first four episodes, most of the outer storyline around Brody is viewed through the eyes of Carrie, and her surveillance of Brody and his family at his house. Second, Brody’s recurring flashbacks (a symptom of posttraumatic stress disorder) add depth and insight to Brody’s character, as they constantly remind him of what happened during his eight years in captivity. Flashbacks, a “recurring, intensely, vivid mental image of a past traumatic experience,” are used to insert Brody’s years in captivity into “the normal chronological order of a narrative.”¹³³ In *Homeland*, Brody’s flashbacks interrupt the chronological sequence by adding information and insight into Brody’s motivation behind the way he acts and thinks.

By using flashbacks as a means to change the spectators’ perspectives on the narrative, action and characters, “a new paradigm of storytelling has emerged” by which “television tells complex stories.”¹³⁴ The narrative complexity in *Homeland*, then, might give nuance to the stereotypical portrayal of the Muslim enemy because it forces the spectator to

¹³² “Marine One,” 1:03:00-1:04:00.

¹³³ The Free Online Dictionary, s.v. “flashback.”

¹³⁴ Mittell, 39.

interpret, and re-interpret, everything they see. The following section will discuss how the characters in *Homeland* challenge the stereotypical portrayal of the Muslim enemy by analyzing how Muslims and Islam are represented through the character of Sergeant Nicholas Brody.

2.2 Sergeant Nicholas Brody

Sergeant Nicholas Brody is a former scout sniper for the U.S. Marines who went missing on a mission in 2003 when he, as part of a two-man sniper team serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, was taken prisoner by forces loyal to Saddam Hussein. These forces sold him to an Al-Qaeda commander, Abu Nazir, who was operating a terrorist cell from across the Syrian border. In this terrorist cell, Brody was held captive for more than eight years.

During the first two episodes, there are indicators that point toward Brody's conversion to Islam. In the first episode, Brody is found by a Delta team that has been on a mission, taking down insurgents who operated a base in the Korengal Valley in northeastern Afghanistan. The Delta team, working on the orders of the Counterterrorism Center for the CIA, discovers a padlocked door into an interior room where they find Brody sitting in fetal position. Brody is in bad shape, and looks almost unrecognizable. When the Delta team first arrives, Brody mumbles in Arabic. He then says, in English, "I am an American."¹³⁵ Brody's first statement is interesting for several reasons. Initially, Brody is probably stating his nationality in order to assure the Delta team that he *is* an American. During the rest of the season, Brody tries to convince both the CIA, and, in part, also his family, that he is not working for Nazir. Thus, Brody's opening line is in many ways a claim that is being questioned during the rest of the season: Has Brody been "turned" by the enemy, the leader of a Middle East terrorist organization while being held captive, or is he really the war hero he is claiming and, at first, is also perceived to be? The fact that Brody first spoke in Arabic might indicate that Arabic has become Brody's first language. This can be a sign that the culture and religion most commonly associated with this language also have become what Brody prefers. However, in the subsequent scene, Brody picks up a scissor and cuts off his large beard. This might support his statement that he *is* an American, because it indicates that he is going back to civilization, leaving the years of captivity behind. If interpreting Brody's cutting of his beard with being an American, the beard is what makes Brody look foreign (and thus "un-American"). Because most of the other foreign enemies in *Homeland* also have

¹³⁵ "Pilot," 5-6.

large beards, one can argue that the beard might serve as a religious marker with negative connotations. When Brody cuts his beard off, he also cuts himself off from everything the beard represents.

Brody's first statement is also interesting because it raises the question about what it is to be an American. Traditionally, television has played "an important role in the production, reproduction, and dissemination of national identity" by naturalizing the idea among the public that " 'the nation' takes precedence over other form of collective identity and perpetuates notions of distinctiveness and superiority over other cultures."¹³⁶ Brody is an example of how identity is a way in which individuals are actors who "produce their history in a conflictual manner, by defining themselves both in relation to their perception of the past and in relation to their perception of the future."¹³⁷ Throughout season one and two, Brody's character is torn between two sides. His identity, therefore, is a constructed product of conflict and contradiction.

Because the term "identity" often has been a subject of endless discussion, for the purpose of this context, it will be understood as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."¹³⁸ The notion of a "national identity" is dynamic and not fixed, and is continually being shaped and re-shaped.¹³⁹ 9/11, for instance, redefined the premises that the content of the American identity and the American community is based on.¹⁴⁰ Four days after the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the Latino Francisco (Frank) Silva Rocque shot and killed Balbir Singh Sodhi in Mesa, Arizona, claiming it was "an act of terrorism."¹⁴¹ Rocque, confusing all Arabs and Muslims with terrorists, assumed that Sodhi fit the category because he wore a turban. Sodhi, however, was an Indian Sikh. When the police arrived to arrest him, "Rocque purportedly shouted 'I'm an American. Arrest me and let those terrorists run wild?'"¹⁴² The episode illustrates that after 9/11, "U.S. citizens developed a more capacious sense of 'we,' but one that was still

¹³⁶ John Hutcheson et al., "U.S. National Identity, Political Elites, and a Patriotic Press Following September 11," *Political Communication*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2004): 28, <http://www.tandfonline.com> (accessed May 19, 2014).

¹³⁷ Morey and Yaqin, 106.

¹³⁸ Henri Tajfel, "Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison," in *Differentiation between Social Groups. Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (London & New York: Academic Press INC., 1978), 63.

¹³⁹ Edensor, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Alsultany, "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity," 595.

¹⁴¹ Takacs, 23.

¹⁴² James E. Garcia, "Arabs, Latinos and the Culture of Hate," AlterNet, September 17, 2001, http://www.alternet.org/story/11530/arabs,_latinos_and_the_culture_of_hate (accessed May 19, 2014).

predicated on the exclusion of Arab and Muslim Americans.”¹⁴³ In Brody’s case, eight years in captivity redefined the premises on which his identity is based. Before his deployment, being a Marine was a large part of Brody’s identity. At the end of season one, Brody still considers being a Marine as important but, in addition, so are his newfound insight and conversion to the religion of Islam. This signifies that the national identity that Brody represents towards the end of season one is a more diverse identity than the identity he represents right after his return to the States as an American war-hero in the first episode. It can therefore be argued that Brody’s character expands the understanding of American national identity by adding diversity, thus redefining the notion of what the term holds.

Brody’s opening line, the sentence “I am an American,” was also the Ad Council’s¹⁴⁴ public service announcement that began airing ten days after 9/11. It was created in “direct response to the hundreds of hate crimes against Arabs, Muslims and Sikhs.”¹⁴⁵ The aim of the advertisement was to discourage further attacks by promoting “unity through the marker ‘American,’ which is signified as a diverse designation.”¹⁴⁶ The ad also wanted viewers to be tolerant and accepting of people, who look or sound different from themselves, and to embrace their differences, rather than to let it divide them.¹⁴⁷

Although the Ad Council’s ads, “touting the shared values of Americans and Muslims” were recognized by Muslims as superficial spin and criticized for failing to address issues of American foreign policy,” it is interesting that Brody’s opening line is identical to the line used in an ad whose purpose was to diminish the gap between “us” (Muslims and/or Arabs) and “them” (the Democratic west), post-9/11. Hence the opening line might say something about the show’s political agenda in the way politics are portrayed, “seeking to move away from the Hollywood Arab Muslim villain” by redefining “Islam and its relationship to America.”¹⁴⁸ However, the diversity that Brody represents, being a U.S. Marine who has converted to Islam, is not fully accepted by several of the characters in the show. This might suggest that Brody does not solve the “dangerous configuration of Americans versus Arabs/Muslims” and that Muslims are still “outsiders looking in,” thus not an “integral part of American and the West.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³ Robert Putnam, “Bowling Together,” *The American Prospect*, January 18, 2002.

¹⁴⁴ The Ad Council is a private, non-profit organization that marshals volunteer talent from the advertising and communications industries, the facilities of the media, and the resources of the business and non-profit communities to deliver critical messages to the American public (<http://www.adcouncil.org/About-Us>).

¹⁴⁵ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 596.

¹⁴⁶ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 596.

¹⁴⁷ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 596.

¹⁴⁸ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 600.

¹⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Terminology to define the terrorists*.

Another indicator that points toward Brody's conversion to Islam is Brody's reluctance to say grace at a family dinner:

Jessica (Brody's wife): "Should we say grace?"
Brody: "We say grace now?"¹⁵⁰

At the end of the grace, Brody is the only one who does not say "amen." Although Brody's reply perhaps only expresses his surprise at what he considers to be unexpected behavior (if the family never used to say grace prior to his deployment), the context in which this conversation appears, makes Brody's behavior suspicious. In the preceding scene, for instance, Brody enters the garage outside his house for the first time, leaving a bag with something that the spectators do not know what is (it is later revealed that the bag contains equipment needed in order to pray properly, among other items, a prayer rug and a silver bowl).

Toward the end of episode two, it is revealed to the spectators (but not to any of the characters in the show) that Brody has converted to Islam. In the episode, Brody wakes up in the middle of the night. He has a flashback of himself sitting hinged to a wall in a dark cell, slowly pushing the door in the cell open while asking if anyone is there. While opening the door, he discovers that the hinges are not bolted to the door, which enables him to leave the cell. At the same time as we see Brody move around in the building where he has been held captive, he walks through the living room of his house and enters the garage. When Brody is out in the garage, he sweeps the floor and then opens the garage door barely, so only a glimpse of sunlight gets through. As the garage door opens, Brody's flashback continues. After having walked around in the building where he was held captive, he reaches another door. When opening this door, he can barely open his eyes as the sunlight floods his face, making it seem as if he has not been exposed to daylight in a very long time. With the possibility of walking into the open, Brody hears men chanting in Arabic, saying: "Allahu Akbar." He turns around and sees men, probably from the Middle East, praying. One of the men sees Brody and smiles at him. Back in the garage, Brody washes his hands and pulls out a carpet from the bag he brought in earlier. Brody then starts praying, chanting and speaking in Arabic. After he is done praying, he keeps the palms of his hands against each other, forming them as if wanting or wishing to receive something.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ "Grace," in *Homeland* (episode 2, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Michael Cuesta, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 33-34.

¹⁵¹ "Grace," 42-46.

In Brody's flashback, it seems as if he has been released, at least to the extent that he is allowed to walk around freely in the building where he was held captive. Although we do not know what surrounds the building, and therefore, can only guess whether Brody had any real opportunity to escape, Brody's flashback can be interpreted as that Brody chose the religion of Islam as a free man, perhaps above his possible freedom. The religion of Islam, then, was not something that was being forced upon him. Brody wandered around in the dark, until he reached a door. When opening the door, he was finally able to see the sun. At the same time, the door also opened his mind to Islam. The man smiling at Brody could be a symbol that the religion he is practicing is a friendly and open religion that welcomes those who want to receive it, including those who have previously been opposed to it. Brody's forming his hands as if he is about to be given something might symbolize that he wants to accept the religion of Islam. In this flashback, then, Islam and Brody's first encounter with it are linked to positive qualities: freedom, light and kindness. Connecting Islam with a captive's first glimpse of sunlight after years in captivity also indicates that Islam is what gets Brody out of the dark. However, this image is partly ruined because, when Brody's wife asks him what he has been doing out in the garage, Brody lies, telling her that he was only fixing the garage door. Despite what we already know about Brody's first encounter with Muslims and Islam, and that his conversion to Islam is portrayed as something he most likely did of his own free will, the fact that Brody lies about it to his wife can make his practicing Islam seem like something suspicious and dishonest.

Brody uses religion to cope with his everyday life, meeting the expectations from both his family and from society. After his return, Brody is being pressured into meeting the press to tell the story about his life in captivity. Vice President William Walden and the Deputy Director of the CIA David Estes want to put Brody in the public eye to remind "America that this (the war) is far from over."¹⁵² Brody, however, responds by refusing to be turned into some "fuckin' poster boy for their bullshit war," claiming that the "days where I take orders from the United States military or government are over."¹⁵³ He follows up his statement by angrily chasing a reporter off his backyard. Yet, the following morning, after he has been out in the garage praying for the first time, Brody finally confronts the press, and also allows them inside his home to conduct a family interview. Here, the religion of Islam is linked to a returning soldier, probably suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder who needs something bigger than himself to believe in, in order to get through the days. Thus Brody's

¹⁵² "Grace," 18-19.

¹⁵³ "Grace," 34-35.

usage of Islam to cope with the pressure of returning home from captivity and fulfilling the prescribed role of “war hero” connects Islam with positive attributes.

Although Brody has converted to Islam, he does not practice the religion openly. Towards the end of season one, Brody’s daughter, Dana, sees him praying in the garage. Brody tells her that he has converted to Islam, and that he has kept it a secret because he did not want to upset the family. Dana reacts in surprise, but she seems genuinely open and interested in learning more about her father’s newfound religion. She asks Brody about the rituals he is doing before praying why, for example, he washes his hands and feet. Brody explains that it is a way of “purifying your mind and body before presenting yourself to God.”¹⁵⁴ Here, it seems as if Dana’s basic questions are meant to enlighten the ignorant and prejudiced, thus presenting Muslim culture and the religion of Islam in a more objective and nuanced light. However, as with Brody’s conversion to Islam, this picture is partly ruined as Brody makes Dana promise to keep his newfound religion a secret because the rest of the family “wouldn’t get it at all.”¹⁵⁵ Thus, the allegedly positive image of the religion of Islam is also associated with traits that link the religion to something negative.

That Dana’s character tries to enlighten the ignorant and prejudiced is also evident in season two. In the first episode, the students at Dana’s new school are having a Quaker meeting, discussing matters of politics in the Middle East. Just having discovered that her father is a Muslim, Dana gets furious when listening to one of the students’ extremely simplified and biased arguments:

Tad: “Plus the Arab religion doesn’t value human life the way we do. I mean, we’re the infidel, right? And these Arabs believe if they kill us, they get to go to heaven. And we’re supposed to let them –“

Dana (interrupting): “They’re not Arabs. Iranians aren’t Arabs. They’re Persians.”
(...)

Tad: “Persians, Arabs, what’s the difference? They both want the same thing, which is to annihilate us. Why shouldn’t we hit them first? Maybe with a nuke or two of our own.”
(...)

Dana: “And what about mass murder? Do we tolerate that? I mean, because that’s what he’s really saying, isn’t it?”

Finn: “He’s just talking.”

Dana: “He’s taking about turning Teheran into a parking lot!”

Teacher: “Dana, that’s enough.”

Tad: “Who do you think you are? And what do you know about any of this anyway?”

Dana: “What do you know?”

¹⁵⁴ “Marine One,” 20.

¹⁵⁵ “Marine One,” 20-21.

Tad: "Well, what if I tell you my dad's undersecretary of state?"

Dana: "Yeah, well, what if I told you my dad's a Muslim?"

Finn: "Right, and mine's a Scientologist."¹⁵⁶

In the first part of the argument, Ted wrongfully uses the term "Arab," implying that Arabs have only one religion, and that it is a religion that does not value human lives. Although he does not specify what religion he is talking about, he implies that it is not the religion that he is practicing. Knowing that this is a Quaker meeting discussing politics in Iran, it is reasonable to assume that Ted is linking Arabs to the religion of Islam. Ted's ignorance is emphasized when, after having been informed by Dana that Iranian's are not Arabs, he claims that their ethnicity does not matter because they all have the same goal, to wipe out the American population. Here, Ted reinforces the binary opposition between "us" and "them" by generalizing about the population in the Middle East, claiming that they make up a foreign threat that needs to be eliminated. The U.S., on the other hand, is presented as the knight in shining armor that can use whatever means necessary to protect itself, an innocent nation.

When Dana, frustrated by Ted's simplified and incomplete argumentation and the teacher's attempts to hush her, exclaims that her father is a Muslim, the other students' reaction is laughter and sighing, as if this is just something Dana has made up to win the argument, to seem interesting or to get attention. The student who replies, Finn Walden, son of the Vice President, compares the odds of Dana's father being a Muslim with his father's being a Scientologist, which, to judge by Finn's look, seems extremely unlikely. The students' reaction to the possibility of Brody's being a Muslim reveals their prejudices and ignorance about Muslims and the religion of Islam, implying that an American Marine cannot possibly belong to a religion they most commonly associate with countries in the Middle East. The reaction further implies that belonging to their community excludes the possibility of practicing another culture or religion. The students thus stereotype Muslims by placing various ethnicities from the Middle East in a preconceived mold, one that holds that all Muslims belong to the same group of people, and that they are violent and untrustworthy extremists.

Although the above discussion confirms the stereotypical image of Muslims and Arabs as violent villains, because Ted and Finn do not have their basic facts straight, their arguments lose credibility, thus emphasizing the generalization and simplification of their

¹⁵⁶ "The Smile," in *Homeland* (episode 1, season 2, 2012), DVD, directed by Michael Cuesta, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2013), 27-30.

arguments. In addition, Dana's counterarguments add another perspective to Ted and Finn's one-sided argumentation and helps balance the stereotypical portrayal of the Muslim enemy.

After the school-incident, Brody's wife, Jessica, confronts Dana and Brody with what Dana has said at school. Like the people at Dana's school, Jessica does not believe that it can possibly be true: "Then why say it? To guarantee everyone in your new school thinks you're out of your mind? To make it impossible for me to show my face there? To blow up your father's relationship with the Vice President? Really, I wanna know. Are you that starved for attention?"¹⁵⁷ Here, it is evident that Jessica believes Dana's statement is only a teenage revolt to get her parents' attention. Jessica is not concerned about the veracity of the statement because she does not believe it to be true, but she is worried about what the community will think, and how it might affect Brody's chances to become a public, political figure.

When Brody finally admits to Jessica that he *is* a Muslim, in contrast to Dana's reaction, Jessica's prejudices towards his conversion, and also to the religion in general, become even clearer:

Brody: "Because it is true."

Jessica: "What?"

(...)

Brody: "I didn't wanna tell you cause I know it would upset you."

Jessica: "But you told Dana?"

Brody: "No. No. She saw me praying one day in the garage."

Jessica (surprised): "In the garage?"¹⁵⁸

Jessica feels betrayed, not only because Dana knew about Brody's conversion before she did, but also because Brody has been practicing his newfound religion on their property without her knowing about it. She feels deceived because Brody has been praying in the garage, which is part of their safe and familiar home. Following the conversation, Jessica storms out of the house and enters the garage, as if she needs physical proofs to believe that Brody has been practicing the religion of Islam in their own home:

Brody: "Do you wanna know why?"

Jessica: "Does it really matter?"

Brody: "It does to me."

¹⁵⁷ "The Smile," 34.

¹⁵⁸ "The Smile," 35.

Jessica: “What matters is you lied to me. Every time you came in here you were lying to me.”

(...)

Jessica: “I don’t understand. These are the people who tortured you. These are the people that if they found out Dana and Xander were having sex, they would stone her to death in a soccer stadium.”¹⁵⁹

Here, it becomes clear that Jessica is not interested to find out the reasons why Brody turned to the religion of Islam. Instead, she is confirming the stereotypical image of Muslims as violent and untrustworthy. She directly links Brody’s religion with the religion of those who held him captive, claiming that they would not approve a physical relationship between two teenagers. Although premarital sex is forbidden in Islam, her exclamation is perhaps a bit exaggerated as it generalizes Muslims, suggesting that they all have an ultra-conservative view on sex and marriage. In addition, she associates Islam with terrorism, implying that the two are synonymous. Jessica’s lack of knowledge is further shown when she slams the Koran on the floor. Because the Koran is not supposed to touch the floor, Brody gets upset. This causes Jessica to get even angrier because she does not understand why Brody is more concerned with the Koran than with the argument they are having.

Even though Jessica’s reaction reveals negative attitudes toward Muslims and Islam, her reaction is comprehensible. When Jessica finally gets Brody back home after having waited for him for eight years, she finds out that he has been lying to her about an extremely important part of his life, his religion, hence her repetitive utterance, “what matters is you lied to me.”¹⁶⁰ Perhaps Jessica feels like she has lost Brody once again to something unknown and foreign, the religion belonging to those torturing him. Hence, her sense of feeling betrayed, and thus, her reaction, are understandable. Moreover, Jessica is probably frightened by the unknown, and what frightens people often makes them skeptical. This might indicate that Jessica is angrier with Brody because he lied, than that he has converted to Islam.

Later that night, Brody finds the Koran, wraps it in a white cloth, and buries it in the backyard while chanting in Arabic. Dana sees him and asks what he is doing. Brody explains that because Jessica threw the Koran on the floor, it is desecrated. He is therefore burying it out of respect, and Dana helps him. The scene provides insight in Muslim customs and the religion of Islam. Dana functions yet again as the voice of the inquiring, yet open-minded

¹⁵⁹ “The Smile,” 36-37.

¹⁶⁰ “The Smile,” 36-37.

character who tries to understand the unknown by asking questions, instead of sticking to what appears to be her surroundings' preconceived notions.

Not only does Brody keep his conversion to Islam a secret, during the first episodes, but he only practices his religion when outside in the garage. When Brody and Jessica are throwing a party at their house in episode four, Brody keeps to the garage, watching the party from the outside. In the scene, Brody seems alienated, especially when he sees his best friend, Mike Faber, together with his family, filling the role as a partner and a father that should have been his. The garage, then, might symbolize the foreign, unknown and secretive, whereas Brody's house is what is familiar and safe, representing typical American values: family and friends gathered to spend time together, and a community that supports each other through good and through bad times. Brody, whom one expects be to part of the latter, seems to be having a hard time feeling at home in either place. Hence, Brody is a complex character who is torn between two worlds: what is familiar and what is new.

Although the garage, which is the place where Brody's changed behavior takes place, might symbolize something foreign and secretive, Brody's flashbacks while being out there praying, are not only of his years in captivity. In episode four, Brody has a flashback of kissing his wife before he was deployed.¹⁶¹ Because Brody also has positive memories of his old life while praying in the garage that is associated with the foreignness and secretiveness of Islam, the garage is also linked to something familiar and known. Toward the latter part of the season, Brody practices the religion of Islam when he is taking a weekend off with Carrie at her cabin. Here, he is praying at sunrise with the evocative view of a peaceful lake. This connects Brody's newfound religion to something positive, tying the American and the Muslim part of his identity together.

Even though Muslims and the religion of Islam are presented in a generally positive light through Brody's (and Dana's) character in the first part of season one, there are also instances where Brody's character connects Muslims and Islam with negative traits. In episode nine, Brody is assaulted and abducted by Nazir's men in a parking lot. When Brody is lying half unconscious on a bed, one of Nazir's accomplices uses a white cloth and water from a silver bowl to wash Brody's face. The bowl that is used resembles the one Brody uses to wash his hands and feet before praying. Moreover, the silver bowl also looks like the one Nazir used when washing Brody's face during his time in captivity. Thus, the silver bowl

¹⁶¹ "Clean skin," in *Homeland* (episode 3, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Dan Attias, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 12-13.

links Brody and Nazir with the religion of Islam, connecting Islam with the leader of a terrorist organization, and to a converted Muslim who works for him.

Another example where Brody's character more clearly connects Muslim and Islam with negative traits can be found in episode five, when one of Brody's flashbacks reveals that he was beaten unconscious by one of his prison guards, Afsul Hamid, with a stick wrapped in barbed wire.¹⁶² In another flashback a few episodes later, Nazir cuts off the ropes around Brody's bloody wrists, while saying: "This is your new home now." Nazir then fills a bathtub with water so Brody can clean up. Before Brody gets into the bathtub, he looks at himself in the mirror. The resemblance between Brody and the popular portrayal of Jesus is striking.¹⁶³ Brody's reflection shows a heavily beaten man with unkempt, shoulder-long hair. His bare upper body is dirty and has a light red color.¹⁶⁴

In both the above examples there are elements that can be associated with Jesus. That Nazir cuts off the ropes around Brody's wrists can be interpreted that Nazir is "setting Brody free," saving Brody from Hamid's barbaric torturing (using a stick wrapped in barbed wire). The subsequent utterance, "this is your new home now," combined with the bathtub filled with water might symbolize that while Brody is washing off his dirt, he is also washing away all of his sins belonging to "the old Brody," the Christian, American Marine. The bathtub might symbolize baptism: Brody is dying as Christ, and is being reborn as a Muslim. Thus, the resemblance between Brody and Jesus might suggest that Brody, who now has been freed from all of his sins, is the lamb that Nazir is going to sacrifice in order to accomplish what in his mind is justice.

Interpreting Brody as Nazir's sacrificial lamb, the image of Brody as a Christ-figure might portray the religion of Islam, and also all other religions one might associate with Jesus, in a negative light, because this means of justifying or explaining acts of terror denotes extremism, not the beliefs of those who share the faith used to justify such political actions. If Brody is getting ready to carry out acts of terror in the name of his religious belief, his "willingness to do whatever necessary to get the job done" means "sacrificing his own

¹⁶² "Blind spot," in *Homeland* (episode 5, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Clark Johnson, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 19-20.

¹⁶³ The popular portrayal I am referring to is the American image of Christ during the 19th and 20th century, where Jesus has been depicted as a fairly tall and lean man, with fair skin, long, flowing, light brown hair, and light-colored eyes. This image, however, is not unproblematic. Throughout U.S. history, various religious groups have looked at Jesus differently (see for instance Stephen Prothero's book *How the Son of God Became a National Icon*). In addition, there are continuous disagreements about how Jesus really looked like.

¹⁶⁴ "Crossfire," 10-13.

physical and moral well-being” making him “a sort of ‘Christ-figure for the war on terror.’”¹⁶⁵

However, when setting aside Nazir’s agenda with Brody, even though Brody might be willing to do whatever necessary for what he believes is right, one might argue that he is not motivated by religion, but by factors of a more personal nature. Perhaps Brody, when looking at himself in the mirror, knows that he is going to be sacrificed, and accepts it because it is for a cause he believes in, to bring justice to the death of Issa, Nazir’s son. Issa, a boy whom Brody became very fond of, was killed in a drone attack conducted by the CIA, that refused to take any responsibility, claiming that news of “the bodies of 83 children allegedly killed in the strike” is believed to be false, “created by the terrorists for propaganda purposes.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, as the little girl in the opening sequence, Issa represents the innocence of a nation, what is pure and not yet damaged by society. With Issa’s death, Brody’s image of America is shattered. Thus one might also argue that Brody is not only sacrificing himself for Issa, but for a new and better America. Perhaps Brody wants to bring back the innocence that he feels the nation lost after the drone attacks. Thus, even though linking Brody to a “Christ-figure” might put Muslims and Islam in a negative light, it depends on how one interprets Brody’s sacrifice: if Brody is only a pawn in Nazir’s game, one can conclude that his character links the religion of Islam with terrorism. However, if Brody is sacrificing himself, for the reasons mentioned above, this negative image is nuanced because it is not (necessarily) religiously motivated.

In addition to Brody, there are also instances where other characters in the show portray Muslims and the religion of Islam negatively. In a conversation between Nazir and Brody in episode nine, for instance, the religion of Islam is again linked to beliefs belonging to extremists:

Brody: “I’ve been living the last eight years thinking I killed Tom Walker, which I now find out is not true. Which means everything I did – everything – “

Abu Nazir: “Is the peace you found in Islam a false peace?”

Brody: “Everything I believed in.”

Abu Nazir: “You believed in Allah’s forgiveness and, through Allah’s mercy, in yourself.”

Brody: “It was all a trick. It’s based on a lie.”

Abu Nazir: “I did not let you actually kill your friend. Isn’t that the good news?”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Takacs, 93.

¹⁶⁶ “Crossfire,” 40.

¹⁶⁷ “Crossfire,” 31-32.

In this conversation where Brody is on the verge of breaking with Nazir and his terrorist regime, Nazir indirectly links terrorism to Islam, as he uses Brody's and his own common belief to support his own political agenda: that supporting his terrorist regime is the right thing to do. Brody denies being part of Nazir's "holy war" when he, in episode seven, confesses to Carrie that he is a practicing Muslim:

Carrie (pointing at his hands): "What's that?"

Brody: "What? Nothing."

Carrie: "No, it's not nothing."

Brody: "It's a habit when I don't have my prayer beads."

Carrie (surprised): "You're a Muslim?"

Brody: "Yeah. You live in despair for eight years, you might turn to religion too. And the King James Bible was not available."

(...)

Brody (explaining why he lied about having met Nazir): "Because he offered me comfort...and I took it."

Carrie: "And you became his follower? A soldier of his jihad?"

Brody: "No. No. Jesus."¹⁶⁸

Here, Carrie's reaction indicates that she believes Brody's conversion to Islam is synonymous with having been "turned," thus linking Islam with being a terrorist. In addition, Carrie's choice of words, asking Brody if he is a soldier of Nazir's jihad, "glamorizes terrorism" by imbuing "terrorists with religious authority they do not have" damaging "relations with Muslims around the globe."¹⁶⁹ The usage of terminology that has negative connotations can feed the notion that "the West" is at war with the so-called "Muslim World," not distinguishing extremists from ordinary Muslims, thus labeling all Muslims as a single enemy. Using such terminology also links Muslims to terrorism because the 9/11 terrorist attacks were "described by leaders of the group, including Osama bin Laden, as acts of *jihad* against globalization and the spread of Western influence."¹⁷⁰

Although the above examples show how Nazir and Carrie present the religion of Islam and Muslims negatively by confirming the stereotypical, negative notion, Brody's character sheds a more nuanced light. First, in contrast to Nazir, Brody separates his religious belief from his own political agenda. Brody's separation of religion from politics indirectly says that it does not follow that one needs to agree with a certain political view or cause even though one believes in the religion most commonly associated with it. Brody tries to

¹⁶⁸ "The Weekend," in *Homeland* (episode 7, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Michael Cuesta, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2013), 42-43.

¹⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Terminology to define the terrorists*.

¹⁷⁰ Combs, 45.

demystify the notion of the stereotypical Muslim enemy by differentiating Nazir's terrorist regime from Islam at large, arguing that his newfound religion has nothing to do with terrorism.

Second, Brody does not identify himself with being a holy warrior. In episode eleven, Brody takes his family on what supposedly looks like a family trip to Gettysburg, the city where one of the deadliest battles during the American Civil War (1861-65) took place. His real mission, however, is to pick up a bomb vest at a tailor shop. When Brody explains the battle of Gettysburg to his son, Chris, the reference to the battle of Joshua Chamberlain and to his own war, cannot be mistaken:

And that's when this teacher from Maine – Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was his name - asked his men to do a very strange thing (...) He told 'em to stop shooting. No guns. Just bayonets. And instead of shooting, they charged down the side of that hill toward the enemy. And it was so unexpected; it was so crazy, that the line was held that day. All because of a schoolteacher from Maine who was willing to do what was necessary for a cause that he believed in.¹⁷¹

Brody's utterance indicates that Brody will, as did Chamberlain, play a pivotal role in the terrorist attack that Nazir and his accomplices have planned to conduct on U.S. soil. Identifying himself with Chamberlain, "a schoolteacher from Maine who was willing to do what was necessary for a cause that he believed in," Brody is just an ordinary man who is willing to do what is needed to fight for what he believes is right.¹⁷² The reference to the American Civil War also alludes to the fact that the war Brody is fighting is a domestic war: the people Brody considers to be his enemies are the people within, not the people from outside.

In both the above conversations between Nazir and Brody, and Carrie and Brody, as well as throughout the whole season, the credibility of Brody's character is questioned because it is implied that Nazir has "brainwashed" or "turned" Brody into conducting acts of terrorism. In particular, there are two factors that put the credibility of Brody's character in a questionable light. First, one might find it odd that Brody willingly converted to the religion of Islam. Even though it seems as if the Brody family practices some type of Protestantism, for instance, by going to church and saying grace before dinner, it is indicated that Brody was not an active participant prior to his deployment. At a family dinner, when Brody is about to

¹⁷¹ "The Vest," in *Homeland* (episode 11, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Clark Johnson, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 17-18.

¹⁷² "The Vest," 17-18.

say grace, his son Chris, exclaims, “Do you even know how to say grace?”¹⁷³ If Brody were only a passive Christian, it is perhaps more understandable that he became a practicing Muslim. Brody also explains the reason he converted to Islam in the conversation with Carrie when he admits he is a practicing Muslim: “When you live in despair for eight years; you might turn to religion too. And the King James Bible was not available.”¹⁷⁴ After (assumably) having been tortured for eight years, with no hope of ever seeing his country, friends or family again, he turned to religion. Because he was held captive in a place where Islam is the dominant religion, that was the religion available, and the religion Brody chose.

Another factor one might find odd is Brody’s motivation for helping Nazir conduct acts of terrorism. According to social identity theory¹⁷⁵, people tend to see the world as a meaningful place, in terms of justice (people get what they deserve), controllability (if people try, they can determine what happens to them) and chance (the world is not random).¹⁷⁶ When people are victimized by traumatic events, these assumptive worlds that are crucial to people’s functioning, force them to reexamine their “views of the world as benevolent and meaningful and of themselves as worthy.”¹⁷⁷ That Brody, while being held captive, felt like he had lost his meaning and purpose in life, is confirmed in the following conversation between Brody and a reporter:

Reporter: “What did they want from you?”

Brody: “They want you to lose faith. Lose faith in your country, which they say is the devil. In your brother Marines, who they say aren’t coming for you because you have no military value. In your wife, who they say has got her arms wrapped around someone else.”

Reporter: “How do you resist that?”

Brody: “You can’t.”¹⁷⁸

The strategies that victims use to cope with life-shattering events can be interpreted as “efforts to find meaning or to protect themselves from having to cope with the full implications of the event.”¹⁷⁹ After several years in captivity, Brody was released from the cell he was sitting in, and allowed to see daylight again. To restore meaning to Brody’s life,

¹⁷³ “Marine One,” 15-16.

¹⁷⁴ “The Weekend,” 42-43.

¹⁷⁵ The theory of social identity was first formulated by the social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 80s. The theory introduced the concept of social identity as a way of explaining intergroup behavior.

¹⁷⁶ Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition* (The U.S.: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991), 172-73.

¹⁷⁷ Fiske and Taylor, 173.

¹⁷⁸ “Clean skin,” 18-19.

¹⁷⁹ Fiske and Taylor, 173.

Nazir instructs him to teach his son, Issa, English. When Issa is killed, once again Brody loses the meaning and purpose of his life. To restore this meaning, Brody needs to bring justice to Issa's death.

In season two, Carrie argues that Nazir uses Issa to manipulate Brody into believing that his actions are for a good and justified cause. If Carrie is right, and if Brody has in fact been "brainwashed" or "turned," Muslims and Islam are associated with traits that are overwhelmingly negative. Although there is no doubt that Nazir at times manipulates Brody through influencing his choices and actions, this does not mean that Brody has been "brainwashed". To be "brainwashed" means to have been "subjected to intensive forced indoctrination resulting in the rejecting of old beliefs and acceptance of new ones."¹⁸⁰ Even though Brody has gained new beliefs, he is not rejecting the ones he already has. This view is confirmed in a suicide video Brody makes, before an attack that, had it succeeded, would have killed the Vice President and half of his staff:

On May 19, 2003, as part of a two-man sniper team serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, I was taken prisoner by forces loyal to Saddam Hussein. Those forces then sold me to an Al-Qaeda commander, Abu Nazir, who was operating a terrorist cell from across the Syrian border where I was held captive for more than eight years (...) People will say I was broken. I was brainwashed. People will say that I was turned into a terrorist, taught to hate my country. I love my country. What I am is a Marine... And as a Marine, I swore an oath to defend the United States against enemies both foreign and domestic. My action today, is against such domestic enemies - the vice president, and members of his national security team, who I know to be liars and war criminals, responsible for atrocities they were never held accountable for. This is about justice for 82 children, whose deaths were never acknowledged, and whose murder is a stain on the soul of this nation.¹⁸¹

Here, Brody takes full responsibility for his actions (including those actions that have not yet happened), instead of blaming those holding him captive. He explicitly states that he has not been turned into a terrorist, but that he is continuing his duty as a Marine, a duty that includes defending the country against domestic as well as foreign enemies. Perhaps his loyalty, then, is not to Nazir, and not to his U.S. superior commander, but to the oath he once swore when deciding to become a Marine, and to those values he then took to protect: freedom, liberty and justice.

In addition, when victims of life-shattering events try to cope with their traumatized experiences, the strategies they use can be interpreted as "efforts to find meaning or to protect

¹⁸⁰ The Free Online Dictionary, s.v. "brainwashed."

¹⁸¹ "Marine One," 1:06:00.

themselves from having to cope with the full implications of the event.”¹⁸² Thus, when Brody decides to help Nazir and his regime to kill those responsible for the attack, one can argue that it is not because he has been “brainwashed” or “turned” by a regime associated with Islam, but that it is a strategy he is using to protect himself from having to deal with Issa’s death. Like the image of eyes that open up in the opening sequence, Brody opens his eyes, realizing that acts of terrorism are not limited only to countries in the Middle East, and that the dividing line between “us” and “them” is no longer clear. This supports the interpretation of Brody’s conversion to Islam as a choice he made based on new insight, not something that was being forced upon him. This also supports the, for the most part, positive representation of Muslims and Islam through Brody’s character during the latter part of season one.

Toward the end of the first season, Brody is forced to choose sides while he is located in a safe room with half of the U.S. government, wearing a bomb vest that if detonated, can blow them all to dust. Before Brody’s first attempt to detonate the vest, Brody thinks about what Nazir has said, and that he is doing this for the sake of Issa. The vest, however, malfunctions. After fixing the vest in the bathroom, Brody is again ready to detonate the vest. Right before he is about to turn on the switch, he receives a call from Dana, who, suspecting that something is wrong, insists that Brody has to promise her that he intends to come home:

Brody: “Dana, I’m here with a group of people. Look, I’ve gotta go.”

Dana: “No, Dad, don’t.”

Brody: “We’re just, uh – We’re in a holding area, and, um...you know, they’re about to let us out.”

Dana: “So you’re coming home?”

Brody: “Sure.”

Dana: “Tell me that.”

Brody (very quickly): “Yeah, I’m coming home.”

Dana: “No, dad, don’t say it like that. Dad, promise me. You have to promise me that you’re coming home, dad. Dad? Dad you have to promise me. I need you. You know that.”

Brody (after a long pause): “I’m coming home, Dana. I promise.”¹⁸³

Here, Brody is torn between Nazir, a terrorist leader, and Issa, an innocent victim on the one hand, and Dana, his American daughter, on the other hand. As in the opening sequence, Brody is walking around in a labyrinth, uncertain about what path to take. In the end, Brody does not manage to detonate the vest. His affiliation with his daughter Dana weighs more heavily than his allegiance to Nazir. This separates Brody’s conversion to Islam from the

¹⁸² Fiske and Taylor, 173.

¹⁸³ “Marine One,” 52-54.

negative associations implied throughout the season (whether or not Brody is a terrorist, and that he became a terrorist about the same time that he converted to Islam). The persistent theme of family and fathering, and the reiteration of conservative family values, shows that Muslim values are comparable with American values, thus uniting the two. Hence, family becomes what fills the gap between “us” and “them.”

Brody, a returning U.S. Marine who has converted to Islam, is a man who is split between his responsibilities as a father and a husband, and his promises to a man who, despite possible dishonest motives, helped him at a time when no one else could. Although there are several instances where Muslims and/or Islam is linked to terrorism, Brody, unlike the typical terrorist who uses theology and religious terms to justify both their means and ends, separates his personal religion from the politics behind his actions. Although keeping his conversion a secret sheds (unnecessary) negative light on his conversion, Brody’s practicing of Islam is what gets him through the days after eight years in captivity. At the same time, Brody is still embracing many of the values and customs associated with his own culture and beliefs that identified him prior to his deployment. Hence, Brody is an enemy who is both complex, and who represents something new to the genre of American terrorism-TV.

Brody’s character does not fit Alsultany’s theory, which argues that television producers, writers and directors uses various strategies to “give the impression that the representations they are producing are complex” only to “seemingly subvert the stereotype of the terrorist.”¹⁸⁴ The strategies Alsultany refers to are first, to use patriotic Arab or Muslim American characters who assist the U.S. government in its fight against terrorism to separate the faith of Islam from being a terrorist. The aim is to challenge the notion that “Arabs and Muslims are not American and/or un-American.”¹⁸⁵ Brody is an American Muslim fighting the U.S. government, which is what, in his eyes, is the true terrorist. Even though he is patriotic, his patriotism is not directed toward a specific nation, but toward what he considers to be the right thing to do. It can therefore be argued that Brody’s split character does not fit Alsultany’s first strategy.

Another commonly used strategy, according to Alsultany, is emphasizing the victimization and sympathy of the Arab and/or Muslim enemy, creating the “ideological work for justifying discriminatory policies.”¹⁸⁶ Already during the beginning of season one, it

¹⁸⁴ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 164-65.

¹⁸⁵ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 163.

¹⁸⁶ Alsultany, “Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity,” 164.

is hard to sympathize with Brody's character. In the third episode, for instance, he humiliates his wife by making her get naked, so he can masturbate without having to interact with her physically. Thus, this strategy cannot be applied to Brody's character.

The third strategy, "flipping the enemy," involves changing the enemy's identity, making the viewers believe that the terrorists are Muslim and/or Arab, only to discover that they are merely "pawns or a front for Euro-American or European terrorists." In *Homeland*, Brody's identity is not flipped, it is torn between being an American and being a Muslim. Nor is Brody part of a larger network of international terrorists.¹⁸⁷ Alsultany's fourth strategy, to avoid naming the terrorist's particular country or ethnicity, or leave this information intentionally ambiguous to eliminate potential offensiveness, does not apply to *Homeland* either. Almost every time the CIA is about to investigate a new suspect, the country of origin, ethnicity and religious affiliation are brought up immediately. For instance, the terrorist suspect Raquim Faisel is a Muslim from Pakistan, Brody's prisoner guard Afsul Hamid is a Syrian Muslim, and Mansour Al-Zahrani, who has a direct link with Nazir, is a Saudi-Arabian diplomat.

Finally, Alsultany argues that "despite the shift away from the more blatant stereotypes of previous decades, Arab and Muslim identities are still understood and evaluated primarily in relation to terrorism."¹⁸⁸ Although this, to some extent, also correlates with the enemies in *Homeland*, the character portrayal in *Homeland* is more nuanced. First, although Arab and/or Muslim identity is primarily associated with characters who are working as terrorists, there are also Muslims in *Homeland* who are non-terrorists, for instance Carrie's co-worker in the CIA, the Guatemalan and Lebanese Danny Galvez.¹⁸⁹ Second, not all of the terrorists in *Homeland* are Muslims. Aileen Morgan for instance, is an American woman who has a relationship with a Muslim man, but there are no indications as to what religion or culture she practices. Tom Walker is another example. The religion and/or culture of the former U.S. Marine are not even mentioned. Third, there are several examples where Muslim culture and customs are treated with dignity and respect. For instance, when Carrie is questioning the Imam in the mosque, she takes off her shoes and wears a headscarf. She also asks Agent Hall from the FBI to take off his shoes out of respect for the Imam. Fourth, being a Muslim is part of Brody's identity. Although being a Muslim and practicing Islam are also linked to whether or not Brody is a terrorist, it is what makes Brody function, both in private

¹⁸⁷ Alsultany, "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity," 164.

¹⁸⁸ Alsultany, "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity," 165.

¹⁸⁹ In season two, this backfires at him when Carrie, in part because she knows he is a Muslim, considers him a suspect.

with his family and in the public eye. The religion of Islam is also where Brody can find some sort of peace.

Brody is not an idealized character. His faults and weakness are constantly being pointed out, yet society perceives him to be what they want him to be. His character is split between two sides: his responsibilities as an American Marine and being a husband and a father, and his allegiance to the leader of a terrorist organization. When the two sides are connected, so are the Muslim and American parts of his identity. Brody's Muslim American identity, then, represents values such as diversity, legacy, patriotism and national service, belief in God, and the significance of a family unit.¹⁹⁰ Brody is the white, American Marine who converted to Islam, playing on both "sides," where there are no enemies and no heroes. Thus, Brody represent a character who challenges the stereotypical Muslim enemy in an American post-9/11 terrorism-show where the depiction of Muslims and Islam is no longer black and white.

2.3 The other enemies in *Homeland*

In the previous sub-section, I argue that Muslims and the religion of Islam are portrayed in a more positive and nuanced light than what has been typical in terrorism-shows post-9/11, and that Brody challenges the contemporary stereotype of the Muslim enemy as a crude and violent fanatic. In the following sub-sections, I will discuss how *Homeland* has portrayed Muslims and Islam through some of the other enemies in the show, and whether this representation challenges stereotypical portrayals of the Muslim enemy in post-9/11 terrorism-shows.

The enemies in *Homeland* can be divided into two types: foreign and domestic enemies. They are enemies because they operate as terrorists, thus representing a threat to American national security. The foreign enemies consist of terrorists who are mainly from the Middle East. They are terrorists from the outside. The domestic enemies are those who operate from within the U.S. government, mainly Vice President William Walden and the Deputy Director of the CIA, David Estes (Brody is both a foreign and domestic enemy). Walden and Estes can be considered enemies both by Nazir and his regime (because they were in charge of the drone attack that killed tens of civilians) and by the U.S. nation because they jeopardize national security in order to gain power, and remain in control.

¹⁹⁰ Alsultany, "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity," 607.

Because the enemies in the show are countless, and the space limited, I have chosen to focus on the enemies that I consider to be of most significance when answering my thesis-statement. In addition, the enemies below are also given substantial roles in the show, thus providing enough material to conduct a fairly thorough analysis. In the next sections, then, I will discuss how some of the other enemies in the show that both confirm and challenge the stereotypical Muslim enemy.

2.3.1 Abu Nazir

In the first season of *Homeland*, the character Abu Nazir, is portrayed either through Sergeant Brody's flashbacks, Brody's phone calls with Nazir, or through information provided by CIA-officials. When Nazir is portrayed by anyone but Brody, it is exclusively negative, while Brody provides a more complex representation.

Nazir is first presented in the beginning of the first episode when his face is displayed in a picture on a wall at the CIA's counter-terrorism center. Nazir, who is the leader of a terrorist-organization, looks like he is from the Middle East. He has a black beard and a moustache, is wearing glasses and has a black and grey-checked scarf around his head.¹⁹¹ Thus, the first view of Nazir connects him with the stereotypical terrorist image of the brown-skinned, bearded man. This image is almost immediately supported in the second episode when one of the CIA's informants, Lynne, describes Nazir as "one of the most dangerous terrorists in the world."¹⁹² In episode five, Nazir is again portrayed in a negative light, when Saul is interrogating the terrorist suspect Afsul Hamid:

One man in particular is getting worried. Abu Nazir. Who, as we all know is not your average Islamic terrorist bent on bringing down Western civilization. No, this man has a certain style, a certain artistry. Let's take the case of Yasser Akram for example. Lifted by our British friends from a villa in Lebanon in August 2006. Within days of his capture, his only brother, a good and holy man, is killed in a car bomb. The Yemeni police had to ship what was left of him in a small plastic bag to a lab in Dubai just to identify him.¹⁹³

In this quote, it becomes evident that Nazir has conducted terrible acts, killing family members of those working for him, once they betray him and his terrorist regime by revealing any information. Although Saul's statement might be exaggerated to make Hamid talk, it sheds negative light on Nazir and the measures he is using.

¹⁹¹ "Pilot," 3-4.

¹⁹² "Grace," 25.

¹⁹³ "Blind Spot," 21-23.

Brody's flashbacks, however, add insight and complexity to this dark and gloomy image of Nazir. In the first episode, only a few scenes after Nazir is first presented, Brody has a flashback of Nazir, remembering him as a calm, gentle and kind man, giving the tortured Brody water.¹⁹⁴ Thus, in contrast to the view provided by the initial picture of Nazir, Brody's flashback paints, at first, a more positive picture of Nazir's character by giving him human qualities, features one does not commonly associate with the leader of a terrorist organization. The first portrayal of Nazir, then, is two-fold, thus partly challenging the stereotypical portrayal of the Muslim enemy.

Only a few scenes later, however, this partly favorable picture of Nazir is crushed when Brody has a new flashback, revealing that he was forced to beat his co-Marine and friend, Tom Walker to death on the orders of Nazir.¹⁹⁵ A few episodes later, Brody has another flashback that adds some nuance to this portrayal. In his flashback, Brody remembers both that he was being tortured, and also that he was given lots of delicious fruit. Nazir's face, when giving Brody fruit, looks friendly and calm, and is gently touching Brody's face.¹⁹⁶ Although one might argue that Nazir is treating Brody well because he wants something in return, at this point, it also shows that Nazir has some positive traits that add to the complexity of his character.

Even though the character of Nazir at first is given both positive and negative traits, during the end of season one, it becomes evident that Nazir is confirming the stereotypical Muslim enemy, a terrorist who is threatening U.S. national security. Although it is revealed in episode nine that Nazir wants to attack the U.S., in part, because of a personal tragedy (the death of his son Issa), in episode twelve, this argument loses its credibility. In a conversation between Nazir and Brody, Nazir tells Brody that their lives are preordained: "We are not created for no reason. We are only finding the path we are meant to walk on..."¹⁹⁷ Here, Nazir justifies his and Brody's actions by the injustice they were exposed to, creating a "larger meaning," claiming that everything is part of a predetermined master plan. This aligns with the conventional terrorist, using religious terms to justify their means and ends.

¹⁹⁴ "Pilot," 33.

¹⁹⁵ "Pilot," 50-51.

¹⁹⁶ "Clean Skin," 18-19.

¹⁹⁷ "Marine One," 17-18.

2.3.2 Raquim Faisel and Aileen Margaret Morgan

As with the first appearance of Nazir, Raquim Faisel, who becomes a terrorist suspect in episode four, first appears in a picture at the CIA's counter-terrorism office. In a conversation between Estes and Carrie's Muslim partner, Danny Galvez, Faisel's ethnicity and religion is brought up almost as soon as he is considered a suspect:

Estes: "What's he an assistant professor of?"

Galvez: "Mechanical engineering. Tenure track. Generally liked. Published, peer reviewed."

Estes: "Muslim?"

Galvez: Yeah, but not a Koran thumper. Worships at Khalid Muhammad."

Estes: "What about those trips to Pakistan?"

Galvez: "Lecturing at the University of Lahore. It all checks out."¹⁹⁸

Although Faisel is working as an assistant professor at Bryden University, a private university in Washington, D.C., the second part of the conversation reveals Estes' prejudices against Muslims and Islam. The conversation shows that in the eyes of Estes, being from the Middle East, the same place Nazir's terrorist network operates from, and being a Muslim who goes on trips to his country of origin, Pakistan, are traits that are synonymous with being a terrorist.

In episode six, Faisel is again considered a suspect, after having been temporarily checked out of the case. Faisel has been observed with a woman, "maybe a girlfriend, maybe a wife, maybe just a cohort."¹⁹⁹ The woman, Aileen Morgan, is Faisel's girlfriend:

Saul: (...) "She's Caucasian, mid 20s, blonde hair, blue-green eyes, depending on who you talk to."

Estes (surprised): "Caucasian?"²⁰⁰

Again, both Saul's and Estes's attitudes toward the suspected, Muslim terrorist confirm typical stereotypes, by doubting the relationship between Faisel and Aileen, suggesting that a blond, Caucasian girl who is involved with Faisel, probably works as his prostitute. Later in the episode, Carrie provides a more accurate description of Aileen: "Meet Aileen Margaret Walker. Twenty-eight years old, brown hair – sometimes dyed blondish -, blue eyes, 5'5,"

¹⁹⁸ "Semper I," in *Homeland* (episode 4, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Jeffrey Nachmanoff, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 30-31.

¹⁹⁹ "The Good Soldier," in *Homeland* (episode 6, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Brad Turner, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 17-18.

²⁰⁰ "The Good Soldier," 17-18.

110 pounds.”²⁰¹ The various descriptions show that the first one is more stereotypical than the other. For instance, in Carrie’s description, it is revealed that Aileen has brown, not blond hair. The above conversation, then, implies that both Saul and Estes, men who are top-ranked within the CIA, are filled with prejudices.

These prejudices are further shown when Saul is questioning Aileen after a chase that ends with Faisel getting shot, and Aileen running away to Mexico. When Saul interrogates Aileen alone in his car, while driving her back to Los Angeles, he refuses to believe that she is a cold-hearted terrorist, despite knowing that she undoubtedly is connected to Nazir’s terrorist regime:

I don’t know what happened to you, Aileen. I don’t know how you went from being one more angry teenage girl to joining the fucking jihadists. And if your issues are truly geopolitical, then I can’t help you. I think you wound up here because you fell in love with a boy. And he’s gone now.²⁰²

Although this might be a tactic used to make Aileen talk, Saul’s statement indicates that he finds it hard to believe that a white, rich, American girl can be working against her own country of her own free will. To find some sort of logical explanation, Saul draws the conclusion that she must have been blinded by her love for Faisel. However, there are several factors that indicate that it is the “innocent,” blond, Caucasian woman who is the “chief” terrorist of the two. After having been tipped off by an insider that the CIA is looking for them, Aileen and Faisel drive away to a meeting point, a “safe house.”²⁰³ During their conversation in the car, Aileen apologizes to Faisel, saying she is sorry that she dragged him “into this.”²⁰⁴ Even though Faisel, in his response, takes responsibility for his actions, his reply also suggests that he follows Aileen no matter what she decides to do: “You didn’t drag me into it. Okay? I dragged myself into it. I am a victim of your fabulousness.”²⁰⁵

When Aileen and Faisel arrive at the safe house, a bomb blows up the supposedly secure location. Faisel panics and wants them to turn themselves in. Aileen, however, refuses, arguing that she has no plan to end up like the prisoners at Guantanamo or Abu Ghrabi. In the argument that follows between the two, it becomes evident that it is Aileen who is the chief terrorist of the two:

²⁰¹ “The Good Soldier,” 25-26.

²⁰² “The Weekend,” 38.

²⁰³ Here, “safe-house” is referred to as a place that functions as a secure location that terrorists use in order to discretely transfer from one place to another.

²⁰⁴ “The Good Soldier,” 11 and 20-21.

²⁰⁵ “The Good Soldier,” 11 and 20-21.

Faisal: “You sure it was a bomb?”

Aileen: “I could see the trigger. Pressure-released – open the door, and boom. Very simple and very effective.”

Faisal: “What? How do you know this shit?”

Aileen: “They – They – They trained me.”

Faisal: “They trained you? You never told me that.”

Aileen: “Does it matter?”

Faisal: “Yes it does matter. We are supposed to be in a relationship. We are supposed to be honest with each other. We should turn ourselves in.”²⁰⁶

In the conversation, Aileen reveals that she has been “trained” by a terrorist network, information that appears to be unknown to Faisal. Thus, he reacts in anger, feeling that she has betrayed him by being dishonest. The conversation also shows that with Faisal and Aileen, it is “backwards”: She is the one driving them to act, she is the main terrorist. This challenges the stereotypical image confirmed by the CIA-officers where Aileen, a “naive, weak-willed, American rich girl” fell in love with a Saudi engineer who happened to be a terrorist, sacrificing “all to be with him and fulfill his mission.”²⁰⁷

2.3.3 Mansour Al-Zahrani

Toward the end of episode nine, Mansour Al-Zahrani becomes a suspect as the wife of an Imam confirms that he has been in contact with another terrorist suspect (Tom Walker). Al-Zahrani, “a mild-mannered second secretary of the Saudi embassy,” is, according to Saul, interesting due to two factors. First, Al-Zahrani is in debt to the tune of 750 000 \$. Second, Al-Zahrani is gay, despite the fact that he has three wives and ten kids, and is a devout and conscientious Muslim.

It is Carrie, and not Saul who has gotten the job to interrogate Al-Zahrani, because Estes believes that “Al-Zahrani will be thrown if it’s a woman” and that a female interrogator might give them some leverage.²⁰⁸ When Carrie is preparing for the interrogation, she memorizes information about Al-Zahrani and his family:

Virgil (Carrie’s friend): “Wives.”

Carrie: “Three. Zahra, Hala and Yasmeen. He met Zahra when they were both 15. An arranged marriage, of course. He had his first five children with her. Farid, Suhail... Gamila, Huda and Wadiya.”

²⁰⁶ “The Good Soldier,” 20-21.

²⁰⁷ “The Good Soldier,” 30.

²⁰⁸ “Representative Brody,” in *Homeland* (episode 10, season 1, 2011), DVD, directed by Guy Ferland, (The U.S.: Showtime Home Video, 2012), 9.

Virgil: “How can someone be 15 and married? What could a 15 year old possibly know about the intricacies of a relationship, about taking care of a family?”
Carrie: “More than you do?”²⁰⁹

The first part of this conversation confirms stereotypes of Muslim culture in that the norm is for an aging man to have several young wives, wives who were forced to marry him when they were only children. Yet, Carrie’s last remark to Virgil, one of her co-workers, saying that *he* might not be any better at marriage than a 15 year old girl, adds another layer to these preconceived notions.

When interrogating Al-Zahrani, Carrie plays on what she assumes is Al-Zahrani’s hidden sexual orientation by showing him photos where he is engaging with other men. Indicating that being gay is something that belongs to the Western society, Carrie argues that Al-Zahrani should not risk everything for a cause he does not believe in: “You’re obviously not a zealot. You don’t believe in radical Islam. You love the West.”²¹⁰ By using the word “zealot” in a way that denotes extremism, Carrie connects the word with being a radical Muslim and not with the vast majority of Muslims (for instance, she does not say: “You don’t believe in Islam”). Although this indicates that Carrie is taking the basic faith of Muslims into consideration by avoiding “exaggerations of those misusing it to justify their extreme actions,” it also suggests that in order not to be an extremist, one needs to embrace values that are typical for the West.²¹¹

Al-Zahrani’s reply, however, refutes Saul’s and Carrie’s preconceived assumptions: “Go ahead. Tell everyone you want. Tell them all. I don’t care. I suck cock, and I love it. Yummy, yummy, yummy, yummy. My wives already know. They don’t care. They love me. So fuck it, huh? And fuck you. Put me on CNN. I’ll admit to everything.”²¹² With this utterance, Al-Zahrani expands the notion of the Muslim enemy. Al-Zahrani is a terrorist who is devoted to his Muslim faith and customs, yet his character is also linked to what the CIA-officers view as traits common in Western culture, such as the love for money and for same-sex affairs.

With nothing more to lose, and desperate to get the information she needs, Carrie threatens to deport Al-Zahrani’s favorite daughter, Janine:

²⁰⁹ “Representative Brody,” 12.

²¹⁰ “Representative Brody,” 21.

²¹¹ Combs, 44.

²¹² “Representative Brody,” 21.

We would deport her. And we would make sure that she was not welcome in England or Germany or France or Italy, or even all-forgiving Scandinavia. We would make sure that she had no choice but to go back to Saudi Arabia and get fat and wear a burka for the rest of her miserable life.²¹³

In this statement, Carrie portrays Americans and the West as “the countries of the free,” democratic nations with equal opportunities and rights for men and women where everything is possible. In contrast, Saudi Arabia is depicted as a prison that would be the end to Janine’s life. Despite that Saudi Arabia is the country where Janine grew up, and the place where the rest of her family lives, according to Carrie, if Janine went back, she would get a miserable life where she would have to wear a burka and get fat (assuming that wearing a burka is synonymous with getting health issues). Here, Carrie confirms stereotypical images of Muslim women as oppressed women, a strategy that Alsultany claims justifies withholding sympathy for Muslims.²¹⁴

2.3.4 Concluding remarks

The enemies mentioned in the above sub-sections both confirm and challenge the stereotypical image of the Muslim enemy. Although Nazir, for the most part, confirms the notion of the crude and violent Muslim enemy, directly linking Muslims and the practice of Islam with terrorism, his character is not black and white. Through Brody’s flashbacks, the viewers also see a man who grieves over a lost son and a man who treats his enemy (Brody) not only with cruelty but also with tenderness and kindness.

The couple, Faisal and Aileen confirms the stereotypical enemy. Faisal is a practicing Muslim who is directly linked to acts of terrorism. Both his ethnicity and country of origin confirms the stereotypical image, connecting terrorism and extremist attitudes to Muslims and Islam. Although Aileen also confirms the stereotypical enemy in that she has lived and travelled several years in the Middle East, the same area from which Nazir’s terrorist network operates, she also challenges the stereotypical portrayal. First, Aileen’s character is not linked to Muslims or Islam. She is a rich, educated, white American woman from Connecticut. Second, with Faisal and Aileen, the conventional roles are turned. Unlike the CIA’s prejudiced assumptions, she is the main terrorist of the two, and Faisal, who met Aileen in Saudi Arabia when they were children, is only following her lead, probably because he is in love with her. It can therefore be argued that Aileen, in particular, challenges the

²¹³ “Representative Brody,” 25.

²¹⁴ Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11,” 167.

stereotypical notion of the Muslim enemy because she represents traits most commonly associated with the opposite of how one usually defines a terrorist, both in terms of background and ethnicity and through her relationship with Faisal. Finally, even though Al-Zahrani's character represents the typical Muslim patriarch in that he has several wives whom he is cheating on, he, too, expands the concept of the Muslim enemy. Not only does Al-Zahrani care enough about his daughter, Janine, to reveal substantial information about Nazir's terrorist regime to the CIA, but also his openness about his sexual orientation challenges established conventions of Muslims as heterosexual people.

In *Homeland*, then, it is not only Brody who challenges the stereotypical Muslim enemy in American terrorism-shows post 9/11. Also the other enemies, both the enemies "from the outside" and the enemies "from within," add nuance and depth to the portrayal of the Muslim enemy in that the characters are represented in a complex way, and not in a black-and-white manner.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to look at how the stereotypical image of the Muslim enemy has been challenged in the post-9/11 terrorism show *Homeland* through a qualitative analysis of the main enemies in the show. In this chapter, I will sum up the main findings of my analysis, and then discuss these findings in light of a broader context. I will also say something about the implications of my results and present some suggestions for future research.

3.1 Findings and implications

The most interesting thing I have found through my analysis is that *Homeland* seems to present a more progressive outlook on Muslims and Islam, despite a post 9/11-climate in which the public sentiment toward Muslims and Islam has been increasingly negative. Although stereotypical portrayals of Muslims and Islam are highly present in the show, through my analysis I have found that several of the enemies in *Homeland* challenge the preconceived notion of the Muslim enemy as a violent, crude fanatic. This is most evident with the main character in the show, Sergeant Nicholas Brody, a white, Christian, U.S. Marine who after eight years in captivity has converted to the religion of Islam. Although there are instances when Brody's character connects Muslims and Islam with negative traits, throughout the first season of the show, Muslims and the religion of Islam are generally presented in a positive light. Through the portrayal of Brody's character, Muslims and Islam are linked to positive qualities such as freedom, openness and kindness. Brody's character also sheds positive light on Muslims and Islam in that he uses his newfound religion to cope with his everyday life as a returning Marine, dealing with pressure both from his family and from society. Even though Brody converts to Islam about the same time that he decides to enter an allegiance with the leader of a terrorist organization, Abu Nazir, his reasons for allying himself with Nazir are not necessarily religiously motivated. This separates Brody from the "conventional terrorist" because he does not use theology and religious terms to

justify his means and ends. Nor does Brody view himself as a “holy warrior” who is fighting a pre-ordained war that is part of a larger master plan. Brody is not “brainwashed” or “turned.” Instead, working for Nazir can be explained as a strategy Brody is using to cope with all of his traumatic experiences, and as a means to restore some meaning to his life, by bringing about justice for the death of Nazir’s son, Issa.

In addition to Brody, there are also several other characters who challenge the stereotypical, Muslim enemy by adding nuance and depth to the contemporary, negative portrayal. The main foreign enemy in the show, Abu Nazir, for instance, is not portrayed only as a hardcore terrorist without any qualms. Through Brody’s flashbacks, he is also given human qualities one does not commonly associate with being a terrorist leader. Thus, Nazir is depicted as a complex character, and not in a black and white manner. In addition, Muslims and Islam are portrayed in a nuanced light in that Muslim ritual and customs are explained, respected and followed by some of the other non-Muslim characters. Brody’s daughter, Dana, for instance, functions as the open-minded character who, by asking basic questions about Brody’s conversion and religion, attempts to enlighten the ignorant and the prejudiced. In addition, Carrie acts in accordance with Muslim customs on several occasions, for instance when she wears a shawl that covers her head when entering a mosque. These characters, therefore, challenge the stereotypical negative picture of Muslims and Islam in that they add understanding and explanation of Muslim customs and practices, instead of viewing Muslims and Islam with a preconceived and prejudiced notion.

My analysis of the opening sequence and the overall narrative in the show supports my above findings that the portrayal of the characters in *Homeland* point towards a more progressive outlook on Muslims and Islam. Whereas the opening sequence backs up my claim that the binary system between “us” (the democratic west) and “them” (the rest) is no longer black and white, the complexities of the overall narrative reinforce this interpretation by adding depth and insight to the stereotypical portrayal of the Muslim enemy, forcing the spectators to interpret and reinterpret everything they see. For instance, in the beginning of the show, Brody appears to be a returning war hero, but through his flashbacks, this image is questioned as the viewer is provided with new information.

Through my analysis, I have also found that Brody’s character might redefine the term “national identity” by raising questions about what it means to be an American, and what the proclaimed “diversity aspect” commonly associated with this term, really holds. In the beginning of season one, being a dad, husband and a Marine is what signifies Brody’s character and identity. At the end of the season, Brody’s new insight about the U.S. (knowing

the truth about the drone attacks that killed Issa) has changed his view about the nation. That, as well as his conversion to the religion of Islam, becomes a large part of who Brody is. Because Brody both embraces the values and customs associated with the culture and beliefs that identified him prior to his deployment, and because he becomes a practicing Muslim, Brody's character expands the understanding of American national identity by adding diversity, thus redefining the notion of what the term means. In addition, through the persistent theme of family and fathering, and the reiteration of conservative family values, Brody's character shows that Muslim values are comparable with American values. In this way, the common denominator, family, becomes what fills the gap between "us" and "them." By building a bridge between "us" and "them," Brody's character shows that being an American can also include being a white Muslim who practices the religion of Islam, while at the same time valuing practices and customs most associated with "Western countries."

Finally, I have found that the portrayal of the enemies in *Homeland* indicates that the show represents a two-sided political agenda. The enemies are both foreign and domestic. The foreign enemies (mainly Abu Nazir and his accomplices) represent a threat to U.S. soil, whereas the domestic enemies (Vice President William Walden and Deputy Director of the CIA, David Estes) represent a threat both to the U.S. and to various countries in the Middle East. Hence, even though several of the enemies in *Homeland* directly link Muslims and Islam to terrorists and extremism, this negative portrayal is balanced in that the practice, actions and behavior of their enemy counterpart, the domestic enemies, are also condemned. For instance, the terrorist actions that Nazir and his accomplices conduct toward the U.S. are highly criticized, but so is the way both the FBI and the CIA operate. An example of this can be found in episode twelve, when it is revealed that Walden and Estes have undisclosed documents to hide traces of their involvement with the drone attacks that killed 83 innocent school children.

Brody is a complex character who disproves Alsultany's and other scholars' claim that Muslims and Islam cannot be presented in a good light as long as the dominant attitude among Americans is negative. Alsultany argues that because a more sympathetic portrayal of Muslims often appears in a narrative that justifies discrimination against Muslims and Islam, these portrayals only contribute to a post-race illusion of a society that no longer discriminates. My analysis, both of several of the characters, the opening sequence and the overall narrative in the show, however, indicate signs of acceptance and a willingness to challenge contemporary stereotypes of Muslims and Islam in American popular culture post-9/11. Throughout history, Muslims and Arabs have been " 'the Other' of the West and of the

United States specifically,” meaning that they have represented what American and the Americans are not.²¹⁵ In this thesis, I have argued that Brody partly fills the gap between “us” and “them” by making “the otherness,” what is foreign and unknown, become familiar and known. In *Homeland*, therefore, one can claim that the stereotypical portrayal of the Muslim enemy is not a strategy used to justify discriminatory politics to project the U.S. as an enlightened nation that has entered a post-race era without discrimination. Instead, my claim is that by challenging the stereotypical image of the Muslim enemy, the characters in *Homeland* add understanding, insight and depth to the contemporary negative portrayal. Understood within this framework, *Homeland* does not reject, but refine racial profiling in that the threat of terror is embodied in a character that can be considered both as a foreign and domestic enemy, and who can be considered a threat by both the terrorist regime in the Middle East, and also by the U.S. Depending on how specific events, political debates and issues are framed, if this trend continues, perhaps with time, a more accurate and tolerant view of those stereotyped might evolve.

3.2 Limitations and future research

In this thesis, I have looked at how Muslims and Islam have been portrayed through some of the characters in the first season of the terrorism-show *Homeland* (2011). Although my analysis indicates that several of the characters in the show challenge the contemporary negative portrayal of the Muslim enemy, because the material analyzed is limited, the result of my analysis is not sufficient enough to give anything but implications as to whether or not there has actually been a shift in the way American terrorism-shows portray Muslims and Islam. A suggestion for future research, therefore, could be to expand the material analyzed. One possibility is to analyze several shows that can be categorized as terrorism-shows to see if *Homeland* is an exception to the contemporary norm due to the political and social climate in which it was launched, or if the positive portrayal of Muslims is a current trend. It would also be interesting to analyze shows such as *Homeland* over a longer period of time to explore how this trend has developed.

Another suggestion for further research is to conduct a comparative analysis between shows in different genres and see what types of shows and/or series confirm and/or challenge the stereotypical portrayal of Muslims and Islam. Finally, a broader study could include a closer look at the relationship between the social and political climate to see how the context

²¹⁵ Suleiman, 44.

in which a show airs, correlates with how stereotypes are confirmed or challenged. The result of this analysis could be compared to public sentiment and attitudes toward those stereotyped at the time in which the respective shows are launched. In a study like this, one could take a closer look at the relationship between society, stereotyping and public opinion, to see how the prevailing depiction of the Muslim world alters in accordance with how a nation's political agenda, media and popular culture changes.

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Appendix A: Film Facts

Homeland (season 1)

Genre: Psychological thriller, political thriller, crime thriller, terrorism-show

Format: Serial drama

Based on: *Prisoners of War* (Israel) by Gideon Raff

Developed by: Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa

Executive producers:

Howard Gordon

Alex Gansa

Gideon Raff

Michael Cuesta

Henry Bromell

Chip Johannessen

Meredith Stiehm

Alexander Cary

Avi Nir

Ran Telem

Production country: United States

Production year: 2011

Running time: 637 minutes (12 episodes)

Starring (main characters):

Sergeant Nicholas Brody: Damian Lewis

Abu Nazir: Navid Negahban

Carrie Mathison: Claire Danes

Saul Berenson: Mandy Patinkin

David Estes: David Harewood

William Walden: Jamey Sheridan

Appendix B: Episode Synopsis

Episode synopsis, *Homeland* (season 1)

Episode 1: "Pilot"

CIA agent Carrie Mathison believes that the Intelligence that led to the rescue of Sergeant Nicholas Brody was a set-up, connected to an Al-Qaeda plot to be carried out on American soil. Carrie is forced to break protocol in order to prove her theory that Brody was "turned".

Episode 2: "Grace"

Carrie receives a new piece of electronic evidence from an undercover agent while staying glad to the surveillance footage of life in Brody's home. Brody is struggling with his traumatic memories, and resisting pressure to become a media hero.

Episode 3: "Clean skin"

Despite misgivings, the Brody family prepares to step into the spotlight with an exclusive television interview. At the CIA, Carrie and her team close in on an al-Qaeda plot to fund a terrorist attack on the US.

Episode 4: "Semper I"

The political powers that be make big plans for national hero Brody, but his increasingly erratic behavior threatens his media-darling status. Carrie grows desperate for evidence linking Brody with Abu Nazir, as Saul directs her to focus on Nazir's money trail.

Episode 5: "Blind spot"

Brody confronts his lone surviving captor, leading Carrie to believe she may be proved right about home once and for all. The agency is hot on the trail of the lovers who bought a house near the airport with funds from a stolen necklace.

Episode 6: "The Good Soldier"

Reeling after losing key players in Nazir's plot against America, the CIA orders polygraphs on everyone who came in contact with them, including Brody. Carrie sees this as an opportunity to finally learn the truth.

Episode 7: "The Weekend"

The relationship between Carrie and Brody becomes more complicated when the head to the countryside for the weekend. Mike and Jessica face the fallout of the truth about their relationship, and Saul catches Aileen on the run to Mexico.

Episode 8: "Achilles Heel"

As Carrie and Saul reel from the news that Walker is alive, the intelligence community clashes on the best way to capture him. Brody learns a shocking truth about his captivity.

Episode 9: "Crossfire"

After his attempt to sever ties with Abu Nazir, Brody finds himself reliving his captivity and recommits to his mission. Carrie finds herself in the middle of a public-relations nightmare on the heels of the mosque shooting.

Episode 10: "Representative Brody"

Brody is approached to run for disgraced congressman Richard Johnson's seat in the House of Representatives, and Carrie and Saul identify Tom Walker's contact in D.C.

Episode 11: "The Vest"

In the wake of the explosion, Saul finds Carrie hospitalized and manic, but realizes her chaotic theories have merit. Before his congressional campaign begins, Brody takes his family on a weekend trip to Gettysburg, where he retrieves an important item.

Episode 12: "Marine One"

While Carrie is near catatonic and confined to bed, Saul investigates the unsettling implications of her timeline. Walker secures a perch for his mission, and Brody makes his final preparations for the Vice President's policy summit at the State Department.