Introduction

- 3/02/2015, video of from a Lebanese news station went viral after presenter, Rima Karaki, cut an interview short with an Islamic scholar after he told her to shut up.
- Responses included beliefs that stereotypes about Muslim and Arab women are hard to break, many women stating ‘so what?’ stressing the voices of Arab/Muslim women.
- Media representation of Arab and Muslim women have often been too simplistic and romanticized, presenting them as women who need to be liberated (Ibroscheva, 2013).
- Framing has been mostly around the Arab/Muslim men, largely ignoring women.
- Discussion in media focuses on symbolic and religious issues such as the veil or Islam, ignoring issues regarding inequality, rights to education and public freedoms.
- Focus on women’s status on specific media outlets not only has to be newsworthy but has to stand up to attacks guests and callers who are opposed to any change in the status quo (Sakr, 2002).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the images of Arab American, Arab and Muslim women in the Arab American News to understand if and how the status of Arab women that is commonly assumed in the Arab world is perpetuated by media representations and if there are variations based on social location (Arab World and the U.S.)

Research Questions

1. Do the images and stories pertaining to women vary based on location in the Arab world vs. the U.S.?
2. How are the women represented in politically based storylines?
3. How do stories images perpetuate or simplify the status of women as voiceless, homemakers or passive?

Methods

Content Analysis: Arab American News

N=25 online stories featuring women. 4 full issues of March publications (March 7, 14, 21, 28 issues)

- 5 stories from each of the following sections: Home page, USA, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq.

Codes

- Victims/Human face of War
- Political Activists
- Segregation
- Primary Identification (Mother/Wife/Other)
- Role of Islam and the Veil

Contributions

- Provide insight into how media is a mechanism for fueling rigid gender narratives.
- Highlight the missing narratives of women in the Arab World, reframing them as autonomous individuals.

Findings

Arab World Stories

Stories based in U.S.

Representation

- Very limited representation of Arab women.
- Segregation/Separation of genders
- 2 Highlights/main stories based on women/Miss Lebanon
- No stories based on education/contributions/achievements of women.

Politics

- Victims of War/Human face of war/Grieving mothers
- Protests that included women varied by country.
- Taking deceased husbands/sons political seat. “Mother of the cause”
- One Activist image: Palestinian activist jailed.

Passive/Assertive Voices

- Never quoted or had words cited.
- Mourning/held by others/near destroyed homes.

Representation

- Larger representation of Arab women.
- Mixing of genders.
- 8 Highlights/main stories based on women.

Politics

- Activists/Calls for divestments
- “Take on Hate” Group/Student Associations
- New discourse/Veil and discrimination.
- Call to end war/U.S. backed aid to refugees.

Passive/Assertive Voices

- Quoted more often
- Authoritative descriptions
- No references made to gender roles/homemakers/wives
- Narratives relating to gender were missing.