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The Othering of Muslims: Discourses of Radicalization in the *New York Times*, 1969-2014

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Abstract
In this paper, I engage with Edward Said's Orientalism and various perspectives within the othering paradigm to analyze the emergence and transformation of radicalization discourses in news media. Employing discourse analysis of 607 *New York Times* articles from 1969 to 2014, this paper demonstrates that radicalization discourses are not new, but are the result of complex socio-linguistic and historical developments that cannot be reduced to dominant contemporary understandings of the concept or to singular events or crises. The news articles were then compared to 850 government documents, speeches, and official communications. The analysis of the data indicates that media conceptualizations of radicalization, which once denoted political and economic differences, have now shifted to overwhelmingly focus on Islam. As such, radicalization discourse now evokes the construct radicalization as symbolic marker of conflict between the West and the East. I also advanced the established notion that news media employ strategic discursive strategies that contribute to conceptual distinctions that are used to construct Muslims as an 'alien other' to the West.
Keywords: radicalization, othering, Muslim, Islam, terrorism.

Introduction

A growing body of literature has emerged which seeks to understand how individuals and groups shift from conformist political, religious, or ideological beliefs to 'radical' extremist views and activities (Aly and Striegher 2012; Della Porta and LaFree 2012; Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman 2009; Silber and Bhatt 2007). Often referred to as 'radicalization,' this process has received increasing political, legal, and popular media attention.[1] Recent attack in Boston and Paris, and the media frenzies that ensued, have heightened this attention considerably. Particularly striking in this respect has been the dominance of governmental discourses, which seek to understand how individuals and groups become 'radicalized' in order to formulate counter-radicalization policy and law enforcement frameworks (Alimi et al. 2012; Baker-Beall et al. 2015). Indeed, the construct has become a principal theme in various governmental and law enforcement strategies, such as the counterradicalization strategy *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. The salience of radicalization in numerous discursive fields and

[1] For an exposition of various conceptualizations of radicalization employed in scientific research and elsewhere see Baker-Beall et al. (2015).

the relative lack of conceptual clarity present us with an opportunity to reflect on how the concept is constructed in various socio-historical contexts and how those meanings work to shape cultural understandings of the term.

While the acceptance and maintenance of these discourses are suggestive of the generally agreed upon nature of the term, scholars have recently pointed out that radicalization remains a fluid, dynamic construct that encompasses many socio-political meanings (Kundnani 2015; Pisoiu 2013). Although attention has been paid to the construction of radicalization in government policy and in academe, there remains a dearth of empirical research into how radicalization discourses take shape and transform outside of politics and science (Neumann 2008). Since radicalization is increasingly being relied upon as a basis for governmental intervention policies, scientific research, and in mass media, it is important to explore representations that influence the cultural apparatus by which we form our collective understandings of the phenomenon.

Media has the ability to affect public opinion and policy alike (Baum and Potter 2008). As such, it is important to examine the formation and transformation of cultural representations of radicalization because of their potential to influence popular understandings of terrorism related phenomena and government counterradicalization policies (Bail 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine national news coverage related to radicalization in the United States. I use discourse analysis to offer insight into how media defines the term and, equally important to this analysis, how it is constitutive of, and constructed by, the social world. Drawing on the Orientalism framework developed by Edward Said (1978), in addition to contemporary work on othering, this paper argues that the producers of radicalization discourses employ strategic discursive mechanisms to treat Muslims as the subject of negativised radicalization narratives, thereby position Islam in direct opposition to the West. In this paper, the 'West' is derived from Said's notion of Occident which generally distinguishes cultures and geographical areas of the Americas, Oceania, and most of Europe from Islamic cultures of the Middle East and Asia. I also advance the established idea that news media representations of radicalization increasingly deploy religion as a symbolic marker for economic and political conflicts between the Middle East and the West (Poole 2002; Poole and Richardson 2006).

The Othering Paradigm: Constructing Notions of "Us" and "Them"

Considerable scholarly attention has been paid to negativised media portrayals of Muslim populations (Awass 1996; Nurullah 2010; Poole 2002; van der Veer 2004).[2] Researchers have pointed out that representations of Muslims in Western media are often associated with violence and conflict, most notably terrorism (Dunn 2001; Shaheen 2003). While this is not a distinctly new trend, Muslims continue to be negativised by the Western media, particularly since the events of 9/11 (Nurullah 2010). Importantly, scholars have noted that American media accounts of terrorism employ linguistic strategies to ignore violence committed by 'us' and rather focus on negative behavior of 'them' (Dunn et al. 2005; Cainkar 2004).

The othering paradigm has been quite influential in media discourse, particularly so in explorations of how religious communities are represented within the media (i.e., Said 1981; van

[2] The terms 'Muslim populations' or 'Muslim communities' are employed throughout this paper to refer to the *Times* representation of the diversity of Islamic practitioners in homogenous terms. While this may contribute to the collectivisation of Muslims, a foundational argument of this paper is that news media fails to account for individual characteristics of Muslims in its representations of radicalization.

der Veer 2004). Scholars working within this framework contend that a common mechanism for constructing distinctions between 'us' on the one hand, and 'them' on the other is to emphasize differences among people in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion (Foner 2015). Saeed (2007), for example, suggests that discursive strategies depict British Muslims as the alien other through continuous reference to 'un-Britishness' and 'deviant' behaviors. Poole (2002), also explores this tendency, and argues British media coverage of global Muslim issues (i.e., themes of terrorism, conflict, and fundamentalism) quantitatively overshadow local accounts of Muslim affairs. Subsequently, she suggests these representations construct an imagination of Muslims 'over there' which influences perceptions of Muslims in Britain (Poole 2002). Such conflict-based understandings of Islam presented in media are then reified by continuous reference to images of extremism, terrorism, and irrationality which portray Muslims as 'backwards,' static, and premodern (Ahmed 1992; Poole 2002). Similar findings that underscore the othering of Islam have been found in analyses of news media in Finland (Creutz-Kåmppi 2008), Australia (Akbarzadeh and Smith 2005; Dunn 2001), and in American and British motion pictures and television programs (Nurullah 2010; Shaheen 2003).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) has emerged as an influential theory which transforms the ways in which we conceptualize traditional power relations between the East and the West. In the book, Said offers a critique for understanding the cultural misrepresentations that form the basis of West's (the "Occident") perceptions of the East (the "Orient"). Said broadly defines Orientalism as a system of thought premised on an epistemological distinction between East and West that forms the basis for accounts of the Orient. Additionally, Orientalism is the corporate institution that holds authority over, makes statements about, or restructures the Orient (Said 1978). On the basis of Orientalism, Said argues, the West is able to create distinctions between itself and others, namely Islamic cultures in the East. Orientalism produces false perceptions of Islamic cultures, including the assumption that "Islamic civilization originally (as well as contemporaneously) continued to stand somehow opposed to the Christian West" (Said 1978:42). In this way, Orientalism offers a nuanced assessment of Western (mis)representations of the East implicitly premised on a general perspective of constructionism that can be employed to highlight how new discursive strategies work to construct cultural imaginaries of Islam.

A fundamental character of Orientalist scholarship is the focus on the role of globalization in the alienation of certain cultures. Globalization can be broadly defined as processes of interaction, mobility, and communication that operate on a global scale, cutting across national boundaries and integrating communities, goods, and organizations in new spatial and temporal combinations. Orientalist scholars tend to argue that processes of globalization have resulted in the fragmentation of the global order and the reconstitution of new political and economic alliances centered on common cultural characteristics (Poole 2002). This global instability has simultaneously resulted in increased mobilization of bodies across transnational space and the fostering and strengthening of Western nations' self-identification as distinct from nations who fail to share common cultural heritage. This results in a 'crisis of identity' that manifests at the local level in the erosion of host nations' identities and resistance to cultural characteristics of minority identities (Poole 2002). As Halliday (1996) maintains, this involves a process of selective representation of information, in media and elsewhere, which constructs a homogenous national identity that rejects sociocultural threats from the outside.

Part of this selective representation of Islam, for Halliday (1996) and Hippler (1995), is the construction and maintenance of discourse presenting Islam as the preeminent threat to the West. Yet it is not the religious or cultural features of Islam as such that are threatening, but the fear of political and economic power shifting towards the Middle East which causes Western anxieties (Hippler 1995). Religious characteristics of Islam are thus problematized by government

and media alike rather than more 'real' socioeconomic issues since cultural differences are more easily depicted than complex economic or political disagreements (Hippler 1995; Poole 2002). In this way, media focus on religious qualities of regions in the Middle East works to shift popular discourse away from socioeconomic issues towards cultural differences, which can then be used to justify Western activities against Muslim countries under the pretense of Islamic fundamentalist militancy (Djerejian 1997; Poole 2002). Such discourses, scholars have noted, are effective because of the virtual invisibility of minority groups to media audiences (Saeed 2007; Poole 2002). And as van Dijk (1991; 1993) argues, media constitute part of 'elite' society marked by their role as 'primary definers' of representations of such 'invisible' minority groups. Religion is thus used in governmental and popular discourse as a symbolic marker by which conflicts around economic and political interests regarding the Middle East are understood by the West.

In other Western contexts, modern Orientalism and the cultivation of Western aversion towards Islam emerged as a result of a number of sociopolitical conflicts, including neo-colonialism, the Rushdie affair, the creation of an Israeli state, the collapse of the communist bloc the oil crisis of the 1970s, and the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Ahmed 1992; Nonnemann 1996; Poole 2002; Poole and Holohan 2011). These sociopolitical factors resulted in gradual shifts in government and popular discursive fields whereby the focus increasingly centered on issues in the Middle East and particularly among Muslims. As Hippler (1995) notes, during the Cold War, Islam was not perceived as threatening to the West because of its decidedly anti-Soviet political position. Due to this political alignment with Western governments, foreign policy remained focused on the struggle between democracy, on the one hand, and communism, on the other (Hippler 1995). Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent end of communism as an immediate threat, however, political and popular discourse began to shift to a newly discovered Islamic threat rooted in sociopolitical anxieties around totalitarian, anti-Western, militant regimes in the Middle East (Hippler 1995; Huntington 1996). In both foreign policy and media, Middle Eastern nations replaced the Soviet Union, Islam for communism, and Muslims for Marxist-Leninist socialists as a central focus of conflict (Hippler 1995). Poole and Holohan (2012), by example, demonstrate that media representations of British Muslims during the post-Rushdie and pre-9/11 period constructed Islam in terms of a cultural threat rather than as a physical one associated with violence.

Following the Cold War, Western representations of Islam began to center around notions of conflict and violence, establishing Islam as a material threat. This 'clash of civilizations,' Samuel Huntington (1996) argues, has been driven by the globalized and transnational flow of Muslims unbounded by neither nation-state nor political treaty, which has resulted in the position of Islam as economic and political threat to the Western world (Poole 2002). It is the threat of a restructuring of the global order, then, which is viewed as an impetus for cultural representations of Islam as an enemy (Ahmed 1992). On this basis, scholars suggest that cultural representations of Islam in the West work to strategically reconstruct its identity to ensure self-preservation in light of political and economic interests. As such, popular discourses often employ rhetorical devices, such as the use of 'them' and 'us' to differentiate ethnic minority groups as an alien culture or constructing and reinforcing images of Islam as global aggressor or in terms of violent conflict (Halliday 1996; Hippler 1995; Poole 2002). Such tendencies have already been read in terms of shifts in immigration discourse, which now predominantly focuses on Muslims (van Dijk 1991), and in Western popular representations of Muslims and Arabs (Nurullah 2010; Poole and Richardson 2006).

Finally, Christopher Bail's (2012, 2015) work on the rising influence of anti-Muslim fringe organizations on media discourses of Islam in the United States is among the most innovative recent contributions to studies of processes of cultural change. Bail presents an

evolutionary theory to explain how anti-Muslim fringe organizations were able to dominate mass media accounts after the September 11th attacks, despite being greatly outnumbered by more mainstream organizations, through narratives of fear and anger. Bail's (2012) study concludes that fringe, or relatively obscure, anti-Muslim civil society organizations influence popular understandings of Islam by successfully exerting influence over the media through a repertoire of structural, cultural, and social psychological mechanisms. While Bail's study provides a fascinating account of *how* media adopts anti-Muslim sentiment, much less discussed is the substance and linguistic organization of media discourse about terrorism and Islam and how these are constructed as part of a broader historical context.[3] To this end, this study contributes to Bail's work by exploring the discursive strategies by which news media disproportionately broadcast anti-Muslim accounts. The present study also highlights how news media deploys the concept of radicalization in an increasingly anti-Muslim way and how this may be the result of broader cultural shifts and therefore irreducible to specific events, crises, or catastrophes.

While the above literature highlights some strategies by which media constructs and reinforces cultural understandings of ethnic minority groups, it is perhaps clear that the othering paradigm is keenly aware of the fluid nature of such representations. As such, it is important to explore new linguistic strategies and frameworks in which political and economic conflicts are represented and how these in turn influence popular understandings of those conflicts. This paper thus explores how news media uses novel discourses of radicalization to reformulate sociopolitical conflicts in terms of cultural distinctions between the West and Islam. In other words, the transformation of cultural meanings of radicalization vis-à-vis news media is indicative of techniques whereby Western media simultaneously alienates Islam whilst reaffirming and preserving the West's identity. The key question here is thus how Western news media deploys radicalization so as to increasingly use religion as a symbolic marker for understanding economic and political conflict and, in turn, how such representations reinforce and construct notions of Islam as an 'other.'

Methods

The research was conducted using both inductive and deductive approaches to discourse analysis. It is based primarily on qualitative textual analysis techniques (Fairclough 1992, 2013), but also makes use of quantitative techniques vis-à-vis frequency of theme counts. In addition, since this research makes use of a more qualitative strategy, it is oriented towards a descriptive and hermeneutic understanding of the use of radicalization in news media. This allows for a more inductive approach to theorizing, rather than testing hypotheses developed prior to the study.

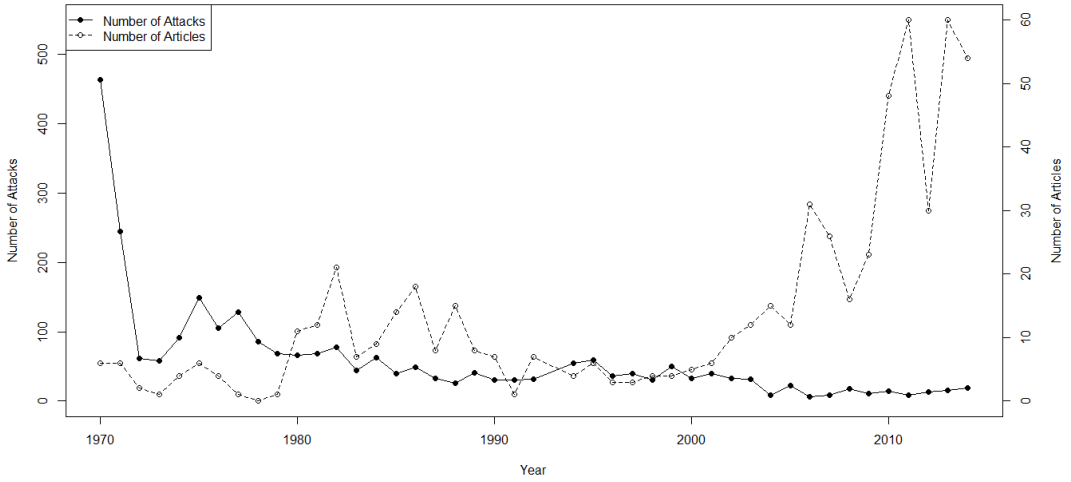
The sample was drawn from a *LexisNexis* search for the terms "radicalization" and its corresponding U.K. spelling "radicalisation" in the *New York Times* from its first appearance on May 18, 1969 to December 31, 2014.[4] The *New York Times* was selected because of its high level

[3] Bail (2012) did identify five mainstream and fringe organization media frames: Muslims as victims, Muslims as enemies, the battle for the hearts and minds, the blurring frame, and the Muslim empowerment frame (p. 863). He then used these as the basis for differentiating fringe and mainstream civil society organizations and mapping the contours of the discursive field (Bail 2012). Bail did therefore not explore in-detail how those frames came to be discursively constructed or how those frames change over time.

[4] I chose to use the search terms "radicalization" and "radicalisation," and not related terms such as "radicalism," "radical," "radicalized," or "radicalizers" because of the conceptual differences

of readership measured by circulation rates.[5] The search resulted in 683 articles about radicalization. The results were then filtered according to the following inclusion and exclusion criteria: (i) the article must be a news story based in reality;[6] and (ii) must not be a duplicate article. In total, 607 articles were included in the analysis. The greatest number of articles mentioning radicalization appeared in 2011 (n=61, 10%), followed by 2013 (n=60, 9.8%), while the fewest number of articles appeared in 1978 (n=0) (see figure 1). I then compare the 607 *Times* articles to 579 Presidential speeches, 271 high-ranking national security official communications, and data on the number of terrorist attacks perpetrated against the United States during the same time period.

Figure 1: Number of articles mentioning "radicalization" in the *New York Times* vs. Number of Terrorist Attacks in the United States[a] from 1969-2014.



[a] Source: *Global Terrorism Database* (GTD). Data is only available from 1970 to 2014.

The present study follows the methodological strategies of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is widely used in studies on news media and discrimination (e.g., Hansen 2006; KhosraviNik 2010; van Dijk 1992). As a methodological approach, discourse analysis highlights how texts draw upon particular contexts in which they are situated and in turn work to produce certain social realities through the organization and structuring of social life (Fairclough and

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between notions of radicalization as process and a radicalized state. Radicalization is typically conceptualized in academic and popular discourse as a process towards particular activities and behaviors (Borum 2011; Della Porta and LaFree 2012). This is an important conceptual distinction because terms such as 'radical' or 'radicalized,' emphasize not a process of becoming, but a state of already become, and must therefore, I argue, be distinguished from the term radicalization.

[5] According to the Alliance for Audited Media (2013), the *New York Times* had the highest circulation rates among newspapers in the United States in 2012.

[6] The original search resulted in some book, music, or movie reviews or advertisements about media containing references to radicalization. These were excluded because they provided little to no context of how radicalization was used in the primary media and therefore were of little use for the analysis.

Wodak 1997). In this way, discourses, here understood as language used in texts, are a form of social practice that is both constitutive of, and constructed by, the social world. Therefore, this study aims to identify broad discourses of radicalization presented within news media while considering the ways in which these discourses shape, and are shaped by, certain social realities.

Added to these methodologies is the socio-textual approach to discourse analysis provided by van Leeuwen (1996) and the analytic perspective of discursive strategies employed in representations of cultural affairs provided by van Dijk (1992). In his socio-textual approach, van Leeuwen (1996) provides a systematic method for categorizing textual and linguistic qualities within an explanatory framework that connects those qualities to social meanings. This involves the inclusion or omission of actors of a social action through strategic linguistic/textual mechanisms. Van Leeuwen (2008) calls this process *backgrounding* and denotes the systematic exclusion of specific actions of the actor(s) involved in the representation. Backgrounding is realized through several mechanisms, most notably through representations of social actors as concrete groups (i.e., terrorists), rather than specific identifiable individual agents or by treating individual actors as homogeneous groups (Calsamiglia and Ferrero 2003; van Leeuwen 1996).

The articles were first read in detail to facilitate engagement with the data and to determine the appropriate guiding questions and themes. This grounded theoretical approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) corresponded with a detailed and systematic coding, assisted by qualitative software, based on six general themes: (i) problematization (i.e., does news media define the problem in relation to a particular social system, such as religion or politics?); (ii) subject (i.e., who is the author referring to as the subject?); (iii) target (i.e., what is the supposed target of the 'radicalized' individual/group?); (iv) internal vs. external (i.e., is radicalization depicted as a problem of a country's own citizens or from another country?); (v) individual vs. group (i.e., is radicalization associated with macro- or micro-level interactions?); and (vi) and tone (i.e., what is radicalization presented in a negative, positive, or neutral way by the author?).

Analysis

Percentage distributions for each of the six categories across five time periods are outlined in Table 1. This is followed by a more detailed qualitative analysis of the data presented in three non-exclusive and generally interrelated periods. Each period corresponds with an analysis of passages taken from news media which are reflective of general thematic trends highlighted in Table 1 as well as the relevant social contexts in which those discourses were produced. The first period begins with the introduction of the concept of radicalization in news media and traces its usage throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The second period analyzes the transformation of media representations of radicalization from the 1990s to mid-2000s. The third period examines media discourses in the so-called era of radicalization (Baker-Beall et al. 2015), a period characterized by increased attention paid to radicalization, from the mid-2000s to the present.

TABLE 1: Percentage Distribution of Discourse Categories by Time Period.

	Time Period

	1969-79 (n=32)	1980-89 (n=123)	1990-99 (n=43)	2000-09 (n=156)	2010-14 (n=252)
Problematization[a]					
Non-religion	96.8	98.4	76.4	19.9	27.7
Religion	3.2	1.6	23.6	80.1	72.3
Subject					
Unions/students	46.9	21.2	4.7	0.6	1.9
Leftists/socialists	25.0	51.2	37.2	6.4	5.1
Arabs	9.4	14.6	16.3	5.8	4.7
Muslims	.0	1.6	18.6	80.8	76.5
Right-wing	.0	.0	6.9	1.3	4.3
Other	18.7	11.4	16.3	5.1	7.5
Target					
Non-Nation-state	96.9	96.7	67.4	9.7	12.0
Nation-state	3.1	3.3	32.6	90.3	88.0
Internal v.					
External	12.5	88.6	74.4	42.2	70.4
Internal	87.5	11.4	25.6	57.8	29.6
External					
Individual v.					
Social group	.0	.0	.0	3.2	83.5
Individual	100.0	100.0	100.0	96.8	16.5
Group					
Tone					
Positive	15.6	4.0	9.8	1.3	2.4
Negative	37.5	53.7	70.7	93.0	92.9
Neutral	46.9	42.3	19.5	5.7	4.7

[a] Operationalized as which social system (i.e., politics, religion, culture, etc.) was primarily associated with radicalization. Categories were collapsed into "religion," if the article associated radicalization primarily with religious elements, and "non-religion," if the narrative did not.

The Emergence of Radicalization: The Centrality of Leftist Politics, 1969 – 1989

A more detailed analysis of the trends presented in Table 1 demonstrates that the construct

radicalization was most often used during this time as a descriptive word for a transition toward a more leftist political position, mostly devoid of any specific activities employed by those represented as the subject. For instance, an article on October 7, 1974 used the construct as an adjective for a shift in public opinion: "the radicalization of Venezuelan opinion could affect the process of nationalization that is now being worked out," while another suggested that American and Foreign press "have been deceiving themselves by reporting radicalization of US in light of shifts toward 'new populism' of the left" (October 6, 1972). There are several examples of the association of radicalization with groups seeking some sort of social change and often referenced the productive nature of the radicalization of groups to spurn social reform. An example can be found in an article published on September 14, 1979:[7]

> **Moderate business, political and church groups** in El Salvador are pressing President Carlos Humberto Romero Government to carry out sweeping economic and political reforms. Growing guerrilla activities, indiscriminate **official repression** and **steady radicalization of peasants, workers and students are expected if reforms are not forthcoming**. Moderate critics have begun openly discussing possibility of coup d'etat that **would pave way for free elections.**

The strategies of this and similar passes are stereotypical of the period insofar as they aimed to alienate pro-communist government and policy through reference to concepts conventionally accepted in democratic, liberal discourse. For instance, the *Times* uses the term "moderate," a common term antithetical to extreme or radical, to describe the very groups by which radicalization is associated. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the repressive aspects of pro-communist regimes in El Salvador, while simultaneously highlighting free elections as the goal of moderate groups. Interestingly, this fragment and others seem to use radicalization in a positive framework whilst negatively depicting political regimes not aligned with the United States' economic policy. In line with Hippler's (1995) thesis on anti-communist discourses, references of this type were most common when the journalist was talking about non-democratic, communist nations experiencing major civil wars and pro-communist revolutions (Hippler 1995). Importantly, while the construct was often associated with anti-communist, liberally minded groups, radicalization was predominantly used to describe the political transition of a country's own citizens against a specific government apparatus. The significance and focus of radicalization in the *Times* was thus on local, jurisdictionally detached issues, suggesting that public understanding of radicalization was not yet considered a transnational issue.

The first surge of radicalization discourses occurred in the early 1980s. The textual analysis reveals that news media generally framed radicalization as a problem where non-Western extreme political ideologies posed a threat to Western interests. During a time of increased political and economic tensions in Central America and the Middle East, narratives focused mostly on two groups: pro-communist governments and sympathizers and anti-American movements in Arab countries. Representations of radicalization in the early years of this period often referred to pro-communist groups in Central America as "Marxist-Leninist guerillas" (January 27, 1985) and problematized socialist groups and countries in direct opposition to the United States. In fact, during this period, references to Marxism, communism, or socialism more than doubled any other period. The salience of news media representations of radicalization in terms of political and economic conflict suggests that cultural understandings of the concept

[7] All emphases used in the qualitative analysis were added to highlight the most important aspects of each illustration.

during this time mostly focused on individual and group transitions away from conventional, or accepted, political and economic positions. Here radicalization was predominantly deployed as a symbolic marker of political differences between communist interests vis-à-vis Western conservative norms of neoliberal capitalism. Radicalization was thus used as a marker for conflicts rooted almost exclusively in political and economic differences between communism/autocracy and capitalism/democracy. The *Times* thus refrained from employing the construct in reference to terrorism or other large-scale political violence (only 2.7% of articles during the 1980s).

Narratives of radicalization during this period, however, were not homogenously focused on political and economic conflicts. The *Times* did increasingly make reference to cultural differences in its representations of radicalization. In response to emerging disputes between Israel and Palestine and the Iran-Iraq War, both of which received much international attention throughout the decade, accounts associating radicalization with Arab nations were more pervasive than in the previous decade. This was exemplified by numerous references to the 'radicalization of the Arab world.' In response to conflicts in the region, a narrative emerged which problematized radicalization in Arab countries as an emergent threat to Western (or American) interests. This is an important discursive shift because it represents a transition from constructing radicalization as an internal problem reflecting a nation's political or economic position to a transnational and cultural threat to Western value systems. This discursive shift represents the first step in media deployment of radicalization as a marker of political or economic conflicts to its use of the term to denote cultural or religious threats to the West.

Importantly, during this period, the *Times* made its first association between radicalization and Islam. The discursive shift away from radicalization as political to religious marker was made explicit in consecutive clauses of a June 20, 1982 article:

> One of the **greatest long-range dangers perhaps emerging is the general radicalization of the Arab world**. The millions of Palestinians who live in Arab countries could be a **threat to several of the conservative regimes on which the United States counts most.** There is also the threat of a **new wave of Islamic fanaticism**. Last week for the first time, truckloads of uniformed Iranian revolutionary guards shouting "Allah is great" drove through Damascus. They came to Syria as volunteers to fight the Israelis in Lebanon. Most specialists in the region have long been saying that the **impetus for the rise of Islamic extremism in the region was not Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolution in Iran but the humiliating Arab defeat against Israel in 1967**.

The structures and strategies of this passage and others were relatively distinct from previous accounts in three important ways: (1) the text began to orient conflicts in the Middle East as threatening to the United States and similar liberal democratic nations; (2) in line with the othering perspective, the *Times* used terms such as 'threats' and 'danger,' and began to reference violent conflict; and (3) the authors began to depict religious differences, rather than economic or political, as threatening to the West. This period thus marked the beginning of a shift in the *Times* deployment of radicalization as a frame for understanding sociopolitical conflicts vis-à-vis communist nations to utilizing the concept as a symbolic marker for threats posed by Islam.

Transformative Years of Radicalization: From Politics to Religion, 1990-2009

Following the increased attention paid to radicalization in the previous decade there was a sharp decline in the use of the construct throughout the 1990s. During this time, radicalization continued to be used to describe a transitional process influencing political beliefs, but articles began to focus more on a shift toward so-called extreme religious beliefs. Correspondingly, there was a relatively substantial decline in associating radicalization with student or laborer union organizations or left-leaning political groups, and instead articles employed radicalization to describe shifts toward (mostly) political and (sometimes) religious extreme beliefs among Arabs and, increasingly, Muslims (see Table 1). In fact, despite the drastic drop in articles about radicalization, references to Muslims increased more than threefold from the previous decade (17 in the 1980s to 54 in the 1990s).

While individual governmental or economic institutions were most often mentioned as the target of such groups, the nation-state was increasingly framed in opposition to radicalization and the majority of these articles focused on external threats (i.e., from outside of a country's borders). This corresponded with a considerable decline in narratives depicting radicalization in terms of counter-political ideology devoid of specific actions and a relatively substantial increase in references linking the concept to terrorist activities. Although specific activities associated with the subjects of radicalization narratives were not always mentioned, political groups (i.e., Central and South American nations, communist groups, etc.) were most often associated with forms of civil disobedience (72% of the time) and religious groups (i.e., Muslims) were overwhelmingly linked to terrorism (88% of the time). This is suggestive of media insistence on representing political and economic conflicts between the United States and certain non-capitalist nations in Central America in terms of relatively accepted forms of conflict, such as civil disobedience and protest, whereas conflicts in the Middle East were most often linked to terrorist activity.

A closer examination of the data during this period illustrates the specific discursive strategies that mark the shift from radicalization as political transition to radicalization as religious extremism. In line with previous narratives, when the *Times* referenced countries or groups in Central or South America, radicalization was most often framed as primarily sociopolitical opposition to notions of capitalism and democracy, which were seen as counter to United States' interests. Such representations often explicitly mentioned diplomatic differences between the United States and so-called communist countries which resulted in economic conflicts. For instance, an article about a series of political protests aimed at impeaching Brazil's president, who advocated for free-market economics, highlighted the economic impacts of radicalization: "business leaders are also starting to say that the price of [Brazilian President] Mr. Collor's continuance in power is **economic paralysis and political radicalization**" (August 26, 1992). During a period characterized by tension and conflict in areas with substantial Muslim populations, such as the Middle East (i.e., ongoing conflicts between Israel and Palestine), Eastern Europe (i.e., Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey), and parts of Northern Africa (i.e., conflicts in Egypt, Libya, and Sudan), narratives of radicalization began to focus less on the 'Arab world' in general and much more specifically on Islam. The threat of Arab radicalization, however, remained focused on economic and political conflicts:

> The conflict would thus become regionally destabilizing, on a scale that is difficult precisely to define but that could become also impossible to contain. Moreover, if Arab emotions were to become aroused by military action against Iraq that is seen as largely American in origin, the ensuing **radicalization of the Arab masses** could eventually even produce upheavals in those more moderate **Arab states that the United States is currently seeking to protect**.

> All of that could produce **potentially devastating economic consequences**. One would have to anticipate the serious possibility of at least a temporary cutoff in much of the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. Military action would probably result in the destruction of most of Kuwait's and Iraq's oil facilities, while sabotage could also affect the installations in other gulf states. The price of oil could easily climb to $65 per barrel or even more.
>
> **The financial costs of the war by themselves would also be extraordinarily high**. It has been estimated that for the United States the costs of large-scale combat could amount to about $1 billion per day. An economic and financial world crisis might thus prove difficult to avoid. (October 7, 1990)

The discursive shift away from Arab culture as the primary threat of radicalization was then increasingly accompanied by references to a new form of radicalization, so called "Islamic" because of an apparent connection of Islam:

> Moreover, the view here is that an American attack on Libya would give a tremendous boost to the **Islamic fundamentalist movement across the Arab world**…The United States has the sheer power to do what it wants, but it cannot prevent the **furthering of Islamic radicalization**.
>
> The feeling here is that an American attack would so embarrass and expose **President Mubarak that he would be forced to distance himself from the United States**. The Egyptian press has been printing increasingly forceful **warnings against military action.** (February 2, 1992)

Yet, despite the emergence of "Islamic radicalization" in news reports, the *Times* continued to associate this 'new' form of radicalization with sociopolitical conflicts threatening Western interests. Such conflicts, however, were now to be understood in terms of risk to the nation-state requiring some degree of military intervention or statecraft. References to terrorist activities thus remained relatively rare during this period.

The second upsurge of radicalization discourses occurred in the early 2000s and continued through 2014. The vast majority of articles during this period associated radicalization with a transition from conventional religious beliefs to more extreme religious views and there was notable increase in references to terrorist activity. Meanwhile, contrary to previous periods, narratives linking radicalization to a transition centered on primarily political beliefs decreased considerably. In addition, references to radicalization overwhelmingly focused on Muslims or mentioned Islam in some way. Representations of radicalization as a cultural issue within the Arab world continued to decline, as did narratives linking the term to far-left political positions. Consistent with previous decades, this period focused primarily on radicalization as an issue affecting social groups, however in latter years of the decade the construct began to be framed as an individualized process. These narratives most often depicted radicalization as an individual transition to be studied, monitored, and prevented through various forms of governmental intervention (i.e., law enforcement, military, intelligence, etc.).

While there was an increase in articles mentioning the concept following the attacks of September 11th (6 in 2001, 10 in 2002, 12 in 2003, 16 in 2004), it was not as drastic as one might expect given the attention terrorism and related issues received from the media post-2001. That being said, there were qualitative differences in how radicalization was constructed by the news media during this time. Most apparent in this respect was the overwhelming concentration of

narratives associating radicalization with Islam. It is important to note, however, that certain sub-genres of narratives during this time (i.e., news accounts of social unrest in Argentina and Brazil) focused on sociopolitical conflicts in Central and South America. These tended to provide a more neutral or even positive account of the so-called radicalization process. For example, when reporting on conflicts in South America, the *Times* focused on the apparent conflict between United States democracy/neoliberalism and Latin American autocracy/communism, presenting the two in dichotomous terms:

> In each, the disintegration of the Argentine economy after a decade-long experiment with free-market policies provides ammunition for candidates who reject the notion, **propagated by the United States**, that there is an unbreakable link **between democracy and the North American model of an open economy, a combination Latin Americans call neoliberal**.
>
> Indeed, South America's most worrisome problem may be that nothing seems to work anymore. In Venezuela, even Mr. Chavez is not immune. These days, his popularity is falling even faster than the price of oil. The result is a **radicalization of his "Bolivarian Revolution**," with **incitations to class warfare** and the rare spectacle of **a successful national strike called jointly by labor unions and employer groups to protest what they see as the president's growing authoritarian tendencies**. (January 13, 2002)

The above fragment is illustrative of how the *Times* predominantly referenced the radicalization of populations whose economic interests clash with North American ideals of free-market society. Consistent with previous periods, when specific actions of the subject of radicalization were mentioned, the articles presented them as relatively acceptable forms of civil unrest, including strikes and protests. More, when the articles mentioned conflicts between the United States and South American countries, radicalization was most often used to denote shifts in *political position,* not transitions towards violence. This suggests that the Western cultural apparatus, in this case news media, used the construct of radicalization to denote political and economic differences very selectively – for example, when referencing nations with some historical connection to communist/socialist policies. As I shall illustrate, this differed greatly from news media representations of so-called Islamic radicalization, which became overwhelmingly associated with violent conflict.

In the much more numerous articles regarding Islamic fundamentalism published during this period, most articles described an unequivocally negative process that would inevitably culminate in terrorism or political violence. In fact, throughout this time radicalization was widely used in narratives about 'terrorism,' 'holy war,' or "violent jihad" that pose an immediate, material threat to the United States and its Western allies (February 1, 2003). For example, several accounts of radicalization during this time explicitly referenced violent jihad and positioned Islam as a foundation of emergent political conflicts between the West and the East:

> From the beginning, Al Qaeda's fighters **were global jihadists**, and their favored battlegrounds have been outside the Middle East: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and Kashmir. For them, **every conflict is simply a part of the Western encroachment on the Muslim ummah**, the worldwide community of believers.
>
> Second, if the **conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine are at the core of**

> **the radicalization,** why are there virtually no Afghans, Iraqis or Palestinians **among the terrorists?** Rather, the bombers are mostly from the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, Egypt and Pakistan -- **or they are Western-born converts to Islam**. Why would a Pakistani or a Spaniard be more angry than an Afghan about American troops in Afghanistan? It is precisely because they do not care about Afghanistan as such, but see the **United States involvement there as part of a global phenomenon of cultural domination**. (July 22, 2005)

This fragment is illustrative of two important developments in much of the news coverage during this and subsequent periods: (1) radicalization was used most often to denote transitions towards violent conflict; and (2) conflict between the United States and Middle Eastern and North African nations became overwhelmingly associated with religious characteristics of those nations' populations rather than their economic or political qualities. Interestingly, the passage above makes explicit use of the nation-state/religion distinction, rather than the previously used nation-state/nation-state distinction, which shifts the focus away from political differences between nation-states and contributes to the deployment of religion as a symbolic marker for conflict between the West and Middle East.

Discursive strategies characteristic of backgrounding also became common during this period. This trend, which would be even more evident in the *Times* following 2010, explicitly constructs Islam in opposition to the West by employing distinctions between 'us,' on the one hand, and 'them' on the other. An example illustrative of this trend can be found in an article also published on February 1, 2003:

> More broadly, European nations like Britain need to end reflexive multiculturalism -- for example, lax language and cultural education requirements for naturalization -- that perversely discourages Muslims from learning the ways of **their new countries,** thus **isolating them from the mainstream** and fueling radicalization.

The use of this us vs. them language immediately following 2001 was pervasive and highlights some of the dominant discursive strategies used in narratives about radicalization during this time. Processes of backgrounding position Muslims as a unified and homogeneous group, thus perpetuating assumptions that all Muslims identical in terms of their religious and political beliefs, activities, and intentions, which are increasingly linked by media to violent forms of conflict directed at the West.

From International to Domestic Threat: The "Lone-wolf" Radical and the Individualized Radicalization Process, 2006-2014

Following a slow decline in the number of articles about radicalization from 2006 to 2009 there was a significant increase in use of the concept beginning at the turn of the decade. The third upswing in radicalization discourses occurred from 2010 to 2014, when there were 252 articles mentioning the term, an increase of 96 articles over the previous decade in only half of the time. Continuing with some of the trends highlighted in the previous decade, radicalization continued to be depicted as a process inextricably linked to terrorism and the overwhelming majority of references to the term made specific mention of Muslims or Islam. The nation-state was almost always presented as the target of such religiously motivated terrorism, while political ideologies and individual governmental institutions were rarely mentioned alongside radicalization. In

addition, there was a substantial increase in representations of radicalization as a micro-level, individual process. Correspondingly, a narrative of "lone-wolf" or "homegrown" terrorism emerged in which the articles increasingly made mention of the internal, domestic aspects of such radicalization. While the first explicit reference to homegrown radicalization occurred in an October 10, 2005 article about an Islamic fundamentalist group in Belgium, this would become a dominant discursive framework following a series of tragic events or foiled plots in Europe (Madrid and London bombings in 2004 and 2005, respectively) and the United States. An article published on January 31, 2010 highlighted the threat of this "new" form of radicalization:

> Not long ago, the **threat of American-bred terrorists seemed a distant one**. Law-enforcement officials **theorized that Muslims in the United States** -- by comparison with many of their European counterparts -- were upwardly mobile, **socially integrated and therefore less susceptible to radicalization**. Perhaps the greatest proof of this came with the absence of domestic terrorist attacks following 9/11, a period that has brought Europe devastating homegrown hits in Madrid and London.

In-depth qualitative analysis of text during this period suggests that the substantial increase in radicalization narratives was related to the emergence of homegrown, or 'lone-wolf,' domestic terrorism, and the corresponding focus on understanding and intervening in the so-called radicalization process. Narratives associating radicalization with a country's own citizens almost always preceded or followed general references to Islam as antagonist groups to Western nation-states. In this way, the discourses related to radicalization perpetuated the assumption that all members of the Islamic religion, even a country's own citizens, share similar belief systems, characteristics, and behaviors. Most notable in this regard was the tendency within the narratives to deliberately include references to Islam when discussing the emergent frame of homegrown, domestic terrorism. The *Times* increasingly made use of the discursive strategy of collectivization, which were then most often accompanied by negative adjectives such as 'threat,' 'intense danger,' or 'risk,' which further distanced the subject to the periphery of the community. By comparison, news articles predominately used terms like "average" (March 5, 2010), "normal" (May 6, 2010), or "acceptable" when distinguishing Muslims from non-Muslim Western citizens; verbiage rarely used in *Times* articles about conflict between Western and South American conflicts. In addition to this, a common discursive strategy in news media was to categorize 'our' society in direct opposition to 'their' radicalization. The categorization of us vs. them within the narratives was made quite explicit several times throughout the text:

> **Many followers of Islam** have been indoctrinated by the radicalizing culture of the mosque and have become isolated **from our society**. The further **radicalization of these American-based Muslims by violent Islamic extremists from abroad** who are committed to international jihad adds a virulent component to an already growing **threat to America**. (March 9, 2011)

> Against the new totalitarian challenge of Islamic extremism, we have to **defend our values**; and this means sticking to the values of **our democratic societies**, even under fire. (September 10, 2006)

This form of backgrounding socio-semantically constructs narratives which assume all members of Islam (and particularly young Muslims), even those who are citizens of Western

countries, are at risk of radicalization and thus pose a threat to the core values of Western society (van Leeuwen 1996). This trend is illustrated in much of the news reporting on the emergent threat posed by efforts to establish an Islamic State in areas of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Here, the *Times* contributed to narratives depicting the threat to be coming from the outside, even when Western citizens were the subject of such radicalization. For example, in an article entitled "U.S. is trying to counter ISIS's efforts to lure alienated young Muslims," published on October 5, 2014, the domestic terrorist threat was actually portrayed as a result of an international terrorist group's brainwashing rather than the individual agency of those Americans seeking radicalization:

> As the United States carries out yet another bombing campaign across two Islamic countries, the Obama administration is redoubling its efforts to stanch the flow of **radicalized young Muslim Americans traveling to Syria** to join the fight and **potentially returning as well-trained militants to carry out attacks here.** American law enforcement and intelligence officials say more than **100 Americans have gone to Syria,** or tried to so far. That number of Americans seeking to join militants, while still small, **was never seen during the two major wars fought in Afghanistan and Iraq** after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. (October 5, 2014)

In contrast, this period was also characterized by attempts to humanize the subject of radicalization discourses through a process of individualisation in which specific characteristics and differences were recognized (van Leeuwen 1996). Narratives highlighting background, contextual, social factors influencing radicalization emerged throughout the text. These narratives corresponded with an increased focus on domestic terrorism in light of several notable attacks (i.e., bombings in London (2005) and Boston (2013) and 2009's Fort Hood Shooting), and often problematized the subject's individual qualities for explanations for why they would engage in terrorist activity. This humanization, however, most often occurred when the individual could be positioned against Western cultural norms, and thus in opposition to the nation-state.

News stories during this period which contributed to the individualization of radicalization subjects most often reified narratives about conflict between Muslims in America and the rest of Americans. An example of representations of individuality can be found in the article "Generation 9/11" published on September 11, 2011 about the misrepresentation of the Islamic community in the United States. This particular account, while providing a much more humanistic account of the reality of being a Muslim in post-2001 America, positioned the Islamic community as the sole arbiter of the community's identity, as if the onus is on stigmatized groups to preemptively show the country that they do not engage in negativised activity. For example, the story included a discussion on "mobilizing the community," and highlighted the formation of a "Muslim Rapid Response Team" whose goal is to demonstrate that Muslims are part of the fabric of American culture: "if we are not showing who we are as Muslim Americans…then what will happen to the next generation" (September 11, 2011). This subtle, yet important, narrative actually further distinguishes Islam from the west by suggesting that groups must actively present themselves in ways that align with dominant cultural representations.

There were several examples where the *Times* focused on the individual characteristics of radicalization subjects, particularly in 2013 and 2014. Not least of which formed much of the news media coverage of the Boston Marathon bombings:

> Mr. King's hypothesis, and the widespread surveillance policies already in effect

> since 9/11, assume that the **threat of radicalization** has become a matter of local geography, that **American Muslims are creating extremists in our mosques and community centers.**
>
> But what we're learning of the suspects, the brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, suggests a different story, and one that has itself become familiar: **radicalization does not happen to young people with a strong grounding in the American Muslim mainstream; increasingly, it happens online, and sometimes abroad, among the isolated and disaffected.**
>
> **The YouTube page of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, for example, does not contain a single lecture from a scholar, imam or institution in America**. One report suggests that he found the theology taught in a local Cambridge mosque, the Islamic Society of Boston, unpalatable: while attending a Friday service in which an imam praised the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mr. Tsarnaev shouted that the imam was a "nonbeliever." The younger Tsarnaev brother **seems to have rarely attended a mosque at all.** (April 23, 2013)

This segment, and others during this period, illustrates two important developments. The first, to deal with the previously unconscionable threat of Western citizens becoming radicalized, the *Times* highlighted the improbability of radicalization coming from Islamic institutions in the West, which are depicted as 'mainstream,' whilst identifying Muslim teachings found in the periphery as the problem – *American* Islamic institutions do not cause radicalization but fringe organizations online and abroad do. Even in the face of counterfactual examples, the *Times* continued to reinforce the search for explanations for radicalization rooted in Islam teachings.

The second development in radicalization discourse during this period was the emergence of a subgenre illustrating how radicalization should *not* be understood as an inherent problem in Islam, but instead a process affecting a wide range of dissociated individuals shifting away from mainstream political and ideological beliefs to engage in political violence. Such narratives, most notably detailed in a series of critiques of Homeland Security Committee meetings on the terrorist threat, began to challenge the notion that radicalization was an exclusively Islamic problem:

> Opposition to the center by prominent politicians and other public figures in the United States has been covered extensively by the news media in Muslim countries. At a time of concern about **radicalization of young Muslims in the West, it risks adding new fuel to Al Qaeda's claim that Islam is under attack by the West** and must be defended with violence, some specialists on Islamic militancy say. (August 21, 2010)
>
> It is **disturbing to listen to Representative Peter King**, the incoming chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. He has announced plans to hold a hearing next month into what he calls the "radicalization of the American Muslim community." Mr. King, a New York Republican, is no stranger to bluster, but his **sweeping slur on Muslim citizens is unacceptable**. (January 2, 2011)
>
> "There **is a real threat to the country from the Muslim community**," he said [Peter King], "and the only way to get to the bottom of it is to investigate what is happening." That kind of sweeping statement from a major government official

> about a **religious minority**…can only serve to **further demonize a group of Americans already being pummeled by bigotry and vicious stereotyping**. (March 8, 2011)

These important developments illustrate how engrained the idea of radicalization has become as a symbol marker of conflict between the West and Islam. The idea is so established that the *Times* itself problematizes premature and irrational assumptions that radicalization is a general problem amongst believers in Islam; assumptions for which, as I have illustrated above, it helped construct in the first place. Narratives such as those presented above also continue to reify the antagonist nature of Islam by continuous reference to the very distinction between the United States and Islam. Overwhelming reference to the distinction West/Islam simultaneously ignores transitions toward political violence unrelated to Islam and committed by non-Muslims. This argument is supported by Table 1, which suggests that the *Times* did not appear to widely evoke the concept of radicalization in other instances of mass violence during this time – for instance, in the coverage of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2013 or the Aurora, Colorado movie theater mass shooting in 2012. The concept was most often employed when the subject of radicalization was associated with Islam in some form. Thus, even in its apparent problematization of widely held understandings of Islam as the primary source of terrorist radicalization in political and media discourse, the *Times*, through its incessant reference to Islam, contributed to the construction of religion as a symbolic marker of conflict threatening the West.

Discussion and Conclusion

The first aim of this study was to explore how the media constructs radicalization and to investigate whether such discourses varied over time. To this end, I examined 607 *New York Times* articles mentioning the construct on the basis of six categories to empirically assess the most common defining characteristics within the texts. Findings from this analysis suggest that discourses evoked in the so-called era of radicalization are not all that new and have been deployed by news media as a symbolic marker for various conflicts since at least the 1960s. This study's findings are also suggestive of a broader trend towards using radicalization as a discursive element which denotes a particular religious threat to the West. In line with ideas within the othering paradigm, news media depictions of radicalization shifted from a symbol of leftist political and economic conflict to a concept positioning Islam in direct opposition to the values, beliefs, and ideologies of Western countries. In this way, the *New York Times* deploys several backgrounding strategies to contribute to conceptual distinctions or 'symbolic boundaries' that work to construct notions of "us" and "them" through reference to radicalization (Bail 2008).

The second aim of this study was to illustrate how the media constructs Muslims as outsiders in relation to dominant Western cultural values and activities. In Edward Said's critique West and Chris Bail's analyses of configurations of symbolic boundaries, the authors explore how mass media represents Muslims and Islam as outsiders to American culture. The findings here contribute to this body of work by highlighting how mass media contributes to the othering of Muslims through reference to processes of radicalization. In this respect, media notably used radicalization discourse to conceptually construct symbolic boundaries between Islam and the West. More specifically, I highlighted how news media socio-semantically constructed an us/them dichotomy through discursive strategies of backgrounding, therefore representing Muslims as an alien other to Western culture. This tendency was most common after 2000 and could be associated with high-profile terrorist attacks that have occurred since 9/11. However, the predominance of associations between radicalization and Islam suggests that news media have

increasingly narrowed their definitions of radicalization to focus solely on Muslim communities, despite relatively few Islamic-inspired terrorist attacks. This is indicative of an overall neglect of news media to include non-Muslims in their depictions of terrorism-related phenomena whilst focusing primarily on Muslims as the source of radicalization.

Prior to concluding that news media contributes to conceptual distinctions which construct Islam as other to the West, it is important to evaluate the merits of some alternative explanations for why news media increasingly makes uses the construct radicalization to describe terrorist activity related to Muslims. The first alternative explanation is that news media simply followed attacks against the West as they occurred. Numerous studies, however, have demonstrated that terrorist attacks carried out by Islamic fundamentalist groups and individuals have actually decreased since 2001 (Altheide 2006; Kurzman 2011). According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD),[8] which gathers data associated with terrorist activity across the globe, not one of the 20 terrorist organizations most frequently responsible for attacks against the United States since 1970 is directly affiliated with Islam (LaFree et al. 2012). In addition, an analysis conducted by Gary LaFree and colleagues (2012) revealed that 91 out of 97 (93.5%) attributions of responsibility for terrorist attacks in the United States from 2001 to 2011 were credited to groups with no relation to Islamic fundamentalism or Muslim communities. It is, however, important to note that only two of the terrorist attacks during that time resulted in fatalities, the 9/11 attacks committed by Islamic fundamentalist group al-Qaeda (2,996 fatalities) and an attack perpetrated by the Minutemen American Defense (2 fatalities) (LaFree et al. 2012). While the sheer magnitude of the 9/11 attacks warranted massive media attention, this seemed to have relatively little impact on radicalization discourse in the news media. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the data explored in this study reveal that radicalization discourse did not increase substantially in the immediate aftermath 9/11. These findings indicate that news media did not evoke radicalization solely in response to terrorist attacks as they occurred. Instead, the rise of radicalization discourse in the media may have contributed to the continued use of the concept to frame terrorist activity.

The second alternative explanation is that news media simply followed national security discourse related to radicalization. Several studies have demonstrated how national security discourse transitioned quickly after the Cold War from concern over Communism to anxiety over terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism (Winkler 2006; Zelizer 2010). Of the 403 *New York Times* articles mentioning radicalization from 2001 to 2014, 43 referenced members of high-ranking national security positions or governmental committees, 39 of which occurred in 2010 or later, notably following a substantial increase in references to radicalization in the newspaper from 2007 to 2009.[9] In addition, of the 46 State of the Union addresses from 1969 to 2014, zero made

[8] The Global Terrorism Database (DTD) uses a broad definition of terrorism as "the threatening or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation" to categorize terrorist attacks. More details about the GTD, including data collection methodology, can be found at https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

[9] I operationalize high-ranking national security positions here as secretaries and directors of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Advisors, high-ranking officers at the State Department, and members of influential national security committees including the House Intelligence Committee and the House Committee on National Security.

reference to the concept radicalization or related concepts of "radicalism" or "radical."[10] Moreover, in a sample of 579 major Presidential speeches from 1969 to 2014,[11] the concept radicalization was only used one time (by Barack Obama in a May 23, 2013 speech at the National Defense University). Importantly, even though there was increased use of the concept radicalization in news media following of the terrorist attacks at the Boston Marathon (2013), the term was not used once in three official Presidential statements immediately following the attacks. Of the 579 Presidential speeches, the related terms "radical" and "radicalism" were referenced 72 times (12.4%), 64 of which were by George W. Bush from 2003 to 2008,[12] 5 by Barack Obama, and twice by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.

In terms of other high-ranking national security officials, of all available speeches made by the Directors of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS),[13] only two referenced the concept radicalization while 23 used related terms. As for government counterradicalization policy, in the three months following the official White House release of the "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States,"[14] which is the United States' only official counterradicalization policy, only one news article made reference to the strategy. Finally, despite attempts made by Representative Jane Harman to pass the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007, which would have legally defined the term 'violent radicalization,' there was not a notable increase in news media references to the term.[15] While governmental discourse on national security post-2001 certainly contributed to news media accounts of radicalization – evinced by relatively similar increases in the use of the term by government officials and news media from 2005 to 2007 – these findings indicate that these external narratives do not account for the substantial increase in post-9/11 radicalization discourse in and of themselves. In fact, since 2007, radicalization discourse in news media substantially increased, while governmental references to the construct actually decreased. The transfer of national security discourse between government, policy makers, and mass media warrants further research in its own right, however this study suggests that media representations of radicalization increased substantial prior to increases of national security discourse making use of the concept. Future studies should focus on this relationship by exploring the substance of government

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[10] Four State of the Union addresses used the related terms "radical" (Ronald Regan in 1982), "radicalism," or "radical Islamist" (George W. Bush in 2005, 2006, and 2007).

[11] The sample of 579 Presidential speeches was drawn from the online speech databases at www.americanrhetoric.com, www.presidentialrhetoric.com, the University of California – Santa Barbara's American Presidential Project, and the University of Virginia's Miller Center Presidential Speech Archive.

[12] Interestingly, not one of the 35 news articles mentioning George W. Bush and radicalization from 2001 to 2008 attributed the term to Bush or suggested that he used the term. One did, however, reference a "top CIA expert" a source for the use of the term.

[13] Transcripts of major speeches from the Directors of the FBI and CIA and Secretaries of DHS were collected from the archives available on each department's website. In total, 271 speeches were included in this analysis. The DHS archive only provides transcriptions for speeches made after 2012.

[14] The strategy was released on August 4, 2011. I examined all *New York Times* articles mentioning radicalization from August 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011 (n=14) for any reference to the strategy.

[15] In 2007, there were only two references to the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007 or bills H.R. 1955 or S-1959 in the *New York Times.*

policies, political debates, and speeches and comparing those to mass media narratives of radicalization and related phenomena.

Alternative explanations aside, this study illustrates how radicalization discourse has emerged as a principal framework by which we make sense of terrorist activity. Rather than contributing to narratives about the causes of terrorism in terms of criminal activity or military conflict, 21st century news media constructs radicalization as one of the fundamental explanatory frameworks for understanding individual and group processes culminating in terrorism. While more research must be conducted on this particular phenomenon, exploring how media increasingly connects radicalization to terrorism, rather than other forms of deviance, would contribute an understanding of how we conceptualize terrorism as a specific form of religiously motivated political violence that can be understood through reference to radicalization.

Finally, the emergence of radicalization as a precursor to domestic terrorism also developed in a way congruent with the othering perspective and contributed to narratives that position Muslims in the West in direct opposition to dominant cultural value systems. News media employed backgrounding strategies to construct American Muslim citizens as subject of radicalization and used the construct to make sense of a transition toward extreme beliefs premised on a particular religious affiliation. The findings are suggestive of the media's differential treatment of Muslims in its accounts of radicalization. In terms of news media discourses about radicalization, Muslims, both in America and elsewhere, are constructed as a threat to the Western world by virtue of their religious belief systems. This may contribute to a collective understanding of subjects of radicalization solely in terms of religious affiliation rather than as a process that can affect anyone regardless of cultural or ideological background. This study offers an empirical basis for which this idea can be further explored and explained.

This paper has sought to demonstrate that discourses of radicalization offer relatively simplistic, and overly general, depictions of the transitional matrix towards political violence. Further scrutiny is needed in relation to how various institutions in society influence, construct, and reconstruct our understandings of terrorism related phenomena. Constant reference is made to the complexities associated with radicalization, however less attention is paid to how institutions and organizations represent the construct in an increasingly generalist manner. The media has contributed to popular understandings of radicalization as terrorism as Islamic fundamentalism as radicalization, and thus offer a relatively narrow definition of the concept. Such narratives produce distinctions between us and them based on dichotomous representations of East/West, while also contributing to the cultural apparatus by which we form our perceptions of Islamic culture. The media's treatment of Islam as the primary source of so-called radicalization is, therefore, an interesting point from which to begin explorations into the consequences of radicalization discourses on other aspects of society.

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