The Power of Film to Educate and Miseducate Pre-Service Teachers

A Phenomenological Analysis of *Hidalgo* and Cultural Representation of Muslims Post 9/11

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Introduction

While undertaking the analysis reported in this article, I experienced several feelings—perhaps chief among them was resentment. This resentment found its objects not in the students engaged in this project, but rather in the opinions and attitudes expressed by these students that suggested, if not actually stated, that those who emigrate to the United States, or who come in contact with its representatives abroad, should abandon their traditions and practices and assimilate into mainstream and supposedly superior American culture and values.

As a working-class, Afro-Cuban metrosexual immigrant, what I have found is what Sherman Alexie dramatized in his novel *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (1993), viz., though I may have assimilated American virtues, I have also imbibed sundry American vices—i.e., biases, prejudices, and bigotries, and in many sizes, shapes, and colors.

How are we as instructors to reflect on these issues, and most importantly, how are we to prepare teachers who are also aware of and critically reflective about these issues? In this article I consider three of today's pre-service teachers who have each watched the World Trade Center towers collapse on broadcast television, viewed the film *Hidalgo,* and participated in subsequent interviews regarding the movie. It is through these events that I have examined the pre-service teachers' views about the proper role that Muslims should play in the American 'nation'—what Benedict Anderson (1991) defined as an "imagined community."

Popular Films

Popular films can offer narratives that shape the way audiences imagine the 'nation.'[1] Pre-service teachers are oviously part of these audiences.[2] Joe Johnston's *Hidalgo* (2004) was a popular film,[3] and I submit that it represented an attempt to rally American public opinion in favor of U.S. intervention in the Middle East.[4]

Though I consider myself a capable cultural critic who has written about and lectured on this film, the focus of the present qualitative case study is not intended to illustrate my critical acumen, but rather to gauge that of the three pre-service teachers being studied. My goal is to develop in them a critically reflective teaching practice as described by Zeichner (1990):

> [To help them] see relationships between [their] daily practices in the classroom and issues of schooling and society .... (to help them develop relational thinking in their pre-service training) by deliberately focusing (their) attention on particular kinds of issues connected to their everyday teaching activities that raise questions of equity and social justice. (p. 58)

Specifically, I want to examine the extent to which the pre-service teachers in this study interpreted *Hidalgo* as a proposal for how the post-9/11 American 'nation' and the Muslims within and without it should be imagined, and whether and the extent to which the pre-service teachers agreed with that proposal.

In 2001, the federal government estimated that approximately one million adult Muslims[5] lived in the United States, and I think it is reasonable to assume that biological reproduction and immigration has increased and will continue to increase that number. Their children attend our schools and share our classrooms, and the teachers we prepare need to be sensitive to their culture and their educational needs.

Thus, this analysis is important for teacher educators who are looking for unique ways to identify their students' biases and prejudices against cultural and ethnic minorities, and who want to dissolve those prejudices so as to ensure that their students-as-teachers-in-the-making will provide equal educational opportunity to all students, including Muslim children.

I preface this report with what I see as a correction of a seemingly common mistake found in what I presume are popular qualitative methods textbooks (c.f., Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These volumes each include a section on the various types of qualitative research, and *phenomenology* is often one of them. Their mistake is that the *phenomenology* they cite is Edmund Husserl's version, and they further assume that it is a reliable tool for understanding the 'essence' of what is studied. To set the stage for my analysis, I will first offer a brief exposition of what I view as a needed correction concerning phenomenology in popular qualitative methods textbooks and then follow it with an explicated literature review that justifies the need for a study of this nature.

Martin Heidegger's Existentialism: A Theoretical Framework for Studying Three Pre-Service Teachers' Engagement with *Hidalgo*

Heidegger's Teacher

Edmund Husserl argued that it is possible for researchers to investigate the *thing itself*, i.e., the concrete phenomena of conscious experience. Their investigation begins with understanding the *intentionality of consciousness*, whereby consciousness is aware *of* something, and hence it is directed towards that something. Husserl thought that if researchers could exclude their subjectivity from their investigations, i.e., through *bracketing* it, they could overcome the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy and arrive at knowledge of the *thing itself*.

Basically, the dichotomy holds that while the experienced, represented, or re-

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membered object is inside one's consciousness (e.g., a dog), the *real* object itself lies outside of it. Bracketing one's subjectivity reduces the *intentionality of consciousness* to a fundamental relation: consciousness and its immediately given object. Once the researcher brackets his/her subjectivity, s/he may begin with gaining a knowledge of the 'front side' of the dog, then adding that knowledge to that of the 'lateral side,' then adding both units of knowledge to that of the 'back side,' etc., finally gaining a full knowledge of the whole dog! In sum, Husserl resolved the subject/object dichotomy by bracketing off researchers' subjectivity and aggregating units of knowledge about an object in order to gain full knowledge about that object.

To express the foregoing in visual terms, imagine Picasso's *The Guitar Player* (1910). As in Cubist painting in general, this work presents the object from multiple perspectives simultaneously. Each contour refers to the object as a whole, though it does not emerge as such, for perception of the whole requires many viewings. It is only after the viewer brackets off previous experiences of having seen various guitar players that s/he can combine various acts of perceiving this painting to finally perceive it entirely. Inductively, each perception anticipates other perceptions whose fulfillment is the object in its entirety. In short, this is how the viewer may perceive the totality of Picasso's guitar player (McCudden, 2004).

The Student Becomes the Teacher

Husserl's phenomenology, especially its belief that knowledge of the *intentionality of consciousness* leads a researcher to 'objective' truth, fails when his notion of *bracketing* is rejected. This is precisely what his student, Martin Heidegger, did in his first major work *Being and Time*, and it is the theoretical position I will take throughout this study. In short, Heidegger's existential work amounts to an analysis of Dasein, i.e., any being (including humans) that manifests the structures he describes as *existentialia*:

> Because Dasein's characters of Being are defined in terms of existentiality, we call them "*existentialia*." These are to be sharply distinguished from what we call "*categories*"—characteristics of Being for entities whose character is not that of Dasein (Heidegger, 1962, p. 70). Existentialia and categories are the two basic possibilities for characters of Being. The entities which correspond to them require different kinds of primary interrogation respectively: any entity is either a "*who*" (existence) or a "*what*" (presence-at-hand in the broadest sense). (Heidegger, 1962, p. 71)

Consider the proposition that consciousness corresponds to a *who*, and in turn a *who* corresponds to a "state-of-mind"—i.e., a mood, a particular attunement to something, which includes having emotions. The result is a fundamental *existential* (singular of *existentialia*). In other words, "… in every case Dasein always has some mood" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 173). Moods, not cognition (or at least not mere cognition), disclose the nature of Dasein's consciousness, which is always constrained by Dasein's *historicity*, i.e., by space and time—what Heidegger refers to as its 'there.'

For a researcher to evade such moods, as in the attempt to *bracket* them, does not prove their absence, but rather is proof of a mood whose chief mark is evasion. Of course, evasion does not inhere in all moods, only in those that seek to evade. Fundamentally, to *bracket* consciousness presupposes a knowledge of how Tradition has shaped and constrained it. When teachers hide (actively or passively) the fundamental basis of Tradition, for instance, by requiring students to memorize and regurgitate what Tradition has defined as a 'fact,' individuals remain ignorant of the extent of its influence upon their consciousness and are thus rendered incapable of bracketing it.[6]

The foregoing considerations should make it clear that I do not pretend to achieve objectivity in this study, for I am myself engaged in the daily struggle of identifying Tradition's influence upon my consciousness. Rather than avoid my subjectivity as a researcher, I embrace it, for to claim that I can *bracket* off my oft-oppressive experiences as a working-class, Afro-Cuban metrosexual immigrant passively imbibing mass media messages about ideal forms of American masculinity in order to "fit in" would amount to nothing short of pretentious delusion!

These remarks amount to saying that whatever 'objective' structures and relationships I find in my subjects' experiences in viewing *Hidalgo*, they may reflect autobiographical hues. However, my subjects' words will be their own, and I will highlight them as often as I can within the bounds of relevance and appropriateness. Yet, it is a given that I collected and analyzed the data, and that I decided which items were relevant and appropriate to report and which were not.

Why This Study Is Important

Film and Consciousness

In their theoretical essay entitled *Phenomenology of Film: On Siegfried Kracauer's Writings of the 1920s* (1987), Schlüpmann and Levin asked what art critic Siegfried Kracauer considered to be the essence of film as an art form. They argued that, according to Kracauer, film essentially annihilates historicity, i.e., it eradicates the primordiality of space and time—of context—and thus of all social constraints. Therefore, a viewer who relies solely on film to learn about the nature of a particular thing—in this study, Muslims—cannot know it. Consciousness, they maintain, must therefore consider a film's narrative as provisional.

However, a viewer who cannot comprehend the importance of context cannot and will not reach such a conclusion. S/he thereby risks considering a film's narrative as actual, and thus reproducing what s/he experiences in the theater or at home in social life, including in a classroom. Given this risk, Schlüpmann and Levin argue that film ought to be seen as an invitation to further consider the historicity and nature of the phenomena it reconstructs. In short, within the audience's reception-as-production inheres the possibility to perpetuate old relations between the viewer and the society in which s/he lives, or to create new relations between them.

Schlüpmann and Levin's essay suggests a role for the teacher as one who may, rather than dismiss films as mere entertainment, acknowledge their pedagogical power and guide students in their interrogation of films' claims on reality. This is the role I assumed in asking the subjects of this study to interrogate *Hidalgo* and to consider the consequences of reproducing the social relations it represents.

Film and the Eye

Not only does film educate one's consciousness, but also one's eye. According to Tyler's article "Film as a Force in Visual Education" (1968), his investigations of modern art yielded the following findings:

> We must not forget that what the film gives us is the illusion of an organic object in motion, only its image, not its actual existence; and this has been obtained literally by a succession of still images, so closely spaced that when the film is rerun in a projector the movement of an object is reproduced. Organic movement has been shown in time and it has been shown in space—(while film can knit together

> unlimited time and unlimited space with a perfect illusion of fluency: the fluency that we especially term *cinematic*); that is, change of form takes place simultaneously with a change of geographic environment. All this happens objectively and is transmitted to us optically. That is the point. Film tends to expand our psychic image of the world, not only as we see it in our daily lives, but as a formal visual notation, a spectacle, like an extra arm of our memory. (Tyler, p. 17)

For Tyler, the cinematic sensibility is best expressed as a "…spatial conquest … the illusion of instantaneous passage, and in the case of image and sound, the fact of instantaneous communication" (p. 17). It educates the eye by controlling this change through a "rhythmic manipulation of movement ... (ranging from) utter rest to extreme activity" (pp. 18, 19). The major contribution of film-as-art-form is its emphasis on "temporal data as the *subject matter"* (p. 18), while fundamentally altering its contextual dimensions.

In short, *Hidalgo*'s annihilation of the dimensions of American and Middle Eastern social contexts, as well as its substitution of illusion for it may tempt pre-service teachers like the subjects of this study to accept its narrative as an accurate representation of Muslims. The possibility of said substitution is the reason that compels the present study.

Using Film to Educate Pre-Service Teachers: A New Idea?[7]

This is not a new idea. In their article entitled "Learning about Teachers through Film" (2002), Raimo and colleagues listed several films they studied to learn how they may be used to educate pre-service teachers about their future roles as professionals. The authors categorized dominant teacher themes in films (e.g., "Teacher as Guardian of Culture and Liberator") that are explicitly about education as practiced in schools, they discussed their implications for teacher education, and they identified realistic and beneficial roles for teachers to play in future films. They concluded that popular films[8] (e.g., *Stand and Deliver* [1988], *Mr. Holland's Opus* [1995], and *Dangerous Minds* [1995]) could provide a starting point for reflection, discussion, and learning more about why people choose to be teachers, and how they contribute to students' development. They recommended the following:

> We need films that show how successful education is connected to necessary societal reforms outside the school, that government and communities can work collaboratively to address the many difficult problems facing society that affect education. (Raimo et al, 2002)

While I agree with the authors that such films are important and should be used in the ways they suggest, we need others as well, including those like *Hidalgo*, which make claims on the ideal nature of the post-9/11 American 'nation' and construct Muslim identities in particular ways. Teacher educators could rely on such films to have their pre-service teachers rehearse the possible social consequences of assuming their representation of Muslims is true, of acting accordingly, and of encouraging their students to do likewise.

Let's consider an example in which we could easily imagine a pre-service teacher taking a course that would count toward her major in English education. We may ask: what role, if any, should *Hijab*-wearing Muslim women play in the American 'nation'? Diva Abdo's analytical essay *Uncovering the Harem in the Classroom* (2002)[9] suggests a small and oppressive one, unless teachers use films to correct their students' misconceptions regarding the socio-cultural complexity of this garment.

From within the interdisciplinary perspective of post-colonial Arab feminisms and the context of an "Arab Women Writers in English" course, Abdo concludes a film such as *Covered: The Hijab in Cairo, Egypt* provides a point of entry into discussions of the *hijab*'s significance. The film is such a point because it provides a cultural context in which, or in response to which, other written texts about the topic may be discussed and analyzed, thus minimizing the risks identified above by Schlüpmann and Levin and Tyler. While the *hijab* issue is an important one in *Hidalgo*, it is secondary to the film's primary concern with the post-9/11 American 'nation,' viz., imagining the social function of an American victory in the Middle East.

As the foregoing examples suggest (and here I also refer to the notes), popular film has been used to promote cultural understanding among diverse groups found in American classrooms. According to Nadaner's *Art and Cultural Understanding: The Role of Film in Education* (1981), a view from the perspective of Gramsci's notion of popular art reveals that, though some films denigrate and distort,

> …film art at its best might contribute more adequate images to our understanding of other people's cares and outlooks. It makes available a base of imagery upon which values can be formed and further efforts to gain knowledge can be initiated. (Nadaner, 1981)

In sum, Nadaner, like the other authors cited in this section, understands film's power to both educate and miseducate.

In light of these considerations, it is not a question of *whether* film *should* be used to educate pre-service teachers, but rather *how* and to *what* end. Fundamentally, the evidence supports the need for pre-service teachers to study a film like *Hidalgo*. Thus, this study will hopefully serve as an original contribution, not only to the literature, but also to the practice of educating our schools' future teachers.

Methods

This analysis involves a phenomenological case study based on a screening of *Hidalgo*.[10] I relied on semi-structured interviews, video-recorded events in the field, observations, field notes, and memoranda to generate and analyze data. Through typical purposeful sampling, I found three pre-service teachers to interview from an "Introduction to Education" class at the College of Education in a large southeastern U.S. university. Two were female and the other was male; all three were in their late teens. Mary and John were self-identified secular Jewish-Americans, and Katie was a self-identified Protestant Caucasian-American.[11] Mary, John, and Katie were not friends outside of their class.

The themes that emerged during our interviews in the form of an overlapping consensus became my codes. The interview questions became the categories where I subsumed the codes and the comments that corresponded with them. My findings came from this organization.

Findings

Eight themes emerged from my interviews with John, Katie, and Mary. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on what I consider were the three main ones, especially with respect to my interest in *Hidalgo*'s representation of the American 'nation' and the policies it should follow regarding Muslims here and abroad: victory, torture, and tolerance. I cite other themes to further illustrate my findings.

Victory

From the first class discussion immediately following the film, *victory* emerged as a major theme, and Trent—a classmate of John, Mary, and Katie—introduced it. He initiated class discussion by raising

the issue of Frank's Caucasian-American/Sioux hybrid and fractured identity. I say 'fractured' because, as Trent put it, in keeping with the first half of his identity—ethnically, organizationally, and historically associated with the American Army of the 19th century, he delivered the orders that resulted in the attack of the innocent Sioux victims of Wounded Knee—those to whom the other half of his identity was attached. The moniker "Far Rider," given to him by Chief Eagle Horn, meant "one who rides far from himself, and never looks home." It symbolized Frank's psychic split.

Moreover, Trent noted that Frank kept this moniker until the climactic moment in the sizzling desert when, within a drop of sweat of his death (and Hidalgo's), Frank summoned his Sioux ancestors with a dolorously wavering chant, which was answered by an apparition of his mother whispering words whose mystical and soughing echo cooled the sands with … "Bluuuuuuue Ch (ahhhhhh)… ild." Only then, having reconciled his ethnically (and nationally) coded psychic halves, though always in cowboy costume, could Frank ride to victory over his Muslim competitors.

In short, Trent seemed to understand that *Hidalgo*, while it acknowledged that Frank was torn between the demands of his All-American Cowboy and Native American selves, also proposed that they must be (and can be) reconciled, and that his All-American Cowboy-coded victory in the "Ocean of Fire" depended on such reconciliation. Though I think his reasoning would have soon led him to realize that the cowboy/Sioux tension represented a *domestic* dispute upon whose resolution victory in the Middle East depended—in short, that he could have viewed the race as a metaphor[12] for pro-American Middle Eastern policy (e.g., the race ends in Iraq with Frank riding Hidalgo surrounded by Muslims who raised his flag with cheers on the shores of the Persian Gulf), it did not on this occasion. That his reasoning could have led him to such a conclusion, however, is what hinted at the potential significance of this study.

I was intrigued when *victory* reappeared as a theme in the context of the interviews. At that time, John and Katie were both active in university team sports, and we know that the end result of all athletic competition is fundamentally understood in terms of victory and defeat. When I asked whether Frank Hopkins is a hero, Mary said that according to the traditional definition thereof, he is because he won. John said that he was for several reasons, including that he won the race. Katie said, "He proves everybody wrong," apparently by winning, for no one expected him to do so.

By contrast, when I asked whether Lady Anne Davenport (one of his many nemeses) is a hero, John said "no" for three reasons, the first of which was because "she lost, she didn't win." He did, however, consider Muslims to be heroes because they have stood the test of time "for thousands of years." John apparently considered standing the test of time to be a victory. Yet every Muslim competitor lost the race against Frank, and John clearly understood heroism in terms of winning. Hence, his own premises should have led him to the conclusion that Muslims are not heroes, at least not insofar as the race in this film is concerned. However, he did not note this inconsistency.

I then proceeded to ask John another question. When I inquired about whether will or blood (i.e., tradition) counted more toward ensuring victory, he answered,

> … will is more important, because Frank … expressed more will (than the Muslims) … him and Hidalgo, had more endurance, they … had a lot inside themselves, to get through the race, to win the race…. it's Frank's will that decides to rescue (the fallen racer who had declared his fate to have been sealed by Allah), and rescuing him is a good thing, it was … a good quality of his. So, it was okay … to bend the traditions a little bit….

Before I asked this question, John was convinced that Frank was a hero, and winning made him so. As his answer above declares, 'will' underwrites winning. Thus, it appears that heroism, winning, and will are inextricably interrelated in John's view of Frank. Moreover, John considered Frank's violation of the Muslim racer's moral convictions to be a "good thing … a good quality of his." Therefore, Frank is justified in violating a Muslim's moral convictions, at least within the context of a 'race,' precisely because he possesses the hero-winner-will nexus.

In considering Frank's victory as a proposal for actual U.S./Muslim relations (and here we transitioned from notions of film-as-entertainment to film-as-a-plan for social action), Katie said,

> … by the end, he won the race, but he also gained the respect of the Muslim people. And the Sheikh (said), "Be a guest in my house." Even though he was (formerly considered) an infidel, (the Sheikh now considered him) …a respectable person, and a friend.... So, it kind of suggested that, even though people don't agree on stuff, no one agrees on everything, it doesn't mean we can't live at peace with each other.

Yet Katie was silent about what the victory-as-proposal made clear: living at peace with each other depends on an American victory over Muslims in the 'race,' which ended in Iraq. When I asked the more pointed question about considering *Hidalgo* as a proposal for how pre-service teachers should treat multiculturalism, Mary said:

> Something to be defeated … the ultimate end is that the White man wins and everyone else bows down to him… (Multiculturalism is) a threat … the whole of the movie considers everything that's not Frank as a threat.

Yet the scene in the desert described above proves to be an exception to Mary's pronouncement. Specifically, Mary neglected the issues Trent had raised in class, viz., that the film renders Frank's reconciling of his Caucasian-American/Sioux identities as a necessary condition upon which his victory depends. The step that Trent did not take, but to which his reasoning would likely have led him had we had more time, is that *Hidalgo* symbolically presents victory in the Middle East as contingent upon a reconciliation of a *domestic* dispute between Caucasian-Americans, on the one hand, and Native Americans on the other; in general terms, between differences of domestic opinion.

Consider the reconciliation in question as symbolizing the social context in which *Hidalgo* was first screened—e.g., the current war in Iraq began in 2003; American domestic opinion was divided between invading Iraq and seeking diplomatic solutions; France, Germany, Russia, and around 36 million people worldwide took part in almost 3,000 protests against the Iraq war,[13] including 3 million in Rome, whose protest made it the largest ever anti-war rally.[14] This suggests that embracing *domestic* "multiculturalism" was necessary for the Bush administration to wage war abroad unilaterally.[15] In short, and in light of the line of discussion that Trent began in class, Mary's comments suggest that multiculturalism may be a "threat," but only when extended to accommodate Muslims in the Middle East and in the United States.[16]

Torture

In considering Frank's victory as a proposal for U.S./Muslim relations, John said,

> … the film suggests that an American comes into their territory, things happen along the way, but in the end, their … presence there was justified … the film suggested it was a good thing for an outsider to come in and change things up a little bit, yeah, that's it … tweak the values, do different … things, and then the people responded to that in a positive way, and, in the end, it was Frank being there … (which) made (them) better off … than if he didn't show up … it suggests that … they should switch over to Western ideas … because … they're better … they were … exposed to his … *Western justice* (emphasis mine), and, he became a hero to them …

Earlier in our interview, John had considered the justness of Islamic justice. He said,

> It seems extreme, because of what ours is … (it is) less efficient (because beheading Aziz for his treachery against the Sheikh would have left unknown the whereabouts of his daughter and her kidnappers). (Frank's) torture (of Aziz) … it's immoral, but, it's more effective. Right, when you put someone against the wall, they're more willing to spill the beans, as opposed to … not torturing them (which he said with hesitation).

John was referring to a scene sequence in which the Sheikh sentenced Aziz (his servant) to beheading for disloyalty—loyalty being the standard against which his fate was measured. John considered beheading—a quick and painless endeavor (assuming a sharp blade and an expert swing), as "extreme." However, in the same sequence, Frank pushed the sword-wielding Sheikh aside, kicked Aziz, and progressively pressed the spur of his boot against the latter's throat until he confessed what he had done with Jazira (the Sheikh's daughter). The confession led Frank to rescue Jazira, which allowed him to continue the 'race' that he won. In short, Frank inflicted severe pain on Aziz and magnified its effects by enlisting Time as an ally.

As John himself stated, Frank subjected Aziz to "torture," and he approved of it. Katie echoed these sympathies when she questioned the Sheikh's justice, "are you gonna get Jazira back, is it gonna help you get any closer to getting your daughter back?" What they did not consider is that torture often leads to useless information because its victim's chief interest is stopping the pain. Though I did not pursue the line of questioning at the time, it would have been interesting to consider Frank's "Western justice" within the social context *Hidalgo* was screened, viz., the 2003 and 2004 scandals of Abu Ghraib.[17]

Just as compelling as what the pre-service teachers considered was what they *did not* consider. Katib (the Sheikh's nephew) kidnapped Jazira and took the Sheikh's stallion-breeding secrets stolen and delivered by Aziz. From Jazira's perspective, accepting her fate and becoming Katib's fifth wife may have been a more favorable outcome (though perhaps not an ideal one) than staying with her father, who refused to let her follow her equestrian passions. For instance, there is no indication in the film that Katib would have kept her from riding horses. Moreover, it can be argued that polygamy may have been favorable for Jazira, given that the film suggests there is no institutionalized role for unmarried women in Bedouin society. As a fifth wife, she could have benefited from having a lighter domestic workload than in her father's tent, where she was the sole woman. In light of these considerations, her kidnapping could be considered a blessing (though again, a less than ideal one). However, absent the narrative's placement of Frank's victory as contingent on her rescue, the pre-service teachers may have had no other choice but to interpret Frank's interference in the Sheikh's administration of Islamic justice as a mere imposition, nothing more.

At another point in our interview, I asked about the pre-service teachers' understanding of Islam, but I did not specify *before* September 11th, 2001. In their answers, one student associated Islam with terrorism *twice*, and located them both in the Middle East. Another student also made the same associations and substantiated it with the Muslims' attempts to take Frank out of the race, by death if necessary, if he did not choose to believe as they did. They also said Islam has the most followers of any world religion—*twice*. When we consider that Islam has around a billion followers worldwide,[18] are we to conclude this number embodies so many reasons to be afraid?

I worry that these pre-service teachers may indeed be afraid, and also angry. John is from New York. His father worked in the city, and so many of his friends died in the World Trade Center collapse that "he was going to wakes and funerals for a month." At the time (8th grade), John reports he and his friends were excited about going to war, until they saw the images of the falling buildings (there was a plaintive piano melody playing in the background as he told me this).

In that moment, he made a connection between terrorism and Islam, and it reflected in his behavior. When he and his friends returned to school, they "treated the other (Middle Eastern) kids … badly", so much so that the principal had to call a special student assembly to address the harassment issue, which John described (in retrospect) as "ignorance, and just really low tolerance." In his own case, he described his "hostility" toward Muhammad (a Middle Eastern peer) over the course of "two days," though he did not specify what he meant by this word. I did not ask him if he still engages in anti-Muslim discrimination.

Tolerance

When I asked John what *Hidalgo* is about, he identified two things:

> A man's relationship with his companion … (and) the clash of cultures (as he brought his fists together repeatedly), and how when they clash, there's … ignorance … and a lot of … intolerance before they … start to understand each other (yet, despite adducing a growth in mutual understanding, he kept bringing his fists together as described above).

Perhaps it is no surprise that he interpreted *Hidalgo*'s proposal for how pre-service teachers should consider multiculturalism in the following way:

> …the most important theme is tolerance … and … if you're a teacher and you don't have tolerance for … diversity or for a certain group, and someone in your class represents a culture that, is, thinks differently than yours, and you don't tolerate that, then that will cause … major problems…. You gotta be open minded … the film teaches you to be more tolerant … (and) to understand people before you make judgments.

When he considered whether Jazira was a hero or not, John said 'yes' for two reasons. First, "Jazira was (a hero) because she got to understand their culture a lot more," which allowed her to take off her veil. Apparently, her heroism consisted of, at least in part, assimilating into Western culture. Second, her heroism consisted of her willingness "to kind of cross the line a little bit" with respect to taking off her veil in front of Frank. In short, John thought her heroism consisted of assimilating into Western culture and thereby transgressing her own. If we allow the foregoing considerations, his comments regarding Frank's justified disregard for the racer's interpretation of Allah's will, and his just prevention of the Sheikh's administration

of Islamic law to shade his opinion about tolerance, suggest that tolerance should work in only one direction. In other words, Muslims should learn to tolerate Americans, and not the other way around.

Conclusion

I consider *Hidalgo* a piece of privately funded pro-American propaganda, and I was disheartened to see pre-service teachers reflect its largely anti-Muslim opinions and attitudes. In the Sheikh and Jazira I see my own experience through the eyes of the American mainstream: exotic, but fundamentally inferior. I cannot *bracket* my immigrant experience because I too early learned to measure my soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity, and I still struggle to understand the basis of a tradition that relegates me to a low rung on the American great chain of being.

I am disheartened to have found evidence that some of tomorrow's teachers may look at their Muslim and minority students with fear, suspicion, contempt, and pity. I am dejected because there may be other students with similar experiences (in New York and elsewhere), who are now pre-service teachers and who will soon have Muslim and minority students in their own classes.

John is from New York City, and I expect for him to return there to teach physical education in its public schools, where one in ten students (or 10%) is a Muslim.[19] The average size of a New York City high school class is approximately 30 students.[20] Ten percent of 30 is three. If we assume that Muslim students will be evenly distributed among his classes, and that he will teach five classes per day, then we can expect for him to have 15 Muslim students per semester, and 30 per year.

What would happen if he were to coach a team like the Lady Caliphs of Warith Deen Mohammed High School in Atlanta, Georgia, who insist on wearing *hijabs* and long pants to play competitive basketbal1?[21] The effects of his "tolerance" could be exponential.

I stated earlier that there are approximately one million adult Muslims in the United States, and Islam is progressively attracting a larger percentage of the world's population.[22] Hence, pre-service teachers should not be surprised to find a Muslim child in their classrooms. Although none of my interviewees directly expressed specific prejudices, from their comments we can infer potentially difficult educational consequences for their future students should those students, for example, wear a veil to class and argue in its favor; support the existence of harems; write papers about the glory of Allah or of Islamic philosophy, the injustices perpetrated under the banner of the Christian God, of free market capitalism, or the ethnocentrism of American feminisms; require sensitivity, understanding, and support should they need to pray or fast; or otherwise insist that U.S. intervention in the Middle East is illegitimate. In light of my current analysis, I am not optimistic.

In closing, I want to stress the apparent support of these pre-service teachers for torture as a means to enforce assimilation into Western culture. Although I doubt they will actually torture the first Muslim student who expresses views contrary to their own, they may choose to deny, to suppress, or to ridicule them, or perhaps worse, to flunk the student and thus deplete the social capital that comes with institutional certification.

This would amount to intellectual coercion and emotional anguish—hallmarks of what I would call psychological torture. If professors and instructors in teacher education adopt films like *Hidalgo* into curricula for pre-service teachers, and use them in the ways suggested by the authors cited above, they could mitigate, if not prevent, such consequences as have here been imagined from occurring.

Notes

[1] See *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media, and the Arts (Making Sense of History)* [Berger, Eriksonas, & Mycock, eds.].

[2] See the section entitled "Film Study and Accountability" in Haroldo Fontaine's *An Interdisciplinary Proposal for Employing Film to Release the Imagination of Pre-Service Teachers*, published in the Proceedings of the 2007 Society for the Philosophical Study of Education. Though the cited statistics deal with high school age students, they are relevant because pre-service teachers are not much older than high school students. Thus, I suppose the numbers, which are substantial, are similar.

[3] According to the website www.rottentomatoes.com, *Hidalgo* spent four weeks in the Box Office Top 10, ranked as high as number 3, and earned a total of over $67 million.

[4] Though I am familiar with (and respect) the staggering diversity within Islam and among Muslims, I use 'Middle East', 'Islam', and 'Muslim' interchangeably throughout this study, unless otherwise stated.

[5] See http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/08s0074.pdf

[6] I discuss the relationship between education and Tradition in an unpublished paper I presented at the 2008 meeting of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA) entitled *Educational Foundations: The Problem of Tradition*.

[7] Film has been used to teach pre-service teachers and other professionals in the following fields: educational administration (see English & Steffy, 1997), counseling (see Higgins & Dermer, 2001; Koch & Dollarhide, 2000), business (see Tarnopolsky, 2007), religion (see Lindvall, 2005), organizational leadership (see Barbour, 2006), health and nutrition (see Cottone & Byrd-Bredbenner, 2007), and nursing (see Parker & Faulk, 2004).

[8] Trier's *School Film and Videocompilations as Pedagogical Texts in Preservice Education* (2003) provides evidence for how teacher educators can profitably teach pre-service teachers to rely on popular films to learn about strategies and tactics that promote equity and social justice in their daily practice. While Trier's study did not include films about the role of Muslims in the post-9/11 American nation, his goal of promoting the development of pre-service teachers' critical consciousness regarding issues of equity and social justice is consistent with mine.

[9] Walker and Rasamimanana's cross-site case study *Tarzan in the Classroom: How "Educational" Films Mythologize Africa and Miseducate Americans* (1993) deals with similar issues of misrepresentations of African Americans. While I agree with the need to offer a fair and balanced view of individuals and the ways they are said to represent a particular ethnicity, I disagree with the authors' methods, for they did not ask students what they learned from the films their study considered. This is important because some students may have disagreed with their opinions. This is precisely why the present study focuses on how pre-service teachers *themselves* interpret *Hidalgo* and learn from it, not on how my theorizing predicts that they will.

[10] The film is based on the life of Frank T. Hopkins (played by Viggo Mortensen), an American, late 19th century Pony Express Mustang rider invited to participate in the "Ocean of Fire"—an impossible race through the Middle East against the best Bedouin riders astride the finest Arabian horses from the choicest breeds.

[11] All three pre-service student names are pseudonyms.

[12] According to Maxine Greene's *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (1995), one of the major social functions of film is to provide audiences with metaphors with which to name and understand their own worlds.

[13] See Alex Callinicos' 2005 article "Anti-war protests do make a difference" in the *Socialist Worker* (http://www.socialistworker.co.uk).

[14] See http://web.archive.org/web/20040904214302/http://www.guinessworldrecords.com/content_pages/record.asp?recordid=54365

[15] I.e., without the support of the U.N. Security Council.

[16] For an illustration of domestic intolerance of Muslims, see Pepi Sappal's 2008 article "Workplace Intolerance Rises For Muslims After Sept. 11" at www.vault.com

[17] To read more about how fiction influ-

ences torture policy today, see Dahlia Lithwick's Newsweek article "The Fiction Behind Torture Policy" (July 26, 2008; http://www.newsweek.com/id/149009/).

[18] See http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_numb.htm

[19] See http://www.tc.columbia

[20] See http://www.cssny.org/pubs/urbanagenda/2003_08_28.html

[21] See www.mohammedschools.org

[22] See http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_numb.htm

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