

Arab-American and Muslim-American Studies in Secondary Social Studies Curriculum

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Abstract

Arabs and Muslims live within the United States surrounded by misconceptions about their culture and religion, both of which seemed foreign to most Americans. Arabs, like many immigrant groups who came to the United States, were not exempt from racist accusations. They were viewed as a backward, violent, desert-dwelling people. The media and Hollywood did their part to ensure that Arabs and Muslims on the big screen perpetuated these misconceptions through their movies, cartoons, and TV characters. After the attacks on 9/11, many Americans realized, for the first time, how little they understood Arabs and Muslims. This led many to raise questions about curricular needs concerning Arabs, Muslims, and the Middle East, as well as Arab and Muslim Americans living within U.S. borders. This article discusses the mixed methods study, which consisted of 101 surveys of secondary social studies teachers from across the U.S. and contextual analysis of five U.S. history textbooks.

Keywords: Arab-Americas, Muslim-Americans, stereotypes, education, social studies curriculum, multicultural education