

Multicultural psychology



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For a substantial segment of the world's population, these are very dangerous times. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite communist countries, western democracies and their defense departments turned elsewhere for a villain that could be easily demonized. Their choice Muslim terrorists. Since the early 90s the instance of Muslim terrorists as staple film villain has steadily increased. Needless to say, most of these characterizations have tended more toward outright caricature, though that would probably be expected considering that even the heroes of these kinds of films tend toward the one-dimensional. The recent film *Syriana* is perhaps the first mainstream American film to deal with Muslim culture in a three-dimensional manner. Despite this-or perhaps because of this-the film has been attacked by those on the right wing.

Syriana is a multi-layered story that delineates the complexity of the global energy business and how it is affected both by western politics and religious faith. The backlash against the film by conservatives and big-business proponents probably has mostly to do with the painting of the American government as being far more interested in profits than democratic ideals. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the complaints against the film is that very little has been made about the utter humanization of the Muslim characters. The Muslim culture remains a mystery to most people in the West; films and television provide most of us with our only glimpse into how these people live. *Syriana* shows Muslim people throughout the strata of society, from those who run countries and industry down to the workers displaced by the Machiavellian international machinations behind oil production. To say that one comes to a full understanding of this culture by watching this film crosses well over the line of hyperbole, but to say that <https://assignbuster.com/multicultural-psychology-essay-samples-2/>

watching this film gives one a deeper understanding of the Muslim culture than any other major American film ever produced is on target.

In the minds of most people in the West, the typical stereotype of Muslims are women hidden almost entirely behind clothing and men with scraggly beards wearing robes. Often we picture these people in dirty, crowded streets shouting anti-western slogans. This film offers up that picture, but also shows well dressed men and women in modern American-style mansions, and also shows young lower-class working boys playing soccer in the oil fields. In other words, *Syriana* proves that not all Muslims conform to the images we typically see on CNN or Arnold Schwarzenegger movies.

The greatest accomplishment-and perhaps the most threatening-of *Syriana* is in its daring to show how disenfranchised young men can be recruited into terrorists. The film ends with a terrorist act committed by two young men-boys really-and neither are the stereotypical wild-eyed Muslim fundamentalist bent on destroying the great Satan. Although the film stops short of actually turning these two into sympathetic, it succeeds in presenting them as victims of an evil that exists not only in the Muslim religion, but in all religions. These two boys wind up seeming no different than American teenagers who get trapped into Christian fundamentalism to the point that they blow up an abortion clinic.

Syriana provides probably the most accurate portrayal of the Muslim culture yet captured in a mainstream American film. One can only hope that it is the beginning of a trend that finally puts an end to the replacement of the communist by the Muslim terrorist as the staple film villain of choice.