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The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a formidable international force operating and perpetuating religious, military, and violent agendas. In 2014, ISIS established a worldwide Caliphate governing religious authority across Middle Eastern territories. ISIS operations are grandiose and large scale, longevity and survival are predicated on recruitment. One prominent ISIS recruiting tool is a printed and digitally produced magazine. Entitled *Dabiq*, the magazine represents the motives and ideologies behind ISIS; it symbolizes what ISIS hopes to accomplish. *Dabiq* includes powerful imagery and persuasive statements to draw readers in. The most cogent and dramatized elements in *Dabiq* reveal persuasion strategies. This study uses a rhetorical criticism; Fantasy Theme Analysis is the methodology chosen to examine the *Dabiq* series. The concepts of fantasy themes, fantasy types, master analogies, and rhetorical visions are considered to explore elements in *Dabiq*.

Exploring the Dramatization in *Dabiq*: A Fantasy Theme Analysis

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

John G. Drischell, Author

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Introduction

Donald Trump's electoral victory on November 2016 shocked and surprised the American people in one of the biggest political upsets in history. Soon after President Trump's inauguration, he signed a variety of executive orders. His signing and inking for the first week in office became a notable trademark for the new President. One in particular stood out, on January 27th, 2017, Trump officiated the following order: *Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States*, also considered as the Muslim travel ban. The order banned immigrants and nonimmigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries: Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen from entering the United States for 90 days. The order banned all refugees for 120 days, and Syrian refugees indefinitely (Kamm).

The backlash and legal challenges placed pressure on the Administration to redraft the enactment. On March 6th, 2017, the new revisions included: removing Iraq from the list of banned countries and allowing current foreign visa card holders to remain in the U.S. (Kamm). In response, lawsuits are pending against the travel ban such as *Washington Vs Trump* and *Hawaii Vs Trump*. Past Presidents have enacted travel bans on immigrants before. In 2011, former President Obama issued a travel ban on Iraqi refugees. In the wake of September 11th, 2001, former President Bush issued a travel ban, which restricted "...countries that are state sponsors of international terrorism" (Shaw). The act significantly tightened the vetting process for immigrants. There is a time and place for everything; the overwhelmingly bipartisan support for the Bush ban reflects the country's need for security at the time. Terrorist acts on U.S. soil heighten and give rise to urgency and concern for U.S. safety. The major difference among previous bans and the recent Trump ban, is the far reaching nature of targeted groups who it

impacts.

Foreign policy, national security, human rights and other concerns relate to the enactment. The ban is sweeping in its declaration, and is considered a blanket ban as it groups countries by region (The Middle East) and the religion of Islam. Critics have questioned as to why these countries were chosen and not others in the Middle East. Trump believed these countries foster violence and should be deemed as the most concerning and high-risk regions for terrorism (Bush). The CATO institute published a study to determine whether the ban's validity was based on facts or fears. From 1975 to 2015, a list of foreign-born people who committed, or at least attempted to commit a terrorist attack on U.S. soil was compiled. Out of the seven countries mentioned from the first enactment, 17 foreign nationals were convicted for carrying out a terrorist attack. Out of these attacks, zero people were killed (Nowrasteh). The facts presented do not paint the same picture the Trump Administration has expressed. This calls into question the reasoning for excluding particular countries; seemingly described as the most threat-imposing and high-risk for U.S. national security.

This enactment, in addition to others, is setting the tone and precedent for how the Trump administration will handle foreign affairs. Furthermore, there are implications to consider as a result of the ban. The ban certainly sends a strong message to Muslims and countries in the Middle East. People who are trying to reunite with families will be delayed in doing so. The ban also suggests inequality in how it penalizes immigrants who have the right to become citizens and live in the United States.

The Trump administration is taking an isolationist point of view for foreign policy and is overlooking the outward implications despite the inward stance. The need for national security

and reducing national threats are sensible concerns. However, Trump's travel ban cherry picks Middle Eastern countries without concrete reasons. Despite the policies in motion to limit terrorism and protect the nation, the focus chiefly remains on either limiting or eradicating violent and radical organizations on a global scale. Radical Islamists, as President Trump states, are the people "we do not want here". In his first joint session speech, Trump stated "Our obligation is to serve, protect, and defend the citizens of the United States. We are also taking strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism" ("Remarks").

The phrase "radical Islamic terrorism" has been used to describe enemies against the United States. In his first speech to a joint session of Congress, President Trump used the mentioned phrase in his address ("Remarks"). Besides looking at semantics, it is important to note how the phrasing misses the mark. The wording of "Islamic" and "terrorism" innately places the two as one of the same; "Islamic" should be replaced with Jihadist. The majority of practicing Muslims agree that violence, and therefore terrorism, is highly prohibited in Islam. Radical beliefs in Islam are formed from an individual's conception of Jihad. Some Jihadists are violent while others are not; violent Jihadists permit terrorism as a means to defend or advance a radical ideology of Islam. Thus, violent Jihadists specifies the smallest fraction of "Islamic" enemies rather than the entirety of Islam.

One overlooked aspect of Jihadist terrorists is how they are religiously motivated; some see themselves as holy fighters who wage war and act as soldiers of Allah. The crossover of religion and terrorism is evident yet the mistake is made to suggest Islam is a religion of violence. Jihadist terrorists practice a radical interpretation of Islam that contradicts many accepted principles and morals from the Muslim milieu. Terrorism made by jihadist groups have

contributed to Islam's misunderstanding. The way in which U.S. policies are worded and verbalized hinders a clear and accurate understanding of Islam and terrorist groups.

Radical Jihadists and terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and more prominently ISIS pose serious threats to the West. The interplay of Islam and terrorist groups are in constant swing in different communication arenas. With media and public pundits offering a multitude of information in this regard, critics have yet to attend to the notable features of prominent terrorist groups. In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) elevated their power and control on a worldwide scale. The dangerous ideas and ideologies found within ISIS and in other radical Jihadist groups are what perpetuate the persistent nature of terrorism. For the sake of better examining such points of interest, radical Islam ideology and violent Jihadist groups are at the forefront to understanding Middle Eastern terrorism. Historical, religious, and social contexts help to give insight to determine the current scope of how radical groups came to exist and how they presently operate. Some of the major events and influences that gave rise to radical Islam and terrorist groups will be examined.

The September 11th, 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers is the most vivid and indelible act of terrorism on U.S. soil for Americans. These acts of terrorism reflected the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. In addition, modern terrorism was transformed from groups such as Hizballah, Hamas, and Al-Qaeda. The rise of Al-Qaeda is a direct result from Osama Bin Laden's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Afghans attempted to defend and resist the invasion, Usama Bin Laden among the many involved in a defensive Jihad. Almost ten years later, the Soviets withdrew, yet significant repercussions allowed Bin Laden to strengthen and produce more Al-Qaeda fighters (Springer et. al 60). The outbreeding of terrorist and Jihadist groups have

given away for more powerful organizations to exist. President Bush responded to the September 11th, 2001 attacks by choosing to invade Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the aftermath of the Iraq War, the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) emerged as the dominant terrorist organization. Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, the chief leader of ISIS, attacked prisons in Iraq to free former jihadists to gain strength in numbers. In 2014, ISIS captured Iraq's capital Mosul after four days of fighting on June 10th. The battle consisted of 1,300 men against 60,000-strong force of the Iraqi army (Cockburn 12). Later that year on September 23rd, the U.S. responded to the attacks by extending their use of airpower in Syria to try and prevent further IS expansion. Despite U.S. airstrikes, ISIS consolidated ties with Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the affiliate branch of Al-Qaeda, and quickly gained unprecedented control in the Middle East. With ISIS at the helm, the invasion of Syria marked the next swift capture of territory. ISIS fighters combined religious fanaticism and military expertise to win unexpected victories against Iraqi, Syrian, and Kurdish forces.

Besides military advancements, ISIS intended to make their presence known through shock and terror. ISIS's dramatic entrance onto the international stage was punctuated from the beheading videos of James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines, and Alan Henning in 2014. The Islamic State operates and perpetuates religious, military, and violent agendas. In June of 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared and established a worldwide Caliphate. The Caliphate can be thought of as an immutable blanket covering Middle Eastern countries while erasing borderlines to be under one nation, the Islamic State. The Caliphate establishes supreme authority across Middle Eastern and gives full autonomy to ISIS. The vision of the Caliphate is the cornerstone to the Islamic State; ISIS equally requires adherents of their ideology and fighters to sustain

longevity and control.

A prominent ISIS recruiting tool is a printed and digitally produced magazine. Entitled *Dabiq*, the magazine represents the motives and ideologies behind ISIS; it symbolizes the epitome of what ISIS hopes to accomplish. On July 5th, 2014, the first *Dabiq* issue provides readers with battlefield updates, administrative reporting, and religious and narrative commentary (Gambhir 1). The magazine is currently translated in five different languages: English, French, German, Russian, and Arabic. *Dabiq* extends a particular insight into ISIS's claim to religious authority on the basis of political control. The ISIS vision is threatening and persuasive. The more readers and potential adherents from *Dabiq*, results in a larger means of operation for ISIS. The media presence of ISIS is visible and should not be ignored. ISIS's recruitment methods are important to look at more in-depth. The dangerous ideologies found within *Dabiq* are pervasive and far reaching. A textual exploration of *Dabiq* could uncover the most persuasive elements.

Academic research on ISIS is currently underway, academics such as David Kibble, Celine Novenario, and Brandon Colas have begun research on the magazine series *Dabiq*. No research has been conducted so far using a rhetorical methodology to examine *Dabiq*. There is insufficient research to accurately and qualifiable explain the rhetorical workings of *Dabiq*. The magazines are textual artifacts, that critics can examine carefully. This thesis is a contribution to the ongoing research and understanding of ISIS and namely *Dabiq*. A textual analysis focuses on the content, cogency, and the structure of the artifact. The use of rhetorical and communicative theories will help to unpack the inner workings of the *Dabiq*. If anything, as for any critic, the aim is to illuminate the artifact in a way which could not be done otherwise.

In order to meet the scope of an Master's thesis, the interdisciplinary program expands the level of depth and detail the critic can attend to. The interdisciplinary approach invites the critic to cover various intersecting points of interest. The three disciplines are considered: (1) Rhetoric, (2) Interpersonal Communication, and (3) Philosophy. Using theories of communication and rhetoric allows the critic to articulate new ways of understanding given subjects and artifacts.

Interdisciplinary research is pluralistic in the nature. As opposed to looking through a single disciplinary frame, three disciplinary frames offers more in the way of research. Interdisciplinary is not necessarily comparative where disciplines are independently considered in relation to the artifact. The critic should aim for disciplines to interact and integrate with one another. Primarily, a rhetorical criticism (FTA) framework will be the grounding evaluative means for the artifact.

The research question is what are the persuasive elements in the *Dabiq* and how do they function to serve the text? Using a Fantasy Theme Analysis framework, concepts and ideas should provide necessary tools to deepen an understanding of *Dabiq*, and answer the stated research question.

Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism

The field of rhetoric has a long history as a discipline, practice, and art form. Rhetoric provides a way to understand discourse and the surrounding world. Common forms of rhetoric include but not limited to: public addresses, essays, novels, stories, electronic media, and films. Rhetoric often times receives a bad rep in the media, and is typically used to refer to things negatively or as empty speech. The rhetorical scholar Gerald Hauser provides a clear definition,

"Rhetoric is concerned with how humans use symbols to reach agreements that permit coordinated social efforts" (Hauser 3).

Rhetorical criticism is an area of research in used to describe, interpret, and synthesize symbols and objects (Foss 6). Discourse may present rhetoric overtly, yet more often it is subliminal in use; rhetorical criticism offers ways to see the inner workings of selected artifacts. The literary critic Edwin Black considered how artifacts or objects needed to be viewed in terms of perception and evaluation (Black 334). By examining objects closely, new perspectives and insights are made possible from the utility of rhetorical criticism. For the rhetorical critic, many different methods exist, including but not limited to: the pentadic criticism, metaphoric criticism, and cluster criticism. Rhetorical criticism methods are much like a tool that can be used to analyze artifacts.

The critic must choose an appropriate methodology to examine the object of interest. It is not necessarily preferable for methodologies to go hand and hand with the object. The methodology ideally should be woven seamlessly as the artifact is analyzed. Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA) is the rhetorical criticism used for this study. The realm of this thesis is rhetorically and textually based.

Literature Review

The literature review provides a survey of existing information related to the artifact. Many events led to the development and fruition of the Islamic State. Consequently, the discussion of the historical context is necessary to better understand the current elements of *Dabiq* and the Middle East. *Dabiq's* context touches on global, social, geographical, and

religious topics. It becomes difficult to encapsulate and generalize the entirety of such areas and contexts. However, the need to address some of the historical essentials will explain events leading up to the publication of *Dabiq*.

The History of the Region

Understanding contemporary events begins with the history of the region. Three major events took place in the 1500s that redefined the Middle East: three long-lived and large scale empires of the Middle East: The Safavid Empire (1501 to 1722), The Mughal Empire (1526 to 1858), and The Ottoman Empire (1500 to 1918) (Gelvin 10). For a comprehensive description and explanation of the Middle East prior to 1500, Gelvin's *The Modern Middle East* (2011) provides much insight. Within a reasonable scope, events during the twentieth century should be considered.

The Ottoman Empire was a long lasting time dynasty that spatially spanned three continents and was the epicenter of modern Turkey. As it developed, it became a massive melting pot, full of diverse races, which produced a multi-ethnic state. The Middle East today is spatially and nationally the result of Anglo-French imperialism (Lewis xxi). The eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire was the start to the British and French takeover. The beginning of the twentieth century marked the makings of internal and external threats for the Ottoman Empire. One of the key players involved in causing turmoil in the Empire, was in fact, the British.

The British intended to cause revolts within the Ottoman Empire in order to seize control of the Middle East. An agreement was made with Sharif Hussein bin Ali, an *amir* (prince or governor) from Saudi Arabia, to enter the Ottoman Empire and mobilize groups to cause major

revolts in the Empire. In return, the British promised guns and supplies to his fighters, as well as a sanction for bin Ali to rule an Arab Kingdom within the Arabian Peninsula. To complicate matters more, Arthur Balfour of the British made an agreement with Baron Rothschild, the a leader of the Zionist community, to establish Palestine as the official Jewish state after World War I. The British had three conflicting agreements: bin Ali and his Arab Kingdom, Zionists newfound Jewish state, and the France's territory division (Fromkin 276-284). As this was happening, World War I was underway. Despite previous sanctions for bin Ali, the French and British had other plans to divide the Middle East.

At the end of World War I, Sir Mark Skyes of Britain and Georges-Picot of France secretly discussed and determined an agreement for how the Post-Ottoman world would be divided. This was known as the Skyes-Picot agreement; a huge power play for the British and French to control territories in the Middle East. The plan was for the British to control what is now considered Iraq, Jordan, and Kuwait. The French would be given modern Syria, Lebanon, and southern Turkey (Ochsenwald et. al. 60). Arabs (a majority of non-rebels) living in the Ottoman Empire were soon to be displaced as a result of World War I and the League of Nations. The only countries that held out as independence states against the imperialists were: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt (Gelvin 206). World War I was a major transformative period for the Middle East. The modern boundaries observed today are a direct result from the British-French imperialism. Furthermore, the territorial boundaries were set in stone in 1947 when President Truman accepted the U.N. partition plan between Palestine and Israel territories. These events drastically reshaped the Middle Eastern regions for the future.

There are two major issues in relation to the U.S. and Middle East during post World War

II: foreign oil in the Middle East and the creation and U.S. support of Israel. The U.S. has a long history for hoarding and extracting oil from the Middle East. Their unrelenting thirst for foreign oil reflects the U.S.'s serious dependence and crutch for the nonrenewable resource. Arabs began to question the goodwill of U.S. intentions in 1953 when Eisenhower ordered to overthrow Iran's democratically elected government (Tristam). In addition, the U.S. occupied Iran to safeguard oil from other countries, especially the Soviet Union. Combined with British support, the U.S. had found an oil source to satisfy the needs of their economy. Incidentally, U.S. support for Israel would become intertwined with the foreign oil crisis. In 1973, The Arab oil embargo, enacted by The Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), delivered a huge blow to the U.S. economy. By significantly increasing the price per gallon of oil, Saudi Arabia emerged as the power player, economically and politically (Hoag).

Israel's territorial lines would be expanded to Jerusalem, the West Bank, and other countries during the Six-Day War in 1967 (Shuster). The Israeli-Palestine conflict is complicated, yet deserves a partial mention in regards to historical regions. Jewish people fled from Europe in reaction to anti-semitic and discriminator abuse. Through a religious and ideological movement called Zionism, descendents were joined together to establish a new national homeland. Israel became the new "Holy Land" for Jewish people. Palestine includes the contemporary state of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (Gelvin 217). Israel is about 80% of this territory.

The conflict is squarely about territories and boundaries; the lines and divides cannot be clearly differentiated from one another. The conflict arose as Palestinians were displaced as a result of Zionism. In response to Zionism, Palestinian nationalism developed later to combat the

issue of nationality and territorial divides between the two (Gelvin 220). The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in 1964 in response to the conflict. PLO was not Islamic, but were largely Christian-based who supported Palestine, which primarily caught the attention of headlines and television screens. Palestinians were forced to flee from war zones and seek refuge in places such as the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The conflict has caused many casualties, to upwards of 1 million deaths (221). Other countries have put a great deal of pressure on Israel to sign treaties with Palestine. No suitable compromise seems possible at this point, which has impacted both sides.

The identity of religion and nationality are two important things to consider in the regional history of the Middle East. Author Bernard Lewis offers a unique take between the two, "Muslims tend to not see a nation subdivided by religious groups, but by a religion subdivided by nations" (Lewis xx). Arabs are considered the ethnic group of individuals who generally originate from Arab regions or near the Arabian Peninsula. The Arabian Peninsula includes nine countries: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen (xxi). The term Arab is more or less used to generally point to an individual's country of origin. This generality to a person's nation of origin is why "most Arabs do not think in terms of combined ethnic and territorial identity" (xxi). It is important to distinguish that "Arab" or "Arabic" are terms to be independent of religious identity. Mislabeling often occurs when Arabs and Muslims are treated synonymously. Muslims are individuals who practice the religion of Islam. Thus, you have many different pairings between nationality and religion.

The History of Islam

ISIS and radical Jihadist groups are religiously motivated organizations. *Dabiq* is religiously grounded in appeals made in the magazine. The interpretation of Islam plays an important role for how readers understand *Dabiq*. The religious context of Islam and the Qu'ran provides an understanding for how Jihadist groups are motivated.

The religion of Islam has a long history that would require an equally lengthy overview. Approximately, the origins of Islam begins near the same time as the period of the Caliphs from 622 to 750 B.C. (Lewis ii). A Caliph is considered a successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Islam endured the Ottoman Empire and the age of Imperialism. Many civilizations and nations have flourished under the support of Islam. Today, Islam is practiced by 1.6 billion people (3). Islam is a monotheistic faith that simply means "the Self-surrender to the Will of God" (3). In Muslim tradition, two houses opposed one another: the House of Islam (Muslim law prevails) and the House of War (infidels rule the world). Many practicing Muslims fall under different categories of religious and cultural diversities. Similar to how people differ on political views, people will also vary on the religious perspectives. Generally speaking, many practicing Muslims have different ways of interpreting Islam teachings. The author Graham Fuller gives four types of Islamist groups: traditionalists, fundamentalists, reformists, and modernists (Fuller 176).

The most significant event of the Middle Ages for Islam was the birth of Muhammad ibn Abdallah, the Prophet of Islam in 570 B.C. (Gordon xi). The Prophet's mission was to share and spread the teachings of God to the people. During his lifetime, he was given the religious teachings, lessons, and divine messages from Allah through the angel Gabriel, collectively known as the Qu'ran (xi). In 622, Muhammad made the holy journey from Mecca to Medina to

avoid assassination and establish an Islamic community or Caliphate. He continued to preach the teaching of the Qur'an in Medina to attract more followers. Many believers would look to Muhammad for political and social regulations to govern daily affairs. The Prophet Muhammad's role was to spread the word of Islam through the Qur'an and act as the source of religious revelation and spiritual practice for Muslims.

Islam became a "universally accepted set of rules and principles for the regulation of public and social life" (Lewis 13). The Qur'an is the divine, unalterable word of God (Allah) that holds the unity and power for all Muslims. The Qu'ran is considered the greatest miracle of Islam, as it provides the foundation for the creation of early Islamic law. The sayings and pronouncements of the Prophet Muhammad became the second source of religious teachings, known as the Sunnah. The Sunnah, or the Hadith, refers to the narratives and stories of the way in which the Prophet lived. The teachings of Islam and Qur'an provide the language and vocabulary for Muslims to express ideas and to make cases for reform, justice, and social change (Springer et. al). The Qur'an and the Sunnah are considered by many, to be the most pure and truest forms of Islamic literature.

Shari'ah or the Holy Law is a political philosophy in Islam. Shari'ah has often been thought of as a threat to non Islamic governments. Under Shari'ah, there are religious teachings that place strict codes of moral, political, and social conduct under law. The U.S. has expressed some concern for the implications of Muslims who follow Shari'ah law. The topics of punishment and cruelty in Shari'ah raise concern for human rights. At the Shura Council in Egypt in 2002, one Muslim scholar captured the dilemma well:

> "Shari'ah cannot be separated from reality. You must read both the reality and the relevant text before applying the right verses to the appropriate reality. Mistakes stem from the fact that the right text is sometimes applied on irrelevant reality" (*Dar Al Hilal*).

Quotes and sayings taken out of context have repercussions in the way Shari'a law is understood. Muslims practice Islam using different verses to guide their way of life.

The death of Muhammad in 632 marked the beginning of numerous successors that would follow. Muhammad did not explicitly state how Muslim communities should be governed, much of this was under development preceding his death. This fact alone is crucial as many successors had different interpretations of the Qur'an and how to apply it to Islamic communities. Muslims must use reasoning and hypothetical situations to apply the ancient teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah to contemporary issues. There is much difficulty in doing such a process and remains a controversial point for Muslims. Verses are selected to aid in the application and validation of solving problems. Muslim communities and scholars form judgments to officiate social, political, and moral issues that arise in modern day contexts. There is no universal or clean cut way to answer every problem. General trust in the Muslim community is needed to form consensuses and rationalized scenarios.

Jihad is defined as striving or effort in the path of God (Lewis 30). Jihad touches on a number of different levels, including but not limited to: spiritual, moral, military, and religion. Most commonly, it is understood as a religious obligation or duty for Muslims. Jihad is seen as an outward or inward focus for a Muslim; the former as a struggle against outsider oppression and the latter as a personal struggle to keep one's holiness (Springer et. al.). The struggles in a Muslim's life come in different forms. The obligation is predicated on how the believer chooses to perform Jihad. Jihad is situational to given circumstances facing a Muslim; struggles with oneself, society, self-defense, tyranny and oppression are all potential grievances to permit Jihad (Awad 2). According to Islamic Law, "it is lawful to wage war against four types of enemies:

infidels, apostates, rebels, and bandits" (Lewis 31). Images of violence and war are possibly conjured with this quote. Jihad is inherently not a violent concept, nor is it a declaration of war to other religions.

Jihad contains many different connotations and interpretations for what this constitutes. There are in fact, both violent and nonviolent Jihadists. More often than not, we hear more about violent Jihadists as they get more attention from terrorist attacks. Violent Jihadists envision the world engulfed in war, where victory is necessary at all costs. The teachings of Islam and the Qu'ran provide the quotes and vocabulary most often used to justify actions in social, political, and military realms. Subjectivity in interpreting religious text is a major point of contention for Jihadists. Jihadists who use violence as a necessary means of the advancement for Islam, believe their actions are granted a religious sanction. For example, Bin Laden believes his use of WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction) is legitimized, regardless of the casualties of civilians in the process of Jihad. Despite this, a large majority of practicing Muslims do not believe violence as a necessary part of Jihad.

The misappropriation of Jihad with violence is a common framing of the religious duty in the media. The use of violence is the most rare instance of Muslims performing Jihad. In fact, most Islamic scholars agree many calls to violent action are not religiously sanctioned in Islam. One exception to this is legitimate self-defense against oppressors. In times of war or conflict, Muslims may retaliate against groups who stand to destroy Islam; yet the killing of noncombatants is prohibited (Awad 2). At no point do the basic readings and texts of the Qu'ran incite terrorism or murder. In verse 2:190 of the Qu'ran, "And fight in the cause of God who fight against you, and do not commit aggression. Indeed God does not love those who are

aggressors" (Ali). However, and to be seen later, a diminutive number of extremists believe differently, who are also considered to be outliers in the religion of Islam.

The discussion of violence in Islam seemingly may prelude the unveiling of radical Jihadists and terrorist organizations; what first must be considered are the conservative ideologies surrounding Islam. Islamic fundamentalism posits the Qu'ran and the Sunnah should be the only two understood literary artifacts for any true believer of Islam. Any "innovations" or deviations in religious thinking and understanding that cannot derive from the two sources are deemed invalid, or more severely as apostasy. For example, the Qu'ran states to pray five times a day; praying six times a day is an innovation in the eyes of conservative Muslims. As the author Bernard Lewis points out, "Most Muslims are not fundamentalists, and most fundamentalists are not terrorists, but most present day terrorists are [radical] Muslims" (Lewis 137). It is important not to group Muslims and terrorists as one of the same; the major divergence derives in radical ideologies adhered. Some critics would go so far to say extremist or radical groups are anti-Islamic for falsely holding the banner of Islam (Awad 1).

Within the broad category of Islamic fundamentalism, Wahhabism is a part of this ideological branch founded by Abu Wahab; Wahhabism is absolute in which no alternatives exist except for the teachings of the Qu'ran and the Sunnah (Wiktorowicz, 2002). Muslims who follow this practice rarely use the title of Wahhabi to identify themselves. More commonly Wahhabi's are called Salafis. Salafis are puritanical in asserting a pure understanding of Islam and eradicate any innovations or suggestions to revise original teachings. Muslims who participate in democratic elections are rejected by Salafis, yet millions of U.S. Muslims do not view this to hinder their religion. According to Salafis, all actions and decisions must be based

on direct evidence found from the two sources (Wiktorowicz, 2002). This is counter to many modern Muslims who engage in intellectual and critical thought to answer contemporary problems.

The use of violence in Islam is the most common area of contention among the Muslim community. The majority of conservative fundamentalist Muslims condemn the use of violence in Jihad. Within the Muslim scholarly community, violence is significantly prohibited and states how extremists will twist religious teachings to justify it. Disagreements and conflict are inevitable with different ways to interpret the teachings of Islam. The use of violence is a major divergence within the Salafi community. On one side, the use of violence is necessary to confront enemies, to make significant changes, and to advance an Islamic State, or *Ummah* (Wiktorowicz, 2005, 76). Others contend violence is prohibited in Islam whereby Muslims should seek advice from their rulers to make change. The Qu'ran contains many examples of warfare and combat; verses found in this regard pertain to the particular rules of engagement. In Islam, any war must be waged for a just cause, in verses 6:151 in the Qu'ran, "Do not slay the soul sanctified by god except for just cause" (Ali). However, another point of contention arises of what exactly is a just cause? Defensive Jihad is considered a just cause, which is to protect the faith of Islam when engaged in warfare (Wiktorowicz, 2005, 78).

The selective and subjective process of religious interpretations will determine whether violence is justified or prohibited. More specifically, the process of "extrapolation based on independent judgment and reasoning by analogy" is used for critical thinking in Islam (Wictorowicz, 2005, 76). Many Salafis ask the question of what would the Prophet Muhammad do if he was still alive today to answer modern day issues. The everyday to significant problems

Muslims face requires new interpretations of Islamic texts to be placed in contemporary settings. This process of finding answers and responding to changes in the modern world recontextualizes the nature of Islam. The subjective process of religious interpretations is problematic for puritanical thinkers. For Salafis and purists alike, contemporary and everyday problems cannot be answered explicitly from the Qu'ran and the Hadith. This requires all Muslims to ask the question, what would the Prophet Muhammed do under these current circumstances.

The use of violence, defensive Jihad, and religious interpretations all play a role in religious thinking, yet Muslims vary on how liberally or conservatively verses are applied. Conservative Muslims might be considered fundamentalists or Salafis, though the unnecessary jump is taken when radical extremists or terrorist groups are treated as the same variety. Many Salafis exist without the wicked adherence to violence.

Radical Islam Ideology

The ascendancy of violent Jihad and radical Islam are underlying ideologies in extremist thinking. An ideology is a "set of structured cognitive and affective attitudes that form a belief system for a person or group" (Springer et. al 4). History shows that Islamic resurgence in the 1950s was largely predicated on and in reaction to the collapse of the Ottoman empire, British and French imperialism, and the establishment of Israel (19). The political and social landscapes are often times the situational contexts that foster grievances for Muslims in the Middle East. An inability for Muslims and communities to impact their environments and governments, or lack thereof, reflect veritable frustrations. For example, the secular regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq reflect government corruption. The economic issues of poverty, unemployment, and overcrowding are partly responsible for painting a world where Islam has failed Muslim people

(19). Out of this frustration, feelings of hopelessness and alienation are common for unaffected populations. Radical Jihadists or Muslim extremists who experience such feelings may harbor and perpetuate radical thinking and behavior.

The dangerous ideas and ideologies that govern radical thinking come before the examination of terrorism. The Jihadist ideology is said to "provide a belief system that provides also, a philosophical and mental framework to interpret both observable and unobservable phenomena" (Springer et. al 5). In addition, strategies, tactics, and actions of Jihadists all rely on ideology. The authors Springer, Regens, and Edger identify three core principles in Jihadist ideology: (1) Jihad as an individual religious obligation in defense of Islam, (2) A constant state of warfare is necessary, and (3) Jihadists represent a revolutionary vanguard and exemplar for the Muslim world (58-60). These three help to capture the essence of how deeply religious motives are tied with political goals for mobilized action in Jihadists.

Part of the Jihadist ideology contains imagery of a holy war. The author Lawrence Leshan addresses how the mythic war lens is embedded in Jihadist ideology. Leshan says the mythic war elevates conflict to resemble a cosmic struggle between good and evil (Leshan 30). Enemies are no longer seen as mere opposition, they represent pure evil and stand to destroy the world. The mythic war is an integral part to Jihadist thinking as it elicits fighters to wage battles for the sake of glory. The Qu'ran says an individual who is killed in the process of wartime Jihad is known as a martyr, while martyrdom is the promise of heavenly rewards and eternal bliss after death (Lewis 38).

Similar to the mythic war lens, the authors Springer, Regens, and Edger describe two other depictions for how Jihadists groups view themselves. The first one is the Islamic Vanguard,

which portrays a Jihadist group as the righteous and determined fighters. In this design, group members are pioneers that "[seek] justice and retribution for past wrongs" (54). Second, is the Nomadic holy warrior, which conjures images and themes as persuasive elements in rhetorical claims that "remind the history-conscious Muslims of the brutality of the crusaders" (Springer et. al 58). All Jihadist groups share the same picture that Islam under attack by the modern world and requests the call to action for all Muslims. Another common theme expressed in Jihadist groups, as well as the author Leshan addresses, is the good vs. evil dichotomy (55). The dichotomy frame posits a desperate struggle exists where good must triumph over evil. For example, the West has been described in Jihadist rhetoric as the evil force that is implacably hostile to Islam (56).

In this context, to deem individuals or groups as extremist or radical is typically marked by the allowance of violence and pervasive visions. Islamic radicalism is defined as "a sometimes violent movement seeking to radically change local, national, and global social and political landscapes" (Springer et. al 18). Rather than promoting the spread of Islam, enlightenment, and civility, extremists will seek to remedy adversities by drastically taking matters into their own hands. As discussed earlier, grievances and societal problems are in part due to the rise of violence. In addition, the radicalization process of individuals can also be in part explained for how adherents of violent Jihad are products of their environment. The use of violence is one tactic radicals will employ to advance and defend Islam. Radicals that adhere to violence follow a "by any means necessary" approach to make political and geographical changes that could otherwise not be accomplished through nonviolent Jihad.

Radicals see themselves as puritan holy warriors, they need religious sanction before

commiting acts of violence. The rhetoric of violent Jihad posits radicals need to "sanctify their action through pious references to Islamic texts...to represent a truer, purer, and more authentic Islam" (Lewis 138). The religious justification lies in the highly selective process of sacred texts to support militant or violent purposes. Much of the Qur'anic verses are quoted out of context. The intertwining of violence with religious claims are used by radicals to justify what they are doing is right. Finally, once framed as a defensive Jihad, violence becomes morally acceptable to support action against infidels or unbelievers.

Adherents of Islamic radicalization and violent Jihad are products of their environment. Jihad, typically accompanied with other terroristic terms, is often mistreated in its use. As said before, Jihad is a religious commitment and obligation to Muslims. Violent Jihad on the other hand has been used to differentiate from the nonviolent religious requirement. The adherents of violent Jihad are convinced their cause for violent actions are morally and politically right through divine sanction (Springer et. al. 18). For example, Osama Bin Laden believed he received divine sanction to use Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in his Jihad. The prophet Muhammad once permitted the use of catapults against a bordered city where the enemy fighters were mixed with civilians. This historical reference was analogically reasoned the permit WMDs; the connection between the catapult and WMDs made a case for violent Jihadists (Wiktorowicz, 2005, 76). In addition, civilian casualties became another permitable act of violence in the Jihadist ideology. The international rules of engagement for attacks would become nonexistent with the creation of global Jihad.

Terrorist Groups

Global Jihad marks a significant shift in radical Jihadist thinking. Radical groups often mobilize members and soldiers by emphasizing collective action through Jihad. The concept of Jihad is a individual religious obligation. However, the way in which Jihad is framed in Jihadist rhetoric can change the way it is understood. Al-Qaeda's founder and person responsible for the September 11th attacks, Osama Bin Laden, issued a fatwa in 1998 that marked the change.

> "To kill the Americans and their allies--civilians and military...with God's permission we on everyone who believes in God and wants reward to comply with his will to kill the Americans and seize their money wherever and whenever they find them" (Springer et. al. 57).

Bin Laden's fatwa is a declaration of war against the West. Additionally, the fatwa uses religion themes to justify the use of violence, moreover changing how Muslims should conduct Jihad. The concept of defensive Jihad appears in his fatwa. Bin Laden permits the use of violence against the enemies of Islam.

The leader of Al-Qaeda, Ayman Al-Zawahiri states in an Al-Sharq newspaper, "In order for the masses to move, they need the following: 1, A leadership that they could trust, follow, and understand, 2. A clear enemy to strike at. 3. The shackles of fear and the impediments of weakness in the souls must be broken" (Al-Zawahiri). In particular, point two shows the importance of enemy targeting. The concept of defensive Jihad is extended as a just cause. Key opinion leaders in radical Jihadist rhetoric have shifted the defensive Jihad focus from the near enemy to the far enemy.

The near enemy places priority of attacks on secularist and apostate regimes in Arab countries. The far enemy places priority of attacks on the West, namely on the crusaders (Christians) and the Jews. Religious nationalist groups such as The Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ),

Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA), and the Muslim Brotherhood focus on near enemy targets. They wish to inflict damage on secularist and apostate regimes in places such as Egypt. Al-Zawahiri's focus on the near enemy reflected his goals for Al-Qaeda to establish the Caliphate in Egypt (Springer et. al. 47). Bin Laden's 1998 fatwa reflects a far enemy focus and argues that violence is the only language Americans will understand placing importance on martyrdom and mass-casualty missions (45). The global Jihad movement is predicated on the far enemy focus. The proof of this expansion is based on the attacks from terrorist groups.

In 1998, the bombings at the U.S. embassy in East Africa, showed the strength and seriousness of a global Jihad reach. In 2000, the USS cole in Yemen was attacked by Al-Qaeda (AQ). Bin Laden's 1998 fatwa and the aforementioned attacks marked the seriousness of far enemy targeting. The far enemy focus was fully realized and heightened from the attacks on the Twin Towers. Americans slept in isolation on September 11th, 2001; Al-Qaeda members hijacked four commercial jets and redirected their course to crash into the World Trade Center in New York, and the Pentagon in Pennsylvania. Americans vividly remember what they were doing and where they were on September 11th, especially for those who saw it firsthand. The unexpected tragedy caused mass casualties and left the American public traumatized. The unanswered questions and reasons for the attacks stirred the most visceral emotions for Americans. The attack showed the far-extending capabilities of violent Jihadists in the realm of global terrorism.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks framed and defined the Bush presence for U.S. foreign affairs. The U.S. government needed to respond to the terrorist acts by creating the best discourse to approach and address it. Bush tokenized the "War on Terror" in his speech entitled "An address

to a joint session of Congress and the American people" on September 20th, 2001. He painted a picture where the world was engulfed in a war between good and evil (Spring & Packer 123). President Bush's famous use of antithesis, "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" was a memorable moment for the speech. He mourned the lost lives and condemned the attacks while pledging to eradicate terrorists. The speech reflected an unwillingness to surrender freedom. The September 11th attacks epitomized the capabilities of international terrorism.

Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden were the two forces behind the September 11th attacks. Al-Qaeda (AQ) saw themselves as the self-appointed soldiers of God who upheld the ideologies of global Jihad. AQ knew the psychological impact of a domestic attack on U.S. soil would grab the attention of Americans. AQ represents previous grievances of other terrorist groups who wished for the removal of Western influence in Muslim territories. Sayyid Qutb was an influential philosopher in this regard, who additionally provided the underlying rhetoric of Jihadists. He described past events such as the Gulf War and Western support for Israel as major grievances for Muslims. Muslims were, and still are, infuriated with the expansion of Israel. Some view this as a sacrilegious invasion of their holy land.

The U.S. has tried to play the role of the international mediator with their involvement in Middle Eastern issues. The U.S. primarily set their sights to protect foreign oil and liberate impoverished places in the Middle East. This is a point of contention among some critics as to the effectiveness in becoming involved in Middle Eastern affairs. The intentions behind U.S. operations are questionable in this regard. The fine line exists between U.S. foreign oil pursuits and the U.S. will to liberate impoverished places and populations in the Middle East.

In 2001, the uprising of the Sunni resistance in Syria in 2011 was a counter-attack

response to the Assad regime. This event helped establish ISIS and encourage six million Sunnis in Iraq to take a stand against political and economic marginalization. From the US foreign policy standpoint, the author Patrick Cockburn attacks former president Obama in saying "The war of terror has failed because it did not target the Jihadi movement as a whole and, above all, was not aimed at Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the two countries that fostered Jihadism as a creed and a movement" (Cockburn 58). ISIS came to dominate the Sunni opposition to the governments in Iraq and Syria. ISIS fighters went rampaging through Iraq and Syria, defeating enemies with ease despite being outnumbered, and attributed all these victories to divine intervention.

Al-Qaeda (AQ) has affiliated groups that are divided by region. Al-Zarqawi lead the branch of AQ called Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in 2004 (Novenario 954). It would be AQI that would eventually develop and transform into what is now known as ISIS. The invasion of Syria allowed for AQI to capture the foothold city of Raqqa. AQ on the other hand, extended their reach in countries such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia, which lead to the merging of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (954). The author Celine Novenario points out distinct differences between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. AQ squarely is aimed at inflicting damage to the West using a "far enemy" focus approach while ISIS places more importance on the Caliphate and building a functioning society (955).

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has become a formidable international force for operating and perpetuating their religious, military, and violent means. ISIS has demonstrated a worldwide Caliphate to establish its religious authority across Muslim territories, and ostensibly across the Western areas. In June of 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the chief leader of ISIS,

declared and established a worldwide Caliphate. A caliphate is a "unified system of temporal authority exercised by a successor...over [a] community of believers" (Springer et. al. 2). The Caliphate is a central defining feature of ISIS; it changes the way Jihadist groups have envisioned their cause.

ISIS purports power and control in order to advance an overarching ideology. Their Jihadist ideology derives from a kind of radical Islam. The unexpectedness of the ISIS rise made it tempting for Western leaders to hope that the fall of ISIS and the implosion of the caliphate might be equally as sudden and swift. Their acts of terror and violence capture the eyes and ears of mass audiences. Media frames and focuses their news stories and events, which in turn posits a great sense of urgency for viewers. It is indeed a powerful and yet horrifying feeling to witness tragedies through differents lenses and outlets. Audiences cannot help but feel saddened and empathetic for victims. The attention grabbing nature and shock value of video beheadings displays the seriousness of ISIS.

In the long run, ISIS has a dominating vision for how the entire world should be ruled; ISIS deploys this vision through various media forms (such as beheading videos) to reach mass audiences. The effectiveness of ISIS hinges on how successful their recruitment methods are, both locally and globally. ISIS responds to the need for numbers and recruitment by asserting a worldwide Caliphate. The main objectives of their media campaign is to present an inescapable explanation and sacred writ for their cause. The Caliphate is the global ruling used to center the new Prophet's (Baghdadi) return and existence. ISIS needs to recruit adherents and believers to their radicalized interpretation of Jihad and Islam. Answers as to how strategies and persuasive efficacy works for ISIS recruitment and subscription to radical ideology would need to consider

the manifest content found in media.

Jihadist Media

The struggle exists for which Jihadist organization will lead the global Jihad movement. Jihadist groups often must compete with one another to garner the attention of audiences. Jihadist groups who use terrorism as a means to intimidate and cause fear works especially well if propagated to a wider audience. Acts of terrorism and violence capture the eyes and ears of mass audiences. The news outlets frame and focus stories and events, which present a greater sense of urgency for viewers. The evolution of the internet and social media has given new outlets for Jihadist media to spread their rhetoric and agendas. The masking feature of media allows groups to inflate their strength and power. *Dabiq* features examples where military advancements and territorial control were exaggerated. By diversifying various media, such as with print and digital materials (magazines, pamphlets, or downloadable content), online forums, videos and audio recordings, Jihadist organizations are able to amplify attention and disseminate information more quickly.

The production value for Jihadist media has come a long way. Osama Bin Laden videos in 2001, used a standard square frame to shoot Bin Laden speaking directly into the camera for his nine minute speech (Bornstein 6). The aesthetics and production values were of no major concern at this time. In 2014, video production quality significantly improved. In 2014, *The Clanging of the Swords Part IV*, produced by the ISIS Al-Hayat Media Center, featured dynamic overhead shots and action sequences (4). With speeding cars, tanks, men dressed in all black, and cities in ruin, the depiction of AQ became more robust and intimidating. The Islamic State also

produced a full featured film called *Flames of War*, which explained the IS's seizure of the Syrian Army (4).

The Al-Qaeda (AQ) affiliate group of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) produced a magazine series titled *Inspire* in 2010 (Novenario 955). Much of the magazine's focus was instructional and provided how-to manuals; one in particular provided information to create pressure-cooker bombs. The Boston Marathon bombing committed by Tamerlan and Tsarnaev used pressure-cooker bombs, which foreseeably was influenced by the *Inspire* magazine series. The motives for publishing *Inspire* stated by AQAP were "to call for and inspire to Jihad in the English speaking world" and "to deliver to every inspired Muslim anywhere around the world the operational know-how of carrying out attacks from within the West" (955). Some audience types are identified with this objective: (1) English readers, particularly in the West and (2) violent Jihadists or extremists willing to commit terrorism.

The Al-Qaeda affiliate group of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) produced a similar magazine product called *Resurgence.* This magazine has stated to support the revival of Jihad and targets the arch enemy of Islam to be the United States (Novenario 955). ISIS dramatically entered onto the international stage during the release of the beheadings videos in 2014. It was at this time that *Dabiq* received much attention as audiences needed to know the terrible motives behind this terrorist organization. The Al-Hayat Media Center is the media branch of the ISIS propaganda machine that produces the magazine *Dabiq.* Their primary goal is stated in the preface of Issue 2, "to convey the message of the Islamic State in different languages with the aim of unifying the Muslims under one flag" (Issue 2, preface).

Dabiq, *Inspire*, and *Resurgence* are all similar in that they contain Jihadist propaganda.

However, there are notable differences between the magazines regarding strategic messaging. The AQ produced magazines focused more on attacking the West while the ISIS produced magazine focused more on building the Caliphate. Celine Novenario's study looked at *Inspire/Resurgence* and *Dabiq* for possible indicators of different messaging strategies. In *Inspire* and *Resurgence*, 43% of the AQ magazines focused on attrition, which is defined from Kydd and Walters five principal strategic logics as highlighting terror attacks and inflicting a high cost to the West (957). Comparatively, *Dabiq* accounted for 13% of attrition. Another big distinction was found with the indicator of outbidding, which is defined from Kydd and Walter's logics as demonstrating a terrorists group's greater commitment to Islam in order to draw more supporters to their cause and prove other opposing groups as un-Islamic (957). The disparities between AQ's *Inspire/Resurgence* and ISIS's *Dabiq* magazines reveal that Jihadist groups vary greatly in messaging strategies.

Dabiq offers more substance and force compared to other Jihadist propaganda productions. The concept of the Caliphate is far more immersive and grandiose compared to other Jihadist media that proclaims hatred for the West. The Caliphate includes those desires as well, yet goes much farther in asserting how the Islamic State is the exclusive Muslim homeland as a part of an unwavering worldview. The wider implications in *Dabiq* are seriously haunting as much as they are apocalyptic. *Dabiq* portrays an end of times world where the holy fighters of Islam walk the empty remains of Earth. The holy fighters of ISIS, portrayed in *Dabiq*, are described as a force that will stop at nothing to achieve their vision. The unapologetic tone of *Dabiq* is palpable, yet shows the seriousness of the claims made.

The photographic material in *Dabiq* is also more professionally made and aesthetically

pleasing compared to past Jihadist magazines. Each page shows powerful imagery with pictures of landscapes, fighters, executions, and dead victims. Alongside these pictures are religious commentaries to justify the actions of ISIS. The religious component of *Dabiq*, and for that matter other radical Jihadist ideology, is the cornerstone to why actions are justified in the magazine. Many ISIS fighters believe they are carrying out Allah's will and are following in accordance to the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (Kibble 138-139). *Dabiq* also takes on a puritanical and authentic understanding of the Qu'ran and Sunnah that seeks to dismiss contemporary interpretations of Islam. The religious commentary is an integral part to understanding the arguments made in *Dabiq*.

Much of ISIS is a numbers game and requires mass appeal for attention and survival. ISIS's large scale operations are predicated on recruitment. The central concept of the Caliphate takes on an inclusive approach for ISIS recruitment. Interestingly though, each issue of *Dabiq* is written for different audiences. Ongoing research is showing how ISIS targets certain audience types based on a range of topics in each issue. *Dabiq* contains religious commentary, articles, news, and military successes. Brandon Colas, West Point instructor, provides a content analysis of 14 issues of *Dabiq*, where he finds 31% of the material focused on religious discussion and descriptions of Islam (Colas 178). Furthermore, military activities accounted for 15% and surprisingly, inciting attacks on the West only accounted for 4%. The range of subject matter represents how the content *Dabiq* is not being pigeonholed to one area. The content of *Dabiq* is diverse and intends to reach different audiences.

Methodology

Interdisciplinary Approach

Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA) is the primary evaluative means for the *Dabiq* issues. FTA borrows many ideas from Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), some of the more essential sub-concepts are: Fantasy Themes, Fantasy Types, Master Analogies, and Rhetorical visions. The interdisciplinary approach invites the critic to cover various intersecting points of interest. The hope here is the discover new knowledge that has yet to be found.

Symbolic Convergence Theory

Before unveiling Fantasy Theme Analysis and how it is used, deductively it is best to explain the general theory of Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT). Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA) is a part of SCT as the methodology critics use. Ernest Bormann, a rhetorical theorist developed FTA and SCT at different points in time. His originating work in 1972 pioneered the novel ideas and concepts behind FTA (Bormann, 1972). Bormann and other FTA scholars published further studies decades later showing the validity of FTA (Bormann 1973 - 1982; Bormann, Cragan & Shields, 1994). Many scholars have applied FTA to research interests; scholars such as Carl Hensley, Virginia Kidd, and Laurinda Porter were among some of the first (Hensley, 1975; Kidd, 1975; Porter, 1976). Other scholars such as and John Cragan, Charles Williams, and Sonja Foss contributed to the theoretical articulation and development of FTA (Cragan, 1975; Foss, 2008; Williams, 1987). More recently, Margaret Duffy, Jim Bowman, and Craig Engstrom continued FTA work (Duffy, 2003; Bowman, 2009; Engstrom, 2009). G.P. Mohrmann was the most outspoken critic of FTA (Mohrmann, 1982). As a result from continued

work with FTA, Bormann expanded the theoretical framework. Bormann specified FTA as the methodology critics apply while Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) is the general theory of communication that derives many of the concepts FTA uses.

The root ideas of SCT and FTA come from small group communication. Settings where people discuss and share ideas may use different kinds of analogies, figures of speech, word play, puns, and language devices. People oftentimes do not tell things completely objective and factual; instead they speak in metaphors and language itself is creative in nature. This is the heart of imaginative substance that gives rise to dramatized communication. When a message "dramatizes", it is removed from the here-and-now, and instead is placed in a there-and-then setting (Bormann, 1972). For example, stories are inherently past-oriented; a person who tells a story may refer to elements not in the present moment. Messages that become "dramatized" go through a time warp where participants or listeners of a group cannot track the temporal movement of symbols. Bormann defines SCT as "social psychological in that it concentrates on how two or more people come to share a similar symbolic world and a similar public consciousness" (Bormann, Ten Years 295).

In 1970, Robert Bales, a social psychologist, focused much of his work on small group communication. His influential work with small group fantasy was the starting grounds for how Bormann's SCT and FTA came to be. Bales' key discovery was that small groups exhibit "a dynamic process of group fantasizing" (Bormann, Fantasy 396). His discovery led to the dramatizing process in which two or more individuals share symbols and messages that are distorted. Bales' grounds much of his work in Freudian theory; G.P. Mohrmann was an oppositional scholar to FTA and wrote an extensive critique in regards to the methodology. He

published two articles during the developmental years of FTA & SCT (Mohrmann, 1982). In particular, he addressed Bormann's glossed over considerations of Freudian origin of dreams and fantasies. Sigmund Freud believed individuals' dreams consisted of two parts: manifest content and latent content. The manifest content is considered the material collected to analyze a given artifact. The latent content is the deeper meaning, which includes repressed emotions and urges (Freud). Mohrmann contended that the manifest content of a dream was a distorted substitute. He made a keen distinction between "dream-work" and "fantasy-work"; the former is considered private and unconscious (*individual*) and the latter is conscious awareness and an active participation with others (*group*).

Bales' noticed when people experienced stress or anxiety, dramatized communication was more present in group settings. Shakespeare described life as a stage, filled with characters, sets, scripts, and costumes. Similarly, people manifest similar elements during the dramatization process in small groups. Dramatization is the process of exaggerating or distorting messages that stray away from the actual truth. The literary critic Kenneth Burke introduced this concept in his work; Bormann borrowed this idea as a general basis for his sub-concept building of FTA. The tendency to animate and embellish experiences is common in conversation. This leads to the dramatization process that occurs as stories and experiences are communicated. The technical term for dramatized messages are *fantasies*; the dream-like substance that "refers to the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events" (Bormann, Symbolic 130). The author Sonja Foss described how fantasies "are designed to create a credible interpretation of experience - a way of making sense out of experience" (Foss 99).

Individuals of a group maintain their symbolic world based on personal experience and

unique interaction. Symbols and signs give meaning to kinds of things presented in discourse. SCT considers the juxtaposition or overlapping of two or more symbolic worlds. This phenomena hinges on commonalities that forms a connection or bond; commonalities such as values, goals, and interests are examples of a connection. Bormann says SCT "explains the appearance of a group consciousness, with its implied shared emotions, motives, and meanings, not in terms of individual daydreams and scripts but rather in terms of socially shared narrations or fantasies" (Bormann, Symbolic 128). Group members who engage in conversation are likely to share fantasies and events; some however will either fall by the wayside or catalyze into something more. Fantasies that pick-up and catch-on within the group indicate changes in conversation in terms of tempo, energy, emotion, and nonverbals, all of which embody the *group fantasy* (Bormann, Fantasy). The noticeable changes in a group setting demonstrate how group members are engaged in the fantasy sharing process known as *group fantasy*. Furthermore, group members who jointly participate in a series of dramatized messages are said to be *fantasies* (Bormann, Political 319). The fantasizing phenomenon parallels escapism; this is a byproduct of group fantasy and analogously draws a similarity to people engrossed in a movie.

Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) is derived from rhetorical and socio-psychological dimensions. The interpersonal communication component of SCT is found in how social function of fantasies. Fantasies are inherently the exchanging mechanism of ideas, feelings, and meanings. Robert Bales reinforced this process with his discovery of the dynamic processes found in small group communication. The sharing of symbols through the use of storytelling and dramatizing is the basis of SCT. An individual's symbolic world is largely composed of stories that constantly change overtime. The similarities between the social function of SCT and

interpersonal communication is in part due to the fantasy sharing process in small group contexts. The methodology of Fantasy Theme Analysis shifts the focus away from interpersonal communication and focuses more of the rhetorical dimension to detect far-reaching fantasy elements. Bormann looked at how the sharing of fantasies went beyond the small group settings and into larger publics.

Cultivation theory, created by George Gerbner, supported an interpersonal theory stating that over exposure to certain kinds of media results in a change of behavior and beliefs. His theory suggests that a person's social reality is affected based on the images, values, portrayals, and ideologies found in media; especially so from television (Griffin 370). In particular, violence is a major index for measuring the content of media in relation to audience effects. The qualitative focus for cultivation theory studies allows for critics to collect data on human subjects. Although this study does not examine the interpersonal connection, future studies would add to the wider implications of audience effects.

The FTA critic Laurinda Porter mentions how "participation in group fantasy events build cohesiveness, a feeling about our group, and creates a group culture" (Porter 272). The joint-experience of *group fantasy* is predicated on emotional arousal (*cues*). Emotions are infectious in a group setting and stir up responses from participants. This may be strongly pulled or pushed based on the an individual or group's investments in other emotions. For example, if the drama in the message contains humor, the group members will aptly respond with a laugh. In addition, Bormann suggests the significance of sympathy in his past studies, "If the speaker presents a leading character in a sympathetic way, then others must sympathize with the character in order to share the fantasy" (Bormann, Political 318). So, as messages are circulated

within a group, certain elements of those messages include emotional cues to excite or deaden the group. One pertinent question arises, why do people share fantasies? The way in which fantasies are presented are based on the rhetorical skill of the speaker. Another factor Bormann suggests is that overtime as people share fantasies, they will prefer certain kinds of fantasies and dramas. The preference of specific fantasies are consonant with personal ones (Bormann Symbolic, 130). As people share fantasies, it will become a part of their personal narratives, needs and fulfillments.

The dramatic elements in fantasies that materialize into more concrete forms are considered *fantasy themes*. Fantasy themes are placed in a setting and scene removed from the here-and-now. The power of this symbolic action transports users to an imaginative place of interpretation (Bormann, Fetching). Fantasy themes may be characters, personas, plot lines, situations, or literary devices; things that become prevalent in discourse. In Bormann's "The Eagleton Affair", a fantasy theme was the McGovern Machine; the political organization and public persona of McGovern. The study looked at the 1972 Presidential Campaign in regard to the McGovern Campaign, media dramatizations, recurring fantasies and voting behavior. The onset of fantasy themes caused a chain reaction and feelings during dissemination. Life events and experiences are chaotic and out of order; fantasy themes however, "provide a structured, understandable, and meaningful interpretation of what happened" (Bormann, Reagan 134). Lastly, fantasy themes give a rhetorical frame for two groups of people to explain events in different ways. The FTA critic G.P. Mohrmann described how fantasy themes are compelling in their ability to "contrast with and improves upon the everyday world" (Mohrmann 112). Some group fantasies will dwindle if participants cannot maintain the sharing process; participants of

the group must respond using cues to perpetuate shared fantasies. If this persists, the results may initiate *fantasy chains*.

The most powerful and reverberating fantasy themes in a group hold the potential to spark an outward chain reaction to other communication contexts. When group fantasies catch on and chain out in small groups, fantasy themes then become *fantasy chains*. Fantasy chains are the transactional force that outwardly works and spreads fantasy themes to other communication contexts. Bormann contends that "[fantasy chains] in small groups are worked into public speeches and into the mass media and, in turn, spread out across larger publics" (Bormann, Fantasy 398). This shift from private (small group) to public (large audiences) forms a *group consciousness*. The result of symbolic convergence describes how the "discovery and arrangement of recurring communicative forms and patterns...indicate the presence and evolution of a shared group consciousness" (Bormann, Symbolic 129). Group consciousness is composed of publicly shared dramas (*fantasies*). Common symbolic ground of two or more groups represents symbolic convergence, thus sharing a group consciousness. To sum, the private symbolic worlds that individuals create with self-consciousness is transmuted to group fantasy if dramatizations are caught and chained out, thus resulting in fantasy chains that spread to all communication contexts. The fantasy sharing process does not guarantee all fantasies will chain out to the public; many in fact, will die out in the small group setting.

FTA critics need to provide proof of shared fantasies. Critics will need to determine recurrences and repetition of fantasy themes and related concepts over the course of content. The most concrete and apparent elements are said to be proof of symbolic action (Cragan, Shields, and Bormann, 1994). Bormann describes the "inside joke" as evidence of group fantasy. He goes

on to say this is the "cryptic allusion to an element of a dramatic situation which sparks a strong response from the other group members" (Bormann, Political 318). Another form of evidence is the retelling of stories and messages; where individuals a part of the group fantasy share their symbolic worlds with their social networks. The claims made by pro-FTA critics (Bormann, Cragan & Shield) argue the appearance of shared dramatizations in rhetorical events and public discourse is the evidence of shared fantasies. The *symbolic cue* is another piece of evidence that reflects the trigger used to "touch the common consciousness and [stimulate] a similar set of emotions, motives, and meanings [for group consciousness]" (Bormann et. al., In Defense of 281). For example, McCarthyism became a cue in the 1950s to call someone or something out on treason without sufficient evidence. The cue is recognizable and quickly understood because of how ingrained the meaning is. This is in part due to how people disseminated the cue through small group to public thus demonstrating fantasy chains.

As group members share similar kinds of fantasies, elements such as plot outlines, scenes, characters, and situations may become generalized. The *fantasy type* is a term to describe "the [stock] scenario that covers several of the more concrete fantasy themes" (Bormann et. al., In Defense of 282). In 1982, Bormann conducted a FTA on the television coverage of the hostage release situation in Iran in relation to Reagan's inaugural address to examine the dramatization of the unfolding events at the time. He discovered recurring themes in Reagan's speech; the powerful fantasy type of restoration was used in the speech to fit the needs of the conservative and economic climate in the 1980s (Bormann, Reagan 134). Inside jokes and comedic devices can signify fantasy types. For example, we often hear "Thanks, Obama" as a sarcastic response when dealing with everyday problems; the inside joke attributes all problems

as a result of Obama's presidency. The phrase is quickly understood for audience members who are aware of the inside joke; the function of the joke is predicated based on fantasy sharing and chaining out process from private to public.

The rhetorical vision is where the most pervasive fantasies in group fantasy and fantasy chains emerge as a composite form; the FTA critic Virginia Kidd refers to it as "concise interlocking dramas", and Bormann describes it as "a unified putting-together of the various themes and types coherently, to form some aspect of [a group's] social reality" (Bormann et. al., In Defense of 282). Fantasy themes and fantasy types are the aggregates that form group consciousness and culture; the elements that chain out in public. Bormann mentions how the rhetorical vision typically contains a *master analogy* to assist in pulling the various elements together (Bormann, Symbolic 133). The momentum behind a rhetorical vision is significant, yet many fantasy themes and types will not reach this stage. As group fantasies and fantasy chains disappear or develop, these elements resemble an organic entity, where features of the drama go through life cycles to either grow or decay over time. One contributing factor that determines the lifespan of dramatic discourse is based on the rhetorics capability; the rhetoric must fit the needs of the group. Bormann affirms this idea, "A viable rhetorical vision must accommodate the community to the changes that accompany its unfolding history. The rhetoric must deal with the anxieties [of the group]" (Bormann, Ten Years 292).

If the rhetorical vision is "all-encompassing and impelling", this momentum forms the infrastructure necessary to manifest into a social reality (Bormann, Symbolic 133). The persuasive potential for sharing fantasies in groups is salient in its ability to "build up predispositions and preferences for certain sorts of dramatizing" (Bormann, Symbolic 130). The

rhetoric vision impacts audiences members who get caught up in the dramas by lending a social reality. *Social reality* is the essential set of values, opinions, and beliefs an individual possesses. Groups may share a similar kind of social reality; the overlapping of symbolic worlds through fantasy sharing process makes it possible. The distinction between the individual's sense of self-consciousness and group consciousness is important. Group consciousness takes on a fantasy life of its own and may remove an individual's sense of self-consciousness. With the rhetorical vision concept in mind, this is the result of sharing dramatized messages (SCT, 1985).

Fantasy Theme Analysis

Symbolic Convergence Theory is a general theory of communication that includes the methodology of Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA). Bormann and other FTA critics have offered specific steps in order to conduct a fantasy theme methodology. The first step is to collect the evidence from manifest content, such as: discourse of the artifact, video & audio recordings, manuscripts, recollections of participants, and direct observations (Bormann, Fantasy 401). The critic needs a substantial amount of discourse collected to where the critic will see how "[the] total rhetoric consists of both discursive material and fantasy themes" (Bormann, Fantasy 405). The critic should gain a solid understanding of the manifest content, to "discover and describe the narrative and dramatic materials" (Bormann, Fantasy 401). Dramas contain elements such as plot outlines, characters, settings, and situations; the critic should look for patterns of characterizations based on the elements. For example, the same character or hero might appear multiple times across the selected discourse. In general, frequent and repeated elements will present themselves as the critic gains a holistic view of the total rhetoric.

When the same kinds of elements are appearing and repetitive, the most pervasive dramas become established. The critic should attempt to uncover motives and dramatistic elements. Furthermore, the critic theoretically should reconstruct the rhetorical vision using the fantasy chains. The FTA critic Thomas Farrell describes this well, "FTA seems to be a kind of rhetorical constructivism; it so varies the placement of disparate discursive particulars as to sediment them, thereby providing...a composite structure (Farrell 311). Finally, Bormann gives a list of ideal questions the critic should ask when conducting an FTA study.

Once the critic has exhausted the manifest content, Bormann offers the following questions to analyze the artifact: What provides the ultimate legitimization of the drama? Who are the heroes and villains? What are the motives attributed to? Where are the dramas set? What are typical scenarios? What emotional responses are dominant? (Bormann, Fantasy) By grouping similar dramas the critic can see the characterization and interplay between elements in order to reconstruct the holistic reach of the rhetoric. FTA has also been used to conduct empirical investigations using Q-techniques to analyze dramatic elements. The FTA critic John Cragan and Donald Shields considered the 1976 Presidential campaign while looking at how American foreign policy dramas combined with Q-type factor analysis were mediated. Their key developmental discovery for FTA was "the utility of [FTA] of rhetorical visions goes beyond its use as a descriptive schemata for critiquing rhetorical communication" (Cragan & Shields, 289). Bormann, Koester, and Bennett conducted a Q-methodology to determine the link between FTA and audience response. The critics sought to understand the sharing of fantasies during presidential campaigns using political cartoons to infer political persuasion.

Bormann contends FTA as a valuable and reasonable methodology for "[it] provides a

rationale for arguing a fantasy theme [and its importance] on the basis on its frequent appearance" (Bormann, Fetching 130). FTA is often regarded as a flexible kind of methodology for "[it] does not give a set of rules for the critic to use in evaluating and criticizing the fantasies" (Bormann, Fetching 130). The methodology of FTA gives the critic creative freedom to map out the pervasive dramas and fantasy themes; the outline of FTA seeks to better understand the rhetorical artifact. The theory is grounded while not rigid to where the critic is able to make artistic and critical decisions. Ultimately, the usefulness of FTA is "the explanatory power of... [accounting] for the development, evolution, and decay of dramas that catch up groups of people and change behavior" (Bormann, 1972, 399).

Applications of FTA

In 1972, Ernest Bormann published his first FTA applied study of a political discourse entitled "The Eagleton Affair: A Fantasy Theme Analysis". Bormann examined the electorate campaign of 1972 in terms of the emotional evocations of dismay, frustration, and apathy. He described the rise and fall of the "New Politics" rhetorical vision. In SCT, Bormann describes how some rhetorical visions are identified with the use of indexes. An index is a symbolic cue that typically is a part of the visions labeling. For example, "The New Deal" and "The New South" had the word "new" to signify an index. Bormann looked at McGovern's rhetorical vision and evaluated one major fantasy theme chained out through the American electorate.

The 1968 Chicago convention is the given context for the study. He discovered characters that existed in the fantasy themes. Senator George McGovern was running as a presidential candidate at the time. McGovern needed a unifying rhetorical vision for partisanship support; the question then was, who or what would create a viable vision and also compete against other

oppositional political visions. McGovern's choice for vice president was the answer. The fantasy themes emphasized in the campaign were based on personae. Personae embodies the character values of a person; values of which the public can relate or empathize with to better understand political candidates. Part of the McGovern dilemma was his weak public figure status, where no personae manifested clearly. The VP pick would ensure or harm the McGovern vision.

Tom Eagleton entered the political arena as the newly announced vice president running with McGovern. However, Eagleton made the choice to disclose his mental health issues early in the campaign which raised questions. Despite his honesty, the U.S. audiences were not ready to completely understand the implications of his health issues. It caused ambiguities and the oppositional political figures used it as a way to stir up controversy. Eagleton's announcement ultimately made the American public worried as to how much this would affect his ability and stability in office. The media dramatized the events through selection and framing. The television networks controlled how the situation was viewed, as Bormann stated "the media professionals evaluate a good story as one having the ability to hold the interest of the audience" (Bormann, Eagleton, 151). McGovern show unity and support for Eagleton. Eagleton firmly stated he was not going anywhere.

The use of FTA in the Eagleton Affair showed the mechanism of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Audiences jumped to a conclusion that Eagleton was unfit to be the Vice President. The media became the triggering force that set off the fantasy chains among opinion leaders and audience members. Ultimately, it was Eagleton's personae that was irreversibly damaged and undeniably a part of McGovern's campaign; the permanent association dismantled the political vision. The negative ideas about the McGovern platform were: inconsistency, ineptness, and

untrustworthiness. Once these ideas became ingrained in the public and electorate as fantasy chains, the campaign could not support itself as a viable run for office. The fantasy themes were chained out, which were measured based on the public's reaction over the course of the Mcgovern campaign. Bormann's study showed how the media interplays with fantasy themes, the rise and fall of rhetorical visions, and the importance of personas.

In 1976, FTA critic Laurinda Porter, published an article that asserted group fantasy culture existed in Richard Nixon's released transcripts of the Watergate scandal. She examined main characters, settings, and rhetorical problems in the transcripts. Porter used a content analysis and FTA approach in the study. Porter grouped rhetorical visions about the media press into general categories; four major themes emerged from the presented fantasies (Porter 273). The themes were image control, appearance vs. reality, channel choice and timing of messages, and individual members of the news gathering institutions. Porter surmised all four themes boiled down to the fantasy type of control. The context of the situation included the Watergate scandal, President Nixon, and Nixon's constituents. Nixon's constituents tried to save face and protect themselves during the political turmoil. Porter asserted group fantasy culture existed based on how Nixon's group reality differed from the press's reality.

In 1982, Bormann published another FTA study in regards to the television coverage of the hostage release situation in Iran and President Ronald Reagan's inaugural address. Bormann asserted people were becoming predisposed to media dramatizations, to the point where television news was accepted without question by audiences. Bormann used his FTA framework to analyze the "intertwining" of television coverage of the hostage release and Reagan's inaugural address. He examined how the "dramatization of unfolding events on television creates

a social reality for those who are caught up in the portrayal" (Bormann, Reagan 134).

The fantasy type of restoration served the needs of a conservative political and economic movement in the 1980s. Restoration is defined as the "nation's return to its original basis and rightness" (Bormann, Reagan 136). Television is an interpretative dramatization that invites the possibility of audience participation, and gives a sense we are in the here-and-now, when really we are in the there-and-then. A confusing set of circumstances that seemed vague and difficult to interpret; fantasy themes attempt to make sense out of this chaos. Bormann goes on to say "Messages that contain rhetorical fantasies cast there-and-then events in narrated frames and provide a structured, understandable, and meaningful interpretation of what happened" (Bormann, Reagan 134).

Many criticisms point to the theoretical gaps of FTA that may leave the critic in the dark about how to best approach the method. Common criticisms are the overuse of technical terms and ambiguity. From 1972 to 2003, SCT and FTA has received much observation. G.P. Mohrmann was among the first to give a comprehensive criticism of FTA. Criticisms from G.P. Mohrmann, Roderick Hart, David Swanson, and Joshua Gunn are considered.

Criticisms of SCT and FTA

Over the course of the FTA creation and development, criticisms have played an important role for the theory's use in future studies. The validity of FTA must be considered. Criticisms offer the overlooked aspects or shortcomings of the methodology. The FTA critic G.P. Morhmann contributed his criticisms for SCT and FTA. He published an article 1982 titled "An essay on fantasy theme criticism" ; Mohrmann attacked FTA with two main criticisms (1) FTA is not a "logically consistent extension of the theoretical bases that it derives" and (2) "circularity

as error in applying the dramatism in recent publishings using FTA" (Mohrmann 110). Mohrmann accused FTA for lacking precision and rigor. His criticisms were compelling to readers who felt FTA's premises were unsupported.

First, Mohrmann addressed the Freudian inheritance in Robert Bales' contributions to small group communication. He stated how "FTA departs radically from the foundation presented by Bales" (Morhmann 120). Sigmund Freud's work with psychodynamics and dreams greatly enhanced the precursors of FTA. Bormann paralleled individual dreams and fantasy chains when he stated "Just as an individual's repressed problems might surface in dream fantasies so those of a group might surface in a fantasy chain and a critic might interpret the manifest content with an eye to discovering the group's hidden agenda" (Bormann, Fantasy 397).

One point of contention is whether manifest content is an appropriate place of discovery for fantasy themes and social realities. Mohrmann did not think this was possible; he instead thought only the subconscious elements were evident in fantasies. Mohrmann described differences between "dream-work" and "fantasy-work"; he goes on to say "Alone and asleep, the search for harmony manifests itself in dream-work; awake and in the company of others, that search manifests itself in fantasy-work" (Mohrmann 112). The difference is crucial; one is individual and private while the other is public and group-oriented. Lastly, Mohrmann thought that "manifest content [was] not an adequate basis for predictions about relationships to overt behavior" (Mohrmann 117).

Bormann responded to Mohrmann by stating how numerous studies have provided proof of a shared reality among participants. Bormann reinforced the manifest content needs to be exhaustive in order to determine the nuances of fantasies. He mentioned John Cragan and

Donald Shields Q-sort empirical study of how fantasy theme statements reproduced foreign policy rhetorical visions. In addition, Bormann stated the stylistic and substantive qualities of fantasy themes reflects the conscious elements. Bormann disregards the Freudian sub-conscious concerns and insteads states how scholars must adapt the SCT and FTA theories to guide their research into specific communication questions (Bormann, In Defense of, et. al. 272).

The FTA critic Charles Williams addressed the concerns about the manifest content in 1987 (Williams). Williams reiterated previous Mohrmann criticisms and then addressed new ones. Williams posed the question regarding the manifest content, and asked how much manifest content was needed to observe fantasy themes and fantasy chains? Bormann, and other pro-FTA critics would tell Williams the manifest content should be extensive; enough to where the dramatic elements are presented naturally.

The FTA critic Joshua Gunn revisited the Freudian dilemma. He stated "group fantasies mean different things to different individuals" and "fantasies are always deceptive and, thus, cannot reveal motive" (Gunn 51). Gunn took into account the language of myth and symbol from Freud; the concealing subterfuge of fantasies. Bormann, Cragan, and Shields assert "rhetorical fantasies are not Freudian fantasies"; dream interpretations are comprehensible insofar meaning can be found through comparison (Bormann et. al., Imaginary Gunn 368). Bormann addressed the criticism by simply removing the unconscious elements from analysis in SCT and FTA related work. Bormann is more interested in the self-conscious, the actions of individuals, and the manifest content. Perhaps at best, fantasies are "highly opaque" and partially reveals motives of the sub-conscious. The conscious fantasies and dramatistic elements are directly observable in a given manifest content providing reliable predictions of human behavior (Bormann et. al.,

Imaginary Gunn 369). Bormann and FTA critics suggest to consider the conscious fantasies found in the manifest content.

The transactional imperative is the chaining out process in FTA. The process says fantasy chains are what spread out to different communication contexts. Mohrmann believed that "interactions are so attenuated that it lacks to fulfill the transactional imperative characterized in the chaining process" (Mohrmann 116). Bormann responded to this claim in 1982 with his article "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: Ten Years Later". Bormann addressed the evidence of SCT derives from audience effects, the recurrence of fantasy themes, and appearance of fantasy types all signify that people have participated in the sharing fantasy process. Bormann firmly states critics must consider the dramas and fantasies as they appear in manifest content.

Mohrmann charged the theoretical progression of FTA as invalid. He challenged the inferential leap and transactional imperative of fantasy chains, to where he says the chaining process could not originate within the small group. Mohrmann believed fantasies could not chain out to other communication modes and contexts. Robert Bales partially addressed this concern with his key discovery of the dynamic sharing process observed in small groups. The sharing process is the key idea that holds the potential for individuals to disseminate fantasy themes to different settings. Mohrmann argued that since Bales did not envision fantasy chains or associations between prediction and overt behavior, FTA misses the mark. Mohrmann goes on to say "there is no necessary connection between or among fantasies and no reason to expect that the dramatistic content of one will share features with another" (Mohrmann 115).

Although Mohrmann brings up a pressing point, his claim disregards factors such as: audience effects, commonalities, symbolic ground, and recurring fantasy themes. Additionally,

qualitative research with large sample sizes provides partial proof for the sharing process of fantasty chains. The reappearing and recurring fantasy themes in different communication contexts also provides partial proof of the chaining process. Critics can suggest the chaining out process without framing the finding as an end-all be-all.

In regards to fantasy themes and behavior, Robert Bales believed it was a mistake to accept that fantasy preceded overt behavior and could forecast it. He does suggest however, fantasy may preserve actions as a model to be acted upon at a later time. The FTA critic Thomas Porter countered this point and said "fantasy highlights behavioral change" (Porter 274). The critic John Cragan stated "one may attempt to predict the behavior of people who are caught up in a rhetorical vision" (Cragan & Shields 290). Ultimately, Bormann stated if people are caught up and participating in the public fantasies they are "powerfully impelled to action" (Bormann, Fantasy 406). Bormann, Cragan, and Shields asserted "predicated individual behavior [is based on] large quantitative studies, thereby demonstrating the presence of meaning, emotion, value, and motive for action" (Bormann et. al. Imaginary Gunn 367). Shared fantasies and their connection to behavior and action is profound; predictability and timing of action is subjective, though it is fair to say if fantasies do not immediately impel individuals to action, then they at least follow or substitute action (Bormann Ten Years, 304). Many quantitative and Q-techniques of FTA utilized in past studies have reinforced the argument that behavior and motives can be suggested based on large sample-surveys.

Mohrmann frequently referred to the technical terms of SCT and FTA as "basic definitions lacking precision" (Mohrmann 119). However, the critic must ask pressing questions about the dramatistic elements and artifact to infer conclusions. Bormann described some of the

more essential questions to ask. Morhmann described these questions as a mechanical application that "does not propel the critic toward valences in drama as action" (Morhmann 119). Similarly, other critics have labeled the theory for being a "categorical scheme" (Black Note on Theory, 333) and as a "cookie-cutter" rhetorical criticism (Farrell et. al. Book Review, 96). The critic Roderick Hart calls FTA a labeling exercise of sorts and states that "fantasy theme analysts take ordinary rhetorical phenomenons, relabel them, and then claim the relabeling as an insight" (Hart, Ed., 291). However, this is only the case if the study performed is unoriginal or routine.

Some phenomenology and epistemological concerns have surfaced in regards to FTA. Morhmann states "FTA throws us squarely into the midst of a metaphysical morass" (Mohrmann 122). To avoid delving into something beyond the scope of this study, the scholar David Swanson makes a point about how representational systems work.

> Swanson's says that "the study of representational systems for constituting reality than of reality itself—requires comment on a further problem: if representational systems constitute the means of framing all human knowledge, what distinguishes the rhetorical critic from other students of human affairs?" (Swanson 214).

The answer to this dilemma is for the critic to consider not their natural attitudes but instead the reflective attitudes. The critic should allow the manifest content to speak for itself.

FTA insights should be researcher-dependent and not theory-dependent (Bormann, In Defense of, et. al. 288). The phrase "cookie-cutter" is a deviation used to devalue the theory. Bormann affirmed FTA by stating how " scholars [are able] to look at a range of phenomena and see them consistently in similar ways" (Bormann et. al., In Defense 282). The use of a taxonomy or conceptual categories allows critics to comparatively see the recurrent patterns and pervasive forms of dramas in terms of fantasy themes and rhetorical visions. The comparing and contrasting of FTA concepts does offer ways to better understand the unknown elements found

in rhetorical artifacts. The goal for any FTA critic should be to illuminate the artifact in different ways; FTA provides the tools and concepts to do so.

The criticisms stated come down to theory-building versus reactive criticism. Criticism in scholarship is important as it is necessary; standards and quality checks are what ensure the sake of future work. The development and innovation of communication theories should be welcomed rather than harshly attacked to the point where critics doubt the usefulness of the theory and methodology. Mohrmann believed critics were using a "borrowed theoretical wholecloth" from Robert Bales, and thus were theoretically flawed for not creating anything new or original. Roderick Hart additionally stated "[FTA] is not cut out of a theoretical wholecloth...each of the FTA studies had its own theoretical impetus irrespective of its method" (Bormann Ten Years, 293). Bormann stated "no research program should wait for a theoretical wholecloth to be produced" and instead "the theoretical cloth [should be] woven as we do the studies" (Bormann Ten Years, 293). The methodology should be used in a balanced way to where it does not dictate the entire course of the study.

Theoretical foundations and contexts are important to consider, though Ernest Bormann proved how it was equally important to push boundaries to create new and uncharted areas for the sake of theory-building. Mohrmann's criticisms deepened the understanding of the theoretical underpins of which SCT and FTA stood on. Bormann and fellow supporters of SCT and FTA have given academia decades of theory defense and applications to support the validity of its use.

Fantasy Theme Analysis was chosen for its imaginative and abstract conceptions. Each issue of *Dabiq* was published on a monthly basis; ISIS is constantly changing and adapting to the

needs and problems facing the organization. *Dabiq* presumably reflects what events and affairs ISIS is dealing with at the time of each issue's release. The intention of *Dabiq* may not become clear until fantasy themes and related concepts are evident in a span of issues. One complete read through of the issues may not necessarily show how the magazine aims to persuade. However, the use of FTA allows the critic to suggest and show the most evident persuasive elements in *Dabiq*.

Dabiq is part of the ISIS's means to communicate information and messaging. Presumably ISIS needs readers to share fantasies in order to spread their messages within groups and outgrow into publics. FTA studies have determined the appearance of recurring fantasy themes is partial proof of the sharing process. FTA was chosen as a method to better understand the imaginative and fantasy-like world ISIS purports to readers. With these reasons stated, this study requires a flexible methodology to sort out the persuasive dramas and fantasy themes.

Dabiq Analysis

Bormann advises Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA) practitioners to carefully and comprehensively read the manifest content of the artifact. This study examines the first six issues of *Dabiq* and the dramatic elements by applying FTA. Specifically, the study will look for the appearance and recurrence of particular elements and themes. Much of the text is accompanied with slick photography to complement content. *Dabiq* is produced and viewed as a digital magazine, newsletter, or website. Although images (e.g., pictures) are a part of *Dabiq*, the scope of this study is aimed at a textual analysis.

This analysis focuses on the language-based persuasive discourse; the arguments

themselves. From a textual standpoint it considers the weight and substance of written material. The textual content found in *Dabiq* is rich with religious connotations and dramatic elements that highlight much of the magazine's attempts to drawn attention. *Dabiq* functions in three ways for readers: (1) a media foothold for ISIS, (2) a recruitment method, and/or (3) a way to understand the ISIS worldview. The broad objective of *Dabiq* is to express strategic goals and efforts for their new society. Dabiq presents arguments – claims and evidence – designed to persuade readers and compel them to support IS. The question of whether individuals or groups are swayed from *Dabiq's* arguments is difficult to answer. However, an insight into the persuasive elements helps to understand how someone could be compelled.

Messages from *Dabiq* that appear in other contexts such as on social media partially shows evidence of readership. Twitter comments (tweets) that feature keywords or concepts from *Dabiq* provides evidence of an audience effect from readership. In this case, the effect is that audience members are absorbing information from *Dabiq* and are disseminating information through social media. Scholarly work has started to explore Jihadist social media usage and track audience effects. The critic Jytte Klausen looked at 59 Jihadist Twitter accounts to discover the most prevalent messages tweeted and concluded that intimidation was a major effect. Although this study does not analyze the efficacy of readership to join ISIS or determine the number of recruits converted by the magazine itself, these could be important areas for future research. Scholars can make inferences to predict the possibility of recruitment and indoctrination of ISIS ideology. Still, the leap is too large to say whether *Dabiq* as a whole, or specific issues, or chapters will in fact cause a reader to join ISIS.

G.P. Mohrmann's often cited criticism of FTA was the methodology could not predict

behavior. Laurinda Porter's FTA study looked at the release of Nixon's Watergate scandal transcripts from 1974 and determined that "fantasy highlights behavior change" (Porter 274). Additionally, Charles Williams critique of FTA concluded that fantasies "provide [a] set of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and attitudes" (13). By considering fantasies, the critic can imagine the reader's interpretations to suggest motive or behavior in connection to the dramatic elements presented in the artifact. With these considerations in mind, this analysis examines the most cogent fantasy themes and persuasive elements in *Dabiq*.

As discussed earlier, outbidding was a major indicator in the distinguishing the strategic messaging of ISIS from other terrorist organizations. The author Jennifer Dyer observes, *Dabiq* is a "branding-exercise" for the Islamic State; ISIS focuses more on the Caliphate in order to compete with other Jihadist groups to reign supreme (Dyer). The intentions of *Dabiq* are framed quite explicitly and in doing so identify some target audiences: English-speaking readers, Muslims, Western policy makers, and ISIS members themselves.

Much of ISIS is a numbers game and requires mass appeal for attention and survival. ISIS's grandiose and large scale operations are predicated on recruitment. The inclusive approach of ISIS is a design feature of *Dabiq*. Each issue of *Dabiq* is written for different audiences. The selected issues revealed different kinds of targeted audience groups. The critic Brandon Colas provides a content analysis of 14 issues of *Dabiq*, where he finds 31% of the material focused on religious discussion and descriptions of Islam (Colas 178). Furthermore, military activities accounted for 15% and surprisingly, inciting attacks on the West only accounted for 4%. The range of subject matter represents how the content *Dabiq* is not being pigeonholed to one area. Whereas the magazine *Inspire* written by Al-Qaeda, primarily focused

on instructions and provided how-to manuals in creating pressure-cooker bombs. The content on *Dabiq* is far more diverse and intends to strike interests with different audiences in doing so.

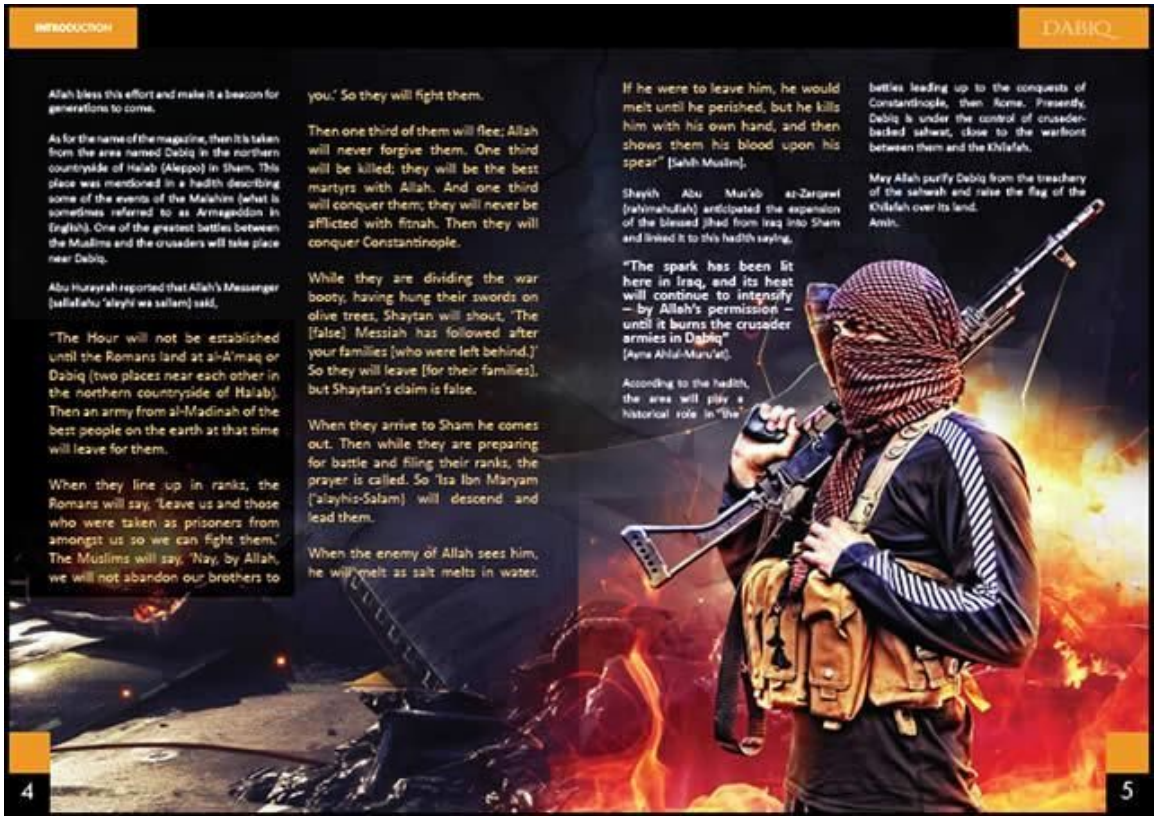
The *Dabiq* issues are not singular and do not follow a gradual progression of ideas. Taken as a set, reading the six issues examined in this study revealed the magazine is quite disjointed. Due to lack of linearity, readers may be inclined to read parts or sections rather than start to finish. Each issue of *Dabiq* includes: the cover, table of contents, introduction, breaking news, reports, articles, wisdom, the enemy's words, feature story, and news. The second half of the *Dabiq* issues features articles written by John Cantlie, a current prisoner of ISIS, who acts as the bizarre foreign correspondence for ISIS. There is more to uncover beyond the broad goal stated in Issue 2. Fantasy themes, master analogies and rhetorical visions were evident in the issues.

The Islamic State seeks military, religious and territorial control, in order to achieve longevity and survival. The Islamic State is far more than just a Jihadist organization. The Islamic State is multi-faced in design and focuses on image to communicate purpose. The way in which *Dabiq* portrays ISIS will impact their marketing and publicity efforts. ISIS invests time and money to bolster public relation campaigns to reach readers. In effect, the level of received attention *Dabiq* garners from international or local audiences will be important factors for ISIS. Potential Muslim recruits, lone wolf enthusiasts, passersby readers, and ISIS members are some audiences of *Dabiq*. Without a returning and dedicated readership, there is less of a chance for the spread of ideas to permeate throughout social groups and other networks. The more piercing and polemic arguments the magazine offers, the greater likelihood there is for audience retention and arousal. Former Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri said, "We are in a media battle for the hearts and minds of our Umma" (Fernandez 2). Any and all evocative responses due to the

rhetoric in *Dabiq* hold the potential to stir the emotions of readers or drive them to action.

Figure 1. Issue Covers – The First Three Issues

Figure 2. How Text is Presented



The Master Plan in Dabiq

Fantasy themes are recurring rhetorical elements prevalent in a given text. They are pronounced and identifiable in different communication contexts; in this case, over the six issues of *Dabiq*. Fantasy themes may include characters, situations, analogies, or other devices to dramatize the content in *Dabiq*. Issue 1 is about consolidation of the Caliphate; it urges readers and audiences to adhere to the master plan of ISIS. Near the end of Issue 1, readers will find the master plan of the Islamic State (IS) in a sequence-oriented diagram. The diagram lists the five phases and shows how each prior one be completed before moving on to the next phase. The five phases are fundamental to understanding the fantasy themes of *Dabiq*. The phases operate as action items. For example, "emigrating" (phase 1) and "destabilizing" (phase 3) ask audiences to engage in the phase by enacting it in their own lives. The subsequent issues are ideological justifications for audiences to engage in the calls to action.

> (1) Hijrah (emigration/journey)
> (2) Jama'ah (community/congregation)
> (3) Destabilize taghut (disbelievers/tyrants)
> (4) Tamkin (consolidation)
> (5) Khalifah (caliphate/political assembly) (Issue 1, 38).

The *Khalifah*, or Caliphate is a central concept for the IS. It represents the new world order that IS wishes to take hold on an international level. The caliphate chiefly states that all Muslims must migrate to Syria and Iraq. In addition, it states every individual needs to become Muslim.

These five phases are in of themselves fantasy themes. Bormann says fantasy themes are

organized, slanted, and ordered (Bormann, Symbolic 133). The five phases are sequential, ideological, and action-oriented. The phases seek to form a group consciousness for readers, to where every person follows in accordance to the Islamic State (IS) master plan. In FTA, fantasy themes that are cogent and capable transform into fantasy chains that hook individuals to action. These phases are built upon a contingency that readers are able to imagine themselves participating in each phase. The master plan IS has presented readers is reinforced with additional fantasy themes.

Fantasy Themes in Dabiq

Unity

Unity is a central theme in the first issue of Dabiq: In "The Return of the Khilafah", the overwhelming sense of togetherness and cohesion are strongly emphasized. *Dabiq* features this statement, "It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man, and black man, the Easterner and the Westerner are all brothers", that reflects the attempt to incite unity among readers (Issue 1, 7). With many displaced and disaffected populations, especially Sunni Muslims in the Middle East, IS offers a solution through unity. Issue 3 states that "If you were to go to the frontlines...you would find soldiers and commanders to be of different colors, languages, and lands (Issue 3, 6). In *Dabiq*, IS appears to take a homogenizing approach to recruitment and state-building, where all Muslims and people need to be unified under the banner of the Khilafah. Diversity and inclusion are sub-themes to the broader theme of unity. An inclusive "all are welcomed" appeal is used to draw more individuals to the IS ideology. The aforementioned quote in Issue 3 serves to remove race and ethnicity as preconditions for fulfilling the religious

duty of *Hijrah* (emigration).

In Issue 1, *Dabiq* passages reveal how Muslims in the Middle East are without nationality and often times are displaced. Identity becomes a problem for Middle Eastern populations and they may feel alienated as a result. Issue 1 states that "Syria is not for the Syrians. Iraq is not for the Iraqis" (Issue 1, 11). Similar to how ethnicity is removed as a precondition, nationality is also not considered a prerequisite to the *Hijrah* obligation. Companionship and friendship are offered to imprint images of groups banded together to fight the same cause.

Brotherhood is another sub-theme of unity; group identity is a hopeful byproduct. This quote captures the loyalty and bond focus of brotherhood, "...standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another. Their blood mixed and become one, under a single flag and goal" (Issue 1, 7). Blood may suggest bloodshed from warfare; images may flood readers' mind with fighters unified under the same fervor of battle and glory.

Unity as the most ubiquitous fantasy theme in Issue 5 entitled "remaining and expanding". As a "repetition" fantasy type, unity is seen heavily in this section and demonstrates how other Middle Eastern countries are on board to fight for the same cause as ISIS. Each country features how provinces can work together and overcome their enemies. *Dabiq* becomes proof of territorial expansion through ISIS ideological adherences. However, the section in Issue 5 seeks also to correct wrongful "creeds and methodologies" from particular countries.

State-Building

The motives behind the theme of unity are related to the Islamic State's need

state-building. The first issue of *Dabiq* describes how the IS Caliphate is the epicenter of the Middle East. IS has deemed Iraq and Syria as religiously sanctioned areas where all Muslims are called to action. The religious and moral obligation is framed through *Hijrah*. The societal utopia IS envisions is predicated on whether its economic and political infrastructure can withstand expansion overtime. This requires individuals to become members and stay as occupants of the IS for continued growth. The IS machine is multi-faced: military, political, social, while its media are the means to communicate operating units.

In order for IS to be geopolitically successful, readers must become adherents and perform the first phase of the IS master plan, which is *Hijrah* to the caliphate. The obligation of *Hijrah* is a signifier to influence lone wolf audiences. In Issue 3, the criticism of the United States, the portrayal of Western political figures as villains, and the detail about how a person would emigrate from their homelands to the Caliphate all may appeal to lone wolf audiences. ISIS must be successful in enlarging the meaning behind the khalifah and expanding the territorial space of the caliphate. As featured in Issue 5, the "remaining and expanding" tagline for the issue reinforces the idea of longevity for the IS.

The state-building fantasy theme shows how IS is actively working to educate citizens, admonish them, enforce Islamic obligations, judge disputes, and eradicate all traces of shirk and heresy (Issue 3, 17). Issue 1 presents an appeal to all specialists such as: doctors, researchers, and other technical experts to join the IS. Interestingly enough, in Issue 3, *Dabiq* states quite openly that the Khilafah is in dire need of emigrants (26). The IS has outlined a plan to first establish a somewhat isolated, self-sustaining state. With enough garnered strength and power, their military and media operations hope to forcefully indoctrinate large populations. So the state-building

need for IS, however initially solitary, is the prior condition to fulfill before moving on to their next and much larger goal of international outward expansion.

The sub-theme of expansion is reinforced in Issue 5, especially as the tagline for the issue is "remaining and expanding". Issue 5 describes the Islamic State's territorial expansion into Yemen, Sinai, Libya, Algeria, and the Arabian Peninsula using commentary and personal testimony from each country. The flag and banner metaphor of the Khilafah appears again in Issue 5.

> The additional metaphor of "shade" makes the Khilafah concept more poignant, "The shade of this blessed flag will expand until it covers all Eastern and Western extents of the Earth, filling the world with the truth and justice of Islam and putting an end to the falsehood and tyranny of Jahilyyah" (Issue 5, 3).

To be discussed later, the dichotomy of good (truth and justice of Islam) and evil (Jahilyyah or apostates) identifies roles and characters in the passage. Shade is an analogy for the concept of the Khilafah, which posits the political and religious system as something of great magnitude and force, stretching to "all extents of the Earth". When phrased this way, ISIS considers itself as undefeatable and unstoppable.

Exigency

Exigency is another recurring theme in the *Dabiq* series. An exigence is a rise to urgency; an impending need for immediate action. The first issue of *Dabiq* features this statement, "Whoever was heedless, must now be alert. Whoever was sleeping, must now awaken. Whoever was shocked, and amazed, much comprehend" (Issue 1, 8). The past and present tenses indicate a move to action. The argument and reasoning in this passage are significant. Heedless, sleeping, and shocked are all words to assert the qualities of complacency. The word "whoever" is

somewhat vague, yet intentional in casting a wide net to audiences and associates negligence with someone who is unaware of Allah's will. Each sentence includes a division, i.e. "heedless" and "alert". There is a greater sense of meaning by placing the contradicting nature of "sleeping" and "awaken" together. The situation always seems unavoidable; the reader cannot escape the urgency and crisis IS poses.

The aforementioned passage also functions as a dichotomy with an exigence focus. Roles and personal qualities are differentiated in the passage. The two roles in the exigence example are complacency and consciousness. The rise of urgency attempts to transform the complacent into the consciousness; this is unlike the example of the two camps of thought: truth and falsehood. Instead of stating how enemies and disbelievers are wrong and seek to undermine Muslims, this passage tells people to alter their behavior. The action-oriented nature changes the way in which it is understood. This illustrates the power of using urgency, and ultimately, an exigence in a persuasive way.

Religious Justification

Possibly the biggest and most evident fantasy theme in *Dabiq* is the religious justification from the Qu'ran and Hadith. Allah is used as the sole divine responsibility for channeling the actions of IS. Often Allah is used, "...to fear Allah", "...by Allah's permission", "May Allah continue…", and "...by Allah's grace". This purports that there is a feeling that Allah is watching over and validating followers of the IS. Religious meanings in *Dabiq* are fundamental in the magazine issues*;* they seem designed to entice readers with particular Hadiths that are "tested out" with the audience. The overwhelming amount of quotes from the Qu'ran and the Hadith will

either resonate with readers, cause indifference, or alienate the audience. The quotes that resonate the most with the audience possibly may cause a fantasy chain to spread out among different communication contexts. Fantasy chains is the process-oriented feature of FTA that is said to hook individuals and cause them to "chain out" fantasy themes to different contexts. The religious justification should be viewed as an overall and over-arching rationalization that is related to every fantasy theme, yet will only chain out if relevant to the readers attitudes and lifestyle.

Faith is a sub-theme to religious justification. In Issues 1 and 3, the appearance of *iman* (faith) is considered the level of commitment and dedication to the IS cause. A hadith is used to support the metaphor for iman, "Indeed a man's iman becomes worn out within him just as a garment becomes worn out, so ask Allah to renew iman in your heart" (Issue 1, 20). Bormann discovered the fantasy type of restoration to be crucial to better understanding the Reagan hostage crisis (Bormann, Reagan, 136). He said political figures often frame their speeches in terms of returning to a previous time of greatness and sincerity. Similarly, the aforementioned quote about a man's iman suggests that Muslims have lost their way with Islam and Allah. The quote relies on an underlying assertion that that Muslims have become unable to reinvigorate their own faith by themselves or through other religious communities. IS offers a way of religious enlightenment that is more true and pure. By accepting this viewpoint, a person's faith must be restored as it has become weakened and artificial. IS offers the source and setting for followers to experience this phenomenon.

The featured article in Issue 1 describes the Millah of Ibrahim, a deeply held concept from the Old Testament of the Bible as the path to a religious community. It also functions as a

political philosophy, as Jennifer Dyer notes: to "gather the faithful linked by a covenant tracing back to Abraham" (Dyer). This concept is discussed in Issue 1 and then brought up again in Issue 3 in regards to *Hijrah* (emigration), the first of five phases from the IS master plan. The path paints an image of the righteous Jihadist fighters traveling a great distance to the IS. IS refers to this as the forgotten obligation of all Muslims, or *Jihad*. An effective antimetabole is used in Issue 3, "There is no life without Jihad, and there is no Jihad without Hijrah" (Issue 3, 31).

Faith and Hijrah (emigration) are emphasized in Issue 3, as someone who "[leaves] from his family, his wealth, and his homeland, and who believes in Allah and attests to his truth" (7). The path of Ibrahim requests adherents to travel the distance and congregate to the IS. Allah is a significant spiritual symbol that helps to guide one to this destination. In Islam, Allah cannot tangibly be seen or heard; faith is the essential essence for Muslims to make a connection to Allah. IS contests that the truest Muslims are the "[ones] who believed in Allah and the day of judgment without seeing either of them" (7). The unseen and the unknown are part of what drives faith.

The use of violence in Islam is the most contested and debated issue among Muslim scholars. A large majority condemn the use of violence and dismiss any kind of divine sanction for it. This goes against what ISIS thinks, as they see violence as a necessity to advance their motives and goals. The misappropriation of violence and a noble cause, has changed how Jihadist groups justify terrorism. The Issue 6 foreward story featured the 2014 terrorist attack in Sydney where three people were killed in a hostage situation. Man Haron Monis pledged his allegiance to ISIS and took credit for the attack. Issue 6 started off by praising Monis as he "[struck] the kuffar, where it would hurt them the most--in their own lands and on the very

streets that they presumptively walk in safety (Issue 6, 3). Monis's attack feeds into the typical IS narrative that tells readers to "to strike those waging war against the IS wherever they may be" (Issue 6, 4). The "wherever they may be" part is seen earlier in Issue 1 with the complacent and conscious example.

The sub-themes of divine sanction, heavenly rewards, and redemption are a part of the faith as justification fantasy theme. Thus, terrorist attacks become noble causes in *Dabiq*. Suicide bombers believe their actions are divinely sanctioned and held in high regard by Allah where heavenly rewards are promised in an afterlife. The sub-theme of redemption offers adherents of IS ideology that any sinful actions or "past history of shirk and transgressions are completely erased" (Issue 6, 3). If redemption is promised in their religious justification, the use of violence becomes permissible. This gives greater meaning to understanding why suicide bombings or terrorists feel divinely safeguarded from judgment when violence is treated as a noble cause.

Legitimization and Authenticity

Legitimization is a fantasy theme that goes hand in hand with authenticity. ISIS wants to be considered the most true form of Islam and worldview for all Muslims. It relates to characters and religious narratives as they provide textual parameters that play into better understanding the worldview of *Dabiq*. Much of *Dabiq* engages readers with a form of legitimizing, where messages portray ISIS as the source for unvarnished truth. State-building, governance, and violence are some examples for their proof of sincerity. In particular, a beheading represents their adherence to violence, as it is a brutal and engrossing form of proof. Legitimization is a process in which *Dabiq* imposes on readers with a structured set of principles to accept their

worldview as true. The proofs presented come in different forms as a grand mosaic to garner support and recruits.

Authenticity is quality accepted during legitimization. In this case, proofs are seen as a source of authenticity. Proofs are used to separate the real and fake adherents or wanna-be followers of IS using character labels. Labels such as quasi-, mock, and liars are used often to describe artificial individuals who are incapable of epitomizing the mujahideen. ISIS is attempting to weed out false Jihadists. *Tawhid* is having a oneness with Allah; this religious fulfillment in Islam is one that *Dabiq* frequently cites. It intertwines this as a partial fulfillment, where every Muslim engages in Jihad wherever they are or performs *Hijrah*. So legitimization and authenticity operate together to form their worldview, or more in line to FTA, a rhetorical vision.

Internal Strife

The major fantasy themes found throughout the six issues are ones that are seen more than once or repetitive. Bormann discusses how fantasy themes must account for the development, evolution and decay of dramas (Bormann, 1972, 399). The most cogent fantasy themes are ones that spread out to different communication contexts. For example, social media platforms and online discussion boards are modern day contexts for fantasy themes. However, some dramatic themes and elements are only seen once and remain as a singular occurrence. Fantasy themes are often times tested out in various issues, where some are found to be less compelling and in turn are never to be seen again. The singular and finite fantasy themes may be a reflection and response to the current situation facing the IS at the time of its publication.

Where it may affect readers at one point in time rather than perpetually.

In Issue 3, the singular fantasy theme of internal strife appears. In the section "Advice for those embarking upon Hijrah", readers receive information and instruction for emigrating to the IS. The section includes action items and trip advice to ensure safe travel. Travelers are told to "not inform anyone of your intention" and "to not worry about money or accommodations for yourself and your family" (Issue 3, 33). For as idealistic and romantic *Dabiq* contends to readers, it is surprising to find in Issue 3 that emigrates are asked to lower their expectations before arrival. In doing so, internal strife shows how existing occupants of the Islamic State are expressing their grievances. *Dabiq* typically depicts life in the IS as the grass is always greener; a palatial landscape, flourishing economy, active social groups and civilian life, and children playing are all promises of the IS livelihood. The fantasy theme of internal strife contradicts the idealistic narrative typically found in *Dabiq*.

Dabiq openly admits in Issue 3, "you may find mistakes that need fixing" and soldiers of the IS are not "infallible angels" (Issue 3, 33-34). While interesting, this is out of character for the typical IS narrative. IS sees itself as an unstoppable and inextinguishable force, although this becomes questionable when they are quite candid about imperfections of the IS livelihood. Brandon Colas, Instructor at West Point, identifies the unusualness as well and suggests the intended readers are for current ISIS members (179). ISIS members who feel disenchanted, misled, or simply confused, are the ones who are the intended audience for this section in Issue 3. If ISIS leaders are privy to members' uncertainty about allegiance, the ISIS motives behind lowering expectations are to create realistic outcomes for newcomers and to chastise current members. This also ties in with legitimization as a failing fantasy theme for those who feel ISIS

is not the most authentic form of life they previously envisioned. Finally, this again reveals, as what Colas refers to, as organizational fissures and weaknesses within IS.

Of the six Dabiq issues examined, only Issue 3 addresses problems and issues the IS faces. This runs counter to previous issues that dedicate large sections to glorifying IS life and making the journey through *Hijrah*. *Dabiq* does not show weaknesses as a way to display honesty and transparency. Every issue reads from an idealistic standpoint and posits characters as the triumphant victors in every situation. Instead, the forewarnings made in Issue 3 appear to convince current members and civilians to stay a part of the IS. The major issue comes down to retention; the existing members and occupants may be difficult to reassure. People are now questioning the longevity and survival of ISIS or simply not getting their own needs fulfilled. Colas states how "ISIS is competing for fighters, not just gaining fighters" (Colas 184), which means ISIS is similar to an open market where potential Jihadists and members need to be outbid to ensure commitment. This shows how the IS may be fracturing ideologically and in Issue 3 shows how *Dabiq* is now acknowledging inefficiencies.

Issue 6 includes a lengthy section titled "Advice for the soldiers of the Islamic State", where 31 topics are derived from "the mouths of men and the pages of books". The sub-theme of guilt emerges in regards to family and friends. The third topic is as follows, "Beware of letting the affection you have towards a relative or loved one turn you away from aiding Allah's religion" (Issue 6, 7). As *Dabiq* emphasizes that the IS life is the best option for someone, it would appear odd to tell readers their close relations are responsible for not joining IS. The typical IS narrative immerses readers and places a great deal of trust for readers to believe joining is the right thing to do. This piece reveals some internal strife within ISIS. Perhaps

potential members or would-be Jihadists are on the fence about ISIS because their family and friends are steering then away from joining.

Guilt is used as a way to manipulate readers to choose the higher calling. The transference of family and religion appears to be the change in meaning. In this case, "Allah's religion" is the more important request to fulfill in one's life. The advice goes on to say Allah's right is more obligatory and requires strong faith. The suggestions falls into the category of readers who are contemplating the IS narrative and whether it is for them.

Fantasy Types in Dabiq

In addition to developing fantasy themes, *Dabiq* also employs the use of rhetorical techniques to enhance the persuasiveness of claims made. The fantasy type is "the [stock] scenario that covers several of the more concrete fantasy themes" (Bormann et. al., In Defense of 282). Fantasy types include typical scenarios and situations. The dichotomy device in *Dabiq* is an overarching fantasy type that covers many of the *fantasy themes* identified, including: unity, state-building, exigence, faith as justification, legitimization & authenticity, and internal strife. Additionally, the repetition of characters was a major signifier to identifying fantasy types. Lastly, repetition is a device used to emphasis key points in *Dabiq*.

Dichotomies

Much of *Dabiq* uses the binary framing of dichotomies to setup "either-or" thinking. In this context, dichotomies do not constitute a theme, rather a *fantasy type*. In every issue, the "us and them" design posits a situation where the right choice seems obvious. Issue 1 states that "the world today is divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp" (Issue 1, 10, and

appears 39). The camp analogy resurfaces again in Issue 3, which presents the "Islamic State camp" as the one of truth while the other is the camp of falsehood (Issue 3). This quote plunges readers into a cosmic conflict between two ideological constructs. The quote is simply put, yet truth and falseness are analogical reductions to the greater meaning behind the passage.

One purpose of the dichotomy is to establish roles in a given passage. The "Islamic State" holds the posture of truth, religious enlightenment, and totalitarian militia. The "Other" represents the enemies of the IS, such as the West, Israel, and polytheists. Much of the Other is condemned by the IS and compared to a cancerous entity. Once the Other or enemies are clearly established in *Dabiq*, Issue 3 begins to detail how the necessary expelling and exiling of such people are needed. In reference to them, "Their lands will cast them out, Allah will hate them, and the fire will gather them together with the apes and swine" (Issue 3, 10). Furthermore, Issue 3 states how "mountainous waves of envy and arrogance" will be all that remains outside the walls of IS. Qualities such as envy and arrogance are used to describe the Other. Much of this operates on the threatening tone found in the following quotes, which once again uses an exigence to change behavior or else.

Another purpose of the dichotomy serves as an ultimatum in decision making. The two sided nature of dichotomies delineates concepts and values as well. Islam is described as "...one promised with victory, not the religion of division, partisanship, innovation, and pride in personal opinion, nor the religion void of bay'ah, imarah, and khilafah" (Issue 4, 3). Victory is the end-all result of glory and divine validation. The concepts of division, partisanship, innovation and personal pride are all considered the other, less desirable qualities to be rid of from Islam. More specifically, division is seen as secularism, partisanship as biased political

parties, innovation as religious interpretation and creation outside the domain of the Qu'ran and Sunnah, and personal pride as individualistic . These are then countered with bay'ah (allegiance), imarah (leadership), and khilafah (caliphate), the more desirable Islamic concepts to be understood and adhered for readers. This dichotomy is more grandiose compared to the good vs. evil one.

Literary critic Kenneth Burke offers conceptions of identification and consubstantiality, which serves as a parallel to dichotomies. Burke presents identification as the inevitable means by which people in society attempt to face and solve problems of the inevitable division (Jordan 267). Identification is to confront the implications of the division. Often times, the dichotomy illustrates the relations between the two options. For example, if A is not identical to B, A then is consubstantial to B. Despite that A and B are different, one is identified from the other, thus creating division and identity simultaneously; a competing duality. Consubstantiality is the connective substance that says parts of a "common text" are relatable through identification. The manifest content requires the rhetoric to answer the division, the surrounding dramatic elements to draw readers to the decision. With divisions, conflicts, or difference of opinions, rhetoric has the potential to germinate around the dichotomy to force or stray away a choice.

In an ironic sense, there is no choice at all; an individual is somewhat forced into thinking there is only one option, the IS. If the reader accepts the worldview of IS, then the choice of truth is the only option under their purview. The dichotomy eliminates any other rational choice in the matter. For example, Issue 2 states "until we return to the correct state of Islamic affairs, it's upon us all to work together to eradicate the principle of free choice" (Issue 2, 11). Identification works in this statement of Issue 2 due to the connection of Islamic affairs and the principle of

free choice. Each one gives greater meaning when positioned in the same together. Issue 2 goes on to say that free choice results in misguidance, either in the present or in the future (5). The constant appearance of the dichotomy fantasy type in all six issues shows how IS chooses to posit roles in situations.

Repetition

Dabiq often uses repetition as a literary device to reinforce or emphasize something. Repetition appears in all six issues of *Dabiq*. Many things are repeated in *Dabiq*, "Praise to Allah", Al-Zarqawi's opening quote, and enemy labels are some of the common recurrences. Issue 5 presents an interesting finding for their featured article. Entitled "remaining and expanding", the featured article in Issue 5 presents proof of territorial expansion by providing commentary and personal testimonies from each of the newly ISIS occupied countries. Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Sinai, and the Arabian Peninsula all pledged their bay'at (allegiance) to ISIS.

Although this section seeks to show how countries are fully adhering to ISIS ideology and "destabilizing taghut" (phase 3), the quotes from said countries never directly indicate this is true. Each country features Qu'ran and hadith quotes (faith as justification), with some commentary from those countries. In every section for each country, the repeated format is as follows: "the Mujahidin in Algeria were the quickest to answer the call", "the Mujahidin of Sinai faced opposition", and "The Mujahidin from Yemen advised the Muslims of the obligation of unity" (Issue 5, 22, 28, & 32). There is a similar format for each of the country's pledged allegiance to ISIS. Thus, the typical scenario for the fantasy type uses repetition as a way to promote unity and shared goals with ISIS.

The mujahidin are the agents of change in each country. The stock phrase simply

switches out the labels for each respective country. The word “advised” was interchanged for other countries with “counseled”, “directed”, and “reminded”. These all follow a similar message for readers. The interchanged words are signifiers to show the sharing of similar elements such as motives and meanings. The section's purpose is ostensibly to demonstrate unity among Middle Eastern countries. Libya’s quote shows this, “We pledged our allegiance because there is no cure for khilaf (differing) other than the Khilafah. Likewise, we call every Muslim towards this good…” (Issue 5, 23).

Characters

Dabiq presents the fantasy type of characters. Characters are often a part of dichotomies and narratives. Furthermore, the dichotomy *fantasy type* identifies characters, heroes, and villains. Characters are backbone for the emergence of fantasy types. Recurring characters show how members are sharing similar elements of a given drama. Thus, the repetition of similar situations and scenarios enacted by characters reveals how fantasy types cover several fantasy themes.

The good are portrayed as heroes; the side that represents Islam and faith are righteous. The bad are portrayed as villains; the side that represents the West and the crusaders. *Dabiq* uses an array of labels and terms to polarize the roles in each situation. The “Other” group includes characters that have been labeled as the *kufr* or *kafir,* which are considered the disbelievers, apostates, infidels, and polytheists. Dabiq frequently urges villainous characters to be terrorized and eradicated for their sinful ways; often these characters are compared to something cancerous and irreversible. The qualities of complacency, laziness, and dishonesty are used to identify the

kufr. Whenever enemies are discussed in fantasy types, the overriding sense of guilt asserts readers should not possess any of the negative qualities.

The Islamic State then portrays the *mujahidin* as the righteous, dignified Jihadist fighters. In Issue 3, *Dabiq* strongly warns readers who cohabitate or live with *kufr,* " initially leaves dashes and traces upon the heart that over time become engravings and carvings that are nearly impossible to remove" (Issue 3, 32). The mujahidin are always portrayed as the victorious protagonists. Soldiers of the IS possess the qualities of bravery, courageousness, and resiliency. Resiliency is an apparent trait, or fantasy theme, for the mujahidin character. Issue 5 presents how "the Khilafah and its mujahidin only grow stronger, more determined and more defiant" (Issue 5, 13). Additionally, Issue 5 emphasizes how "the mujahidin have refused to retreat. They continue to remain firm, having confidence in Allah's promise of victory for those who fight in His path" (Issue 5, 16). This quotes illustrates the importance of placing resiliency among the mujahidin fighters, in line with Al-Zarqawi's repeated quote, to augment the strength and power of ISIS.

The intermediary characters in dichotomies are "the strangers". Strangers are those who uproot their lives to join ISIS. They are the lone, brave, and courageous believers who leave families, homes, and wealth while making the long journey to the caliphate. As the strangers prepare and plan for the journey, and if it in fact are successfully in the trip, *Dabiq* (esp. In Issue 3) regards these individuals as the most worthy and redeemable. The magazine encourages people from all backgrounds and cultures to flee to the IS. These characters have been described as "...the most wondrous of the creation in terms of faith" (Issue 3, 8). The stranger character is intertwined with the path Ibrahim. Characters such as these assist to create a bi-polar world

between the good and the evil. The character of the stranger and the fantasy theme of unity come together as the individual must have needs to satisfy that are not otherwise able to, yet are actualized by migrating to the pseudo-society of the IS.

Every issue of *Dabiq* includes a section called "The Enemy's Words". Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, Senator John McCain, and President Obama have all been featured as the "crusaders" doing harm to the IS. Issue 3 describes the former President as an apostate and someone whose interests are only to serve capitalist gluttony (Issue 3, pg. 35). Obama is a recurring villain character in *Dabiq*, symbolizing the West and the camp of falsehood. In Issue 3 again, Obama's actions are described as "[he] will continue to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor Bush" (Issue 3, 4). In addition to key political figures, Issue 6 presents a threatening disclaimer to the West as sitting ducks, where they say "And all that the West will be able to do is anxiously await the next round of slaughter" (Issue 6, 4). The magazine spends considerable pages glorifying and promoting the IS lifestyle and ideology, while rebuking key political figures in the West to again reinforce the good vs. evil dichotomy.

The IS may seem separated from the global reach of the West, yet its ideology is grounded in targeting the West. In Issue 3, "Any tribe or party or assembly whose involvement and collaboration with the crusaders and their apostate agents are confirmed...we will target them...and we will eradicate and distinguish them" (Issue 3, 12). If ISIS possessed the capabilities to militarily *"Destabilize taghut"* (phase 3), they would unflinchingly move forward with their plan without blinking, based on the seriousness of claims made. Although enemy targeting and portraying the West as the villainous opposite is evident, *Dabiq* surprisingly does not primarily focus on urging attacks on the U.S. Religious discussion and selections from the

Qu'ran and Sunnah take up the majority of the textual substance of *Dabiq*.

The hypocrite is another character found in *Dabiq*. Hypocrites generally fall under the category of the Other. Issue 3 warns readers not to allow hypocrisy to creep into their hearts (25). *Dabiq* describes hypocrisy as the devastating result for not fulfilling the obligation of *Hijrah*. This is similar to the strangers who transform into the most wondrous people for their long journey. Yet the transformation for the character of the hypocrite must come through the legitimization of *Hijrah*. Once *Hijrah* is accepted and enacted, the hypocrite becomes saved in a sense and is then deemed sincere.

Additionally, *Dabiq* contains a surprising amount of criticism towards "modernized Muslims" who are attacked for not adhering to Jihad; they are described as failing to fulfill their own religious obligation (15). They go on to say "he lives in the West amongst the kuffar for years, spends hours on the internet, reads news and posts on forums" (Issue 3, 27). The abandonment of Jihad as a whole, and more specifically *Hijrah*, are two major issues *Dabiq* contends and uses bad characters to display the repercussions of neglect. In reference to the good vs. evil dichotomy and Muslims who are contemplating joining ISIS, Issue 4 features a statement to remove any indecision: "Anyone who says otherwise now should review his faith before death suddenly takes him while he stands with one foot in the trench of the crusaders and the other in the trench of the hypocrites whilst claiming he is in the gray zone" (Issue 4, 43).

The Issue 4 statement signifies the dichotomy of characters between the crusaders and the hypocrites. Also, the accusation of inadequate faith (iman) is threatened with the possibility of death. Yet the evocative point remains to eliminate the gray zone, where indecision regarding faith and allegiance with the IS should be questioned. Issue 4 states that "The mujahid knows no

gray zone" and even references President George W. Bush's post 9/11 speech "As the liar Bush truthfully said, either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (43). Characters are the cornerstone to fantasy themes as they model behavior for the dramas to be played out. The principles, beliefs, and claims found in a fantasy theme are enacted by characters, of which the audience can identify or disassociate with the characters be accepted or unaccepted in real life scenarios and decisions for readers.

The character of John Cantlie is by far one of the more unusual and bizarre commentary operatives for the *Dabiq* narrative. At the time of his writing, John Cantlie is a prisoner of ISIS and a journalist who writes articles in *Dabiq*. The Islamic State introduced Cantlie in the "Lend me your Ears" propaganda video series. He first appeared in *Dabiq* Issue 4 and has been featured in subsequent issues. In every article, he takes a critical position against Western foreign policy and blames U.S. governments for the killings of ISIS prisoners. He refers to the beheading victims -- James Foley, Steven Sotloff, David Haines, and Alan Henning -- as "four foolish policy victims" (Issue 4, 53). In addition, he states in Issue 5 how "our governments are too aloof, prideful, and conventional" to understanding the ISIS global threat. His disparaging remarks about the West and gloating of ISIS strongly suggests Stockholm Syndrome has set in for Cantlie. Still, Cantlie may be regurgitating the rhetoric of ISIS as a way to survive as a prisoner and remain useful to his captors.

The character of Cantlie is instrumental to the fantasy themes of *Dabiq*. Whether or not the statements are Cantlie words, his enacted character and role played in *Dabiq* is more significant to consider rather than the validity of Cantlie's textual credibility. The most evident sub-themes of the Cantlie character are blame and responsibility aimed at the U.S. He points to

the villain President Obama as the source of weakness and indecision for the West. Issue 5 compares Obama to "a robot stuck in a loop", where he is making the same mistakes twice, that is interfering with ISIS military operations (Issue 5, 39). Another sub-theme for the Cantlie character is the expression of gratitude towards his captors. He states in Issue 5 how "the mujahidin have kindly given me a voice the others never had" (Issue 5, 55). This choice to use Cantlie as a journalist crudely shows how much ISIS values their image in the way of recruitment and mass appeal. Cantlie represents the voice from the other side, the voice of reason and eloquence that tries to persuade foreigners that the U.S. and their allies are the enemy.

Rhetorical Visions in Dabiq

The rhetorical vision of ISIS is considered the putting-together of the most viable and apparent fantasy themes. Rhetorical visions are overarching in textual artifacts as they posit a social reality for audiences. One indication of a viable rhetorical vision is its capability to accommodate the community and deal with the anxieties of the group. Muslim grievances and ill feelings comes from different points in history. ISIS capitalizes on these feelings and weaves them within the narratives and fantasy themes found in *Dabiq*.

The fantasy theme of unity and faith as justification offers a better, more fulfilling and functioning society to live in. Fantasy themes and fantasy types are the aggregates that form group consciousness and culture within a group. *Dabiq* is the self-correcting rhetoric for Muslims under duress. ISIS forms this rhetorical vision in *Dabiq* as all-encompassing and impelling, which is the momentum necessary to manifest a social reality. Thus, the emergence of a social reality becomes a byproduct of the rhetorical vision found in *Dabiq*. A social reality is the essential set of values, opinions, and beliefs an individual possesses.

The social reality of ISIS is best understood when taking a holistic view of all the dramatic communication. Fantasy themes are the aggregates that form part of the social reality ISIS wishes to be in place the utopian-esque depiction of life in the IS feeds into the rhetorical vision. The ideological adherents of ISIS use *Dabiq* as a way to understand their worldview. If a reader cannot align their own beliefs with the authenticity *Dabiq* offers, legitimization fails and they then cannot accept the worldview. However, a reader who becomes excited and vivified are the ones who make it possible to spark fantasy chains among their social circles and networks.

> In Symbolic Convergence Theory, a general theory of communication a part of FTA, Bormann states that "when a rhetorical vision emerges, the participants in the vision come to form a rhetorical community. Membership may be formalized, through such symbols as induction and initiation ceremonies, confirmation and baptism, dues paying, and carrying a card" (133).

Bormann mentions how the rhetorical vision typically contains a master analogy to assist in pulling the various elements together. The rhetorical vision of ISIS can be best understood from the discovery of master analogies in *Dabiq*.

Master Analogies in Dabiq

Issue 2, entitled "The Flood", uses Noah's Ark as a reference to the picturesque flooding on Judgment Day. The flood serves as a master analogy; pulling together various fantasy themes. For example, the theme of unity is drawn into the analogy in the previous quote. The phrase "to work together" acts as the saving grace from the apocalyptic event. The flood also is the catastrophic prophecy IS proposes to readers. The dichotomy fantasy type is used as an ultimatum, and uses exigence as the sense of urgency. Issue 2 states "It's either the IS or the flood". The characters of disbelievers and sinners deserve to drown. In addition to the

aforementioned dramatic elements, Issue 2 also shows the fantasy theme of threat and punishment. Drowning is the punishment for the disbelievers.

The apocalyptic tone is a part of the flood master analogy as seen in Issue 4. In this quote, "...by Allah's permission that this campaign will be your final campaign" (Issue 4, 5). IS is stating there will be only one event to end the warfare and crusader injustices. Under this premise, no subsequent events will follow; the end of times as the setting where only the mujahideen exist and rule the remains. "We will conquer your roman, break your crosses, and enslave your woman, by the permission of Allah (5).

Al-Zarqawi's quote opens the first issue of Dabiq, and appears in subsequent issues, "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify-by Allah's permission--until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq" (Issue 1, pg. 2). Al-Zarqawi plays an influential role in the rhetoric of *Dabiq*. The former Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) leader was considered the punisher of intellectual figures in Jihadist rhetoric. He condemned Shia Muslims to the severest degree and reinvigorated strong appeals for use of violence against enemies. The opening quote signifies the visceral emotions behind ISIS, and deems the entity as a force to be reckoned with. The metaphor of fire, with additional descriptors of sparks and burning, enlarge a sense of strength and power. It is a statement to punctuate the unrelenting nature of ISIS. These describe the entity of ISIS as unstoppable and inextinguishable.

Fires are of course, a threatening force that escalates quickly if left unattended. ISIS hopes to show no intention of becoming obsolete or ineffective in spreading ideology and goals. Resiliency is another quality expressed by ISIS, "If any aspect of [Islam] is abandoned or ignored…[it] will quickly fill the vacuum" (Issue 3, 16). The echo chamber of *Dabiq* allows the

rhetoric to germinate in an unsolicited setting. *Dabiq* becomes an exercise of self-rationalization in order to glorify ISIS fighters as the most holy and righteous. ISIS is compared to fires as a way to indicate the seriousness of their threats to surrounding areas in the Middle East, and beyond borders extending to the West. The crusader armies are considered the West, their allies, and Israel. *Dabiq* often refers to enemies as "the new apostate regime" or "crusaders" symbolizing the Christian armies centuries ago.

The consuming and encompassing magnitude of fires is exactly how ISIS wishes to be portrayed. ISIS becomes enlarged in impact when compared to something steadfast. Even when fires are put-out, there always remains a radiation of heat that slowly smolders rather than when it expires. ISIS envisions a world engulfed in war until one side is victorious and the other is wiped off the face of the earth. ISIS and its ideology cannot be suddenly removed or destroyed with military assaults; the dangerous ideas behind ISIS are like weeds that continue to crop-up. In this regard, ideology is expected to survive through lineage in Issue 4, "If we do not reach [our goal], then our children and grandchildren will reach it. And they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market" (Issue 4, 5). The will to remain relentless and omnipresent is the backbone to the Islamic State's ideology.

Al-Zarqawi's quote is found in the beginning of every issue of *Dabiq*. The prevalence of this quote and its frequent usage represents the embodiment of ISIS ideology. This quote serves as major symbolic weight for readers as it represents key qualities for ISIS: relentlessness, resiliency, strength, and power. A rhetorical vision is considered the putting-together of the most apparent fantasy themes and related dramas. Bormann introduces the concept of master analogies in his discussion of Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT). He describes master analogies as the

substance that assists in pulling together fantasy themes, types, and characters for rhetorical visions (Borman, Symbolic, 133). Every rhetorical vision is said to be integrated with a sharing of dramatizing messages. In this case, the Al-Zarqawi quote is the master analogy that compares ISIS to something unstoppable using the metaphors of fire, sparks, and burning. To sum the meaning behind Al-Zarqawi's opening quote, ISIS does not see itself as something extinguishable or removed from the political and military arena in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The examined six issues of *Dabiq* in this study revealed how ISIS are merchants of fear and intimidation. The threatening tone of *Dabiq* is distinctively present in every issue. Most prominently, the fantasy themes of exigency and religious justifications strongly work together to posit the world involved in an imminent end of times; a prophesized holy struggle where the soldiers of Allah walk the empty remains. *Dabiq* writers and producers especially use the fantasy theme of religious justification to select alterations of the Qu'ran and the Hadith to support their narratives, arguments, and worldview. The creators of *Dabiq* had to listen and respond to how current ISIS members conceptualize their own importance within the organization. The magazine seeked to validate current members and attract new followers at the same time. The discussion of fantasy themes, fantasy types, master analogies, and rhetorical visions found in *Dabiq* showed the ideas and motives behind ISIS.

Dabiq represents just one branch of the ISIS machine. ISIS intends to symbolize the global Jihadist movement. The ISIS movement is based on a worldview that perpetuates a long-term struggle. The cosmic divide is framed by radical and violent Jihadist ideology. The

fantasy themes found in ideology offer glimpses as to how ISIS and current members disseminate among their own groups through social networks and other lines of communication. The visions and sentiments expressed in *Dabiq* are not easily deterrable. This often overlooked aspect may incite wishful thinking from the West to believe ISIS is nearing its end based on territory setbacks. Since the Caliphate establishment, ISIS has lost territory footholds; however it will be radical Jihadists who perpetuate the ideology left behind. Jihadists are strong-willed and religiously motivated agents of change. The Islamic State has firmly stated their intentions to assemble fighters and control territories. With enough followers and believers to sustain, the political and military movements will remain sustained by by ideology that will not fall off the map.

The difficulty in tracking the development and decay of radical groups is in part due to how dynamic Jihadist movements are able to adapt to new situations. The use of violent Jihad has amplified the urgency for Westerns and international audiences to continue research to understand the complexities of radical groups. Audiences who read and believe the material found in *Dabiq* perpetuate ISIS ideology. Further research should look at how radical Jihadist groups exist and sustain over time; the dramatizations in *Dabiq* are one way ISIS ideology survives.

Over the course of the six issues of *Dabiq*, it appeared that the issues built upon one another. The issues respond to the situations facing ISIS at the time of each publication. The magazines are not necessarily isolated, yet attempt to weave together references and concepts mentioned in previous issues. For example, the concept of Hijrah is first mentioned in Issue 1, yet is not fully elaborated on until Issue 3. Expansion is first mentioned in Issue 1, yet becomes

the focal point in Issue 5. Despite that each issue presents its own unique topic of discussion, every issue tries to connect previously mentioned ideas. Issue 5 describes that "This is the promise of Allah. The true religion--embodied by the Jama'ah of the Muslims (the khilafah)--will manifest over all false religions, with proof and evidence by the sword and spear" (Issue 5, 3). This quote uses references from Issue 1 (the return of the khilafah, Issue 2 (manifest over false religions), and Issue 4 (the sword and spear metaphor).

In particular, the fantasy theme of internal strife was a significant finding. The transparency in *Dabiq* frankly tells newcomers of the Islamic State they will find problems that need fixing. Much of *Dabiq* paints a romantic image of the Islamic State where fighters are empowered and people live in harmony; internal strife tells a different story that contradicts previous narratives. This fantasy theme reveals how ISIS is struggling to retain fighters and people within the Islamic State. Although family resistance is one reason for internal strife, it would be interesting to discover other reasons as to why ISIS narratives contradict one another.

One goal of *Dabiq* is to persuade audiences the actions of ISIS are valid and justified. Based on the ISIS need for recruitment and survival, *Dabiq* presumably aims to change the beliefs and attitudes of readers. Despite recent ISIS military and territory setbacks, it is important not to underestimate the rhetoric in *Dabiq*. This study showcases six months of ISIS current events and strategic messaging; much of the fantasy themes and fantasy types depict the values of empowerment and strength. For example, the fantasy theme of state-building intends to describe a self-sustaining and functioning society. Thus, ISIS ideology has in no way had any major setbacks within *Dabiq*; as long as there are readers to listen, there always will be an audience. Dangerous beliefs cannot be unlearnt or unheard, they can only be re-understood with

equally compelling counter-narratives made by key figures in Muslim communities or possibly the West. One consideration in creating a counter-narrative would be to use an interfaith approach; the relating of different religions may serve the best outcome to challenge Jihadists thinking, as religious justification was evident in *Dabiq*.

As Western policy makers focus heavily on the tactical elimination of ISIS, they overlook how the residual radical beliefs are ingrained, allowing Jihadists groups to continually reappear. It would require compelling counter-narratives made by Muslim communities and the West to draw would-be ISIS members away from the rhetoric of *Dabiq*. The U.S. State Department put together the "Think Again, Turn Away" campaign, using twitter accounts to tweet counter messages that hoped to deradicalize groups and sway on the fence Jihadists. The campaign received much criticism as an ineffective operation that had no real substance. It is also doubtful terrorists, radicals, or lone-wolf types will read something written by the U.S. government. Future publishers of counter-narratives may need to mask their identity in order to attract radical audiences. Additionally, any effective counter-narrative will have to keep in mind the *Dabiq* issues, as they provide glimpses into ISIS ideas and motives. U.S. departments need to communicate with opinion leaders of Muslim communities in order to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap in producing counter narratives.

ISIS is not wasting time waiting for *Dabiq* to sink in with audiences. ISIS is now producing a new magazine series titled *Rumiyah* that focuses on monotheism. The first issue appeared on September 6th, 2016, nearly two years after the first issue of *Dabiq*. The ISIS media machine is consistently producing new materials. This is ramping up the need for continued research to understand ISIS magazines. The comparing and contrasting of different ISIS

magazines could help explain how some narratives contradict one another.

One limitation of this study, particularly in regards to FTA, was the lack of discussion with fantasy chains and the chaining process. Fantasy chains are said to hook individuals to the major fantasy themes and initiates the dissemination, or chaining process, to different communication contexts. Without a clear overview of other ISIS or Jihadist media contexts, the gap was too large to claim the fantasy chains had in fact spread. Future studies could consider different ISIS communication contexts, such as *Rumiyah*, and continue the research to determine how fantasy chains maneuver in multiple settings.

Another limitation of this study was the separation of audience effects and understanding the persuasive elements in *Dabiq*. Without personal interviews or qualitative information, this study could only make suggestions as to the link between readership and behavior. Thus, audience effects were not analyzed in this study. *Dabiq* does not directly reveal the number of recruits or how many people have joined ISIS as a result of the magazine.

Qualitative studies will help to explore the link between readership and the interest to join ISIS. Research of this kind will help balance the textual work explored in this study. Future work should consider collecting information surrounding the individual's impact from reading *Dabiq*. However, this may be difficult as the full-fledged adherents of *Dabiq* or like-minded radical thinkers may be hard or impossible to use in the way of research. The more research conducted will only help to gain a clearer picture of how ISIS operates and impacts audiences. Lastly, *Dabiq* is primarily disseminated through the internal and social media; a future study could look at the amount of digital traffic and the number of downloads per *Dabiq* issue.

Other future work could consider the visual rhetoric in *Dabiq*, which would be equally

fascinating and serve to critique the other persuasive parts in the magazine. The pictures in *Dabiq* capture the emotional substance that carry memorable moments for readers. The reality is many readers are likely to become emotionally charged and compelled to action based on the pictures alone. Many pages are accompanied with glorified images of military accomplishments, fighters huddled together, and grandiose landscapes of the Islamic State (IS). Persuasion is evident in both written materials and images.

The personal impact from researching ISIS was eye-opening. *Dabiq* touched on many subjects that often were interrelated: religious, social, cultural, and organizational. The subject matter was incredibly overwhelming. The thesis writing process required my full attention and focus to achieve the final results. Despite the long haul, many unanswered questions remain about ISIS that have yet to be discovered. With conversations and common intrigue, research and dedicated work guides our search for understanding the complex and dramatic.

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