

## The Portrayal of Pashtuns in Pashtu Language Movies: A Comparative Analysis of the Content of Classic and Modern Pashtun Films With Pashtun Literature

Majid Ali Shah\*

Girne American University, Karaman, Turkey

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the representation of Pashtuns in both classic (pre-1985) and modern (post-2000) Pashtu language movies, and to determine the differences between such portrayal in these movies and that in Pashtun literature. A qualitative method approach, consisting of descriptive case study, qualitative content analysis and comparative semiotic analysis is used to examine the content of Pashtu language movies. Pierce's semiotics model is used in this analysis: eighty positive leading characters are purposely selected from the sample (ten classic and ten modern Pashtu movies) and are compared with Pashtun literature. The findings reveal that Pashtuns are framed in classic Pashtu language films as they are in Pashtun literature, 96% of the representation of Pashtuns in classic movies are identical with "Pashtunwali" and Pashtun literature while 52.25% of the portrayals in modern Pashtu language movies differ from those in the literature. However there are contradictions between the representation of Pashtuns in modern movies and that in Pashtun literature. As compared with classic Pashtun films, the producers and directors of modern Pashtu language movies frame Pashtuns as an uncultured, unprofessional people, as drug addicts and extremely violent, while female actresses in modern Pashtu language films are objectified and used to spread vulgarity through seductive dance and music together with signs and language that show the Pashtun people in a negative light. The classic Pashtu language film industry thus presents a truer picture of the Pashtun population.

**Keywords:** Representation of Pashtuns; Semiotic analysis; Content analysis; Pashtu films and Pashtunwali

### Introduction

The role of the media and their effect on society goes beyond just entertainment, information and education, media is the tool through which the very fabric of society is moulded. Even when the purpose of a media message is to entertain, there are still slivers of intentional representations and misrepresentations of race, class, sexuality, and gender amongst others. As a tool of changing perceptions, creating narratives and influencing decisions, the media is considered one of the most powerful of such tools. Curran, Grevitch, Bennett and Woollacott posit that the media is arguably the most powerful tool used to influence decisions and spread misinformation. This study departs from the common and well-treaded research into representations in movies, which usually focuses on how a particular gender or race are portrayed in movies, instead this focuses on how a tribal group in Pakistan are depicted in local film productions. This is important because it shows how tribalism and xenophobia might be a major concern even within people of very close ethnic ties. Pashtu films are produced mainly for the consumption by Pashtun people and mainly focus on stories about the region and other regional, historical and cultural based movies. Pashtun culture is based on "Pashtunwali" which means non-written ethical code and traditional lifestyle which the indigenous Pashtun person predominantly follows. TV and film is a major influencer on how viewers form opinions and how they perceive other's opinion. What we think about a race, region or society is usually based on how these people, race or society is depicted on TV. Although produced mainly for Pashtun people, Pashtu films are growing in popularity and are increasingly being watched outside the region and because of this, the researcher fears that wrongly representing the culture and practices of the Pashtun people might have far reaching and most likely, negative effect on how Pashtun people are perceived by outsiders. The way the women are depicted might be a silent but potentially important revolt against the status quo. It is quite possible that the writers and producers

of the movies want to depict Pashtun women as more free-spirited, open minded, adventurous, strong and independent. However, this does not change the fact that a lot of these movies misrepresent the Pashtun culture, whether this would have a positive or negative impact on the society at large remains to be seen and would hopefully serve as the basis for future research into the Pashtun culture and how the film industry has influenced it. The primary focus of this study is to examine the representation and misrepresentation of Pashtuns in media and to find out the differences and similarities of the portrayal of Pashtuns in Pashtu language movies and Pashtun literature. Culture rules virtually every aspect of our lives such as music, literature, visual arts, architecture or language and life style. In fact, the things produced by a culture which we perceive with our five senses are simply manifestations of the deeper meaning of culture, what we do, think and feel. Culture is taught, learned and shared with every member of society. In this regard, the study attempts to explore the impact of media upon the Pashtun society and culture. Additionally, this study aims to find out how the depictions of violence, foul language, sex and nudity on Pashtuns movies contradict with Pashtun literature or "Pashtunwali". Qualitative method of research is applied to this study to find out all the possible answers for the main research question of this research. The researcher selected eighty positive leading characters from total twenty Pashtun movies. All the selected characters were analyzed through

\*Corresponding author: Majid Ali Shah, Girne American University, Karaman, Turkey, Tel: +90 850 650 2000; E-mail: [majidali\\_1@hotmail.com](mailto:majidali_1@hotmail.com)

Received March 24, 2018; Accepted August 04, 2018; Published August 10, 2018

**Citation:** Shah MA (2018) The Portrayal of Pashtuns in Pashtu Language Movies: A Comparative Analysis of the Content of Classic and Modern Pashtun Films With Pashtun Literature. J Mass Communicat Journalism 8: 382. doi: [10.4172/2165-7912.1000382](https://doi.org/10.4172/2165-7912.1000382)

**Copyright:** © 2018 Shah MA. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

comparative semiotic analysis with Pashtun literature. Whilst in the second phase qualitative content analysis is used to analyze ten classic and ten modern Pashtu movies to find out the main differences to clarify how Pashtuns were depicted in classic and modern time. There is no doubt that with passage of time advancement and improvement affects the original norms and values of any culture. But this research study especially focuses on main categories in both time frames, which are derived from Pashtun literature and “Pashtunwali”. According to Drumbl “Pashtunwali” is a customary law for the Pashtun people and every Pashtun has to obey this law; however, it is not a formal state law.

## Theoretical Framework

This study adopted cultivation theory, cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s. Riddle states that the more time people spend ‘living’ in the television world, the more likely they are to believe social reality aligns with reality portrayed on television. Under this umbrella, perceptions of the world are heavily influenced by the images and ideological messages transmitted through popular television media. According to West and Turner, cultivation is a positivistic theory, meaning it assumes the existence of objective reality and value-neutral research. Cultivation theory posits that Television is the most influential medium because it occupies a central role in everyday life of the average person.

Cultivation Theory, in its most basic form, suggests that television is cultivating viewer’s conceptions of social reality. The combined effect of massive television exposure by viewers over time subtly shapes the perception of social reality for individuals and, ultimately, for our culture as a whole. This theory is particularly relevant to this study because the study aims to find out a minority group are perceived in Pakistan based on their portrayals in movies.

## Review of Relevant Literature

This section of shall briefly take a look at similar researches done in this area of study, their relevance, findings and conclusions.

Studying the portrayal of a culture, people, region, race or gender is not new in academic discourse and as such there is no shortage of literature in this regard. A lot of scholars from practically every region of the world have attempted to study and perhaps understand how and why certain people or regions are portrayed the way they are in popular media. This study is also an attempt to understand how Pashtun people are portrayed in Pashtu movies. And by so doing, it is the hope that the researcher would be able to determine and understand the underlying reasons for the portrayals.

On the portrayal of women in films, Arshad et al. [1] in their article title, ‘The portrayal of women in Pakistan feature films Urdu and Punjab (1988-1999) a critical evaluation’ critically examined and evaluated forty eight (48) Urdu and Punjabi films and explored the characters of the women in this movies. The study made use of content analysis, they found out that the movies and how they portray Pakistani women is not a true reflection of women in Pakistan and the movies do not even try to tackle or even present some of the struggles women face in Pakistan. The authors also concluded that the representation of women in these movies is heavily influenced by male prejudices and do not represent the social or political roles women play in the country. This study clearly shows how women are presented and represented in media, but fails to show how these representations have influenced perception or changed people’s attitudes towards women in Pakistan. The article was more a comparative analysis of Urdu and Punjabi movies, but this distinction can easily be lost to the casual reader of the

article as the authors failed to clearly explain the direction of the study and the fact that it was a comparative study. Also the authors failed to explain how they arrived and selected the 48 movies they analysed. There is no way to objectively conclude that the selections of these movies were scientifically done.

Took a different approach to the issue of depiction of women in Pakistani cinema by looking at the issue through the lens of feminist depiction in Pakistani movies. Their article titled, ‘Challenges of Patriarchal Ideologies in Pakistani Cinema: a case of feminist depiction in films’ examined four (4) movies; Bol, Dukhtar, Bachana and Khuda ke liye, and tried to understand and explain their ideological leanings-feminists or patriarchal. Descriptive analysis was used and they found out the women in the movies are depicted as bold and challenging the patriarchy and tried to push the idea that feminism is very beautiful. Similar to the research done above, the researchers here also did not explain how they went about selecting their movies and how they hope this study can be generalised as a reflection of the progress being made in how women are depicted in Pakistani movies.

Lee [2] in her article titled, ‘women and their portrayal in Indian Cinema’, tackled the issue of media portrayal of women in movies by trying to investigate the interrelation of gender, cinema and women in two Indian movies- ‘Daman’ directed by, Kalpana Lajmi and ‘Mrityudand’ directed by, Prakash Jha. The research made use of the narrative method of analysing selected films. They concluded the movies depicted women as both the victims and empowered at the same time. This study immediately strikes one as trying to achieve too many things in one article. The author attempts to analysis the ideological leanings of two movies while at the same time trying to review the progress of women in the film industry by exploring the inclusion of more women directors and producers. At the end, in the author’s attempt to pursue so many objectives, the article ends up looking unfinished. Although the authors take on the issue of depiction of women in Indian movies are quite interesting and the findings similar to that of Zahid, Malik and Iffat.

A study by Shohat [3] analyzed “oriental” movies, which he described as movies about the orient, or movies located in the oriental areas/region or movies with a reasonable amount of oriental characters in them. The movies analysed by Shohat where produced in Hollywood and he explained the movies were simply a look through the eyes of Americans about their opinion and views of the orient especially in regards to women. Shohat concludes that women in these movies were depicted as a product of the western male, a thing to be enjoyed by men. He explains that in the movies analysed, white women are depicted as desirable while minority women appear to be sexually inferior or unwanted. This article is also plagued with the same problems noted in Lee [2] article; too many issues are being tackled at the same time, therefore not allowing the author to reach specific point before jumping on another issue. However; interesting findings were founded in this article. Cai and author analysed the content of three Hollywood films in which there was Chinese actors played essential roles. They founded that in Marlowe, Bruce Lee represented a wicked and callous character who had very hostile relationship with the West most especially, America. In contrast Jackie Chan’s character in Big Brawl and Rush Hour was intelligent, confident responsible and honourable and had good relations with America. The researchers concluded that Chinese characters in modern times have been mostly represented as good guys with hardworking and honourable characteristics. This study basically looked at the progression of Chinese characters in Hollywood movies from 1960s to recent times and tried to ascertain

how their representations have evolved over time. From the study, one can immediately notice that the earlier movies depicted Chinese and their American counterparts in rivalry roles while later movies should them in a more cooperative and even cordial relationship.

A lot of researchers have worked on Hindi cinema and how women are depicted in them, and a large number of them have arrived at the same conclusion-progress has been made, but a lot still needs to be done, since there is still some gender stereotyping prominently depicted in Hindi cinema. Datta [4] in her work examined cultural identity and personalized nationality and how they influence gender through film and media with implications on gender through media and film. She was mainly concerned with how market forces and ideologies impact on how genders are depicted in Indian cinema. She went on to explain that in the 1980s, the cinema was inundated with the objectification of women and the valorising of men. By the end of the twentieth century, women were presented more in the role of mother, domestic help and generally subordinate roles [5].

The author analysed various aspects of women's representation in popular cinema in India. She analysed various movies using semiotic and psychoanalytical approaches. She found out that the way women are depicted in movies is very different from the reality. She also found out that victimisation syndrome is a major component of women's image in cinema [6].

From the foregoing it is clear that a lot of work has been done on the depiction of women in Indian cinema, film and popular culture generally and most of the authors agree that the way women are presented in movies is a far cry from the reality [7].

This study is more concerned with how minority groups - in this case Pashtun - are depicted in movies produced in their country - Pakistan. The most common research into this concept were carried out in the US where there is great concern on how African Americans and other minority ethnic groups in the US are being represented in movies and how this representations might be affecting perceptions and beliefs about these people [8].

## Statement of the Problem

Media organisations and in this case the entertainment industry is a powerful medium through which reality is bent and shaped into what some certain class or group of people believe society should look and be like. So it is not a complete surprise that a lot of movies as empirical studies have shown, have an ideology or agenda they push and promote in the course of entertaining us. A lot of studies have shown how media misrepresents different groups of people like African Americans, women, Indians and Asians etc. These misrepresentations have real life consequences such as high unemployment levels among African Americans in US. These misconceptions and wrongly held beliefs can be tied down to a large extent on how these groups are represented in the media [9].

Pakistan as a whole and Pashtun as a group in Pakistan is still growing and developing, lacking in a lot of things other countries take for granted. However, over time, the region and the Pashtun society in particular have evolved and are still fast evolving into a more open, educated and ambitious society. These thirst and yearnings for growth and development in the region has led to increased adoption of some Western values which has impacted on the way of life of the people of Pashtun [10].

Pashtu film writers, actors, producers and other members of

film industry have been consistently criticized by Pashtun society for misrepresenting their culture in their films. A journalist Yousaf Jan from Khyber Watch TV interviewed Pashtu film stars on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and categorically stated after the interview, that if care was not taken, these movies produced in Pashtun had the tendency of destroying the little that is left of their culture. He questioned a prominent Pashtu actor Jahanger Khan and passionately asked him, 'why Pashtun actors are taking part in movies that depict Pashtun culture wrongly. The actor replied that they are just focusing on their work not on the consequences on their culture [11].

This study hopes to address the problem of media representation and/or misrepresentation of Pashtuns and their culture in Pashtu language films and to what extent this depiction is identical or contradictory with Pashtun literature and "Pashtunwali".

## Research questions

Although there are many stories and articles about Pashtun in the media but there is no conclusive research on representation of Pashtuns in the media. Drawing from similar research in this field and the personal opinions and educated beliefs on the issue of the representation of Pashtuns by Pakistani media, the researchers came up with the research questions.

**RQ1:** How does the Pashtu film industry represent Pashtuns in classic and modern movies through positive characters like the hero and heroine?

**RQ2:** What are the differences between the portrayal of these leading characters in Pashtu films and Pashtu literature?

## Methodology

This research is aimed at understanding the impact of the media on Pashtun culture and how the Pashtu film industry depicts Pashtuns [12].

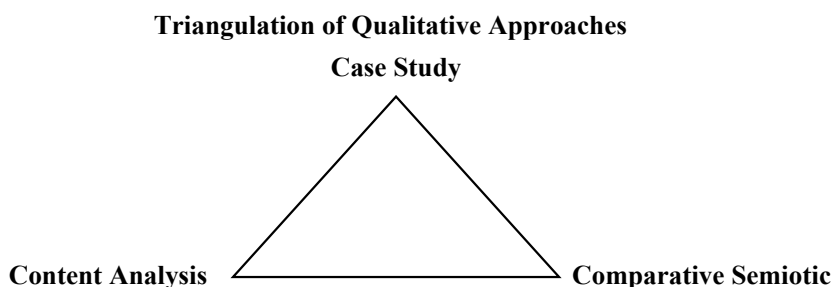
## Research design

This research study employed the qualitative method; in particular the descriptive case study approach. Case studies, especially qualitative case study is an approach to research that ensures exploration of a phenomenon within its context using different sources of data [13]. By doing this, one ensures that the issues being researched upon is viewed from a variety of lenses and allows for better understanding and thoroughness of research [14].

The descriptive case study was used because this study seeks to find out how Pashtuns are being represented or misrepresented in Pashtun movies, by thoroughly studying their representations in Pashtu movies.

The primary data (twenty Pashtu movies positive characters) were first carefully viewed and categorized accordingly. Secondly the contents of selected sample were analyzed using the tool of comparative semiotic analysis and content analysis (Figure 1).

The outcome from comparative semiotic analysis, content analysis and case study were systematically triangulated to analyze overall coherence of meaning in Pashtu movies. Authors argue that triangulation was initially used in research as an instrument of validation, but today triangulation is used as methodological technique that leads to a broader and deeper understanding of the research. The above triangulation model shows the three qualitative tools used in this study to provide a complete explanation of conversation used in Pashtu movies and Pashtun culture [15].



**Figure 1:** Triangulation of Qualitative Approaches.

S/N	Film name	Year	Genre	Producer	Director
1	Akhir Zra Dey Kana	2006	Action	Saeed Anwar beig	Naseem khan
2	Za Yuma Kakay Khan	2016	Action	Arshad khan	Arshad khan
3	Daagh	2015	Action	Hayath khan	Shah Jehan Khan and Bilal Khan
4	Jall	2010	Action	Ajab Gul	Sheikh Akram
5	Jawargar	2016	Action	Arshad khan	Arshad khan
6	Andaaz	2006	Action	Abdul Rahim	Nasim Khan
7	Gandageer	2016	Action	Muzafar Khan	Nadir Khan
8	Elzam	2014	Action	Muzafar Khan	Nadir Khan
9	Sar Teez Badmash	2016	Action	Aziz Jehangeri	Qesar Sanobar
10	Teezab	2013	Action	Shahid Usman	Shahid Usman

**Table 1:** Ten movies that will be analyzed for this study from the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Data collection and sample selection

A convenience sampling technique is used in the selection of samples for this research study. The reason for choosing convenience sampling technique is because of the methodology of this research study. Twenty Pashtun films were selected for this research from different periods, ten movies were chosen from the classic time, whilst another ten movies were selected from the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The reason for choosing these movies was because they represent the top ten selling movies of all the time as judged; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it was relatively straightforward for the researcher to obtain these movies (Table 1).

The selection of classic movies for this research study proved challenging because classic Pashtu movies are slowly disappearing and people have less interest in watching them. The other challenging factor was that, the Pashtu film industry has no official website and it is thus difficult to make a comment on classic movies. But Sher Alam Shenwari a journalist from “The Dawn” English newspaper recommended ten classic Pashtu films for this research study. Shenwari has covered the Pashtu film industry news and Pashtun cultural issues for “The Dawn” newspaper for many years and has more than enough knowledge about these films [16]. The selected classic Pashtu movies were the most popular movies of the time. It is the opinion of the researchers that these movies will provide a good source of data for the study (Table 2).

A study sample of 80 positive leading characters were purposely selected from ten classic and ten modern Pashtu movies. These 80 positive leading characters were summarized, explained and was analyzed using the tools of comparative semiotics analysis with Pashtu literature as the control medium. The following characters from the selected movies have been chosen for this comparative semiotic analysis with Pashtun literature (Table 3).

## Content analysis

The selected categories in classic and modern films were counted

separately, in both time periods to find out the differences between classic and modern movies with Pashtun literature. After comparative semiotic analysis; all the semiotic features or codes were counted to find out the clear differences of Pashtun movies with Pashtun literature. Accordingly, the researcher carefully and critically watched those movies and placed them in different semiotic features (codes). The semiotic features or codes derived from Pashtun literature, these semiotic features or semiotic categories were used as coding unites from content analysis perspective (Table 4).

The above semiotic features and coding are derived from Pashtun academic books. The above table is considered a pen picture of Pashtuns. All the selected characters in the films are compared with the table to ascertain the differences between Pashtu language films and Pashtun literature [17].

For comparative semiotic analysis a total of 80 positive characters were selected from classic and modern movies. All the four leading positive characters from each film were selected for comparative semiotic analysis with Pashtun literature. These characters were purposely selected and all the negative characters deliberately neglected in this part [18].

The speech of every single selected character in the film was translated into English language and summarized before the analysis, to provide complete details about that what message is conveyed by the character and what type of frame and language are used by Pashtu film-makers [19].

Secondly, the semiotic feature (codes) will be counted separately in classic and modern movies to find out the portrayal of Pashtuns in both time frames. A total of twenty movies were analyzed to determine the occurrence of certain variables. These variables were obtained and based on the researcher’s understanding of the Pashtun literature. This study will look at any depictions in movies that depart from the ethics and norms of the Pashtun people and yet presented as the norm [20].



S/N	Film name	Year	Genre	Producer	Director
1	Ajab Khan	1971	Biography	Farhan Munir	Badar Munnir
2	Mujahid	1978	Action	Saleem Khan Yousafzai	Nasir Raza Khan
3	Zartaaj	1975	Action	Aziz Hussain Peshawari	Inayath Ullah
4	Elaan	1985	Historical	M. Riaz Akhtar	Darwish
5	Alaqa Ghair	1972	Historical	Habib ullah and M Latif	Inayath Ullah
6	Darra-e-Khybar	1971	Historical	Habib ullah	Mumtaz Ali
7	Deedan	1975	Drama	K B Afridi	Mumtaz Ali
8	Da Gaaz Ao Da Meidan	1982	Drama	Afzal hussain	Aziz Tabasum
9	Adam khan Ao durkhany	1971	Folktale	Syed shakeel akhtar	Aziz Tabasum
10	Yousaf Ao sherbano	1970	Folktale	Syed Nazeer hussain	Aziz Tabasum

**Table 2:** Ten classic Pashtu movies that will be analyzed for this study.

S/No	Film name	Era	Position of the character	Name of the character
1	Ajab Khan	Classic	Hero	Ajab Khan
			Heroine	Gul Sanga
			Supporting role	Shahzada
			Supporting role	Bano
2	Mujahid	Classic	Supporting role	Gul Baaz
			Supporting role	Sheer khan
			Hero	Zaman
			Heroine	Zareena
3	Zartaaj	Classic	Supporting role	Marjan
			Heroine	Zar Taj
			Hero	Tamas khan
			Supporting role	Marchaki
4	Elaan	Classic	Hero	Feroz Khan
			Heroine	Palwasha
			Supporting role	Captain Usman
			Supporting role	Salmeen
5	Alaqa Ghair	Classic	Hero	Saleem Khan
			Heroine	Palwasha
			Supporting role	Saifor
			Supporting role	Kashmala
6	Darra-e-Khybar	Classic	Hero	Nawab Khan
			Heroine	Taja
			Supporting role	Akbar khan
			Supporting role	Palwasha
7	Deedan	Classic	Hero	Taaj
			Heroine	Leewany
			Supporting role	Saleem
			Supporting role	Gulshan
8	Da Gaaz Ao Da Meidan	Classic	Hero	Nadir khan
			Heroine	Nadir Khan's wife
			Supporting role	Afzal khan
			Supporting role	Afzal khan's wife
9	Adam khan ao durkhany	Classic	Hero	Adam Khan
			Heroine	Durkhaney
			Supporting role	Baloo
			Supporting role	Meroo
10	Yousaf ao sherbano	Classic	Hero	Yousaf Khan
			Heroine	Sher Banoo
			Supporting role	Dilawar khan
			Supporting role	Bandey
11	Dagh	Modern	Hero	Janan
			Supporting role	Noor islam
			Supporting role	Rokhaney
			Heroine	Khkulla

12	Jall	Modern	Hero	Shahram khan
			Supporting role	Dilawar
			Heroine	Gongay
			Supporting role	Raanda
13	Za Yuma Kaky Khan	Modern	Hero	Kakay Khan
			Supporting role	Nadeem Khan
			Heroine	Yasmeen
			Supporting role	Sameena
14	Akher Zra Dey Kana	Modern	Hero	Shahinsha
			Heroine	Nargas
			Supporting role	Nadeem
			Supporting role	Meena
15	Jawargar	Modern	Hero	Janas Khan
			Heroine	Qamar Gula
			Supporting role	Aman Ka Ka
			Supporting role	Shahzada
16	Tezzab	Modern	Hero	Usman
			Heroine	Menya
			Supporting role	Kaeynath
			Supporting role	Usman's Mother
17	Sar Teez	Modern	Hero	Sar Teez Badmash
			Heroine	Sar Teez Badmash's girl friend
			Supporting role	Master Saib
			Supporting role	Sanoobar
18	Elzam	Modern	Hero	Malang Jan
			Heroine	Malang Jan's girl friend
			Supporting role	Delbar
			Supporting role	Delbar's fiancé
19	Gandageer	Modern	Hero	Mansoor Khan
			Heroine	Saba
			Supporting role	Shahzada
			Supporting role	Shazia
20	Andaaz	Modern	Hero	Bedar Bakht
			Heroine	Yasmin
			Supporting role	Jahangir Khan
			Supporting role	Dilruba

**Table 3:** Characters from the selected movies.

S/NO	Semiotic categories/coding units	Stands for
1	Cultured	If the character is cultured, considered a positive portrayal; uncultured characters signifies a negative portrayal.
2	Occupation	If the character is a professional, considered a positive portrayal; unprofessional characters signifies a negative portrayal.
3	Signs	If the character uses good signs considered a positive portrayal; if the character use sex and swearing signs signifies a negative portrayal.
4	Language	If the character uses good language, considered positive portrayal; if the character uses foul or sexual language, indicates a negative portrayal.
5	Appearance with drugs	If the character appears with cigarettes, a water pipe, drugs or alcohol, considered as unconstructive portrayal; if the character avoids the above, signifies a constructive portrayal.
6	Appearance with vulgarity	If the character indulges in vulgar acts, signifies a negative portrayal; if the character avoids vulgarity, a positive depiction.
7	Appearance with violence	If the character appears as wanting to kill, shout, disrespect women, children and old people, considered a bad and negative depiction; if the character avoids the above elements, considered a positive portrayal.
8	Dress	If the character appears in Pashtun clothes or any official clothes or uniform, considered a positive portrayal of Pashtuns; if the character avoids the above kind of clothing signifies a negative depiction of Pashtuns.
9	Dealing with elders	If the character's behaviour and attitude are respectable towards their parents and other elders, considered identical with Pashtun literature; If their behaviour is not well intentioned, placed in contradictory category.
10	Dealing with women	If the character disrespects any woman with or without any reason, categorized as contradictory; if dealing with them according to "Pashtunwali" is considered identical with Pashtun literature.

**Table 4:** Semiotic features/coding.

## Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, Chandler [21] argues that signs do not just convey meaning but constitute a medium in which meanings are constructed. Eco [22] states in his work "the theory

of semiotic" that the sign is the primary way to convey a message and that the receiver receives that message in their own context. He further explains that signs comprise sound, image, gesture, spoken words, written words, and every single object which conveys a message [23].

Pierce proposed the word, 'semiotic' and he argues that it is synonymous that the concept of logic. Pierce explains that logic is: logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown only another name for semiotic, the quasi necessary, or formal doctrine of signs. By describing the doctrine as "quasi-necessary", or formal, I mean that we observe the characters of such signs as we know, and from such an observation, by a process which I will not object to naming Abstraction, we are led to statements, eminently fallible, and therefore in one sense by no means necessary, as to what must be characters of all signs used by a "scientific" intelligence, that is to say by an intelligence capable of learning by experience [24].

The guiding principle of Pierce's theory are sign boundaries and human mind, the triadic/trichotomy and the relativity of the three typologies (i.e., icon, index and symbol). According to Pierce the sign relation is very important. He describes the relation with three basic semiotic elements, which are:

- Sign (represents)
- Object (semiotic subject)
- Interpreting (Interpret meaning).

Pierce's model of semiotics has been selected as it is considered the most appropriate to answer the main research question, framed to discover how producers represent key actors in Pashtu films through their characters. These characters in Pashtu movies are signs and objects and these characters fit with Pierce's definition of icons (Figure 2).

Pierce's semiotic model will be employed to analyze how irregular semiotic features used to reinforce the identities of Pashtuns in the movie as particular actors. The semiotic analysis will consider the features which enable particular characters in the movie to be identified as Pashtun. For example, what similar and contrastive features make up a particular aspect of a Pashtuns life?

## Analysis, Findings and Discussions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

**RQ 1:** how does the Pashtu film industry represent Pashtuns in

classic and modern movies through positive characters like the hero and heroine?

**RQ 2:** what are the differences between the portrayal of these leading characters in Pashtu films and Pashtu literature?

## Result from comparative semiotic analysis

In order to assist the main research question eight positive leading characters have been analyzed through comparative semiotic analysis to find out the differences and similarity between Pashtun literature and Pashtu movies. Although Pashtuns are generally depicted in Pashtu movies as respectful to women, elders and their parents, twelve out of eighty semiotic features were found to contradict Pashtun literature. It can be stated that Pashtuns are portrayed as being uncultured in Pashtu movies because twenty-five semiotic features have been found to contradict Pashtun literature, whilst twenty-seven out of eighty semiotic features have been noticed as contradictory and show Pashtun people as unprofessional in Pashtu movies [25]. The signs and language used in Pashtu films were found to contradict Pashtun literature; twenty-seven out of eighty semiotic features were found to show Pashtun people in a negative light. Drugs and alcohol are shown in Pashtun films through positive leading characters only fourteen times while Pashtuns are depicted as vulgar in Pashtu movies because thirty-two semiotic features are contradict Pashtun literature. Twenty-two semiotic features have been recorded in the "violence" category while the dress used in Pashtun films contradict Pashtun literature; thirty semiotic features have been noticed, which show Pashtuns as being different from literature [26].

## Findings and discussions from content analysis

The content of the classic and modern Pashtun movies have been counted separately to find out the differences and similarity between Pashtun literature and classic and modern Pashtu movies.

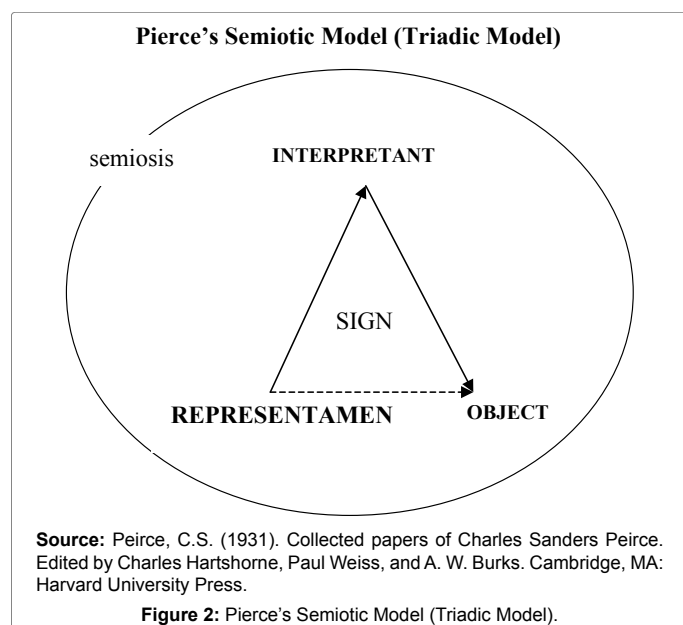
As compared to modern Pashtu movies, classic Pashtu films are identical to Pashtun literature (96%) of the time. They depict the Pashtun population positively (3.5%) the content of classic movies are to contradict Pashtun literature, whilst (0.5%) of the selected characters were not able to be analyze. The Pashtu film industry in the classic period was a real medium for the entertainment and positive representation of the Pashtun population.

In the light of the content analysis, the researcher finds that (52.25%) of modern Pashtu movies contradict Pashtun literature, (44.5%) are identical while (3.25%) of the content of modern movies does not fulfil the requirement of analysis. Pashtuns are negatively portrayed in modern Pashtun movies and there is quite a bit different in the representation of Pashtuns in classic and modern movies [27].

The representations of the Pashtun population in classic Pashtu movies are positive, whilst in modern Pashtu movies Pashtun males are portrayed more violent, uneducated or uncultured, unprofessional and drug users. Ladies in modern Pashtun films mostly appear in non-Pashtun dresses and more vulgar than in classic Pashtu films, which expose Pashtuns negatively in the modern era (Table 5).

## Discussion

In the course of this study and based on the findings of this research, we can deduce or come to the conclusion that the Pashtu film industry is a developing one, but still very influential in Pakistan. The industry is the main source of entertainment in terms of cinema, TV shows, CD dramas and films generally. So it goes without saying that such an



	Modern	Classic
Contradictory	209 (52.25%)	14 (3.5%)
Identical	178 (44.5%)	384 (96%)
No Relation	13 (3.25%)	2 (0.5%)
Total	400 (100%)	400 (100%)

**Table 5:** Total percentage of classic and modern Pashtu movies.

industry should not be looked down upon or taken for granted. This is why it is important that care is taken to ensure that only culturally relevant and truthful portrayals are presented through this medium because of the reach and influence of the film industry [28].

From information gathered during the course of this study, it was determined that the movie industry in Pashtu has evolved in terms of the message being shared and distributed. In the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the industry focused on producing historically accurate dramas, autobiographies of prominent figures and upheld most if not all cultural values and norms as stated in the “Pashtunwali” and Pashtun literature. However since the turn of this century, the message in the movies have changed; more romantic dramas, actions films with a lot of violence and thrillers are produced more frequently now. The film industry has become a tool for film producers to promote ideologies, which recently is more about promoting western ideologies and beliefs. The way actors dress, talk, behave and their general appearance on the big screen is almost westernized. Also based on the discussions the researcher had with prominent stakeholders in the Pashtu Film industry, it was found out that the Pashtu film industry is fast becoming a major and important tool used to promote certain agendas, in some cases these agendas are all for promoting better living conditions, calling attention to injustices in the society, exposing corrupt practices of government officials or showing the problems women in society face. While in other cases, the film industry simply promotes western values, something the author of this thesis finds most disheartening [29].

This clearly shows that objective of this study was met, as the authors could determine and clearly showed how the Pashtu film industry manipulates information in order to promote certain ideologies.

On the relevancy of the theory used, this study was conducted against the backdrop of Cultivation theory, which simply explains how television contributes to viewer’s perception of social realities. From the findings of this study, it is clear that there is indeed a relationship between the depictions and representations of the Pashtun culture in films and how they are perceived by the society. Apart from how they are perceived by outsiders, we can also deduce from the facts of this study that Pashtun people are beginning to lose their sense of identity as some do not even know what their culture is supposed to represent and how it should be represented in the media [30].

From the foregoing, it is clear that the findings and conclusion of this study supports the major concepts of cultivation theory. As we could clearly infer from the analysis, review of literature on the issue and interviews conducted, that the Pashtu film industry is a powerful tool through which opinions and ideas can be shaped and manipulated.

Although studies into media effects and more particularly misrepresentation in film is not new, this study is still relevant to the field of mass communication, cultural studies and film because it touches on a region that is mostly neglected in academic literature. There are hardly any materials available that talks about the Pashtun people, “Pashtunwali” or how the media might be changing their culture through negative depictions of the Pashtun people in movies. The study suggests that there is a chance to channel the power of the

film industry into promoting social change, proper representation of minority and majority ethnic groups as well championing the case for gender equality only if the industry allows and encourages diversity in the industry. By giving the people a voice, they have the opportunity to shape their own narrative in the films and cinema. This study would act as starting point for further studies, which shall be discussed more in the recommendations section into this region as regards to film and mass media industry.

## Conclusion

Cinema can be considered a social phenomenon and it reflects society and how we see ourselves in a lot of instances. Films are therefore examined and seen as cultural product, it reflects society’s values, beliefs and ideas and this is why care must be taken to ensure that movies produced and released for mass consumption should present the truths and reflects what and how the majority of people denoted in these movies see themselves. This study however focuses on how ethnic groups within a country are depicted in movies produced in those countries. This is different from popular studies conducted in the US as regards to race and how minorities are treated and depicted in Hollywood movies, as it is focused on the representation of Pashtun people in Pashtu movies and Pashtu literature.

In this study, the researcher has compared classic movies from before the 21<sup>st</sup> century and movies produced after year 2000, with the main purpose of this study is to understand how close these movies are with Pashtun literature. Pashtun people form parts of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan have a unique movie industry that produces movies that cater to the entertainment needs of this unique group within the larger Pakistani society.

The major findings of this study can be summarised as follows:

To answer the main research question: the study found that classic Pashtu movies are framed according to Pashtun literature and “Pashtunwali”. Pashtuns were positively depicted in classic Pashtu films, whilst the portrayal of Pashtun people are contradictory with Pashtun literature. However there are contradictions between the representation of Pashtuns in modern Pashtu movies and that in Pashtun literature.

Twenty classic Pashtun films were analyzed and all of the selected Pashtu films focused on the Pashtun code of living and “Pashtunwali” principles. In the light of this research, it is clear that producers, directors and other participants in classic movies entertained the vast majority of the Pashtu population in an appropriate manner and conveyed the message of “Pashtunwali” and patriotism. These classic movies were romantic and a source for entertainment, many songs being sung and the actresses dancing alone with music and poetry but no vulgarity in the poetic language and signs were used in classic movies. “Adam Khan Ao Durkhaney” and “Yousaf Khan Ao Sher Bano” were romantic films of the time but there was no vulgar element. Proper Pashtun dress is used in classic Pashtun movies and all the actresses in those movies belong to Pashtun tribes who know what messages are being conveyed through them. In modern Pashtun movies however, actresses appeared in seductive dresses which have no relationship with Pashtun literature. As compared with classic Pashtu movies; female actresses appeared more vulgar in modern Pashtu movies, which depict Pashtuns in a different frame and contradicts with Pashtun literature.

The agenda of the classic Pashtun film producers and directors is clearly different from that of the modern Pashtu film producers and directors; 96 percents of classic Pashtu movies are identical with Pashtun



literature whilst 44 percents of modern Pashtu films are identical with Pashtun literature. Pashtun males are depicted extremely violent in modern movies something which has no relation with “Pashtunwali” and Pashtun literature.

## Recommendations

This research study focuses on the representation of Pashtuns by the Pashtu film industry in two different eras. It proves that the Pashtun people are positively represented in classic Pashtun movies whilst the representations of Pashtuns in modern movies contradict Pashtu literature. However, to further understand the depth of the agenda of the Pashtu film producers, especially the complete Pashtun film industry; a key recommendation for further research is made:

First, while this study focuses on the portrayal of Pashtuns in the Pashtun film industry, it is recommended that those researching the Pashtu language media conduct an empirical study on the effect of the media on the Pashtun population, especially to understand the long-term effects of media content on Pashtun culture. This study has gone through great lengths to analyse the portrayal of Pashtun people and their culture in movies, but has just fallen short of explaining and empirically proving how these depictions and misrepresentations in newer movies are affecting the way of life of the Pashtun people. It is important to know this because it would help contribute to the ever growing literature on how media influences behaviour.

Secondly, it is important to conduct surveys and interviews with Pashtu film makers and other participants in the Pashtu film industry in order to find out the intention of those with influence. As an improvement and furthering of this work, it is pertinent that future studies into these issue interview film makers and other major stakeholders in the Pashtun movie industry. The reason for this is that without getting to hear from them and understanding what goes into making movies, we cannot have a balanced and objective view for the reasons movies are the way they are now. It would also be important to have an understanding of how people living in the region perceive the Pashtun culture and people, and one way to achieve and get this data/information is to carry out some audience based research involving interviews and questionnaires.

Finally, it is recommended that a content analysis of visual elements of news reports and other Pakistani media like TV drama series and advertisement should be conducted, to examine the depiction of Pashtuns in news, drama and especially advertisement and entertainment shows. This study studied the misrepresentation of Pashtun culture in Pashtu films, but there is empirical evidence to support the fact that the news media is perhaps the most important and powerful medium through which audience perception and ideology can be controlled and influenced. So it is pertinent that a study into how the Pashtun people are reported in the news, how news about the Pashtu region is reported both locally and internationally, is carried out, so as to ascertain the role of the news media in influencing and changing perceptions about the Pashtun people and culture.

## References

1. Arshad A, Wajid A, Hassan S (2014) The Portrayal of Women in Pakistan feature Films Urdu and Punjabi (1988-1999) a Critical Evaluaton. *Int Res J Social Sci* 3: 15-20.
2. Lee M (2016) *The Manipulation and Role of Stereotypes in the Rush Hour Trilogy*. Elon University.
3. Shohat E (1990) *Gender in Hollywood's Orient*. Middle East Report.
4. Datta S (2000) Globalization and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema. *Social Scientist* 28: 71-82.
5. Adorno TW (2005) *The culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture* Routledge Classics. Philosophy.
6. Ahmed N (2000) *Cross-cultural content analysis of advertising from the United States and India*. USA: Universal Publishers.
7. Albig W (1939) *Public opinion*, New York: Mcgraw-hill Book Company.
8. Ambreen A (2011) Media imperialism and its effects on the culture of Pakistan.
9. Bignell J (2002) *Media semiotics: An introduction*. Manchester University Press.
10. Butalia U (1984) Women in Indian Cinema. *Feminist Review*, 108-110.
11. Cai Q, Zhu K (2017) Representations of Chinese people in Hollywood martial arts films.
12. Cutting JE (2014) The framing of characters in popular movies. *Brill online Books and Journals* 3: 191-212.
13. Dong Q, Murillo A (2007) The Impact of Television Viewing on Young Adult's Stereotypes Towards Hispanic Americans. *Human Communication* 33-34.
14. Javid Y (2013) Pashtu films are destroying Pashtu culture. *The Express Tribun*.
15. Junaid M ( ) *Living the code of honour: Pashtunwali and entrepreneurial identity of Afghans in Peshawar*. London: Queen Mary, University of London.
16. Krippendorff K (2012) *Content Analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
17. Mastro D, Greenberg B (2000) The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Prime Time Television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 690-703.
18. Orient ZM, Arbeitshefte, Buch A (1998) *Being Pashtun - being Muslim: Concepts of person and war in Afghanistan, essays on south asian society*. Essays on south Asian society.
19. Reeves N (2004) *The Power of film propaganda*.
20. Rehman GS (2015) Pashtunwali and Islam: The conflict of authority in the traditional Pashtun society. *Pakistan journal of social sciences (PJSS)* Vol. 35(1), 297-307
21. Chandler D (2004) *Semiotics: The Basics*. New York: Psychology Press.
22. Eco U (1976) *A theory of semiotics*. United States of America: Indiana University Press.
23. Sanders C (2004) *The Cambridge companion to Saussure*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
24. Spain JW (1962) *The way of the Pathans*. London: Robert Hale limited.
25. Sullivan M, Evans M (2012) *Noam Chomsky theorist*. Texas: Brownsville.
26. Tarzi A, Lamb RD (2011) *Measuring perceptions about the Pashtun people*. CSIS.
27. Tony B (1982) *Theories of the media, theories of society*. Culture, society and the media 26-51.
28. Utmanzai YJ (2014) Pashtu film industry is destroying Pashtun culture.
29. Yousaf A, Arshid K, Ammarah A (2014) The Impact of Indian dramas on language and dressing of females. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Volume 19: 66-71.
30. Zainal Z (2007) Case study as a research method. *Jurnal Kemanausiaan Bil* 9: 1-6.