Perceptions of Race Among Members of the Egyptian Diaspora in the United States

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ABSTRACT
The Middle East and North African (MENA) region is ransparent with anti-blackness: there is an ongoing slave trade of sub-Saharan Africans, inhumane work programs which affect Black Africans, and unchallenged demonstrations of blackface in Egyptian media. Surprisingly no previous research has examined racial perceptions or potential biases among members of the MENA communities. This research aims to test racial perceptions and potential biases among Egyptian populations in the United States. Implicit and explicit racial perceptions, a vignette study was conducted among Egyptian church population. In the vignette, participants are presented with a paragraph describing a man who received a shortened sentence for committing a nonviolent crime and asked follow-up questions, such as if they believe the sentence is fair. The race of the man was equally altered among White, Black, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern. Data analyses show that participants were completely unlikely to find the sentence unfair for the Middle Eastern man, and more likely to find shorter sentences to be fair if they were college-educated. Data collection is ongoing and can provide more data and potentially statistically significant correlations in the future.

INTRODUCTION
Turn on the TV in an Egyptian country, and you will see unchallenged depictions of blackface and stereotypical portrayals of Black Africans in television shows, movies, and music videos. But isn’t this the 21st century? Racially prejudiced depictions of Black Africans can be traced back over one thousand years of Egyptian media, but unlike in the West, they have continued to pervade mediums of entertainment. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Egypt dominates the entertainment industry and supplies neighboring countries with television shows, movies, and music, and the influence of Egyptian cinema and art in the region cannot be understated. If disturbing depictions such as these can be widely distributed with little to no backlash, what is the state of racial perceptions in the Middle East?

When we consider the broad history of the region, prejudicial depictions are hardly surprising. The Middle East is home to a 1300-year-old slave trade, which is ongoing in the region and documented by King in "Black Arabs and African migrants: between slavery and racism in North Africa" (2019). King describes in detail the origins of anti-blackness in the MENA region, beginning with the introduction of Black Africans as slaves (2019). Slavery is ongoing today, through the trafficking of sub-Saharan Africans (Global Slavery Index) as well as the restrictive and inhumane regulations of the kafala system, a legal sponsorship work program which employs mainly Asian and sub-Saharan women (Kakande, 1980). Bias media depictions are a side effect of a much larger, deeply-seated issue and represent the ongoing prejudices maintained against Black Africans.

RESULTS
Most respondents were not victims of property crime (67.7%) but 33.5% were. About 23.4% said there was an event where an Egyptian was a victim of a crime which impacted their perceptions or crime, and 76.6% did not.

Analyses: Crosstabs analyses were conducted comparing various variables, such as the race of the man in the vignette and the decision the respondent made (Figure 1). Chi square analyses were conducted to determine if the findings were statistically significant. Notable results include:
- Every respondent answered that the Middle Eastern man should receive the shorter sentence, a statistically significant correlation ($\chi^2 = 6.498$, p<.10) which did not occur in any other racial group (Figure 1).

CONCLUSIONS
Looking at the current data, there is a statistically significant correlation that Egyptians seem to be most sympathetic with a Middle Eastern subject in the vignette, as no responses indicated he should receive a longer sentence. In general, for all four races, college-educated participants were more likely to favor shorter sentences. Written responses indicate that two participants reference race: there is an indication of awareness of racially biased perceptions of Middle Easterners in crime reports and that White preparators may receive shorter sentences that perpetrators of other races would not.

Data collection for this project is ongoing and receiving more responses can provide new insights into perceptions of race among the Egyptian diaspora and more significant correlations.

REFERENCES

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Figure 1: Frequency of Sentence Perception Based on Race: Note: $\chi^2 = 6.498$, p<.10

Figure 2: Frequency of Sentence Perception Based on Education Note: $\chi^2 = 8.867$, p<.10