

Effects of Viewing Drama on Egyptian and American Youths' Perceptions of Family

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Abstract

A transnational survey was conducted in the United States and Egypt to examine the effects of viewing television dramas on the perception of social reality, and concepts of family and society by the two genders. The research also studied the

relationship between the phenomenon of watching television and the subsequent importance placed on the concept of family and society. Differences between the two distinct cultures were researched in the amount of television consumed and the perceptions of social reality, and family and society after watching the medium. Although the relatively small convenience nature of the sample prevented the researchers from performing tests for statistically significant differences, descriptive statistical analyses were performed and reported. Results indicated rather interesting outlooks on the television consumption of different genders and nationalities, and the possible effects on social reality and the concept of family in the American and the Egyptian cultures.

Introduction

Since the dawn of media, pundits have suggested that its consumption can result in a number of negative effects, including altered perceptions of family values. Some proponents of media consumption suggest that media have little or no effect on perceptions of family values, while others believe that they do – but in a positive way, promoting a broader definition of “family” than has been traditionally accepted in the past.

Both media consumption and perception of family values vary from region to region and culture to culture. Certainly in the West the definition of family has evolved significantly over the decades. This study examines the relationship between media and their effect on the concepts of family and society. It is comparative in nature, and the two sample populations are from Egypt and the United States.

Social values and concepts, such as the definition of “family,” are also a dynamic state – not only varying by culture but changing within a culture over time. While tradition still has great effect on both American and Egyptian families, the fact cannot be ignored that there is greater spread of information through new media and technology and therefore new ideas can be conveyed. This can lead to an evolution of long-held social concepts.

This paper examines modern American and Egyptian societies and the way they are being influenced by media, especially television, while keeping in mind the traditions that these societies have come from.

Literature Review

Family takes on the form of the basic unit of society in the way it reflects that society's ethical values and cultural characteristics (Xiang-lang & Liu, 2008). A family unit is also one of the oldest human institutions even though different societies take on different family structures. For example, family in the United States and family in Egypt may take on forms remarkably different from each other.

The American Family

The nuclear family is the common form of American family (Xiang-lang & Liu, 2008). This structure consists of a mother, father and dependent children. The children in these nuclear families move out of the home around the age of 22, but there is still a close connection between the parent and the children (Xiang-lang & Liu).

The extended family including several generations has been the traditional family type (Xiang-lang & Liu, 2008) in part as a result of the economic and interpersonal relationship expectations of the time. Because of these issues the "stem" family, which consists of two or more generations with a married couple in each, was favored through American history. As the years progressed and modernization started to occur, the number of stem families has decreased and the number of nuclear families has been on the rise (Xiang-lang & Liu).

Ruggles (1994) examined the transition in American history where the extended family became less viable and the nuclear family took its place. He pointed out that the nuclear family was common in early American history too, but people still relied on their relatives for assistance. Ruggles also referenced the term "modified extended family" that Eugene Litwak coined. The concept of the

modified extended family was that it is a “coalition of nuclear families in a state of mutual dependence.” (Ruggles, 1994, p. 105).

Other trends that Ruggles (1994) cited were the change in gender roles in the American society and also the increase of fragmentary or single parent households. This changing of gender roles could have had a possible effect on the increase of fragmentary households. As women gained more empowerment, there was less dependency on the husband.

A study conducted by Walker (1996) observed how partners in a conjugal relationship assumed gender-typical roles and exerted power over each other in routine activities such as watching television. In a heterosexual relationship, the male partner exerted more influence over what to watch, due to more instances of possessing a remote control device than a female partner. The latter found it difficult to make the former watch a TV program of their choice. This affirmed the claims of some scholars who suggested that routine activities such as watching television correspond to the social structure. Data in this study revealed that in heterosexual families, fathers and sons dominate the use of a remote-controlled device more than mothers or sisters. Morley (1988) observed that fathers usually changed the channel without consulting or explaining their behavior to others in the family.

Family in Egypt

Today, family in Egypt takes on a different form than family in the United States. The Islamic religion has a great impact on Egyptian culture, and social and family structure. This helps determine norms and guidelines for everyday life of the Egyptian people (Dawla & Seif, 2000). The patriarchal social structure in Egypt dictates that the husband is the “breadwinner” and the wife stays home and takes care of household duties such as child-rearing and cooking (Dawla & Seif). This is much similar to the traditional “stem” family of an earlier period in the U.S.

Women's rights in Egypt are not as prominent as in the United States. In a 1995 study, Abu-Lughod observed that in rural Egyptian communities, women were protective of their reputation. Their social status was also lower than that of men; for instance, while socializing, men sat on benches whereas women sat on the floor (1995). While watching television, men maintained control over the kind of programs that were to be watched while women remained discreet. The social norms required older girls and women to wear a head covering as well as a black dress while making visits or traveling. The gender disparity in the Egyptian society was best described by the author in an instance when young rural Egyptian women were happy to get water pipes at home so that they did not have to go out to fetch water and in turn, risk judgment from their communities on their behavior (Abu-Lughod, 1995). The state has major impact on the legislations that could empower women by abolishing the latent gender inequalities in the Egyptian family as well as social structure (Sakr, 2004). Although family values in Egypt may have become more liberal with time, some things have not changed. As Sakr said in her 2004 study on dependency theory and women's media activism in the Middle East, "positive media exposure is thus central to unblocking the route to women's empowerment" (p. 158).

An Egyptian cultural study conducted by Abu-Lughod (1997) commented on the minor role of television in accurately depicting the social, political and cultural realities of communities. Many Egyptian television commercials dealing with contraception projected Egyptian men as conservative patriarchs, traditional in their views and defensive of the prevalent customs and traditions such as anti-birth control views (Ali, 1997). Some ads used stereotypical images of men. The article cited an example of "an unconcerned peasant patriarch who rides on a donkey while his wife, walking next to him, carries a big load on her head" (p. 43). In a 2004 study conducted by Amin and Al-Bassusi, working women had better prospects of finding a suitable match for marriage than unemployed

women. However, after marriage, women were traditionally expected to quit work and focus primarily on domestic responsibilities.

The picture that begins to appear of is that the definition of family in both U.S. and Egyptian culture has evolved and become more liberal over the years. However, the perception of family in Egypt today is much more conservative to that the current perception of family in the United States and may more closely be equated to the definition of a U.S. “stem” family of the 1960s.

Possible Effects of the Media

In a 1997 study, O’Guinn and Shrum found that in mass media, television surpassed most other forms of personal socialization such as parents, or community churches or schools. Research quoted in Yabiku (2005) indicated that mass media along with access to education, jobs and involvement in activities outside the family in a society dramatically changed family patterns. Effects of such mass education included delay in marriages, increase in the use of family planning tools, lower fertility and a predilection toward smaller families.

The effects of television on human interaction and behavior in social settings have been subject of much study. Concerns regarding the effects of television consumption have been voiced since the 1970s. In 1972, the Surgeon General’s Scientific Advisory Committee established a causal relationship between violence on television and violent behavior in audience (as cited in Dail & Way, 1985, p. 491). In their examination of literature on effects of television on individuals, Dail and Way (1985) found that most studies were based upon how individuals learn to apply themselves in social situations or solving problems when they identify with the televised images being presented. The molding of one’s behavior may occur by observing either representative situations or real-life situations (Dail & Way). As a medium, television evokes the former function. By watching representative situations as visuals on televisions, viewers associate

them with real-life and tend to emulate them (Dail & Way). This behavior may be explained by a theory proposed by Bandura (1962) that explained the learning process in individuals. The theory underlined the importance of individuals observing other people and learning to mimic their behavior in social settings.

Another theory that studies the effects of television on audience is the cultivation theory. Gerbner et al. (1977) found that audience, especially children, were particularly vulnerable to the effects of television dramas. In 1989, Fabes et al. examined the role of television in American family life and found that the medium has a strong influence on the socialization process of viewers. Viewers, especially children, learned how to behave in social situations from television characters in similar situations. Parents who recognized the potency of the influence cast by television on their children could help control and organize the consumption of the medium (Fabes et al., 1989). Unsupervised or excessive consumption of television resulted in distorted perceptions of social reality such as higher risk of violence, incompetency of law enforcement, and feelings of apprehension and doubt about external environment. Viewers with heavy consumption rates of television confused real life with dramatized life on TV and the television values seem closer to real-life values (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). Television effects, also, may be hard to observe and check because the process of watching television is commonplace that checking one's self knowingly might be rare (O'Guinn & Shrum).

In 1980, a study conducted by Brody et al. revealed implications of television viewing on family interactions. It was found that fathers and children were less oriented toward each other and talked less while watching television while mothers did not show any significant change in interactions with family members. However, the study also found that the amount of family members touching each other increased which indicated a need to maintain intimacy (Brody et al., 1980). A study conducted by Anderson et al. (2001) on adolescents over a period of time, supported the notion that content rather than viewing time is

responsible for effects of television on individuals. Another study of television effects on children, Wilson (2008) found that children adopted many behavioral patterns from the actors observed on television; the medium also affected their perception and development of social reality and skills. It was found that the effect of media on American children depended upon the preferred programming than the amount or frequency of television watched (Wilson). Children tended to exhibit aggressiveness on viewing violent television programs whereas watching children-appropriate programming such as educational and sitcoms had a positive effect on children's social skills. They exhibited "altruism, cooperation, and even tolerance for others" (Wilson, 2008, p. 87).

In both the United States and Egypt, media are seen to have an effect on perception of social reality. In 1980, Butler and Paisley outlined some findings regarding gender roles as portrayed on television. They annotated that usually there are lesser chances of women being shown as employed than men. They also found that children television shows had men in more roles and showed women in mostly familial setting. In 1982, Hall suggested that media seek to maintain the prevalent norms by not only supporting the existing ideology, but also building and molding the social reality (as cited in Kim, 2008, p. 392). A common belief among feminists and sociologists indicates that the effect of television is potentially dangerous on the image of women as their depiction is mostly in negative light (Hess & Grant, 1983). Women are portrayed to possess a lower status than men on commercial television. Men may receive the notion of masculinity, heroism and machismo through messages imparted through media (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). Kivel & Johnson referenced Ging's 2005 study on masculinity and mediated images which concluded that "mediated fictions are part of wider 'gender scripts' that both inform and are informed by the social structures within which male viewers are immersed" (p. 29). Kivel & Johnson's idea of hegemonic masculinity explained the way that the dominant position of men was secured because of gender practices which were conveyed through

institutional practices (Kivel & Johnson). In 1982, Hall suggested that media seek to maintain the prevalent norms by not only supporting the existing ideology, but also building and molding the social reality (as cited in Kim, 2008, p. 392). A common belief among feminists and sociologists indicates that the effect of television is potentially dangerous on the image of women as their depiction is mostly in negative light (Hess & Grant, 1983). Women are portrayed to possess a lower status than men on commercial television. While the notions of gender differences can be imparted through media, there has been little empirical evidence so far that has been able to prove that media consumption imparts this concept of hegemonic masculinity or violent masculinity (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). While there is still much research to be done on this concept, it is found that media such as television, radio, books, magazines and even video games have the ability to impart messages concerning gender identities as well as simply providing a leisurely activity (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). In 1980, Butler and Paisley outlined some findings regarding gender roles as portrayed on television. They annotated that usually there are lesser chances of women being shown as employed than men. They also found that children television shows had men in more roles and showed women in mostly familial setting.

In Egypt, television represented modernity when it was first introduced in the 1960s (Abu-Lughod, 1995). It opened the Egyptian eyes to the vast contrast between the Western world and theirs. In a country like Egypt where illiteracy remains a concern, television brought a wave of unfamiliar foreign experiences to the locals in the comfort of their own homes. Abu-Lughod (1995) argued that a handful of media professionals pressed the need to modernize upon the country's youth, women and rural population. These self-proclaimed cultural activists usurp and skew Western ideas and introduce them to the public with the help of television thus seeking to produce "a virtuous modern citizen" (p. 191).

In the beginning, the Egyptian government planned to use television to enlighten the Egyptian society, especially individuals in rural areas, by

disseminating information regarding politics, literature and art (Abu-Lughod, 1995). In the 1980s, a television series known as *Hilmiyya Nights* engaged Egyptians in a drama examining relationships and characters from Hilmiyya, a traditional neighborhood in Cairo (Abu-Lughod, 1995). The series especially featured strong central female characters that face various moral and social dilemmas at various stages of their lives. An ethnographic study involving the series' viewers found that the audience was careful of the hidden social messages in the series (Abu-Lughod, 1995). Viewers took pleasure in the boldness of characters shown yet accepted their moral decisions only when the ideas echoed with their own. Important issues seemingly relevant to rural Egyptian viewers were raised on other television series, too (Abu-Lughod, 1997). Yet, the issues seemed too alien to be assimilated in daily life due to the difference in the social standing of the viewers and the series characters (Abu-Lughod, 1997). . . . Nonetheless, televised messages can have different effects on different audiences depending upon the quality of education and lifestyle. In a 1997 study, Abu-Lughod stated:

Television makes obvious the fact that the same cultural texts have different imports in different contexts. When Zaynab (an Egyptian woman subject of study) interprets a scene like the marriage of a sixty year-old (on a television series) as a matter of cultural difference—linked to region, way of life, and morality—this is because she is so disadvantaged in terms of class and education that she fails to grasp the intentions of the more privileged creator (Fathiyya al-Assal, an Egyptian female television-drama writer and political activist) of the program. For al-Assal—working as an oppositional political within the national context of a postcolonial state and arguing with fellow intellectuals, critics, and politicians in Cairo and across the Arab world while trying to reform the public—this episode was meant to represent a revolutionary and enlightened feminist option. (p. 120)

In 1989, Condry found that the frequency of watching television reduced with the increase in levels of education and income. This could be due to availability and openness to other forms of entertainment to/by those who were

richer or more educated. Based on prior studies, there appear to be clear differences in the perception of family and society in 21st Century U.S. and Egyptian culture, and also that media consumption may have an effect on – or at least correlate with – perceptions of family. The purpose of the current exploratory study was to investigate relationships between cultural perceptions of family and society, and whether or not perception of media relevance and media consumption might play a role in these perceptions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

In this exploratory study, several questions were formulated to guide the researchers in understanding the possible relationships between culture, gender, media consumption, perception of media as relevant, and concepts of family and society.

Prior research suggests that Egyptians may be more conservative in their perceptions of family and society than U.S. citizens. However, as times rapidly change and cultures are inundated with media content, these differences may not be as large as once perceived. Additionally, gender may play a role in these perceptions in both cultures. This resulted in the following research questions.

RQ1a: How do Egyptians and U.S. citizens differ – if at all – in their perceptions of the concepts of family and society?

RQ1b: Does gender play a role in how Egyptians or U.S. citizens perceive the concepts of family and society?

Additionally, the researchers were interested in how nationality and/or gender related to respondents' consideration of how important, or relevant, TV is to their lives.

RQ2a: How do Egyptians and U.S. citizens differ – if at all – in their perceptions of the relevance of television to their lives?

RQ2b: Does gender play a role in how relevant Egyptians or U.S. citizens perceive television to be to their lives?

It was also felt that TV viewing levels should be studied and researchers were interested to see if media consumption would be affected by nationality or gender. This led to the third set of research questions:

RQ3a: How do Egyptians and U.S. citizens differ – if at all – in their levels of TV consumption?

RQ3b: Does gender play a role in how much TV Egyptians or U.S. citizens consume?

Finally, there was an interest in determining whether or not respondents considered TV families to be representative of real families within their cultures. Again, researchers were curious to see if nationality or gender affected these findings.

RQ4a: How do Egyptians and U.S. citizens differ – if at all – in their perceptions of the relationship between “TV families” and real families within their cultures?

RQ4b: Does gender play a role in how “real” Egyptians or U.S. citizens believe “TV families” to be?

Hypotheses and Additional Research Questions

Based on prior research on media use, relevance, and both U.S. and Egyptian cultures, four hypotheses were developed.

If television portrays families in a certain way, then TV relevance, or how important TV is to an individual, may have an impact on an individual’s concepts of family and society. Given that TV in general tends to portray a broader spectrum of “families” than the traditional model, it would seem likely that the more relevant television is to someone, the more willing they are to accept less traditional models of family and society. This led to the first hypothesis:

H1: The more relevant TV is to a person, the more willing they are to accept less conventional definitions of family and society.

Egyptian society is not only more conservative, so is much of their TV programming. However they do import a significant amount of Western media as well. It was therefore expected that the relationship between TV relevance and perceptions of family and society would differ between U.S. and Egyptian respondents. This suggests the following research question:

RQ5: How will culture, and type of media consumed affect the relationship between TV relevance and a person's definitions of family and society?

The second hypothesis and related research question are based on the assumption that the more relevant TV is to an individual, the more likely she or he would feel that TV families represent real world families. This may vary however within the two cultures under study. From this, the following were developed:

H2: The more relevant TV is to a person, the more likely they are to believe that TV representations families are reflective of real world families.

RQ6: How will culture, and type of media consumed affect the relationship between TV relevance and belief that TV families are representative of real world families?

Prior research has suggested that quantity of TV consumed can be correlated with various beliefs and attitudes about society. This lead to the final hypotheses and research questions.

H3: The greater amount of TV a person views, the more willing they are to accept less conventional definitions of family and society.

RQ7: How will culture, and type of media consumed affect the relationship between TV viewing levels and a person's definitions of family and society?

H4: The greater amount of TV a person views, the more likely they are to believe that TV representations families are reflective of real world families.

RQ8: How will culture, and type of media consumed affect the relationship between TV viewing levels and belief that TV families are representative of real world families?

Method

A convenience sample of 323 undergraduate students responded to an online survey that included both demographic questions as well as questions about their media use and their perceptions of society. One hundred and sixty-two respondents were from a large university in the southern region of the United States. Another 161 responses were obtained from students at a large private university in Cairo, Egypt. Students who completed the short survey received extra credit in a communication course.

The survey consisted of demographic questions – including country of residence, nationality, age, and gender – as well as items that related to TV consumption; concepts of family and society; and perception of TV as reflective of social reality. Demographic questions were measured with simple self-response statements. To determine TV viewing levels, respondents were asked to categorize the average amount of TV they watched on a daily basis: low (less than 2 hours per day), medium (2-4 hours per day), or high (greater than 4 hours per day).

Relevance (or importance) of TV to an individual's daily life was measured by a series of eight Likert-type statements that were summed and averaged. Respondents were asked to identify how they felt on a three-point scale ranging from agree to disagree to the following items: I try not to miss watching the TV series that I like. I cannot do anything while I'm watching my TV series. I remember all the events of the series I watch. I watch TV series as a habit. I learn from TV series things related to me and others. I know from the TV series I watch how people deal with reality. I learn a lot from TV series in solving my problems. I feel myself in the TV series.

Personal concepts of family and society ranged from the more conservative to the more liberal and were measured by responses to 13 three-point Likert-type statements ranging from agree to disagree. These items were: The family is generally regarded as a major social institution. The family is a locus of much of a person's social activity. The family is a social unit created by blood, marriage, or adoption. The family can be described as nuclear (parents and children) or extended (encompassing other relatives.) Societal changes have contributed to a sharp reduction in the percentage of families. Family means a wife and a husband. Family is a co-responsibility between the wife and the husband. Family is an essential component for society. The husband is responsible for providing the family with money. The wife is essentially responsible for raising the children. The values of the family construction are related to religious instruction. Separation between wife and husband mean the end of family relations. Children stay with their family if they are not married.

Perception of social reality, or how real are representations of family and society that are portrayed in the media, was measured by the average response on two three-point Likert-type items: Family in TV series are the same as family in reality. TV series promote family concepts in different ways than what we know in reality.

All negative items were reverse coded before measures were averaged. Data were analyzed using statistical procedures within the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program.

Findings

Research Questions

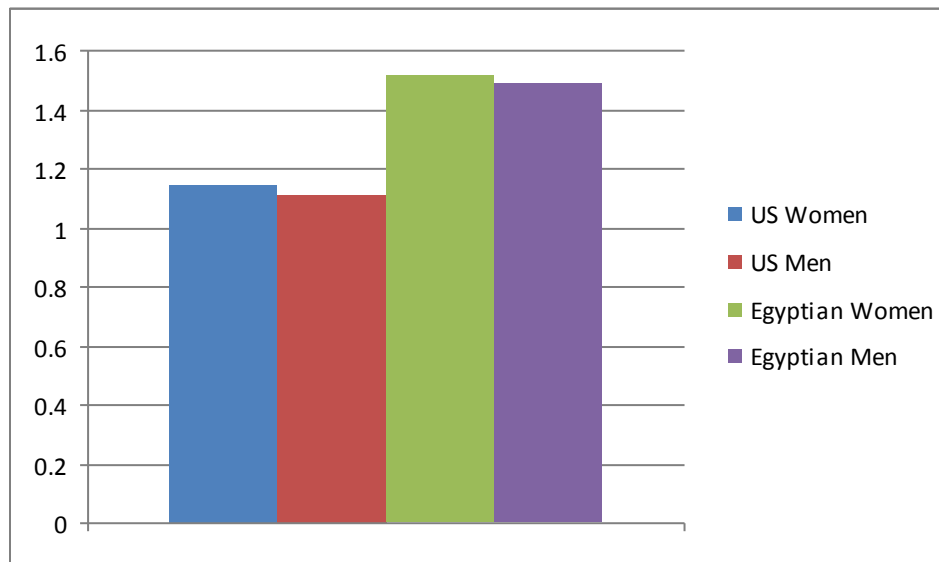
RQ1a: Perceptions of Family and Society. On average, respondents tended to more liberal in their understanding of the concepts of family and society, with "1" being the most liberal definition and "3" being the most conservative. Still, t-test analysis of the responses obtained for this research

question revealed that Egyptians ($M = 1.51$) held a somewhat more traditional concept of family and society that did U.S. respondents ($M = 1.13$) – $t(321) = -10.39, p = 0.00$.

RQ1b: Gender and Perceptions of Family and Society.

Gender does not seem to play a role in perceptions of family and society. T-test analysis revealed no significant difference in responses by gender. Figure 1 reveals, there are variations in responses by gender and culture, but it is important to note that U.S. men and women responded similarly and Egyptian men and women responded in kind.

Figure 1: Perceptions of Family and Society by Culture and Gender



RQ2a: Relevance of TV. On the whole, respondents did not consider TV to be very relevant to their lives. Additionally, t-test analysis revealed no significant difference in how U.S. and Egyptian respondents felt about the relevance of television.

RQ2b: Gender and Relevance of TV. T-test analysis revealed no significant difference in relevance of TV by gender.

RQ3a: Levels of TV Consumption. Average daily TV use was measured on the following three point ordinal scale: 1 = low (less than 2 hours of

TV viewing per day); 2 = medium (2 – 4 hours per day); and 3 = high (more than 4 hours per day.) Responses were averaged and the resulting mean score can fall on a range from very low (1) to very high (3). The average score for all respondents was less than medium (below 2).

Although all respondents reported viewing a somewhat low amount of TV per day, t-test analysis did reveal a significant difference in the daily amount of TV viewed by U.S. ($M = 1.36$) and Egyptian ($M = 1.73$) respondents – $t(265) = -4.40, p = 0.00$. Egyptian respondents reported watching slightly more TV per day than did their U.S. counterparts.

RQ3b: Gender and Levels of TV Consumption. No significant difference was found in amount of TV viewing based on gender.

RQ4a: Comparison of TV Families to Real Families. Respondents were asked a series of questions about how TV families compare to their perception of real world families. Average replies ranged from 1 (TV families do not represent real world families) to 3 (TV families do represent real world families.) Although the average score for all respondents was less than two, suggesting that most respondents saw little resemblance between TV families and real world families, significant differences were revealed. T-test analysis showed that U.S. respondents ($M = 0.77$) were less likely to say that TV families were representative of real world families than the Egyptian respondents ($M = 1.77$ – $t(321) = -6.93, p = 0.00$).

RQ4b: Gender and Comparison of TF Families to Real Families. No significant difference was found between women and men in their beliefs that TV families represent real families.

Hypotheses and Additional Research Questions

H1 and RQ5: Relationship Between TV Relevance and Concept of Family and Society. Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a very slight positive correlation between respondents' perception of TV as relevant and their feelings about family and society ($r = 0.15, p = 0.02$). The difference between the

U.S. sample ($r = 0.15, p = 0.06$) and the Egyptian sample ($r = 0.18, p = 0.03$) was negligible.

H2 and RQ6: Relationship between TV Relevance and Belief that TV Families Represent Real Families. A stronger positive relationship was found between relevance of TV to respondents and their perception that TV families represented real families ($r = 0.32, p = 0.00$). In both the U.S. ($r = 0.33, p = 0.00$) and the Egyptian ($r = 0.36, p = 0.00$) samples, this relationship explains a fair amount of the variance.

H3 and RQ7: Relationship Between TV Viewing Level and Concept of Family and Society. Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed no relationship between TV viewing level and concept of family and society overall or within either subsample.

H4 and RQ8: Relationship Between TV Viewing Level and Belief that TV Families Represent Real Families. Overall, Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed no relationship between TV viewing level and belief that TV families represented real world families. However, in the Egyptian subsample, there was a weak linear relationship ($r = 0.26, p = 0.00$) explaining at least a small portion of the variance.

Discussion

This study has been of use and value because it shows that there is, indeed, a relation between media consumption, particularly television, and social values and concept. In the review of other studies, it was found that there was much speculation as to what the effect of media would be upon preexisting family values and concepts and social values and concepts. This study allowed for a better understanding of these variables.

Findings from the study indicated that Egyptian women had a more traditional view of family concept and society than Egyptian men. An insight in to this finding can be found in the literature review where Egyptian women were subjected to more societal pressure from the patriarchal society to conform to the

traditional role of women as housewives and mothers (Abu-Lughod, 1995). In the United States, even though gender roles have changed remarkably over the last century, American women, too, find themselves accorded a lower status than men at home (Walker, 1996) as well as on commercial media (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). The study also found that Egyptian men and women were more likely to perceive television families to be similar to real life families. This finding was not in coherence with the literature on the same subject that showed Egyptians to be more discerning of the differences between real-life families and those portrayed on television (Abu-Lughod, 1997).

The study also found that the relevance placed on viewing television by American men was more than that of American women. This finding supports the finding of Brody et al. 1980 study that found fathers were less responsive and oriented than mothers toward their children while watching television.

One limitation that should be considered when viewing this research is that there is variance in types of television programming viewed in the United States and Egypt. Elements such as subject matter and dramatization level may tend to differ. Another limitation is that there may be a difference in perception of the traditional family unit. Terminology may affect perception of survey questions from one culture to another. Also, the use of convenience sampling may have resulted in some internal reliability issues.

Though the study was limited to only two countries, some significant conclusions were discovered that can be a foundation for later research. A suggested area of future study is how different types of media, not just television, affect family and society concept and values. The rise of Internet as a multi-media platform has potential to cast a strong influence on individuals' social and family lives. Video games and comics are other examples of different types of media that could potentially have an effect on these variables. There is also the possibility that other factors influenced the participant's concept of family and society.

Studies abound in judging the effects of watching television on young children yet not much research has been conducted recently to study the effects of watching television on adults and subsequently, adult relationships. Another question of interest would be if there is a certain age at which one is not any longer influenced by media consumption in relation to family concept and values.

This study is one of the few recent studies that compared the effects of an important mass medium such as television on the family and social lives of two starkly different cultures- American and Egyptian. With the immense rise in the amount and kind of television programming available for viewer consumption, it is only pertinent that effects of such programming be examined in context to its effect on individuals. It is only then that the positive can be sieved from the negative and be used to benefit families, communities and society, at large.

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