

Media Effects on Attitudes

Media Effects

- In the Information Age, media is a powerful tool for influencing attitudes
- Some of my research explores its impact
 - Romantic fantasies study
 - Rap music experiment
- Today we'll be talking about advertising and sex

Advertising & Sex

- Advertising is often based on sex appeal
- The message is that if you buy the product, you will be more popular
- For women and men alike, this often means with the opposite sex

Advertising and Women

- In particular, women are often used as _____ in ads
 - Scantly clad
 - Decorative in function
 - Seen but not heard
 - Often “cloned”
- These ads successfully sell all kinds of products

Question

- But beyond selling the product, can these ads influence the way we think about women?
 - The “beer commercial” study (Rudman & Borgida, 1995)

Legal Background

- Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, women can sue for sex discrimination
- The courts have decreed _____ is a form of sex discrimination
- And that “hostile work environment” is a form of sexual harassment

The blue collar “blues”

- Women who work in blue collar industries often cope with hostile work environments
- Pin-ups, graffiti, tools shaped into phallic symbols (hostile = _____)
- The message? “Women not wanted here”

Legal context for research

- Two cases prominent in Minnesota in 1990's
- Eveleth Mining Company
 - First _____ sexual harassment lawsuit filed in U.S.
- Stroh Brewing Company
 - Female employees saw a link between the company's use of sexist advertising and their hostile environment
 - Videotaped introduction:
 - **MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour clip**

Social Psychology and the Law

- As the tape shows, women in hostile environments suffer discrimination
- My co-author was an expert witness in the Eveleth Mining lawsuit
- The judge asked if there was scientific evidence that hostile work environments promote sexist _____ in men

The judge was asking:

- Does priming men to view women as sexual objects impact on their behavior?
- Or is it relatively harmless?
- At the time, there was no research on the _____ effects of priming
- So it was up to us to test this idea

How to prime men?

- We wanted to use a "subtle" manipulation
- The Stroh's case suggested that watching TV commercials (e.g., beer ads) might be effective
- These ads are so prevalent no one should be _____ of the true purpose of the study

Beer Commercial Study

- Three parts – each one introduced as if it were a separate experiment
- 1. _____ Task
- 2. _____ Check (did the priming task work?)
- 3. Behavioral Assessment (did priming affect behavior?)

Priming Task

Cover Story:

- Male subjects ($N = 80$) signed up for a Consumer Research Project
- They believed they would watch and rate TV ads
- In fact, they were randomly assigned to 2 conditions

Priming Materials

- Prime Tape (20 ads)
 - portrayed women as sexual objects
- Control Tape (20 ads)
 - had no women in them at all
- Ads were yoked by product (e.g., beer, clothing, soft drinks) – see examples

Ad ratings

- Subjects rated the ads (e.g., boring, interesting)
 - This took only 20 minutes
- Plenty of time left for two other tasks
 - Manipulation check
 - Behavioral assessment

Manipulation check

- Subjects completed a lexical decision task (LDT)
- Subjects think their task is to distinguish words from non-words
- In fact, we want to see if they _____

LDT procedure

- Letter strings are presented at random on the screen
 - press the “YES” key if the string is a word
 - press the “NO” key if the string is a non-word
- For the following demonstration, tap your left finger for WORDS and your right finger for NONWORDS

LDT words

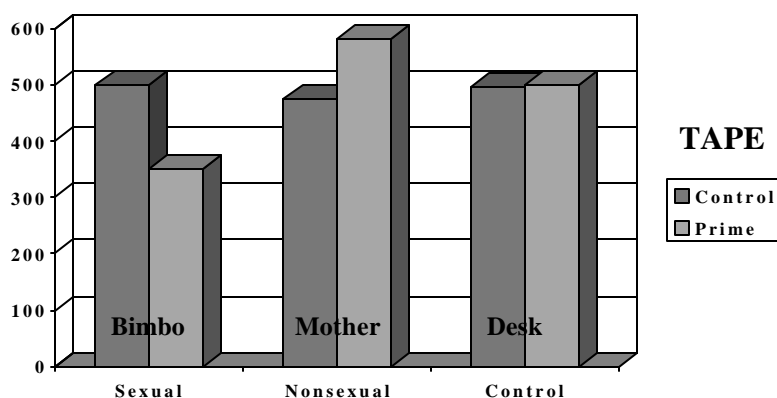
- 4 types of stimuli
- Sexual
 - bimbo, babe, Playboy, breasts, panties, blonde
- Nonsexual
 - mother, sister, nurse
- Control
 - chair, paper, desk
- Non-words
 - bolster LDT cover story

If the priming task worked:

- Primed men should recognize sexual words _____ than control group
- They might also be _____ to recognize non-sexual words
 - They might have a hard time recognizing “mom” if they’d been thinking about women as sex objects!
- For the control words, no differences should emerge

High bar = slower to recognize words

Reaction Time Results (in ms)



LDT Word Type

- The LDT results showed that the ads worked
 - Primed men judged sexual words _____ than control subjects judged them
 - Primed men judged nonsexual female words _____ than control subjects judged them

This represents a _____ effect of the prime

- But what about behavioral effects of viewing women as sex objects?

Cover story

- Subjects were asked to “help the experimenter” by interviewing a prospective R.A. (female confederate)
- She would have to pretend to be an interviewee in an “Office Manager” Project (Subjects’ task was to “audition” her)
- To see how subjects behaved toward her, we _____ the interview

Behavioral Assessment

Three interview behaviors:

1. Number of sexist questions asked
2. _____
3. Dominance and Sexist Behaviors
 - **Independent judges rated these after the study was over**

Question Selection

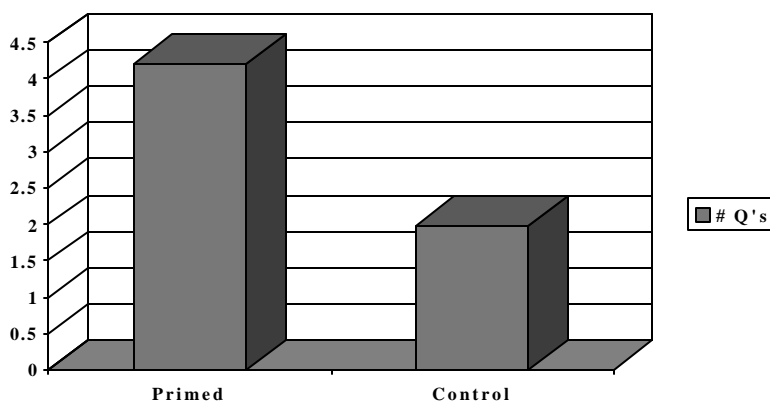
- Subjects were given a stack of 14 cards containing questions they might ask her
- They were asked to choose 7 of these
- The questions were pre-selected to be sexist or nonsexist (see examples)

Hypothesis

- Primed subjects would ask more sexist questions of the confederate, compared with control subjects

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of Sexist Q's selected



.....

Proximity

- After question selection, subjects were brought to the interview room
- They were seated in a rolling chair
- The confederate was then seated in a stationary chair
- This allowed the men to decide how close they would sit to her – as the tape clip shows

Proximity

Slide shows that primed men sat _____ (closer to or farther from?) the confederate, compared with control subjects

Interview Procedure

- The confederate gave a short speech introducing herself
- It contained biographical information (e.g., name, hometown, major)
- Subjects then asked their 7 questions
- The confederate responded using a script

Judge's Ratings

- Subjects did not use a script
 - Judges rated them on 2 main dimensions
1. _____
 - How much does he control the interaction? Interrupt her? Seem to be “into” playing the power role?
 2. **Sexist Behavior**
 - Does he look at her body? “Come on” to her? How sexually motivated does he seem to be? Would you be surprised if he sexually harassed her on the job?

Judge's Ratings

Slide shows that primed men were rated as _____ (more or less?) dominating and sexist during the interview, compared with control subjects

Memory Test

- Recall the confederate gave an introductory speech
- We sprang a surprise recognition memory test
- What would subjects remember about her?

Recognition Test

Biographical information:

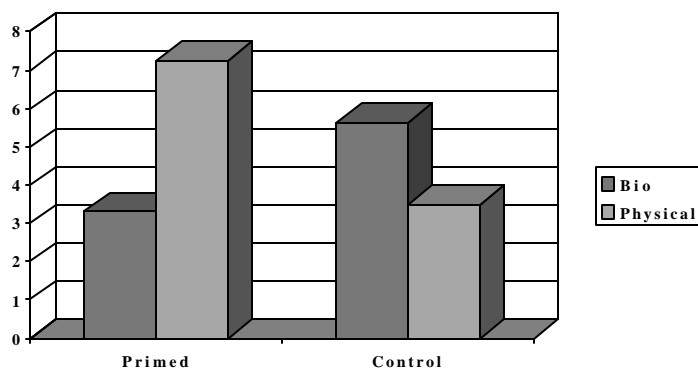
- Subjects received one point for recognizing her name, hometown, major, date of graduation, current residence

Physical information:

- Subjects received one point for recognizing the color of her eyes, hair, clothing, whether or not she wore lipstick and jewelry

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Memory Results



Free Recall Test

When asked to write down what they could remember of the interview, control subjects showed accurate memories. However, some primed subjects showed _____ memories.

What did they (mis)remember about the confederate?

Summary of Results

- Men primed to think about women as sex objects showed both cognitive and behavioral effects
- Cognitive
 - Recognized words related to women as sex objects (e.g., bimbo) faster than controls
 - Remembered more about the confederate's physical appearance, and less about her "as a person"

AND: _____

- Behavioral
 - Chose more sexist questions to ask during the interview
 - _____
 - Behaved in a more dominant and sexist manner toward her

Subjects' explanations for the study

- We used TV commercials b/c they are pervasive in our culture, and likely to be a more subtle prime than Playboy
- Still, we worried that men might figure out what we were studying
- After the experiment, we asked subjects to tell us, on paper, what they thought the study was about

Subjects' misperceptions

- No one pin-pointed the hypotheses
- But some of the answers were revealing
- In particular, several men thought that the study was about "how they would react to a woman who was _____" during the interview
- These subjects were all in the primed condition

Implications of Research

- Priming men to think about women as sex objects can have negative effects on how they think about and behave toward women
- Sexualized work environments can lead to behaviors that are hostile to women

Applied (Legal) Implications

- The women at Eveleth Mines won their judgment against the company
- Our research was helpful
- The following are excerpts from the judge's decision

Judge's Ruling

- **"Sexual stereotyping and priming provide a framework for understanding why consistent and pervasive acts of sexual harassment could occur in work environments...**
- **The Court finds that the effect of the sexualized environment at Eveleth Mines was to inform women that they were perceived as sex objects and inferior to men, rather than as coworkers, and that these perceptions were detrimental to the women's working conditions."**

Film: *Killing Us Softly 3*