Sexism in Contemporary Media

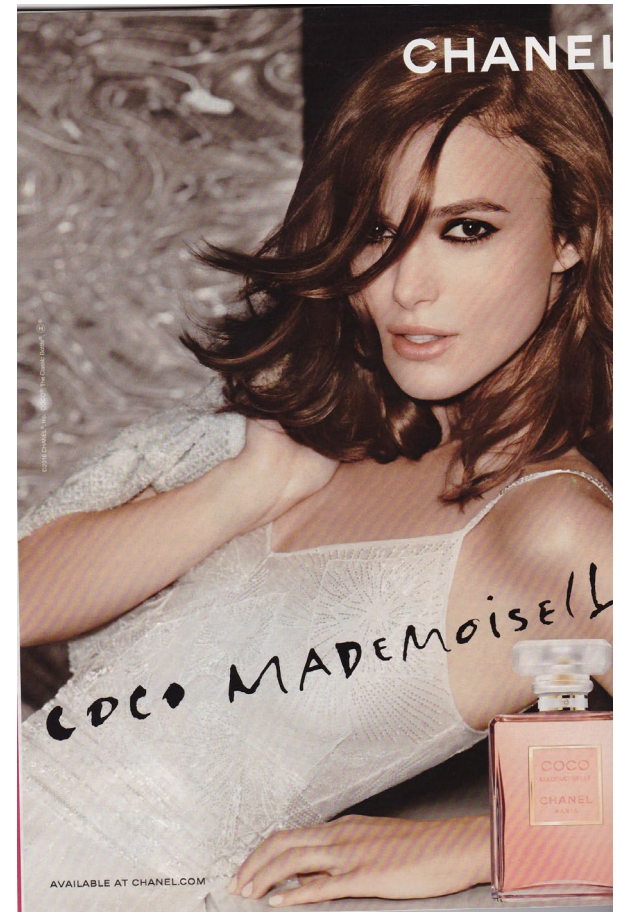## Megan Earle, Elvira Prusaczyk, & Gordon Hodson

STRIKE ZONE, The Summer Hit

Gender Portrayals in the Media

Women

- Sexualized (e.g., through nudity) and decorative
- At home in dependent roles
- Degraded and disrespected
- Younger, thin, beautiful

(Knoll et al., 2011; Lunceford, 2012; Nelson & Paek, 2008; Primack et al., 2008; Uray & Burnaz, 2003)

Gender Portrayals in the Media

Men

- Professional and recreational roles
- Independent, authoritative
- Little regard to age or physical appearance

(Cheng, 1997; Reichhert & Carpenter, 2004; Uray & Burnaz, 2003)

But are things changing?

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First ads banned for contravening UK gender stereotyping rules

Watchdog bans VW and Philadelphia ads with bungling dads and 'passive' women

- No change in traditional gender roles in magazines (1950-2010) (Marshall et al., 2014)
- Sexual objectification of women increasing over past several decades in music and magazines (Graff et al., 2013; Smiler et al., 2017)
- Small increase in men seen as parent between 2003-2008 on TV (Fowler & Thomas, 2015)

New media, new effects?

- Most research on gender stereotypes in media focuses on print and TV
- Calls to examine "new" media (e.g., interactive media, virtual reality)

(Grau & Zotos, 2016)

Research Questions

- How are men and women portrayed?
  - Study 1: content analysis of advertisements

- How do these portrayals affect male and female consumers?
  - Study 2: experimental manipulation of ad exposure

- Does "new" media have similar or stronger effects?
  - Study 3: comparing sexually objectifying videos, video games, virtual reality

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Ads

- Women:
  - sexualized, passive, at home, family-oriented
  - appliances/furniture, kids' stuff, fashion, health/beauty

Grau & Zotos, 2016; Rubie-Davies et al., 2013

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Ads

- Men:
  - independent, professional, outside the home, recreational
    - although some evidence that parental roles are increasingly common
  - alcohol, cars, finance/insurance, entertainment/leisure, agriculture/building, government, sports/outdoor
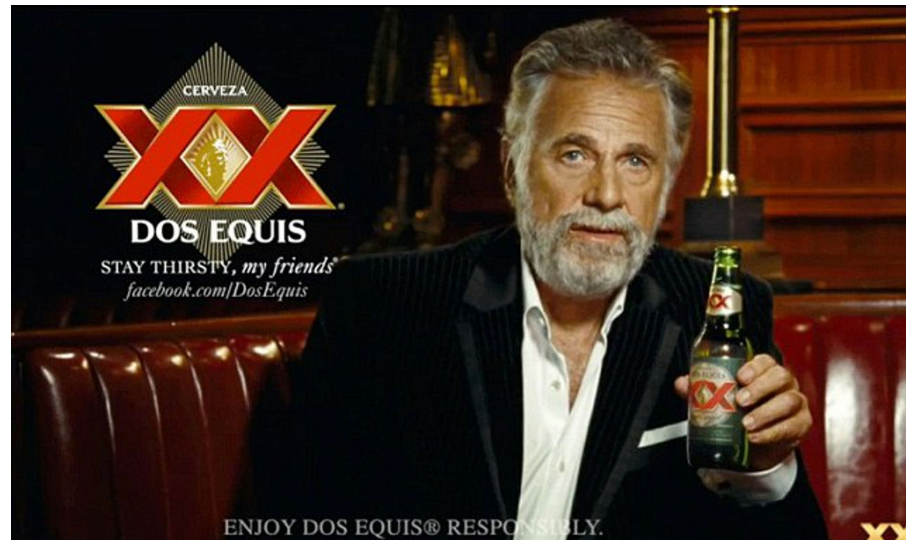
Grau & Zotos, 2016; Rubie-Davies et al., 2013

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

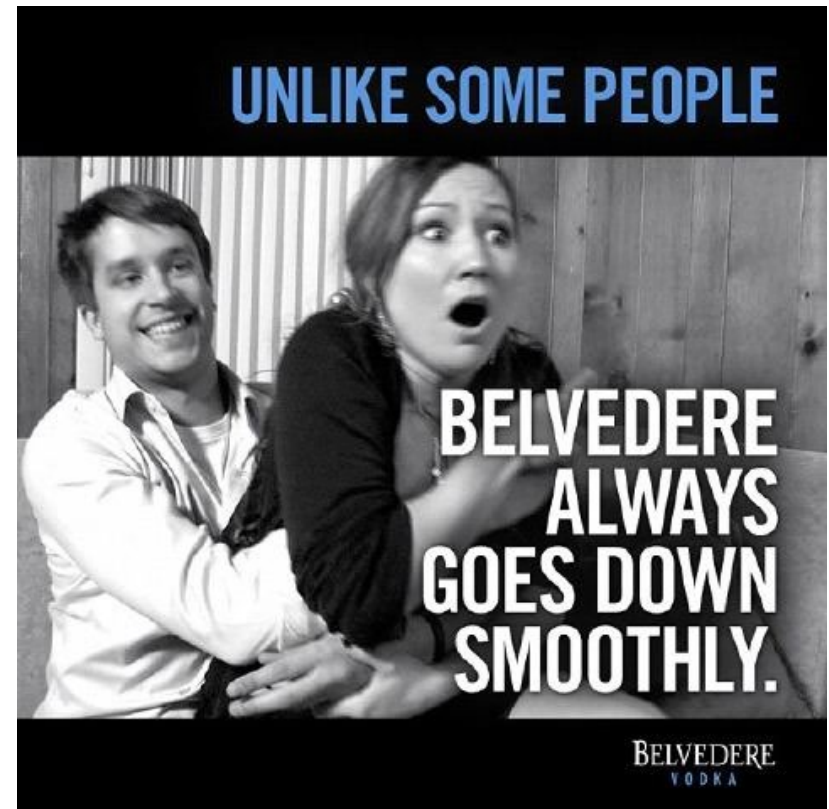Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

Women

- Presented *as* product

Killing Us Softly, Killbourne, 2010

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

Women

- Presented as product
- Dismembered

Killing Us Softly, Killbourne, 2010

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

Women

- Presented as product
- Dismembered
- Silenced
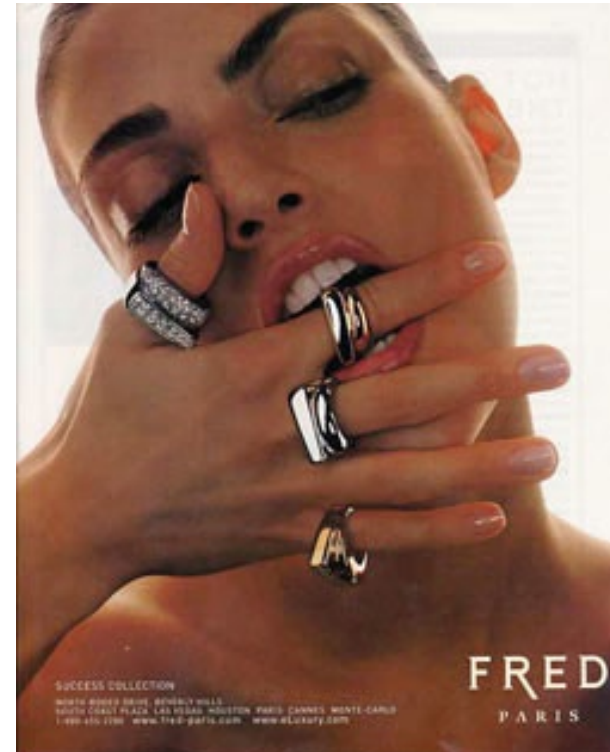
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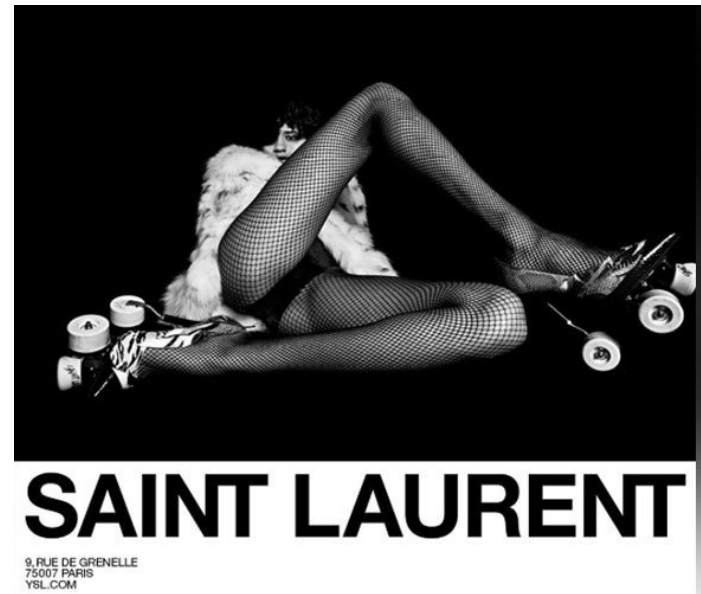
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Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

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How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

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- Dismembered
- Silenced
- Silly/unnatural poses
- Infantilization
- Victim

Killing Us Softly, Killbourne, 2010

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

Men

How are men and women portrayed?
Study 1: Content Analysis of Print Ads

Other theorized (but not empirically examined) differences:

Men
- Violent

Killing Us Softly, Killbourne, 2010

Study 1: Content Analysis

- Portrayals of men and women in different roles, traits, image composition etc.

- Goals to be descriptive

Alliance for Audited Media, 2018

Study 1: Method

Magazines (2 issues each)
- Better Homes and Gardens
- Game Informer
- Good Housekeeping
- Family Circle
- People
- Women's Day
- National Geographic
- Sports Illustrated
- Reader's Digest
- Cosmopolitan

Alliance for Audited Media, 2018

Study 1: Method

Exclusions
- Only product

Study 1: Method

Exclusions
- Only product
- Only children

Study 1: Method

Exclusions

- Only product
- Only children
- Only fingers or hands

Study 1: Method

Exclusions

- Only product
- Only children
- Only fingers or hands
- Only cartoons

Study 1: Method

Exclusions

- Only product
- Only children
- Only fingers or hands
- Only cartoons

219 unique ads that include at least one adult

Study 1: Method

- 5 coders

- Gender (dichotomous male/female)

- Age group (young adult 20-39, mature adult 40- 64, older adult 65+)

- What is the product?

- What are they doing?

- How are they portrayed?

Study 1: Method
What is the product?

Discrete categories:

- Skin care
- Makeup
- Hair product
- Jewelry
- Perfume/fragrance
- Nail polish/product
- Clothing
- Hygiene
- Pet

- Food/drink
- Medication
- Housewares
- Cleaning
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Electronic devices/services
- Other

Study 1: Method
What are they doing?

Non-discrete dichotomous:

- Housework
- Child care
- Pet care
- Cooking/Serving
- Attending to appearance
- Yard Work
- Mechanical/Technological
- House repair
- Sports/active
- Career/workplace
- Leisure

Note: discrepancies resolved through discussion

Study 1: Method
What are they doing?

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What are they doing?

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- ~~Housework~~
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- Leisure

Note: discrepancies results through discussion

Study 1: Method
How are they portrayed?

Continuous (0 = not at all, 4 = extremely):

- Passive
- Assertive
- Emphasis on body (vs. face)
- Beauty ideal
- Sexual implications
- ~~Presented as product~~
- Dismembered
- Silenced
- Unnatural pose
- Infantilization
- ~~Victim~~
- ~~Violent~~

Note: ratings averaged across coders

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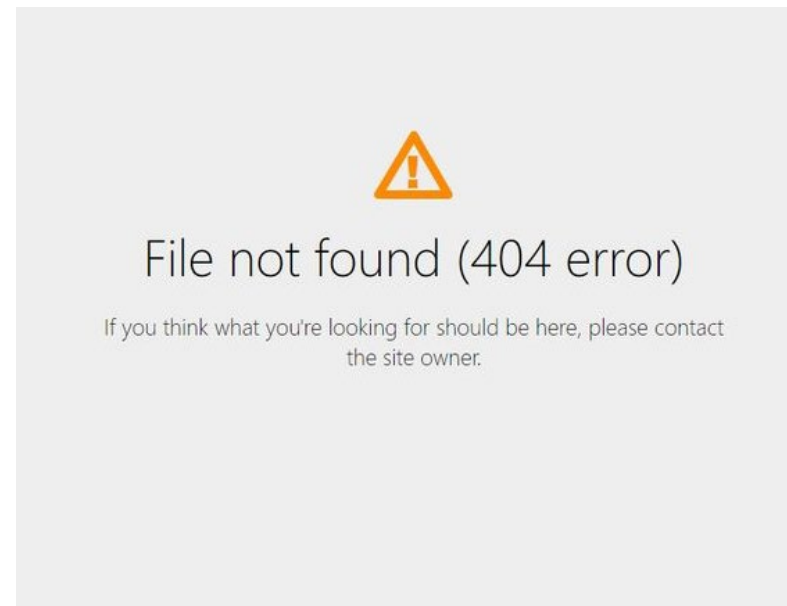- Infantilization
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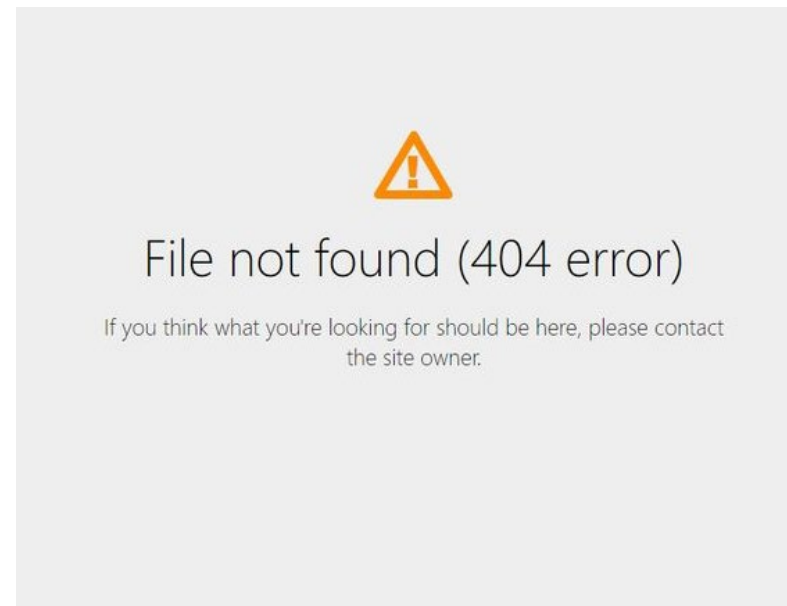
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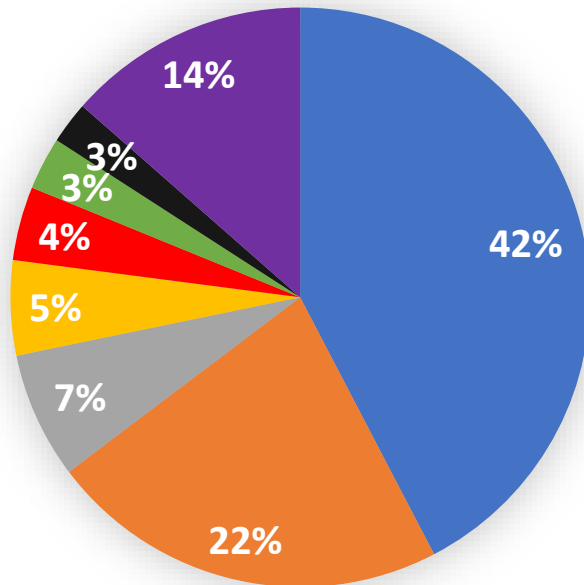
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Note: ratings averaged across coders

Study 1: Method
How are they portrayed?

Continuous (0 = not at all, 4 = extremely):

- Passive (α = .86)
- Assertive (α = .81)
- Emphasis on body (vs. face) (α = .81)
- Beauty ideal (α = .92)
- Sexual implications (α = .88)
- ~~Presented as product~~
- Dismembered (α = .75)
- Silenced (α = .86)
- Unnatural pose (α = .79)
- Infantilization (α = .78)
- ~~Victim~~
- ~~Violent~~

Note: ratings averaged across coders

Study 1: Products

Women (n = 170)

Men (n = 49)

Legend:
- beauty/fashion
- house/cleaning
- hygiene
- pet
- food/dink
- medication
- electronic devices
- other

Study 1: Results Summary

Women more likely to be:

- Attending to appearance
- Idealized beauty
- Passive
- Posed unnaturally
- Younger
- Sexual

Men more likely to be:

- Doing something career-related
- Older
- Assertive
- Emphasis on body
- Infantilized

Study 1: Results Summary

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- Doing something career-related
- Older
- Assertive
- Emphasis on body
- Infantilized

No difference: sport, leisure, child care, dismemberment, silenced

Study 2: How do these portrayals affect male and female consumers?

- Among women, exposure to thin, idealized, sexualized women in ads → body dissatisfaction, appearance anxiety, self sexual objectification, eating disorders
  - negative mood, lower self-esteem, depression

- Sexualized women seen as less intelligent and capable by both men and women

- Does exposure to sexualized women in ads impact competence perceptions of women generally?
- Does exposure to sexualized women in ads impact self-efficacy among female consumers?

Birkeland et al., 2005; Vanenbosch et al., 2015; Miles-McLean et al., 2015; Szymanski & Henning, 2007; Harrison & Secrarea, 2010

Study 2:Hypotheses

Female Participants

- H1: Exposure to stereotypical-female (*vs*. neutral female) ads → lower self-efficacy, less preference for female job candidate

- H2: Exposure to stereotypical-male (*vs*. neutral-male) → lower self-efficacy and less preference for female job candidate

Male Participants

- H3: Exposure to stereotypical-female (vs. neutral-female) ads → less preference for female job candidate

- H4: Exposure to stereotypical-male (vs. neutral-male) ads → less preference for female job candidate

Study 2:Hypotheses (Moderators)

- Factors that may boost effects of stereotypes on lower competence ratings:
    - Hostile sexism- women are incompetent
    - Benevolent sexism- women are incompetent (but in a "nice" way)
    - Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA)- preference for tradition, convention, authority
    - Social dominance orientation (SDO)- preference for hierarchy

Study 2:Method

Participants: 642 MTurkers (308 men, 334 women)

1) Individual Differences

- SDO (e.g., Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups) α = .90
- RWA (e.g., Our country will be destroyed someday if we do not smash the perversions eating away at our moral fibre and traditional beliefs) α = .93
- Benevolent sexism (e.g. Women should be cherished and protected by men) α = .89
- Hostile sexism (e.g. Women exaggerate problems they have at work) α = .94

2) Manipulation

3) Outcomes

Study 2:Method

- Participants: 642 MTurkers (308 men, 334 women)
- 1) Individual Differences: SDO, RWA, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism
- **2) Manipulation**
  - Random assignment to 1 of 4 conditions
    - Stereotypical-female ads
    - Neutral-female ads
    - Stereotypical-male ads
    - Neutral-male ads
  - 7 ads for 15 seconds each
- 3) Outcomes

Study 2:Stereotypical-Female Ads

Study 2:Neutral-Female Ads

Study 2:Stereotypical-Male Ads

Study 2:Method

- Participants: 642 MTurkers (308 men, 334 women)
- 1) Individual Differences: SDO, RWA, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism
- **2) Manipulation**: Stereotypical-female, neutral-female, stereotypical-male, neutral male
  - 7 ads for 15 seconds each
  - To what extent do you think the advertisement is effective? appealing?
  - How likely would you be to purchase this product or service?
- 3) Outcomes

Study 2:Method

- Participants: 642 MTurkers (308 men, 334 women)
- 1) Individual Differences: SDO, RWA, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism
- 2) Manipulation: stereotypical-female ads, stereotypical-male ads, neutral-female ads, neutral-male ads
- 3) **Outcomes**
  - Generalized self-efficacy (e.g., I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events) α = .93
  - Job Candidate Selection

Study 2:Method
Job Candidate Selection

- Ideal candidate should have:
  - Creativity
  - Project management skills
  - Undergrad degree related to advertising/marketing
  - Work experience in advertisement/marketing field

Study 2:Method
Job Candidate Selection

- Ideal candidate should have:
  - Creativity, project management, undergrad degree, work experience
- Possible candidates: Sarah, Rebecca, Michael, Joshua
  - 1 skill (creativity or project management) and 1 formal qualification (undergrad or work experience)
  - E.g. Sarah Reed
    - Strengths: portfolio demonstrates creativity, 1 year work experience
    - Weaknesses: No experience in managing team projects, no undergrad degree in marketing/advertising
- Rank order candidates
  - Averages creates for male and female candidates
  - Scores reversed: higher scores = greater preference

Study 2:Results
Analytic Strategy

- Stereotypical Female (+1) *vs.* Neutral Female (-1)

- Stereotypical Male (+1) *vs*. Neutral Male (-1)

Study 2:Results
Self-Efficacy

- ## Male Participants
  - **No effect** of stereotypical female ads (B = 0.02, SE = .08, *p* = .777) or stereotypical male ads (B = -0.06, SE = .08, *p* = .497)
  - **No interactions** (*p*s = .099- .997)

- ## Female Participants
  - **No effect** of stereotypical female ads (B = -0.01, SE = .08, *p* = .948) or stereotypical male ads (B = -0.03, SE = .07, *p* = .679)
  - **Interaction:** benevolent sexism X stereotypical (*vs*. neutral) female ads (B = .12, SE = .05, *p* = .023)

Study 2:Results
Self-Efficacy

- Benevolent sexism X stereotypical (*vs* neutral) female ads for female participants

BS = benevolent sexism

Study 2:Results
Self-Efficacy

- Benevolent sexism X stereotypical (vs neutral) female ads for female participants

BS = benevolent sexism

Study 2:Results
Perceptions of Women's Competency (Job Selection Task)

Female Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

Ads with Male Models

Study 2:Results
Perceptions of Women's Competency (Job Selection Task)

Female Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

- No effect for stereotypical female ads

Ads with Female Models

Study 2:Results
Perceptions of Women's Competency (Job Selection Task)

Female Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

- No effect for stereotypical female ads

Male Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

Ads with Male Models

Study 2:Results
Perceptions of Women's Competency (Job Selection Task)

Female Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

- No effect for stereotypical female ads

Male Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

- Stereotypical female ads → less preference for female candidate

Ads with Female Models

Study 2:Results
Perceptions of Women's Competency (Job Selection Task)

Female Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

- No effect for stereotypical female ads

Male Participants

- No effect for stereotypical male ads

- Stereotypical female ads → less preference for female candidate
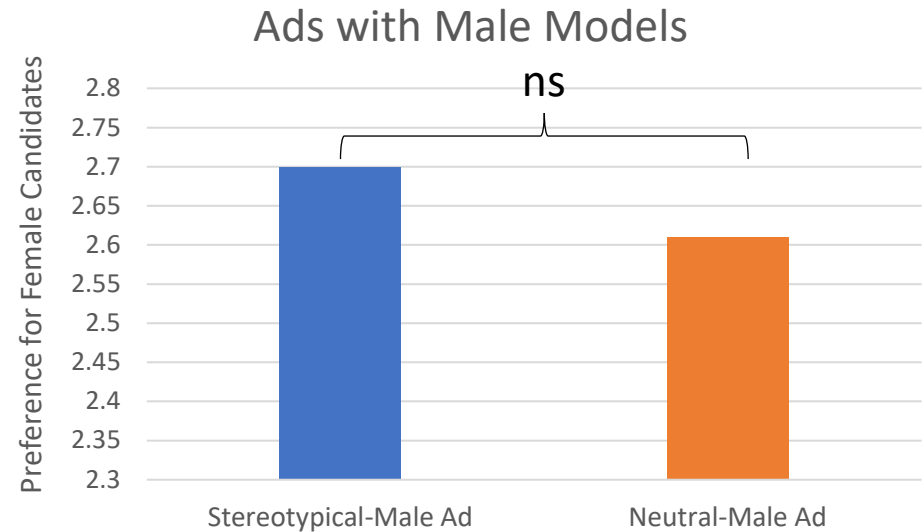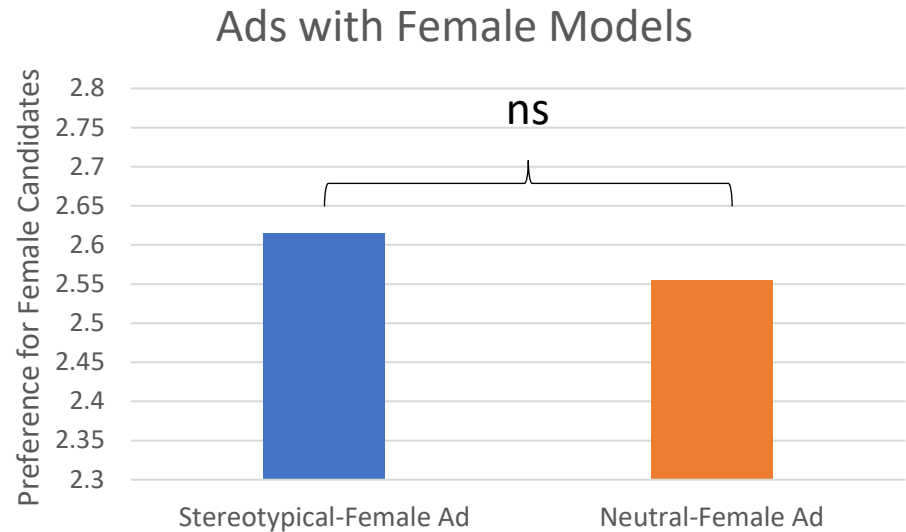 - Interaction with RWA
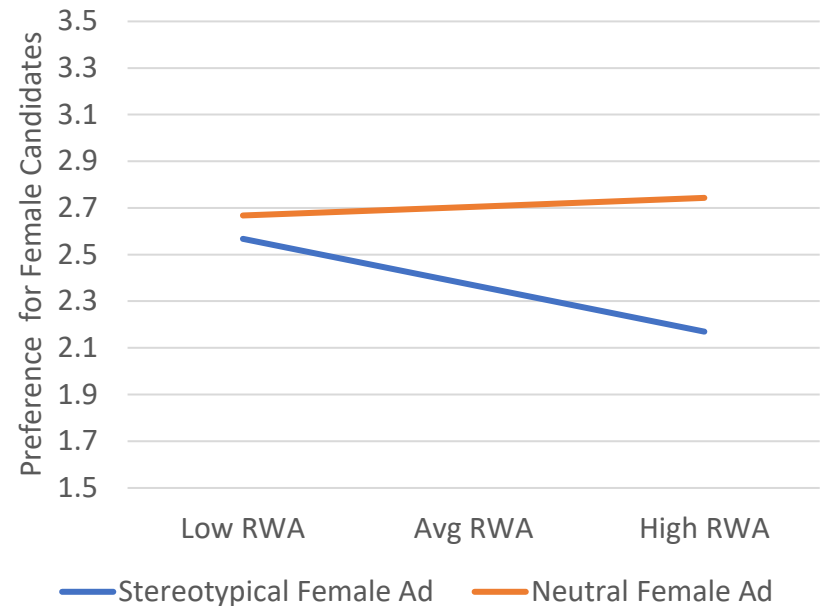
Study 2:Results Summary

- Gender stereotypes and media have different effects on male and female consumers
  - Self-efficacy
    - Men: no effect
    - Women: female stereotypes decrease self-efficacy among those low in benevolent sexism
      - But may be empowering for women high in benevolent sexism
  - Perceptions of other women's competence
    - Women: no effect
    - Men: female stereotypes decrease preference for female job candidates
      - Stronger for men higher in RWA

Study 3:New Media

- Calls to examine newer, more interactive, forms of media (e.g., Grau & Zotos)

- Video Games

  - Women sexualized, innocent, helpless (Burgess et al., 2007; Summers & Miller, 2007, 2014)

    - Female protagonists/heroines also sexualized (e.g., Heldman et al., 2016)
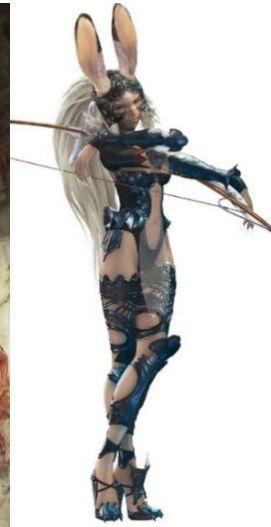
Study 3:New Media

- Playing with a sexualized (vs. non-sexualized) female character → greater tolerance for sexual harassment, support for rape myths (Driesmans et al., 2015; Fox et al., 2013; Yao et al., 2009)

- Possible Mechanisms
  - Objectification (e.g., Fox et al., 2015; Seabrook et al., 2019)
  - Desire for power over women (Fox et al., 2014)
  - Heterosexual self-presentation (Fox et al., 2014)

- Comparing media types
  - Some evidence that effects stronger for video games vs. TV exposure (Karsay et al., 2018)
  - VR generally awe-inspiring, gives goosebumps (Quesnel & Riecke, 2018)

Study 3:Hypotheses

- Male participants, sexualized portrayals of women

| VR *vs* Video Game
Video Game *vs* Video
Video *vs* Control | **+** → | Rape Myth Acceptance
Likelihood to Sexually Harass
Willingness to Exploit Women |

Study 3:Hypotheses

- Male participants, sexualized portrayals of women
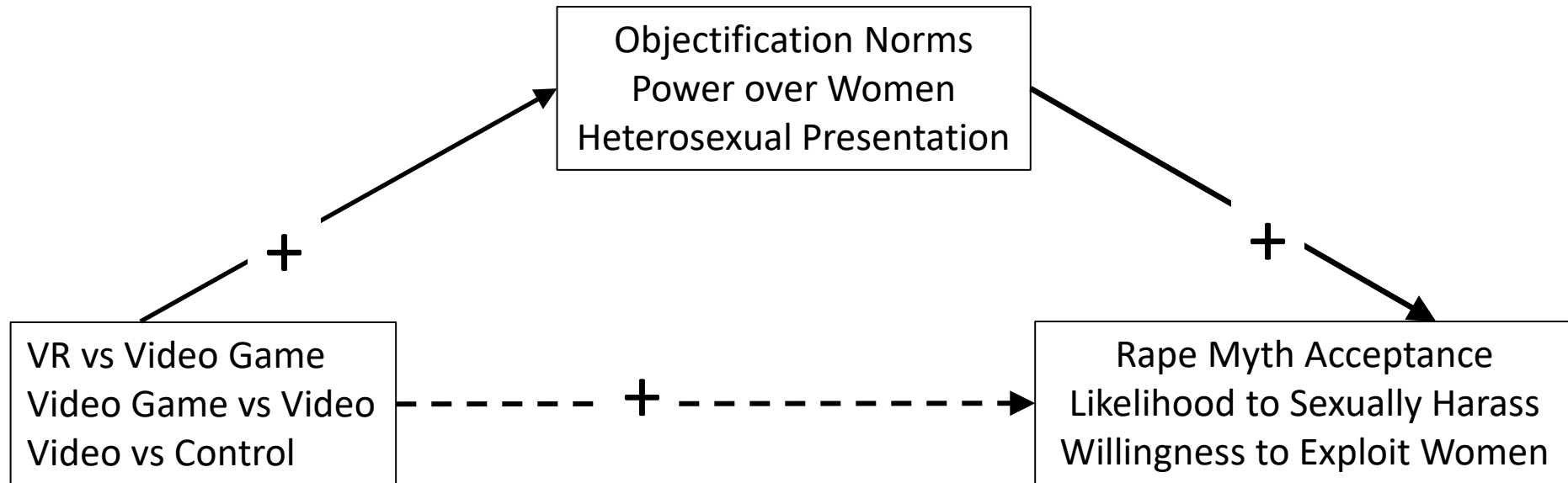
Study 3:Method

- Participants: 370 men from Brock (anticipated; in progress)
- Manipulation
  - 4 conditions: control video, sexualizing video, sexualizing video game, sexualizing VR video game

Study 3:Method
Manipulation

Control

Sexualizing Video

5 mins 🖵 12 mins

5 mins 🖵 12 mins

Sexualizing Video Game

Sexualizing VR Video Game

5 mins 🎮 12 mins

5 mins 🥽 12 mins

Study 3:Method
Manipulation

Control	Sexualizing Video
5 mins 🖥 12 mins	5 mins 🖥 12 mins

Sexualizing Video Game	Sexualizing VR Video Game
5 mins 🎮 12 mins	5 mins 🥽 12 mins

Study 3:Method
Manipulation

Control

5 mins   📺   12 mins

Sexualizing Video

5 mins   📺   12 mins

Sexualizing Video Game

5 mins   🎮   12 mins

Sexualizing VR Video Game

5 mins   🥽   12 mins

Study 3:Method
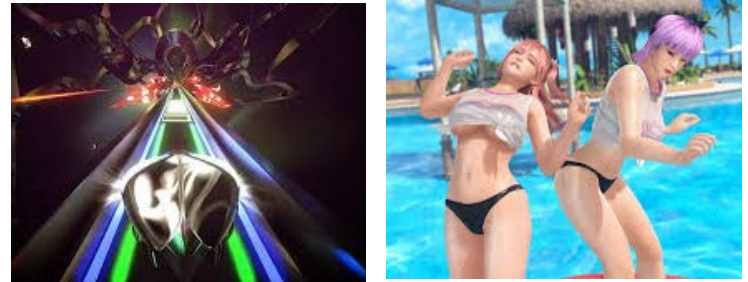# Manipulation

Control

5 mins 🖵 12 mins

Sexualizing Video

5 mins 🖵 12 mins

Sexualizing Video Game

5 mins 🎮 12 mins

Sexualizing VR Video Game

5 mins 🥽 12 mins

Study 3:Method

- Participants: 370 men from Brock

- Manipulation
  - 4 conditions: control video, sexualizing video, sexualizing video game, sexualizing VR video game
  - **Have you played before? Do you own? If not, would you buy? Would you recommend? What would make it better?**

- Mediators

- Outcomes

Study 3:Method

- Participants: 370 men from Brock

- Manipulation

- Mediators
  - Objectification Norms (e.g., how harmful is staring at a woman's body)
  - Power over women (e.g. I love it when men are in charge of women)
  - Heterosexual self-presentation (e.g., I would be furious if someone thought I was gay)

- Outcomes

Study 3:Method

- Participants: 370 men from Brock

- Manipulation

- Mediators

- <u>Outcomes</u>
  - Willingness to exploit women (e.g., It's reasonable for a man to make a woman think that he's interested in a long-term relationship to obtain sex from her)
  - Rape myth acceptance (e.g., Any healthy woman can successfully resist rape if she really wants to)
  - Likelihood to sexually harass (e.g. If the actress wants the job she will have to demonstrate her sex appeal to me in a personal way)
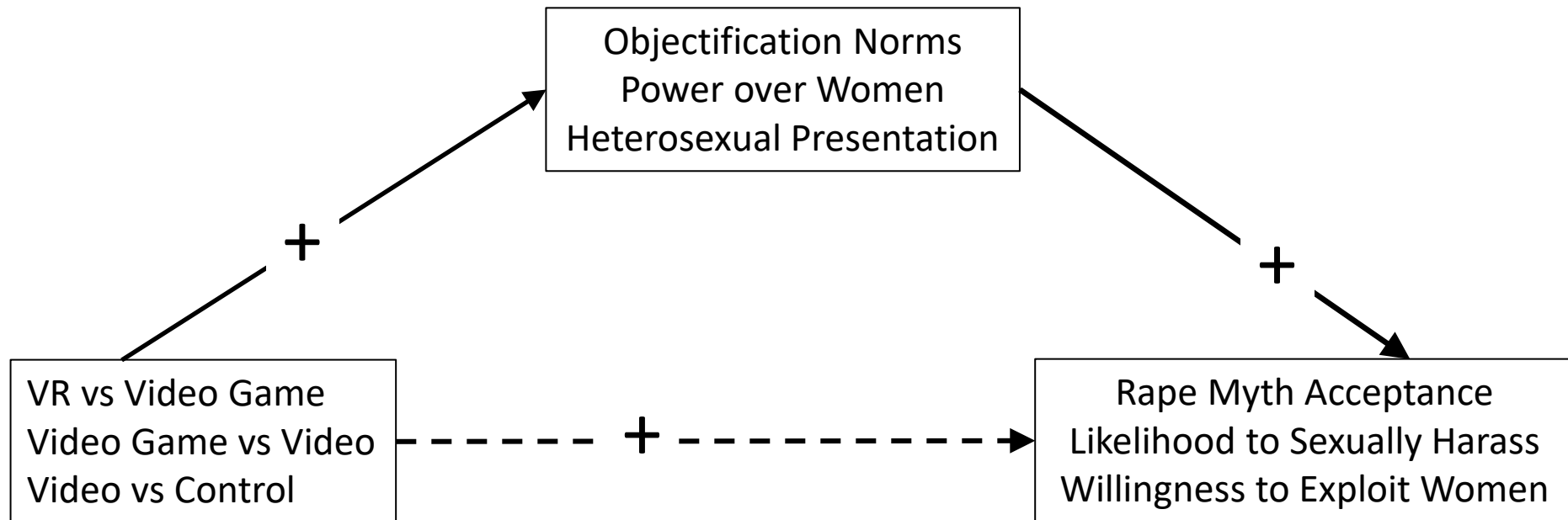
Final Points

- Ad Content Analysis:
    - Women still idealized, sexualized, young, passive
    - Men still career-oriented, older, assertive
    - Equally likely to be parent, doing something leisurely, playing a sport
- Experimental Manipulation of Ad Exposure:
    - Makes some women less self-efficacious
    - Makes men less willing to hire women
- Manipulation of Media Immersivity:
    - People moving away from traditional media
    - Importance of examining new, interactive, immersive media

Future Directions

- Counterstereotypical gender portrayals
- Other social groups (e.g., racial, LGBT)
- Change in portrayals over time
- More research on newer media
  - Broader range of outcomes
  - Impact on female consumers
  - Impact of male stereotypes

Thank you!