

The Effects of Positive and Negative Media on Racial Attitudes

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Motivation

As social beings, we can be highly influenced by what we see advertised in the media, whether it be shown in a positive or negative light. Stereotyping, is one factor that can be influenced by the media. Mastro and Tuckachinsky (2011) state that media impacts outgroup characteristics and how outgroups are being viewed, as well as, how they are portrayed on outgroup members. In return these outgroup characteristics are often depicted as stereotypes.

Objective

To see if media, positive or negative, has an effect on an individual's perception of others.

Thesis Statement

In relation to these stigmas that can be caused by the media, we wonder how media exposure effects an individual's perceptions or beliefs about others.

Research Design & Methods

There were 120 participants (41 male and 79 female). Participants ranged in age from 18-45 with an average age of 21.7 ($SD = 5.43$). There were 40 participants in each of the three conditions (violent, nonviolent, and control). Participants were recruited from a Midwestern University from various classes including, General Psychology, Adult Development and Aging, and Abnormal Psychology

The design used was a between-subjects design. The independent variables were media videos (positive (nonviolent), negative (violent), and control). The dependent variables were measures of attractiveness and trustworthiness of photographs of a Black male and female.

The materials used were three priming videos (positive, negative, and control). Photos of a Black male and female, and measure of physical attractiveness and trustworthiness.

The procedure for this experiment is as follows. Participants read over and signed an informed consent form stating the details of the experiment. Participants then watched one of three media videos (positive, negative, or control). Next, participants viewed photos of Black male and female. Then, participants rated the photos on physical attractiveness and trustworthiness. Lastly, participants were debriefed upon finishing the experiment which completed the process.

Findings and Conclusion

I found that neither hypothesis was supported. There was no significant difference between the positive and negative priming media in terms of attractiveness or trustworthiness.

When exposed to positive priming media and negative priming media, ratings of Blacks is going to be greater than when exposed to control media. The underlying causes for reported racial attitudes is still unclear. However, I did find that positive media exposure of situations revolving around racial attitudes does in fact influence reported racial attitudes positively. Lastly, overcompensation and social influence are factors that could have contributed to finding no difference between the violent and nonviolent conditions.