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# **A study to investigate the effects of priming a Lad's magazine brand on women's perception of the sexual harassment of other women**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the effects of priming a Lad's magazine brand on women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women and their notions of women as sex objects. Previous research has demonstrated perceptions of women can be affected by media exposure. Past studies were reviewed and a gap was identified in the current knowledge of the effects of exposure to sexualised media on women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women. One-way ANOVAs did not demonstrate any statistically significant differences in women's perception of the sexual harassment of other women or notions of women as sex objects in the Lad's magazine brand priming compared to a popular women's, or neutral magazine's branding. Implications and future research are discussed.

## **Introduction**

In 2010, a survey by Havens found that female respondents were less forgiving than men of incidences of rape. Fifty-six percent of females said in some circumstances victims of rape and sexual assault should accept some responsibility for the incident. Seventy-one percent of women argued that if you go to bed with a person you should accept responsibility for being raped (vs. 57% men), similarly 35% said going back to someone's house for a drink (vs. 19% men) or dressing provocatively (31% vs. 23%) also constituted victims accepting blame. Research by the Home Office (2009 cited in EAW Leveson Report, 2012:3) had similar findings, 36% of women believed women should be held wholly or partly responsible for being sexually assaulted if drunk, and 26% if she was wearing sexy or revealing clothing in public. Despite these findings research has found that women are more aware of incidences of sexual harassment than men (Hurt, Wiener, Russell & Mannen, 1999; Russell & Trigg, 2004). So what is accounting for the hostility women are expressing towards other women, and do women express similar hostility in cases of sexual harassment towards other women as they do in cases of rape?

Academics have argued that in our current culture we are constantly presented with sexually explicit or suggestive images in numerous forms of media (Levy, 2010; Coy, 2009; Krassas, Blauwkamp, Wesselink, 2003; Banwari & Walfried, 2000). Recent research has found that men's exposure to sexually explicit media portraying women as sex objects, i.e. portraying an individual as receptive to any sexual advances, an object for men's pleasure and/or lacking any personal presence, is related to more negative attitudes towards women (Gunter 2002; Linz and Malamuth 1993; Ward, 2002). The aims of the present study were two-fold, firstly to investigate whether exposure to sexually explicit material such as Lad's magazines could produce similar effects in women. Secondly to examine whether such media exposure could account for women's lack of forgiveness towards victims of sexual assault, measured by participant's acceptance of the sexual harassment of other women.

Media images are increasingly present in everyday life. It is estimated that an individual is exposed to 650 adverts per day, and is only aware of 11% (Adams, 1965; Henderson, Adams, Miller, 1972). Similarly our media environment has become increasingly sexualised, especially when portraying women (Gill, 2007:92; Stakiewicz & Roselli, 2008). It is argued that media such as Lad's magazines, "red top" tabloid newspapers, and the advertisements in them reflect many features of pornography (Hunt & Ruben, 1993; Stankiewicz & Roselli, 2008; McNair, 2002). Recently women's groups such as Object and End Violence Against Women (EAW) attended the Leveson inquiry into press standards regarding the portrayal of women in the media (Topping, 2012). They argued that some tabloid newspapers such as the Daily Star and The Sun consistently portrayed women as sex objects or a sum of body parts in ways that would not be permitted before the watershed if on television. They reasoned that the way these newspapers reported crimes against women such as rape, violence and murder focused on the women's actions rather than those of the perpetrator, consigning blame to the victim and undermining the crime (EAW Leveson Report, 2012:23).

## **The effects of Magazine Exposure and Content**

Current research into the effects of magazines has shown reading Lad's magazines can increase men's body self-consciousness (Aubrey & Taylor, 2009) and body

surveillance (Aubrey 2006). Equally, research into the effects of magazine exposure on women has focused on women's body shape dissatisfaction, (Morry and Staska, 2001), body shame and appearance anxiety (Monro & Huon, 2005; Zuckerman, 2003), and body-image disturbance (Nio, 2004; Marcus, 2002). Empirical research into the content of Lad's magazines suggests their portrayal of women is highly objectifying, presenting women as objects for men's pleasure (Taylor, 2005; Gill, 2007). This research is supported by many other studies (Coy & Hovarth, 2010; Krasses et al, 2003; Gill, 2007; McNair, 2002). A review on the content of Lad's magazines by Krassas, et al. (2003) found female nudity, the presentation of women as sex objects and women as sexual prey were predominant themes.

Media psychologists have theorised that exposure to sexualised media such as Lad's magazines can prime concepts and attitudes prevalent in that media source (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Dillman Carpentier, 2002). This idea relates to the cognitive-neoassociationistic model that argues, nodes corresponding to emotions and beliefs exist on an interconnected cognitive network (Anderson and Bower, 1973). Nodes that are strongly connected to one another are referred to as Knowledge Structures (Potter 1999 cited in Yao, Mahood & Linz, 2010). As suggested by Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. (2002) knowledge structures, such as concepts of women as sex objects, may be activated by exposure to related media, such as Lad's magazines. This activation can affect an individual's subsequent behaviour. Yet a literature search has revealed a lack of research investigating the effects the portrayal of women as objects in Lad's magazines has on women and their perceptions of sexual harassment towards other women.

However, research by Hamilton (2004) investigated the effects of short-term exposure to Lads magazines on male participants' dating norms, sexual expectations, attitudes and objectification of women. No significant effects were found suggesting Lad's magazines do not affect behaviour. Further to this, many argue Lad's magazines are harmless fun (Benwell, 2004; Tinckenell, Chambers, Van Loon, & Hudson, 2003:49), a positive source of information (OFSTED, 2007 cited in Coy & Hovarth, 2010), and empowering to women (Levy, 2005:91). Research has shown that sexually harassing behaviour is affected by factors other than media exposure (Pryor, 1987; Pryor, Giedd & Williams, 1995) and that Lad's magazines contribute to only a small amount of an individual's overall media exposure (Coy & Hovarth, 2010). Furthermore, some academics argue the media should not be treated as a scapegoat for criminal activity (Collins, Martino, Elliott, 2011; Steinberg and Monahan, 2011). However it should be considered that *FHM* has an estimated readership of 965,000 adults per week (Media UK, 2011), and research by Hogarth and Hegerty (2011) suggests that Lad's magazines legitimise sexist attitudes, which individuals would otherwise reject. Hogarth and Hegerty found that men were more likely to identify with statements made by convicted rapists when told they were from a Lad's magazines. Similarly when blind to the statements source, participants on average thought 50% of statements from Lad's magazines were made by convicted rapists. This suggests that exposure to Lad's magazines make individuals more permissive of sexual crimes. Currently no research has looked into the effects of exposure to Lad's magazines on women's perceptions of other women. However research has shown exposure to other types of media can affect men and women's behaviour. These findings give some insight into the effects exposure to Lad's magazines may have on women's perceptions of women, and will now be discussed.

### **The effects of Exposure to Sexualised Media**

As mentioned above, exposure to sexualised media can activate and strengthen knowledge structures, which can affect subsequent behaviours (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2002). This theory has been demonstrated in past research into the effects exposure to sexually orientated audio-visual media (e.g. games and films) and sexually suggestive advertising in print media (e.g. magazines) have on behaviour. Research has suggested that male and female adolescents exposed to a highly sexualised media environment have stronger notions of women as sex objects (Peter and Valkenburg, 2007, Brown and L'Engle, 2009). Similarly research has shown short-term exposure to sexually-explicit films can prime men to focus on women's sexuality resulting in higher expectations for women's sexual appeal, sexual interest and permissiveness (Jansma, Linz, Mulac & Imrich, 1997). Studies have also demonstrated that men's short-term exposure to sexually explicit films and games can increase sexist behaviour (Mulac, Jansma & Linz, 2002, Yao et al. 2010). Other investigations have indicated exposure to video clips depicting sexual stereotypes such as sex is recreational, women are sex objects or men are sex driven; make women more likely to see other women as sex objects than women shown non-sexual clips (Ward, 2002; Ward and Friedman, 2006). Further to this research has found exposure to degrading vignettes increases women's rape supportive attitudes (Golde, Strassberg, Turner and Lowe, 2000).

However audio-visual media is different to magazines, as it is more immersive to the viewer and can be seen, heard and, in the case of games, interacted with. Peter and Valkenburg (2007) argue that media exposure follows a hierarchal pattern, i.e. exposure to sexually orientated audio-visual media elicits stronger notions of women as sex objects than exposure to sexually orientated visual media. However Peter and Valkenburg's study investigated the effects of long-term exposure to sexual media; in contrast the present study will measure the short-term effects of exposure to a magazine prime on behaviour. In any case, research into the effects of exposure to print media advertising, a medium more similar to magazines, has demonstrated that exposure to sexually suggestive advertising can increase men's acceptance of rape myths (Lanis and Covell, 1995) and increase men and women's acceptance of child sexual abuse myths (Machia & Lamb, 2009). With this in mind magazines are more descriptive than sexually suggestive advertisements, for example where sexual relations in advertisements are often implied, in magazines they are described and examined (Menard & Kleinplatz, 2004; Ward, 2003:355). This would suggest that exposure to Lad's magazines, measured in the present study, would be as or more potent than exposure to sexually suggestive print advertising.

### **Brand Priming**

Similar to Roskos-Ewoldsen et al.'s (2002) theory of media priming, research has also investigated the effects of priming brands on behaviours. Brands have been shown to have powerful associations, a study by Parise and Spence (2012) demonstrated, using an Implicit Association Test (IAT), that consumers associated two brands of mouthwash (Listerine and Scope) with completely opposing attributes (Powerful and Gentle) despite the products being essentially the same. Ferraro, Brettman & Chartrand (2009) investigated the effects unconscious exposure to different brands of bottled water had on participants' subsequent brand choice. Participants were primed with the brand through exposure to pictures that depicted the brand of water bottle in the background. The study found that participants

favoured primed brands. Similarly research has shown that brand priming can make individual's more likely to use the primed product, when it suits their physiological needs (Karremans, Stroebe, Claus, 2006; Bermeitinger, Goelz, Johr, Naumann, Ecker & Doerr, 2007). Further to this a study by Defever, Pandelaere and Roe (2011) found participants primed with values communicated through print advertisements expressed more value-congruent behaviour. Defever et al. (2011) found participants shown security orientated advertisements were more likely, when given the choice, to chose a branded 'safe' chocolate bar and those primed with self-directed who were more likely to choose the unbranded 'unique' bar. In a similar vein research by Chartrand, Fitzsimons and Fitzsimons (2008) found that priming brands such as Apple caused participants to elicit behaviours congruent with those brands. For example participants were more creative when primed with the Apple logo than participants primed with the IBM logo. Similarly, participants primed with the Disney logo were more honest than those primed with an entertainment news channel logo. These findings demonstrate that branding can prime certain behaviours. However no research has investigated the effects priming magazine brands could have on behaviour. In the present study it is expected that exposure to a Lad's magazine brand will activate knowledge structures associated with Lad's magazines such as the concept of women as objects. This activation is expected to facilitate participant's associations of women and sex as well as making them more permissive of sexual harassment towards other women.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment does not have an all-encompassing definition as there is disagreement over which behaviours constitute sexual harassment (Pina, Gannon and Saunders, 2009; Wise and Stanley, 1987; Roiphe, 1993). However it is agreed that "quid-pro-quo" harassment, the exchange of a sexual favour in return for advancement within the workplace or academia clearly constitutes sexual harassment (Pryor, 1987; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfan & Mageley 1997; Timmerman & Bajema, 1998 cited in Pina et al. 2009; Stake & Malovich, 1990). Research has shown that sexually harassing behaviour is effected by individual differences (Pryor et al, 1995; Stillman, Yamawaki, Ridge, White & Copley, 2009; Bargh et al, 1995), the situation (Pryor, 1987), social norms (Pryor, LaVite & Stoller, 1993; U.S Merit Systems Board Surveys, 1981, 1988) and peers (Pryor 1987). It has also been suggested that perceptions of sexual harassment are not constant.

Research by Hurt, Wiener, Russell & Mannen (1999) found that male workers in an American workplace classified sexual harassment by the environmental context and social norms, whereas women's perceptions were based on the perpetrators intentions. For example men would be less likely to class inappropriate sexual comments in a relaxed office environment as sexual harassment than in a strict office environment. Conversely women may judge this behaviour to be sexual harassment, regardless of context, if the perpetrators intentions are malicious. Further to this, a study by Osman (2004) found that perceptions of sexual harassment are stronger when the victim's verbal resistance matches their facial expression, i.e. sexually harassing interactions where the victim was smiling when saying 'stop' were less likely to be labelled as sexual harassment than serious expressions. However contrary to findings from Hurt et al's study, Osman's study found overall men were more likely to recognise verbal harassment as sexual harassment regardless of the victim's expression than women.

In contrast research by Russell & Trigg (2004) suggests gender does not affect perceptions of sexual harassment but instead gender traits. Similarly Blumenthal (1998) argues that status difference between the victim and perpetrator accounts for more variance in perceptions of sexual harassment than gender. Blumenthal's meta-analysis of past research into perceptions of sexual harassment suggested that when the perpetrator is of higher status than the victim the incident was more likely to be perceived as sexual harassment than if the victim was of higher or equal status to their harasser. Other situational differences that affect perceptions are differences in gender of the victim and the perceiver. Research by Runtz and O'Donnell (2003) tested participants' perceptions of sexual harassment by presenting participants with student teacher sexual harassment scenarios, similar to the present study, however Runtz and O'Donnell varied the gender of the victim and perpetrator in their scenarios. The study found that if the gender of perpetrator and victim were the same or the victim's gender was different to the participant's the interaction was less likely to be seen as sexual harassment. Research by Isbell, Swedish and Gazan (2005) had similar findings, but found when the victim's gender differed to the participant's, participants with a high Likelihood to Sexually Harass (LSH) were less likely to judge the interaction as sexual harassment than low LSH participants.

### **Media Exposure and Perceptions of Sexual Crimes**

As mentioned above research has shown that exposure to sexualised media can affect perceptions of sexual violence such as rape, sexual harassment and child abuse. Research by Brown and L'Engle (2009) found that Adolescents exposed to a sexualised media environment were more likely to have behaved in a sexually harassing way in the past 3 months. Similarly a study by Strouse, Goodwin & Roscoe (1994) had similar implications, finding that high exposure to music videos increased adolescent females' acceptance of sexual harassment. As mentioned previously research has suggested exposure to sexist advertisements can increase men's acceptance of sexual crimes (Lanis & Covell, 1995; Hovarth & Hegerty, 2011). Similarly research by Machia and Lamb (2009) found men and women exposed to sexually orientated advertisements taken from popular magazines scored significantly higher on Child Sexual Abuse Myth Scale than participants shown nature advertisements. Furthermore research by Taylor (2005) has suggested men who read Lad's magazines have higher rape myth acceptance than men who do not. This research demonstrates that the portrayal of women as sex objects and exposure to sexually orientated media can result in more permissive perceptions of sexual violence and crime. In light of this, the present study predicts that participants primed with Lad's magazines will be more permissive of the sexual harassment of other women.

### **Present Study**

The present study will investigate the effects of priming a Lad's magazine brand on women's notion of women as sex objects, and their perceptions of the sexual harassment of women. Participants will be primed with one of three well-known magazine brands (*FHM*, *Cosmopolitan*, *National Geographic*). It is expected that priming participants with a Lad's magazine brand (*FHM*) will facilitate access to knowledge structures of women as sex objects and so they will associate women with sex more than participants primed with a women's (*Cosmopolitan*) or neutral (*National Geographic*) magazine brand (H1). These effects will be measured using an IAT. It is also expected that participants primed with the *FHM* brand will be more likely to permit hypothetical incidences of sexual harassment between a female

student and male lecturer (H2) and perceive that the victim will feel more positively about the incident than participants in other conditions (H3), these variables will be measured by Sexual Harassment Attitudes questionnaire (Stake & Malovich, 1990). Participant's media usage will be recorded to control for any confounding effects long-term exposure to sexualised media may have on participants' associations of women and sex, or perceptions of sexual harassment as has been suggested in previous research discussed above.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Forty-nine female undergraduate students from a University in the South West of England took part in the study in exchange for one course credit. Participants were aged 18 to 22 years ( $M = 19.2$  years). The study was advertised on a university website for Psychology students, and recruited via the same website's participant pool in return for course credit. Participants recruited for the study had all lived in the UK for three years to ensure they were aware of the magazine brands included in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three following magazine conditions, *Cosmopolitan* condition (women's magazine,  $N = 16$ ), *FHM* condition (Lad's magazine,  $N = 17$ ), *National Geographic* condition (neutral magazine,  $N = 16$ ).

### **Materials**

#### *Magazine Priming Task*

The magazine priming task was administered on PC-type desktop computers using EPrime software. The task consisted of 20 pictures of four different models (two male, two female) completing everyday tasks such as, washing up, taking a picture, reading a map etc. Each picture included the magazine of the assigned condition in the background. The magazines logo could be clearly seen but was not overtly obvious, which acted as a prime to participants, similar to brand priming method employed by Ferraro et al. (2009). The pictures for each condition were identical, the only difference being the magazine prime. This was to ensure no confounding variables would affect the priming task.

#### *Sexual Harassment Attitudes Questionnaire (SHA)*

The Sexual Harassment Attitude (SHA) Questionnaire (Stake & Malovich, 1990) consisted of two scenarios demonstrating an example of quid-pro-quo harassment between a student and lecturer (see appendix 1). In both scenarios a male lecturer makes an inappropriate request to start casual relations with a female student in order to ensure she gets a good grade on the course. Participants were asked to rate two sets of 6 statements on a scale of 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each scenario. The first set of questions measured whom participants thought was responsible for the situation arising. For example statements such as: "The student is probably hoping that getting to know the professor personally will help her to get a better grade on the course" measured how much the student was to blame (Victim Blame); "The professor is using his status unfairly to pressure the student into dating him", determined how much the lecturer was to blame (Perpetrator Blame); and finally "The professor probably meant no harm so it should not be taken too seriously", measured how much participants felt no-one was to blame (No Blame). Two statements were used for each of the three blame measures. The



overall blame score was calculated by averaging participant's responses to the Victim Blame, Perpetrator Blame and No Blame statements across the two scenarios.

The second set of statements recorded how participants suggested the student should react to the incident, whether they should comply with the request, ignore it or confront the lecturer.

"Go to dinner with the professor and talk over the problems you are having in class"  
(Comply)

"Change the subject and try to forget about the conversation" (Ignore)

"Go to the department head and tell him/her about the professor's actions" (Confront)

Similarly, two statements were used to measure each of the suggested reactions within each scenario. The overall score was calculated by averaging participants suggested response across the two scenarios resulting in a, Compliance, Ignore and Confrontation score for each participant.

The last section of the questionnaire measured the emotions participants anticipated the student would feel in this situation, six emotions were presented to participants as bi-polar adjectives, i.e. Insulted- Flattered, Intimidated- Powerful. The adjectives were separated by a 7-point scale, on which participants selected the corresponding number to reflect how much they felt the student in the scenario would be experiencing this emotion. I.e. for the Insulted- Flattered emotion, scoring '0' would indicate Insulted and '6' would show Flattered. The overall Emotion Score was calculated by averaging the total negative emotion ratings for both scenarios, with higher scores signifying a higher anticipated negative emotional response. The instructions accompanying the SHA explained that participants should think of the student in the scenarios presented as their friend or colleague. This was to ensure participants considered the situation from an outsider's perspective as it was anticipated that asking participants how they themselves would feel in this situation would not accurately reflect women's tolerance of sexual harassment of other women as group.

#### *Implicit Association Test*

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) used 38 stimulus items: nine male names (e.g., James, Matthew, Oliver), nine female names (e.g., Jessica, Megan, Olivia), nine sex-related words (e.g., vagina, orgasm, scrotum), nine neutral words (poster, cushion, plate). Stimuli were similar to those used in sexual priming tasks (Pryor, Giedd and Williams, 1995; Geer & Bellard, 1996. See appendix 2 for a full set of stimuli). The IAT was conducted in five blocks. Male versus female names were the target concepts, and sexual versus neutral word were the attribute contrast. Participants responded to the concept and attribute words by pressing left (Q) and right (P) keys on a QWERTY computer keyboard with their corresponding forefinger. The IAT trials were administered in the following order for half of the participants: Block 1, discriminate male versus female names (nine trials); Block 2, discriminate sexual versus neutral words (nine trials); Block 3, respond to female and sexual words and male and neutral words (18 trials); Block 4, discriminate female versus male names, with response key assignments reversed (nine trials); Block 5, respond to male and sexual words and female and neutral words (18 trials). For the other half of

participants Blocks 3 and 5 were reversed to control for order effects. Instructions on how to complete the IAT were presented to participants on the computer before each trial. The IAT score was computed by subtracting the mean response latency for carrying out the stereotype-congruent trial (Block 3), in milliseconds, from the stereotype-incongruent trial (Block 5), so a positive response difference reflects a stronger implicit stereotype i.e. a greater association of women with sex. The IAT stimuli appeared within a white window, vertically and horizontally centered, both target and attribute concepts were presented in black text on a white background, participants viewed this display from approximately 60 cm. The stimuli were presented randomly within each block of trials.

### *Media Usage Questionnaire*

Participants completed the Media Usage Questionnaire (see appendix 3) on paper. The Media Usage Questionnaire consisted of four sections relating to Magazine readership, Television viewing, Film preferences and Computer gaming. The first section, Magazine Readership asked participants to rate how often they had read a list of popular monthly and weekly, men's, women's and gender neutral magazines in the past 6-months on a 0 (Never, 0 times) to 6 (Always, 9+ times) Likert-scale, the rating scale for monthly magazines was 0 (Never, 0 times) to 5 (Always, 6 times) due to the different number of monthly magazines issued over a 6-month period.

Participants were then asked a series of questions relating to their television viewing such as how many hours per week they watched television and which channels and programs they watched. The last two sections enquired into participants' film genre preferences, if they were computer gamers and if so, which games they played. The primary use of the questionnaire was to control for any confounding variables in the data which could be attributed to participants' television viewing, magazine readership etc, in light of this the questions included were not too in depth. Therefore the Media Usage Questionnaire was comprised of mostly closed questions, although some open questions were used for questions such as which television programmes participants watched or computer games they played. Information on how to complete the sections Media Usage Questionnaire was included with the questions.

### **Design and Procedure**

The study employed a 3 (prime condition: Cosmopolitan, *FHM*, Control) x 2 (IAT block order: congruent vs. incongruent trial first) mixed factorial design, with between-subject measures on the first factor. Upon arrival participants were seated at a desk in a classroom of six computer cubicles, 15 inches in front of a PC-type desktop computer in a cubicle to ensure participants were not distracted, remained focused on the task and were reassured other participants were not able to see their answers. Participants were randomly allocated to one of three magazine priming conditions. Participants were given the brief to read (see appendix 4), which outlined the study's task, reassured participants of their right to withdraw themselves from the study at any time and the confidentiality of their results. Participants were then asked to sign the consent form if they agreed to take part in the study, after which they began the computer-based tasks. Participants began by completing the picture recognition task; pictures were shown to participants for 2 seconds, after which they were prompted by the computer to enter the task the model was acting out.

Participants then completed the Sexual Harassment Attitudes Questionnaire (Stake & Malovich, 1990) and then the IAT. None of the computer-based tasks progressed

to the next stage after time limit participants' responses were required in order to move on to the next stages. After completing these tasks participants were asked by the experimenter to complete the Media Usage Questionnaire, administered on paper. The experimenter briefly explained the questionnaire to them. After this participants were debriefed, (see appendix 4) and asked if they were aware of the magazines in the priming task. The experimenter then thanked them.

## Results

The response times, responses and error rates of participant's data were checked to ensure all participants fully participated in the study's tasks. One participant's data from the IAT test was discarded due to an error rate of over 30% (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009) however this participant's data was accurate in the other tasks and so was included in the analysis of the SHA and further analysis. No participants indicated that they were aware of the magazine prime.

The magazine prime did not elicit any effects on participant's association of women and sex. The IAT scores demonstrated that all participants performed the word categorisation task in the incongruent trial (men and sex vs. women and neutral) faster than the congruent trial (women and sex vs. men and neutral). The average response time for participants in the *FHM* condition ( $M=-64.01$  ms,  $SD=103.3$ ) was almost double the response time of participants in the *Cosmopolitan* condition ( $M=-33.15$  ms,  $SD=94.38$ ) and the control ( $M=-30.14$  ms,  $SD=78.49$ ) demonstrating that participants primed with the *FHM* magazine logo had a stronger association between men and sex. However a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of participant's IAT scores and the magazine prime condition demonstrated these findings were not significant,  $F(2, 45) = 0.67$ ,  $p=0.52$ . The first hypothesis, therefore, is not supported.

The second hypothesis predicted that participants in the *FHM* magazine condition would be more accepting of the sexually harassing behaviour towards others than participants in the other conditions. A preliminary scale reliability analysis of the Sexual Harassment Attitudes Questionnaire suggested that the scale's items were not reliable. The test revealed that items measuring blame for the situation were of varying reliability, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .39 to .71. Similarly items measuring possible reactions were not markedly reliable, Cronbach's Alphas ranged from .56 to .74.

Due to the lack of internal reliability of the Sexual Harassment Attitudes Scale a new "Sexual Harassment Acceptance" scale was constructed using 16 of the items from the previous Sexual Harassment Attitudes scale. The new scale consisted of eight items, from both Scenario 1 and 2, which measured participant's acceptance of sexually harassing behaviour. These were formerly the No Blame and Compliance items. The other eight items, again from scenario 1 and 2, measured participants Non-Acceptance of sexually harassing behaviour. These were formerly the Perpetrator Blame and Confrontation items. The acceptance ( $\alpha = .75$ ) and non-acceptance ( $\alpha = .76$ ) measures both demonstrated high internal reliability. The overall Sexual Harassment Acceptance (SHA) Score was calculated by reversing the Non-acceptance scores, and averaging the total sum of both measures. The higher the score demonstrates a higher acceptance of sexually harassing behaviour of others. The overall reliability of this measure was high ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

As can be seen in Table 1 below, there was no interaction between the magazine prime and SHA score. A one-way ANOVA, conducted on participants SHA score and the prime condition, confirmed there was no interaction between the prime and acceptance of the sexual harassment of others,  $F(2, 46) = 0.83, p = 0.45$ . Hypothesis Two, therefore, is not supported.

**Table 1:** Mean and standard deviation of Sexual Harassment Acceptance scores (0-5), and Emotion rating (0-6) for each of the three magazine conditions.

	Cosmopolitan		FHM		National Geographic	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
SHA	1.20	.55	1.37	.60	1.45	.53
Emotion	4.99	.68	4.83	.59	4.92	.77

The third hypothesis predicted that participants in the *FHM* magazine condition would anticipate fewer negative emotions to be felt by the female students in the scenarios. Preliminary analysis of the reliability of the items in the emotion measure of the Sexual Harassment Attitudes questionnaire demonstrated a high level of reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ). As can be seen from table 1, participants anticipated emotion scores did not differ in the *FHM* condition compared to the other conditions. A one-way ANOVA was conducted on participants' Emotion Scores and their prime condition. The test found no interaction,  $F(2, 46) = 0.25, p = 0.78$ . Hypothesis Three, therefore, is not supported.

Further analysis investigated participant's reading of women's magazines and associations of women and sex, and acceptance of sexual harassment scores. A linear regression analysis found there was no relationship between participant's frequency of reading women's magazines and associations of women and sex ( $\beta = 0.21, p = 0.30$ ), acceptance of sexual harassment, ( $\beta = -0.12, p = 0.44$ ), and anticipated emotion response to sexual harassment ( $\beta = 0.25, p = 0.22$ ). The test found no significant interaction was found,  $t(46) = -1.25, p = 0.22$ . Similarly no interaction was found between participant's condition, their magazine readership and any of the Independent variables  $t(42) = 1.68, p = 0.1$ .

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to predict if women's acceptance of the sexual harassment of other women was affected by exposure to a Lad's magazine prime. The first hypothesis predicted participants primed with the *FHM* brand would exhibit stronger associations between women and sex compared to participants in the *Cosmopolitan* and *National Geographic* magazine conditions. It was also hypothesised that participants in the *FHM* condition would be more likely to permit hypothetical incidences of sexual harassment of a female student, and expect that victims of sexual harassment would feel more positive emotions regarding the incident than participants in other prime conditions. The present study found that participants in the *FHM* condition did not have stronger associations of women as sex objects than participants in the other conditions. Similarly, participants in the *FHM* condition were not more accepting of sexual harassment towards other women compared to participants in the other conditions. These findings will now be discussed further.

### **Implicit Association of Women and Sex**

The results suggest participants in the *FHM* condition did not have a stronger association of women and sex than participants in the *Cosmopolitan* and control condition. However, the study found participants in the *FHM* condition had an average IAT score, favouring the incongruent trial, whereas the average IAT scores for participants in the other magazine conditions suggested their associations were neutral. These findings suggest that participants primed with the *FHM* brand, on average, had stronger associations of men with sex. However these differences were not statistically significant and so will not be discussed further. Overall, the study found no interaction between the Lad's magazines prime and participants' notions of women as sex objects these findings do not support the first hypothesis. However the findings of the present study are similar to those of Hamilton (2004), who also found that short-term exposure to Lad's magazines did not affect men's notions of women as sex objects. In light of Hamilton's (2004) findings and those in the current study, it would appear that the affects of Lad's magazines on the strength of men and women's notion of women as sex objects are the same, suggesting that short-term and unconscious exposure to Lad's magazines does not facilitate notions of women as sex objects. However, these findings conflict with some previous research that has suggested that women's short-term exposure to sexually explicit audio-visual media increases women's notions of women as sex objects (Ward, 2002; Ward and Friedman, 2006). This discrepancy could be due to the different types media used, and gives weight to Peter & Valkenburg's (2007) findings. They argue that exposure to sexually explicit audio-visual media, facilitates the activation of notions of women as sex objects more so than exposure to sexually explicit visual media, such as Lad's magazines. As such these findings support Peter & Valkenburg's conclusion that the effects of exposure to sexually explicit media and the strength of notions of women as sex objects follows a hierarchical pattern.

### **Perceptions of Sexual Harassment: acceptance and anticipated emotional response**

Another aim of the present study was to investigate if women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women were affected by unconscious exposure to Lad's magazines. Contrary to the proposed hypothesis the results did not demonstrate any statistically significant relationship between participants acceptance of the sexual harassment of other women in the *FHM* condition, compared to those in the other magazine priming conditions. Participant's Sexual Harassment Acceptance scores were consistently low in all magazine prime conditions, suggesting that on average all participants expressed strong disapproval towards the sexual harassment of other women.

It was also hypothesised that participants in the *FHM* condition would expect victims of sexual harassment to feel more positively about an incident of sexual harassment, than participants in other prime conditions. However the results show that participants' anticipated emotional reaction of victims of sexual harassment was highly negative across all three of the magazine conditions. This outcome suggests that contrary to the hypothesis, women's unconscious exposure to Lad's magazines does not affect how they anticipate victims of sexual harassment may feel about the incident.

In summary, these findings suggest that unconscious exposure to Lad's magazines does not affect women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women.

These findings conflict with research by Strouse et al. (1994) which indicated that adolescent women are more accepting of sexual harassment when exposed to sexualised media. However Strouse et al.'s sample consisted of adolescents with an average age of 13 years. Conversely participants in the current study had an age range of 18-21. This difference could suggest that age mediates the affects of exposure to sexualised media and women's perceptions of sexual harassment. This conclusion is supported by research undertaken by Foulis and McCabe (1997), who found that high school students were more accepting of sexual harassment, as measured through questionnaires, than university students and people in work.

However the findings of the current study are in line with previous research findings that suggest exposure to Lad's magazines does not affect attitudes towards women (Taylor, 2006; Hamilton, 2004). Although, as asserted by Taylor (2006) the findings that exposure to Lad's magazines does not affect women's acceptance of the sexual harassment could be affected by other confounding variables such as social norms, which discourage the tolerance of sexual harassment of women. Taylor argues that these social norms could be more prevalent amongst undergraduate students compared to the general population and so these results may not be applicable outside of the undergraduate population.

### **Effects of Long-Term magazine Readership on Attitudes**

Further analysis investigated the effects of participant's readership of women's magazines, their notions of women as sex objects and perceptions of sexual harassment. The study found there was no relationship between women's magazine readership and notions of women as sex objects or their perceptions of sexual harassment. These findings give weight to the argument put forward by Winship (1987) that women's magazine empower women. However, as long-term media exposure was not a main focus of the present study, the questionnaire used to assess participant's media usage was basic. Therefore no concrete conclusions can be drawn from these findings for this matter and further investigation into this area would be needed to give conclusive results.

### **Limitations and Improvements**

One limitation to the findings of the present study was the sample. Only one participant in the *FHM* condition reported reading *FHM*. Cognitive-neoassociationistic theory argues that exposure to a stimulus, such as sexualised media, strengthens the relationship between concepts and ideas related to that stimulus, such as sexualised media and notions of women as sex objects. The strengthening of these connections makes these related concepts more accessible when an individual is next exposed to this stimulus (Potter, 1991 cited in Yao, Mahood & Linz, 2009). Following this, participants' lack of *FHM* readership in the *FHM* condition could suggest that these participants did not have a strengthened connection between the *FHM* brand and their knowledge structures relating to past exposure to sexualised media and concepts of women as sex objects because of their lack of readership and lack of exposure to the magazine's content. One way this issue could be overcome is through priming women with images from Lad's magazines, or sexually objectifying words used with relation to women regularly in such publications. This adaptation would increase the likelihood of the primed stimulus facilitating access to women's established concepts of women as sex objects. Further to this, the use of images or words would not depend on an individual's readership of Lad's magazines, and would reflect the impact of exposure to elements of the magazine's

content. This would increase the ecological validity of the study in that it would expose women to material similar to the content of Lad's magazines and so, measure the effects of exposure to the magazines content of women's notions of women as sex objects.

### **Further Research**

As illustrated in the introduction of the present study, there is a lack of research investigating the effects of exposure to sexualised media on women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women. The findings of the current study contribute a small amount to this gap in the research, suggesting that unconscious exposure to Lad's magazines does not increase women's acceptance of sexual harassment towards other women or their accessibility to notions of women as sex objects. However, as discussed above the accessibility of concepts of women as sex objects may not be facilitated by exposure to Lad's magazine branding. Furthermore, past research has suggested exposure to Lad's magazines can increase the acceptance of sexual crimes (Taylor, 2004) and their content may legitimise derogatory and sexist views of women which readers may otherwise see as unacceptable (Hogarth & Hegerty, 2011:14). Considering these findings further research would be required to explore what effects exposure to Lad's magazines have on women's and men's perceptions of sexual harassment. As discussed above, in future research, when investigating the effects of priming Lad's magazines on women, it is important for the prime to reflect aspects of the content of Lad's magazines.

Similarly, the findings from previous research have indicated that social norms mediate individual's perceptions of sexual harassment (Strouse et al., 1994). As suggested by Taylor (2004) perceptions of aggressive behaviour towards women, including sexual harassment (Kelly, 1988) are affected by the social norms of undergraduate students. Considering this, it would be useful to undertake research into women's perceptions of sexual harassment in demographics, where sexual harassment is more integrated into social norms, such as female staff in the armed forces (Pryor, LaVite & Stoller, 1993), of similar ages to the sample of the present study. This further research would be useful in demonstrating whether perceptions of sexual harassment are affected by social norms within the student population.

Another avenue for future research would be to investigate the effects of long-term exposure to sexualised media on women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women. Past research has suggested that long-term exposure to sexualised media can affect women's perceptions of women as sex objects (Ward, 2002; Ward and Friedman, 2006; Peter & Valkenburg, 2007). Similarly research has also shown a correlation between long-term exposure to audio-visual sexualised media and women's acceptance of sexual harassment towards them (Strouse et al., 1994). In view of this, research into the effects of long-term exposure to sexualised media on women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women could provide useful insight into factors which affect perceptions of sexual harassment, and the effects of long-term exposure to sexualised media.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the current study aimed to investigate the effects of priming Lad's magazines on women's attitudes toward other women. Past research has investigated the effects of exposure to sexualised media with varying outcomes. The present study found, contrary to the hypotheses, exposure to a Lad's magazine

prime exhibited no effects on women's accessibility to notions of women as sex objects and their perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women. However limitations of the study, mentioned above, mean these findings cannot conclusively demonstrate the effects of Lad's magazine content on women's perceptions of the sexual harassment of other women or notions of women as sex objects. In light of this, areas of further have been discussed to shed light on, and add to the current findings. These findings contribute to the current debate on the effects of exposure to sexualised media on individual's attitudes and behaviours, suggesting that exposure to sexually orientated print media does not have an effect on women's attitudes towards other women. This would suggest that women's every-day exposure to Lad's magazines will not affect women's attitudes towards the sexual harassment of other women or their notions of women as sex objects.

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