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Tognoli, J and Hornberger, F., Greenvale, USA

IMAGES OF HOUSEHOLD ROLES AND CHILDREN'S TELEVISION PROGRAMS

Thirty-four second grade children were asked to watch one and a half hours of pre-recorded television programs consisting of either traditional or non-traditional format regarding household sex role stereotyping. They were administered pre- and post-experimental questionnaires concerning attitudes toward play activities, careers, and television program preference. Data indicate that boys watching the traditional format judged more occupations as belonging to men, whereas boys and girls viewing the non-traditional programs saw the occupations as more appropriately belonging to both sexes. The data indicate the power of television in shaping children's attitudes, both positively and negatively.

This study concerns the influence of television programs depicting traditional and non-traditional household sex roles on children's play activities, career aspirations and attitudes about the home. Previous research has shown that sex bias in television programming is common (Tognoli and Storch, 1980; Sternglanz and Serbin, 1974), with female characters being located more often inside the home than males, who were more often seen in their place of business. There are some studies which are beginning to show a direct link between television viewing and subsequent sex typed behavior. For example, Davidson, Yasuma and Tower (1979) found that girls exposed to low stereotyped cartoons scored lower on a sex role bias test than subjects exposed to neutral or highly stereotyped material. Liebert, Sprafkin and Davidson (1982) were able to reduce sex role bias among nine to twelve year olds through design of special video programs. In a study by O'Bryant and Corder-Bols (1978), girls who were shown models of reverse sex role occupations in television commercials had a higher regard for traditional male jobs performed by females. It was thus predicted that

children who viewed a set of programs with traditional formats with regard to household rules would display more sex stereotypic attitudes and behavior regarding play activities and attitudes about careers and home than would those who viewed programs containing non-traditional formats.

Method

The subjects consisted of 34 boys and girls aged six to eight who were randomly assigned to either a Traditional or Non-Traditional category, according to the type of programs they would be viewing.

Materials: A video cassette tape recorder and tapes were used to record and show pre-selected television programs, popular children's shows from which the commercials had been edited. "The Flintstone's", "The Brady Bunch", "Gilligan's Island", "Laverne & Shirley", "Scooby Doo" and "The Jetsons" comprised the Traditional group, and "Fame", "Nancy Drew", "Alice", "The Bob Newhart Show", and "3-2-1 contact" were in the Non-Traditional group. Traditional programs depicted scenes with the mother in the home performing household chores while the father was shown at work away from home. Non-Traditional programs either contained role reversals or depicted expanded options for males and females.

Identical pre- and post-tests included questions asking what the subjects most wanted to be when they grew up, what their favorite television programs were, how much they liked different play activities, and which photographs of men and women they would match with particular sex-linked occupations.

Procedure: The children were tested in groups of three to seven in the home of the experimenter. They were shown approximately 70 minutes of Traditional shows or 50 minutes of Non-Traditional programs, depending on which group they were assigned. They were administered the pre- and post-tests before and after viewing the video tapes.

Results

One primary finding was that when the children were asked to indicate from a group of photographs of men and women which sex were more likely to hold each of 18 sex-linked occupations (nine of each), all of the children judged more of the professions to be held by men than by women. In addition, boys who viewed the Traditional tapes judged even more of the occupations to be male after the viewing, whereas both the boys and the girls in the Non-Traditional condition tended to move toward a more egalitarian position after viewing the tapes. The effect was stronger for the girls than the boys. Preferences for play activities indicated a same-sex orientation for girls and boys, and also for an increase in this preference among girls after viewing the Traditional tapes and for a decrease in preference for all activities among boys after viewing the Non-Traditional tapes.

Conclusions

These data hold promise that causal influences of television can be studied and that, with caution, television can be shown to have a

positive or negative impact on viewers depending on the content. Considerable attention must be given to refinements in selection of program choice and conditions under which programs are viewed in order to extend the findings.

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Takahashi, Takashi Tokyo, Japan
SEVEN WONDERS OF THE JAPANESE HOUSE

Seven wonders or questions were obtained from a research concerning the characteristics of 145 individual houses built with the financial aid of the Government Housing Loan Corporation in 1978. These houses, sampled nation-wide, represent the typical plans of the contemporary Japanese houses. The Japanese way of living and housing construction are undergoing a continuous change with the onrush of western influences. The waves of westernization seem to have inundated every nook and cranny of our life and society. It is, however, quite miraculous that much of the original Japanese style of life and house design still obstinately survives under such onslaught.

1. Why do Japanese houses obstinately adhere to the traditional Japanese room ("Washitsu")?

It is amazing that each of the 145 houses surveyed has at least one traditional Japanese room ("Washitsu"). The "Washitsu" was derived from the "Shoin" which was the residential style of the priest origi-