

# MEDIA AS A REFLECTION OF CULTURE

Nov 2, 4

Race and Gender Biases in Media Presentations

# Media and Culture

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Media programming as both a shaper and reflection of cultural norms and stereotypes

Studies of media content – both entertainment and public affairs programs – reveal significant stereotyping of racial minorities and women

Stereotypic coverage influences attitudes and behaviors, i.e. how people vote

Media as “hegemonic” force, working to perpetuate the social and political order

# Outline

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Media as a “mirror image” of mainstream culture and reinforcer of cultural stereotypes

Racial bias - explicit versus implicit racism and racial priming

Case studies of crime and welfare coverage

Gender bias – implications for women pursuing public office

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Media as “mirror image” -- reinforcement of popular culture and cultural stereotypes

# Ethnicity of US Population

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African American	13.2%
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Asian	5.3%
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Two or More Races <small>(fastest growing group)</small>	2.4%
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Hispanic or Latino	17.1%
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White	62.6
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# Media Representations of Cultural Diversity

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- One out of three Americans is non-white, but content of entertainment programming remains heavily white

If cast of primetime shows was representative of the population:

- Half the population would be white men
- 5 percent of the population would be black men
- 1.9 percent would be Asian or Latino men.
- 34 percent would be white women
- 3.8 percent would be African-American women
- 3.8 percent would be Latino or Asian women

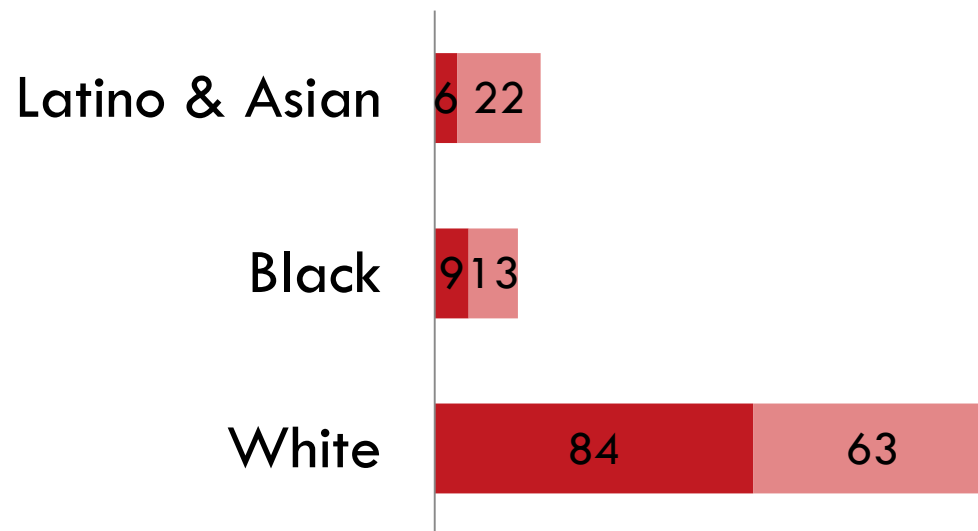
# TV Content Not as Diverse as US Society

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Significant under-representation of non-whites, particularly Latinos

## TV ≠ Real World

■ Media ■ Reality



# Racial bias - explicit versus implicit racism and racial priming

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- Hard to say if content is cause or effect of audience biases
- Programming may elicit stereotyped views of minorities or stereotypes may drive program content



# Nature of Racial Prejudice

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“Old fashioned” racism based on theories of biological superiority has long since disappeared

Expression of overtly negative attitudes toward minorities also infrequent

- Less than 10 percent of whites in national surveys rate African-Americans as “lazy,” “violent,” etc.

Explicit, conscious prejudice has been replaced by more subtle forms of out group animosity

- Symbolic or modern racism and racial resentment

# Measuring “Modern Racism”

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- Combination of support for mainstream values such as individualism and the work ethic with beliefs about norm violation by minorities

“The Irish, Italians, Jews, Vietnamese and other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.”

- Agree
- Disagree

“It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.”

- Agree
- Disagree

# Absence of Bias or Political Correctness

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Post-1960s, Americans have accepted the norm of racial equality, i.e. that society should be color blind

Survey questions on race produce pressures to conform to egalitarian norms; responses indicate absence of racial bias



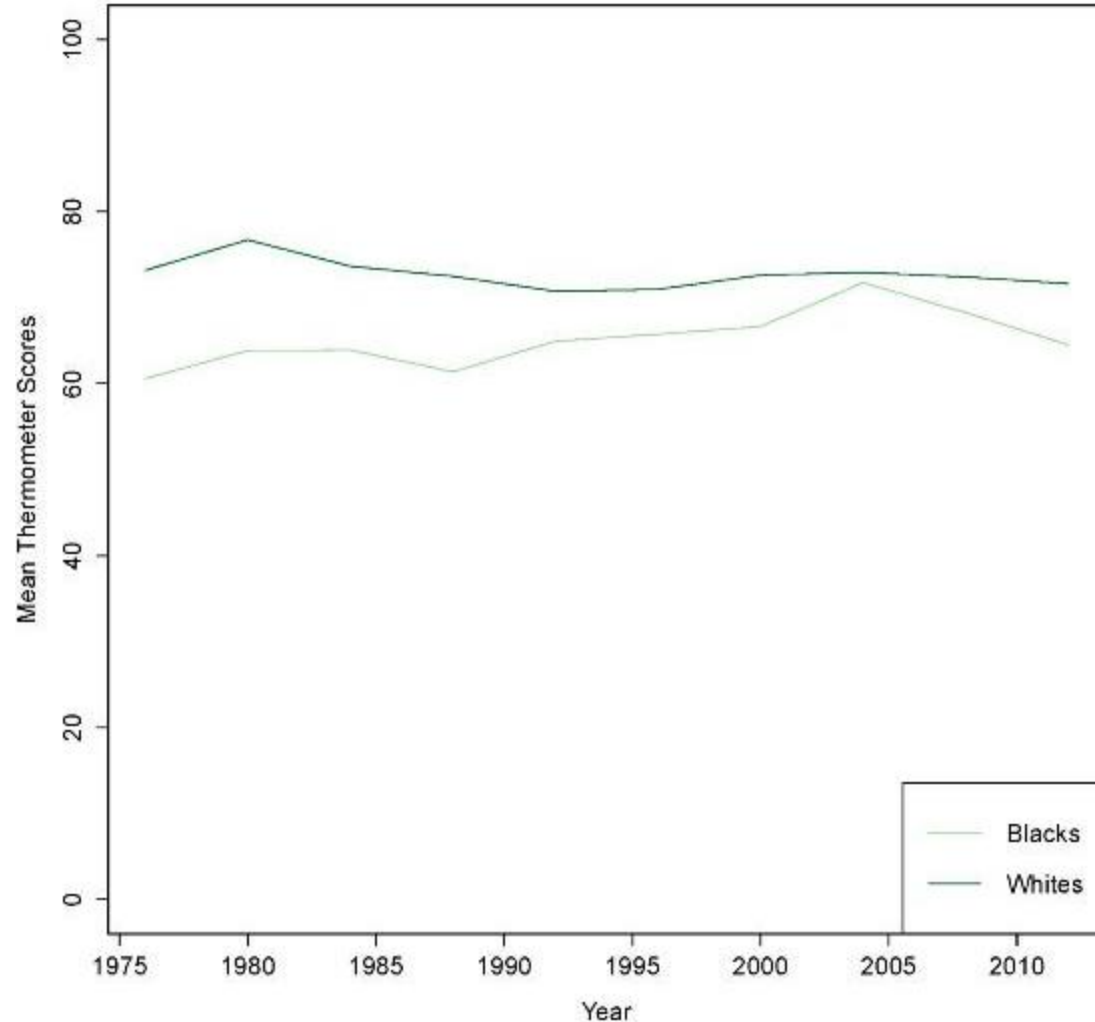
But when survey questions are framed so as to disguise the racial cues, whites' responses frequently indicate "blatantly prejudiced attitudes"

When people do not recognize that they are violating the norm of racial equality, they feel free to express stereotypes that are hostile to minorities

# Race “Feeling Thermometers”

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Very small differences in thermometer scores; does this mean respondents are unbiased?

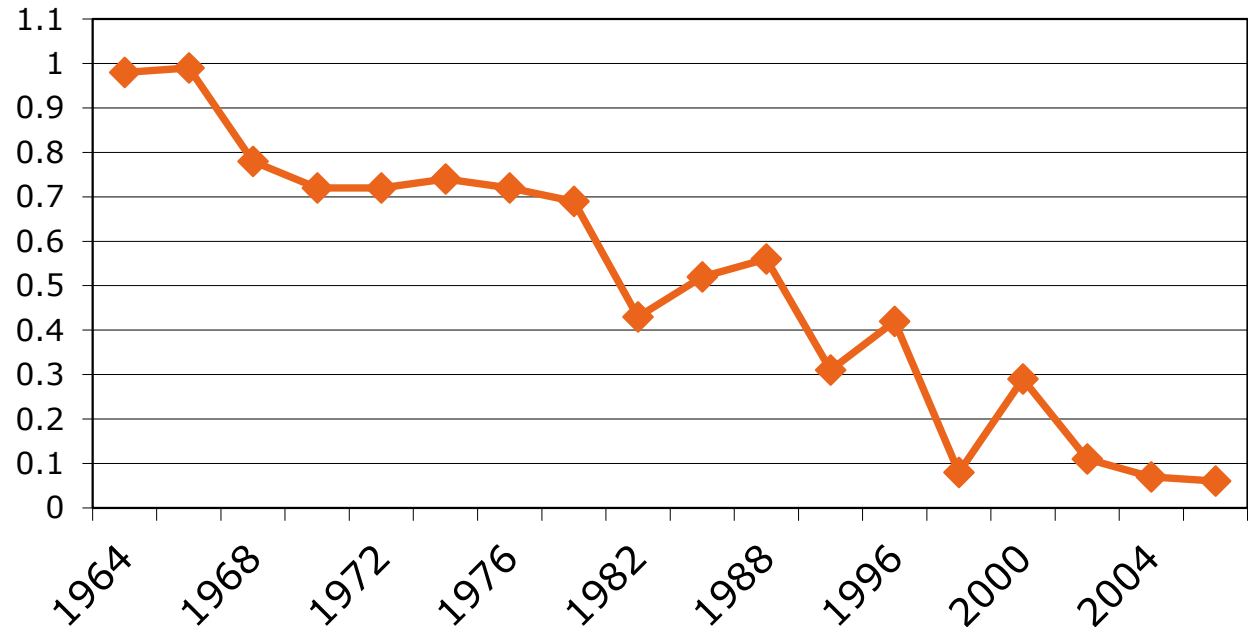


# Decline in Effect Size/Race Feeling Thermometers

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Significant racial bias in the 1960s and early 1970s, then dramatic reduction

Trend in Cohen's d: 1964-2008 (NES)



# Implicit Racism

(<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Study?tid=-1>)

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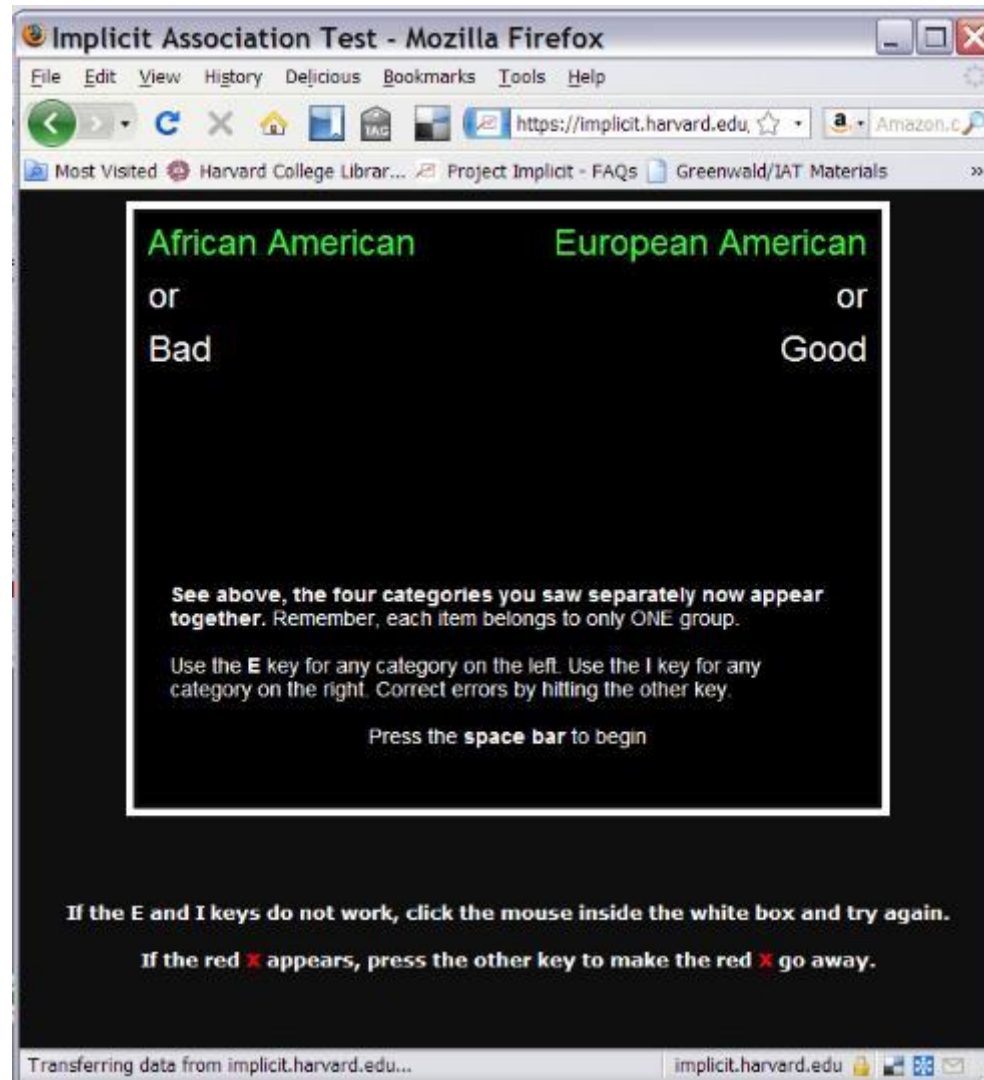
- Implicit attitudes exist independently of awareness
  - ▣ Race IAT as the most widely used implicit measure

“... psychologists now believe that the mind’s architecture precludes introspective access for the most part and have sought to develop attitude measures that have an existence independent of consciously stated ones. While explicit attitudes do in fact reflect genuine conscious preferences (which, in the case of race, have indeed changed over the past 100 years), they shed no light on less conscious and therefore inaccessible preferences that may nevertheless influence behavior.”

# Race IAT

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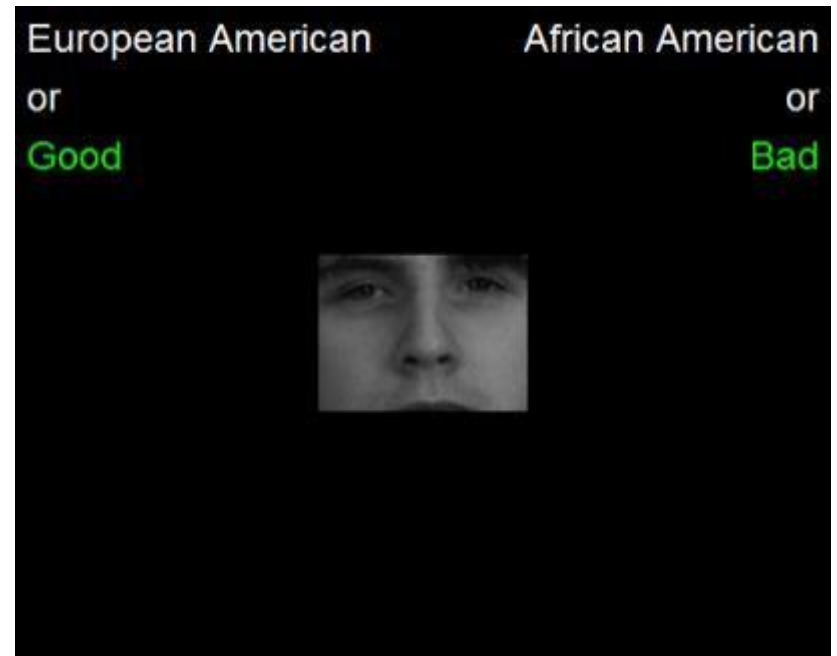
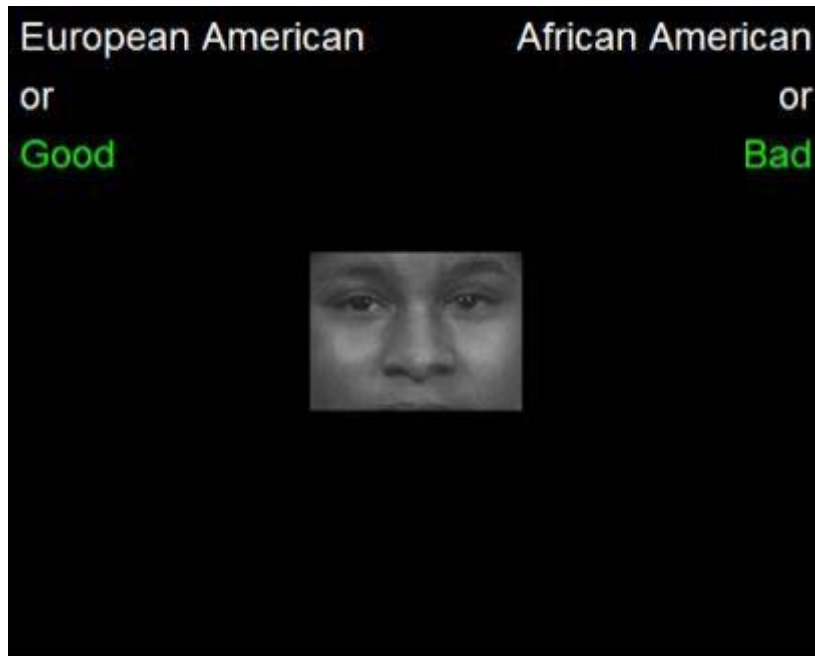
Measures speed with which people associate racial groups with positive-negative terminology



# Race IAT (cont.)

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<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/>





# IAT Scoring

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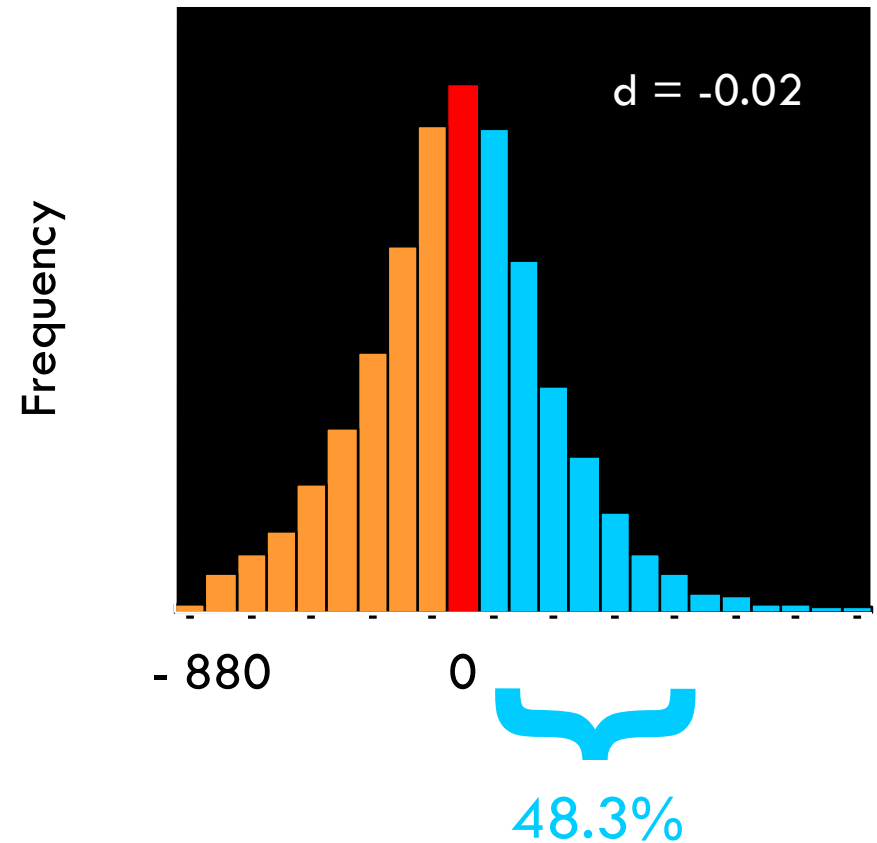
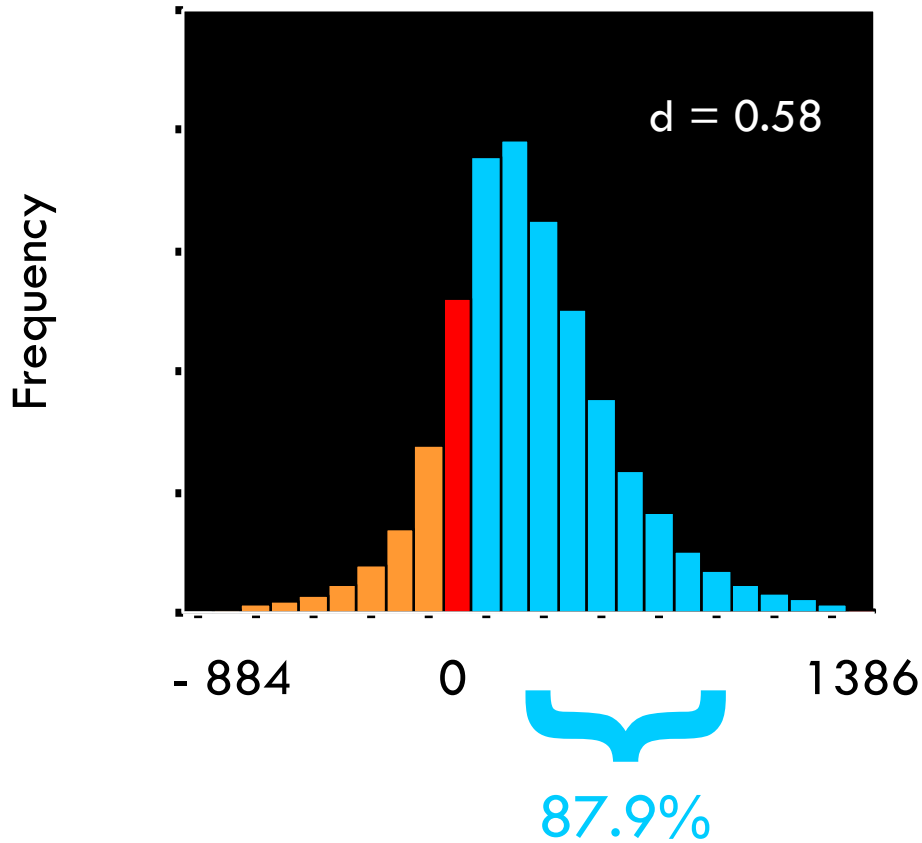
- IAT or “D Score” computed by subtracting the response times during blocks with stereotype compatible pairings (e.g., African American paired with bad and European American paired with good) from the response times during blocks with incompatible pairings (e.g., African American paired with good and European American paired with bad)
- Positive values represent faster sorting for compatible blocks, negative scores indicate faster sorting in incompatible blocks (i.e. when African American is paired with good and European American is paired with bad)
- D score ranges from -2 to 2 (-2 = strong pro-black bias, 2 = strong pro-white bias)

# IAT Scores Reveal Considerable Implicit Prejudice

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N = 46789 (whites)

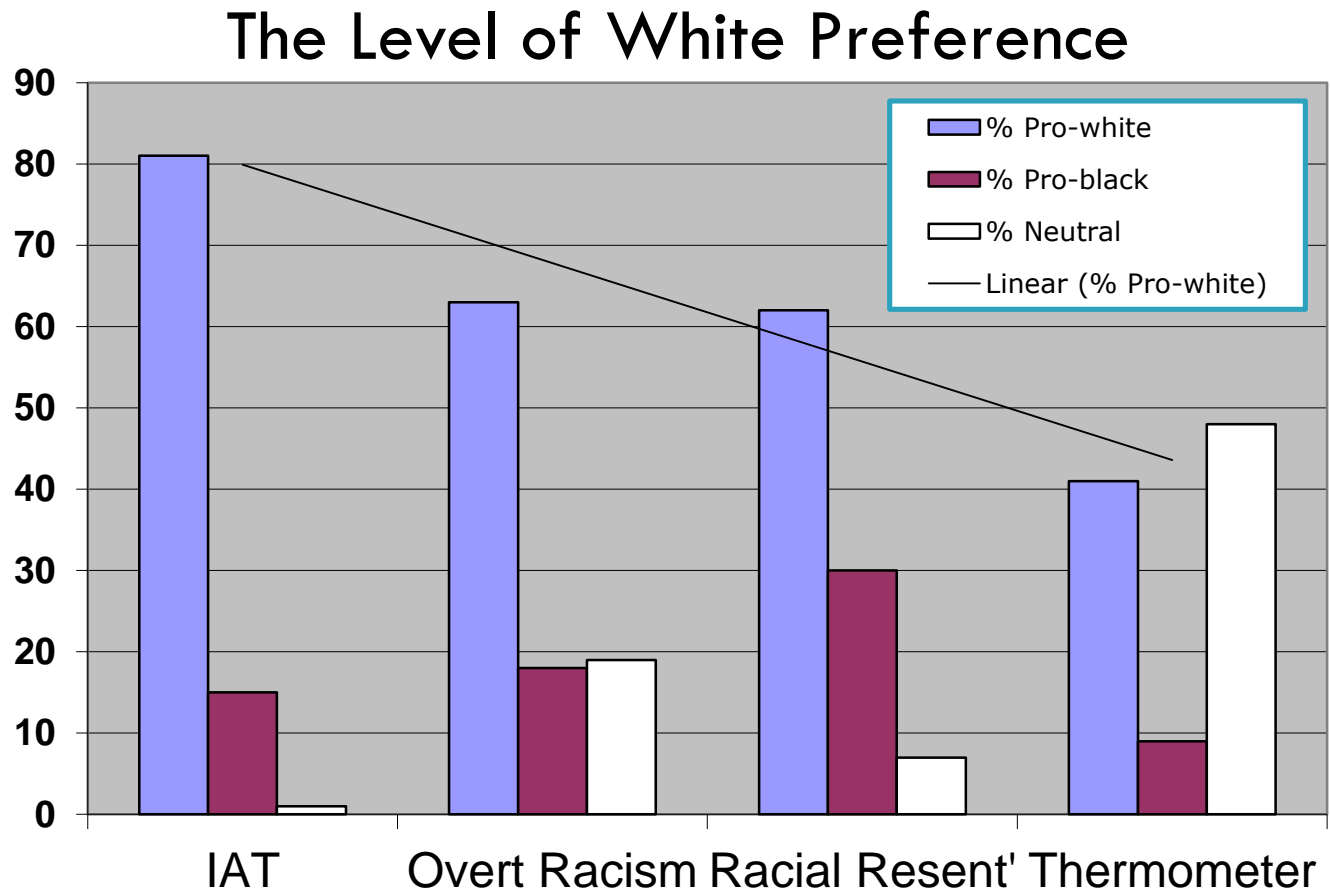
N = 5746 (blacks)



# Level of Prejudice Depends on the Indicator

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Number of people with anti-black attitudes ranges from 40 to 80 percent!



# Media Programming as a Source of Explicit and Implicit Racial Bias

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## Local news coverage of crime as the exemplar

- Unending focus on violent acts committed by non-white males

## Extraordinary over-representation of non-whites as criminal perpetrators

- Corresponding under-representation of minorities in law enforcement
- Non-white suspects more likely to be shown handcuffed

## Exposure to the “crime script” is so frequent that viewers have internalized it

- They interpret news reports consistently with the script even when given evidence to the contrary

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## Case studies of crime and welfare coverage

# Gilliam/Iyengar study of crime

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Images of suspects  
“painted”  
to match  
racial  
prototype  
and  
inserted  
into local  
newscast



# Biased Memory for Crime News

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30 minutes  
after  
exposure to  
the crime  
report,  
participants  
asked to  
recall  
details

## Recall of Suspect's Race in Gilliam/Iyengar Crime Study

**TABLE 2** Manipulation Check: Recall of Suspect  
by Experimental Condition

	<b>Black Suspect</b>	<b>No Suspect</b>	<b>White Suspect</b>
Percent recalling suspect as black	70 (182)	44 (56)	10 (21)
Percent recalling suspect as white	13 (34)	19 (24)	64 (137)
Percent unable to recall suspect	17 (45)	37 (46)	26 (56)

# Consequences of Stereotypic Crime News

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(1)

- Exposure to non-white suspect increases support for punitive criminal justice policies (e.g. “three strikes”)

(2)

- Exposure to non-white suspect increases salience of crime as a national problem



# Visuals Accompanying Crime News

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- Cedar Rapids Gazette published yearbook photos of Univ. of Iowa wrestlers arrested on burglary charges and standard mugshots for unknown African-Americans also arrested for burglary
- black (compared to white) suspects less likely to be identified by name, and are more likely to be shown physically restrained.

# Hetey-Eberhardt Study

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## Manipulated racial composition of prison population

- Subjects were either told that CA prison population was 25% or 45% African-American

## Subjects then asked to sign petition to make CA three strikes law less harsh

- Majority agreed law was too harsh
- 52% in “less black” condition signed
- Only 27% in “more black” condition

## Replicated results in NY with “stop and frisk” law

# The Power of Statistics?

“Many legal advocates and social activists assume that bombarding the public with images and statistics documenting the plight of minorities will motivate people to fight inequality. Our results call this assumption into question. Motivating the public to work toward an equal society requires something more than the evidence of inequality itself.”

# Welfare “Queens”

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- During the 1976 presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan made “welfare fraud” a major theme of his rhetoric – he cited a particular case:

“She has 80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards and is collecting veteran’s benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands. And she is collecting Social Security on her cards. She’s got Medicaid, getting food stamps, and she is collecting welfare under each of her names.”

# The “Genderization” of Poverty

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- Patricia Hill Collins, a leading feminist scholar, professor and author of the book “Black Feminist Thought,” outlines the welfare queen script:

“[S]he is portrayed as being content to sit around and collect welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values to her offspring. The welfare mother represents a woman of low morals and uncontrolled sexuality.”

# Effects of Exposure to Gendered News Coverage

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- Gilliam manipulated the race of female welfare recipient
- When viewers saw the black woman:

(1)

- They became more opposed to welfare spending

(2)

- More likely to cite individuals as responsible for their poverty

(3)

- More likely to endorse negative characterizations of African-Americans



# Race-Crime Associations

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Eberhardt et al. first subliminally exposed subjects to either black or white faces then gave subjects visually degraded images of crime-related objects



Degraded images gradually made clearer

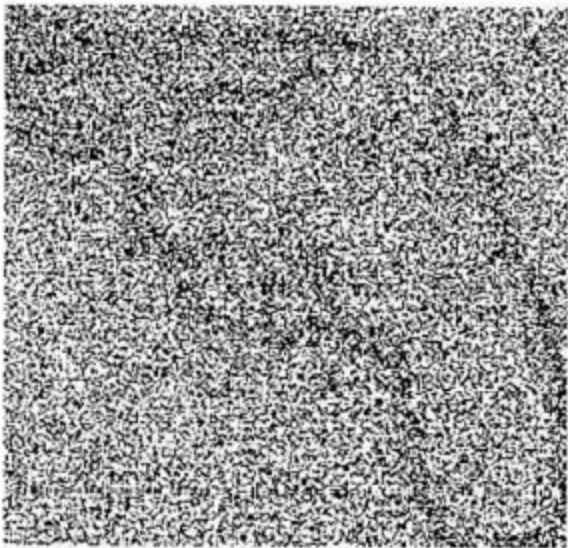


Exposure to black faces dramatically reduced the number of frames subjects needed to accurately identify crime-related objects



# Eberhardt et al. Study

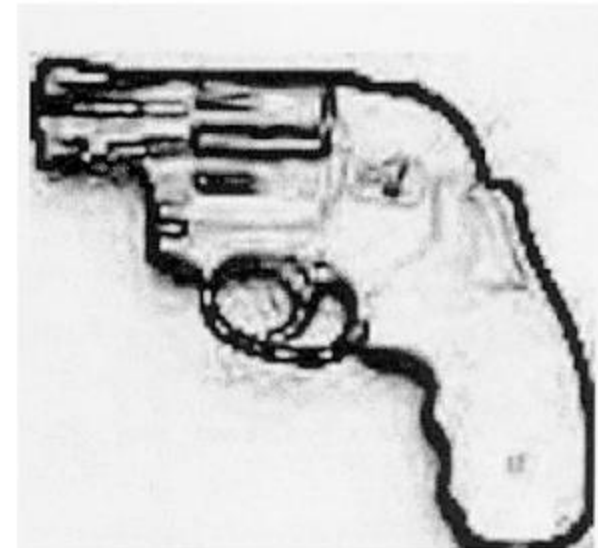
32



Frame 1



Frame 20



Frame 41

*Figure 1.* A sample of stimuli used for Study 1. Participants were presented with 41 frames of a continuum displaying an image that initially was severely degraded (e.g., Frame 1), became less degraded (e.g., Frame 20), and finally contained no degradation at all (e.g., Frame 41).



# Race as a Recognition Cue

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Exposure to black face significantly speeds up ability to recognize crime-related objects

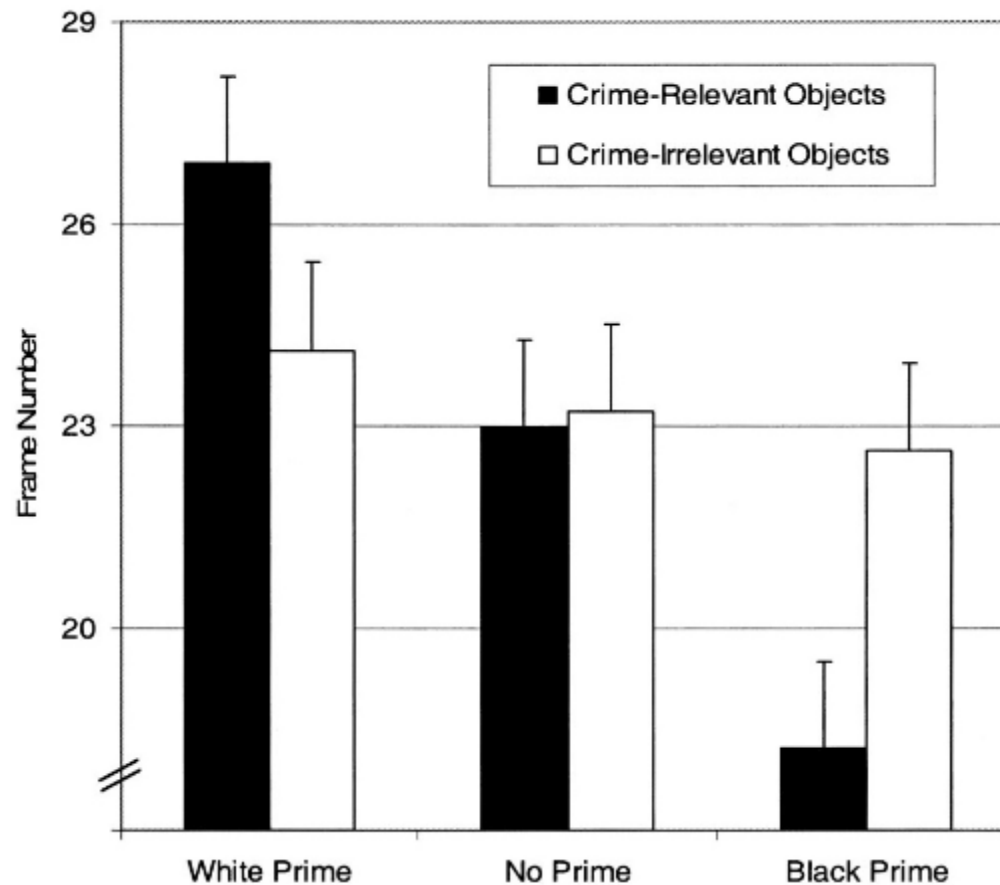


Figure 2. Mean frame number at which the object could be detected as a function of race prime and object type (Study 1). Error bars represent the average standard error for each condition.

# News Coverage of Poverty

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As in the case of crime, news coverage exaggerates the representation of racial minorities as welfare recipients

Gilens studied all poverty stories in the three major national news magazines (Jan '88 through Dec '92)

Dataset included 82 stories, 214 pictures showing 560 individuals

African-Americans accounted for 62% of all the individuals shown in pictures, compared to 29% of all social welfare recipients; more than a 2:1 distortion

# Deservingness of Welfare Beneficiaries

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Children and the elderly seen as more deserving than working-age poor



Magazine coverage of the former skewed in favor of whites

News coverage of poor people with part-time jobs or undertaking vocational education also skewed



27% of white welfare recipients shown as working compared with 12 percent of blacks

# Explanations for Biased Coverage

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Journalists  
focus on  
poverty in  
urban areas

- Where blacks make up the majority of the population
- Virtually no coverage of rural poverty which is disproportionately white

Biased  
beliefs

- Journalists interviewed by Gilens estimated that black share of poverty was >40%

# Racial Priming

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Making racial attitudes more accessible through exposure to stereotypical (black criminal or poor person) or counter-stereotypical (white criminal or poor person) news

Strategy of “wedge appeals” in campaigns

Priming more effective with implicit rather than explicit racial messages

- Former makes no reference to racial nouns or adjectives (e.g. “blacks”), instead uses proxies such as “inner city”

# Hurwitz-Peffley Study

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“Some people want to increase spending on prisons to lock up ‘violent’/‘inner city’ criminals. Other people want to spend the money on anti-poverty programs to prevent crime. What about you?”

- Respondents racial attitudes more strongly associated with prison spending when question wording included “inner city” instead of “violent”
- Large literature documenting racial priming effects (Mendelberg, 2008)

# Local News: in the “Public Interest”?

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In 2003 FCC relaxed ownership rules covering TV stations

On grounds that deregulation would increase amount of local news which is known to be profitable

Localism and cultural diversity delivered by local news both seen as ingredients of programming in the public interest

By doing so, FCC introduced “Trojan Horse” of implicit racism

“We seek local news for valuable information necessary to plan our lives, but embedded in that information is a sort of Trojan Horse that increases our implicit bias. Unwittingly, the FCC linked the public interest to racism.”  
(Kang, 2005)

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## Gender bias – implications for women pursuing public office



# Gender Stereotyping in Primetime TV

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- Dozier-Horan paper examines gender roles (roles played by men and women) in 124 primetime programs (2005-2006)

## Males

- “Agentic” - self-assertive and masters of their environment
- Play occupational roles

## Females

- Selfless and concerned for others
- Disproportionately play marital/interpersonal roles
- Even when in the workplace, shown doing “interpersonal actions” (comforting, socializing) rather than decision making

# Gender Stereotyping (cont.)

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Does gender diversity behind the camera make a difference?

## Average # of Roles (major characters)

	Interpersonal			Work		
	Male	Female	M-F Diff	Male	Female	M-F Diff
All Male Creative Team	0.79	1.05	-0.26	0.79	0.67	0.12
Mixed Gender	1.05	1.36	-0.31	0.66	0.52	0.14

# Are Gender Stereotypes Weakening?

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Significant increase in women's employment and representation in professional occupations

Women received half the law degrees awarded in 2012



Recent success of TV programs with women in decision making roles

*Madam Secretary* with 10-12 million viewers



Significant change in advertising images since 1950

Despite increased representation of women in career roles, stereotypical images persist

# Under-representation of Women in Politics

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Gender-neutral distribution requires 50:50 split; actual distribution shows significant under-representation

Table 1

## Women Office Holders in the United States Office

Office	Percent Women
U.S. Senators	17.0
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives	16.8
State Governors	12.0
Statewide Elected Officials	22.4
State Legislators	23.6
Mayors of the 100 Largest Cities	8.0

Sources: Women & Politics Institute, American University; and Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University.

# Cross-National Variation

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Almost every industrialized nation is ahead of the U.S. on gender representation

**Table 2**  
**Worldwide Rankings of Women in the National Legislature**

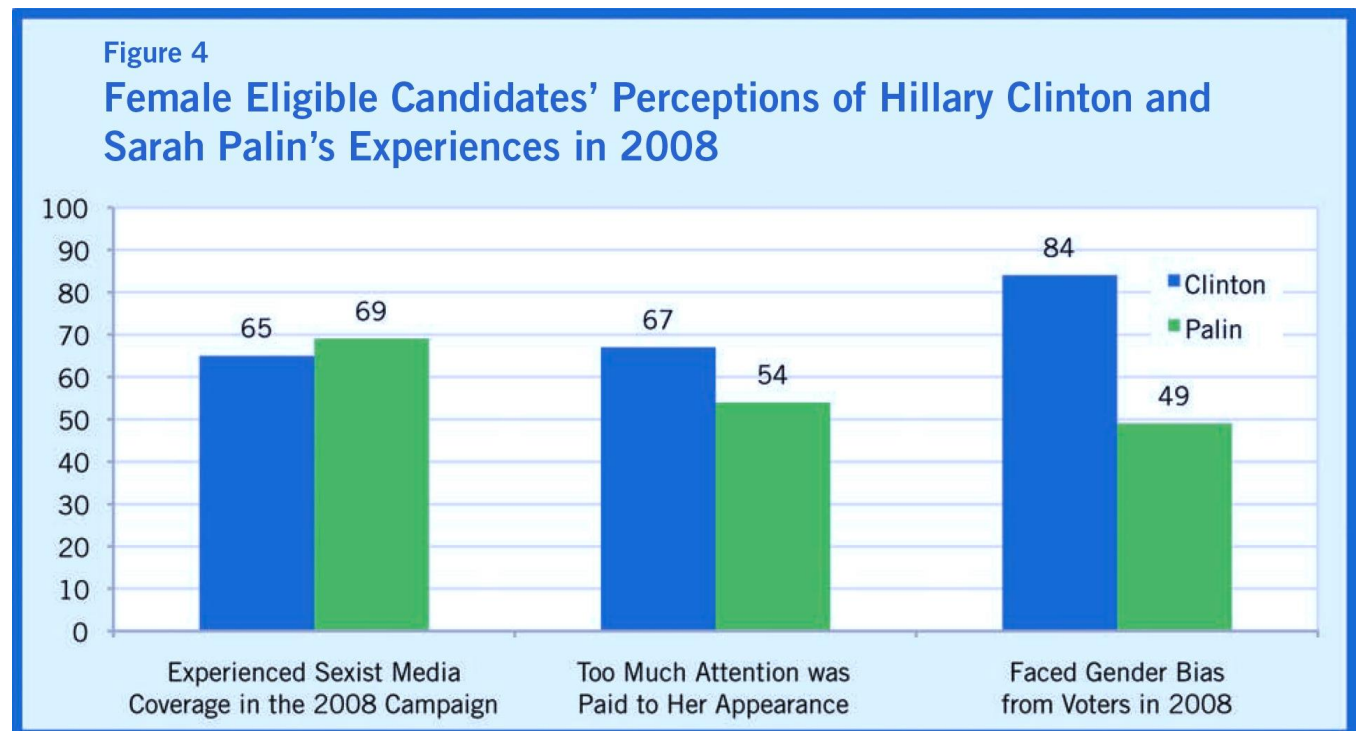
Rank and Country	Percent Women
1. Rwanda	56.3
2. Andorra	53.6
3. Sweden	45.0
4. South Africa	44.5
5. Cuba	43.2
6. Iceland	42.9
7. Finland	42.5
8. Norway	39.6
9. Belgium	39.3
Netherlands	39.3
11. Mozambique	39.2
12. Angola	38.6
Costa Rica	38.6
14. Argentina	38.5
15. Denmark	38.0
16. Spain	36.6
17. Tanzania	36.0
18. Uganda	34.9
19. New Zealand	33.6
20. Nepal	33.2
91. United States of America	16.9
International Average	19.3

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," as of August 31, 2011.

# Perceptions of Sexism, 2008

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Survey of candidates shows widespread beliefs that sexism is a significant problem facing women



# Gender Biases in Campaign Coverage

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## Palin and “sexiness”

- “The race for the U.S. presidency is not just one more beauty contest.” Maureen Dowd’s characterization of Palin as “Barbie”

## McCain’s shielding of Palin from press scrutiny reinforced stereotypes about competence

- “Childlike treatment”

## Chris Mathews on Hillary Clinton’s electoral success in 2008

- “The reason she’s a U.S. senator, the reason she’s a candidate for president, the reason she may be a front-runner is her husband messed around”

## Rush Limbaugh

- “Will this country want to actually watch a woman get older before their eyes on a daily basis?”

# Gender Stereotypes in Politics

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## Double bind

- “Women who are considered feminine will be judged incompetent, and women who are competent, unfeminine.”

## “Mother stereotype”

- Women “own” attributes of compassion and caring; greater competence on social welfare issues
- But reduced competence on “male” issues, e.g. national defense; Clinton “3 am” ad

## “Iron maiden” image

- As applied to Clinton

## Bottom line

- “Media portrayals do send messages that women are not as competent and are unsuited to certain offices - whether they have the qualifications or not.”



# Women seen as Liberal

- women candidates seen as significantly more liberal than men
- women seen as more compassionate and caring, also more trustworthy
- “gender ownership” – women seen as more competent on issues of education, civil rights, helping the poor, health care, maintaining an honest government

# Special case of sexual harassment and the 1992 elections

50

- Hill-Thomas confirmation hearings propelled sexual harassment onto the national agenda (Oct. 1991)
- Issue mobilized women; 1992 as the “year of the woman” – six women elected to the U.S. Senate including two from CA
- Women candidates campaigned with ads featuring the Hill-Thomas confrontation

# Gender Biases in Evaluations of Candidates

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- Women candidates with more feminine faces evaluated more favorably (face modeling programs make it possible to score faces for femininity-masculinity)
  - ▣ But no parallel advantage for male candidates with more masculine faces (Hohman et al., 2014)
- Republican women are more stereotypically feminine in appearance than Democratic women

“The Democratic Party is associated with social liberal policies that aim to diminish gender disparities, whereas the Republican Party is associated with socially conservative policy issues that tend to bolster traditional sex roles. These policy platforms are manifest in each party’s image - apparently also in the physical characteristics exhibited by politicians.”

# Summary

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(1)

- Commercial imperatives and cultural “hegemony”

(2)

- Contrast with public broadcasting regimes where cultural diversity is mandated

(3)

- Biases in local news

(4)

- Confirmation of racial and gender stereotypes