The Influence of Sex Roles on Judgment

JOAN MEYERS-LEVY*

Two experiments provide convergent evidence that sex roles, when activated, influence males' and females' judgments. Activation of the genders' sex roles was achieved either by means of explicit sex role primes or by making unambiguous self- and other-relevant information highly salient. In accordance with males' self-focused agentic sex role, males' judgments were sensitive to the favorableness of only self-relevant information, whereas females, who adhere to a self- and other-sensitive sex role, rendered judgments that reflected the implications of both self- and other-relevant information.

A sizeable literature suggests that the genders adhere to alternative sex roles. Along these lines, Bakan (1966) and Carlson (1971, 1972) have posited that males are guided predominantly by controlling tendencies referred to as agentic goals. These goals stress self-assertion, self-efficacy, and mastery. Accordingly, males tend to forcefully pursue goals having personal consequences. By contrast, females are believed to be guided by communal concerns. Their emphasis is on interpersonal affiliation, a desire to be at one with others, and the fostering of harmonious relations amongst themselves and disparate parties. Thus, the male sex role is characterized as being relatively self-focused, whereas the female sex role entails sensitivity to the concerns of both self and other.

The results of a study by Watts, Messe, and Vallacher (1982) exemplify these different emphases. On an interpersonal values test intended to reflect agency and communion, it was found that males endorsed items that were highly focused on the self (e.g., "To be my own boss"). By contrast, females endorsed items that reflected the consideration of both self and other (e.g., "To have people around who will encourage me").

Researchers have drawn on these portrayals of sex roles to explain an assortment of gender differences. Although consumer behavior researchers have met with only limited success in relating sex roles to product perceptions (Allison et al. 1979; Golden, Allison, and Clee 1978), sex roles have provided greater explanatory power in other areas. For example, males' greater favorableness toward issues involving force or violence (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986) and their greater aggressiveness (Eagly and Steffen 1986) have been viewed as consistent with males' self-assertion emphasis. Females' greater support for issues that exemplify compassion for the underprivileged (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986) and their greater facility in interpreting nonverbal social messages (Hall 1984) have been regarded as compatible with females' concern in fostering harmony amongst self and others (Eagly 1986).

This sex role theorizing also might imply that gender differences in evaluative judgments will occur in response to sex role-consistent or inconsistent appeals. For example, males might be more persuaded by messages that contain agentic sentiments than those that do not, while females' persuasibility might relate to the degree to which communality is represented in the appeals. Thus, an interaction might be expected between gender and the degree to which messages are sex role-consistent.

A meta-analysis of the persuasion literature by Eagly and Carli (1981), however, failed to support this view: although empirical findings were quite mixed, females were found to be more persuadable than were males in two of the three types of persuasion studies examined. Several factors that might account for this finding were investigated by Eagly and Carli, but they did not examine whether the stimulus materials employed in the studies featured claims that were more attuned to a communal orientation than an agentic perspective. Such a phenomenon might account for the results. Thus, the possibility that the agentic/communal sex role distinction applies to persuasive communication settings remains unresolved.

To test this hypothesis, one might present males and females with messages that differ in their consistency with the genders' sex roles and then obtain subjects' evaluations of these messages. Ideally, this test would be conducted in a controlled setting so that subjects' exposure to extraneous influences would be minimized. The expectation would be that the favorableness of males' evaluations would depend on the extent to which

*Joan Meyers-Levy is Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024. The author would like to thank Brian Sternthal and Hal Kassarjian for many helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.
the message contained agentic appeals and the favorability of females’ evaluations would correspond to the degree of communality represented in the appeals.

However, such a test would be susceptible to a potential problem. As Deaux has argued, in investigating such issues in controlled settings, “the pressures of the laboratory experiment may emphasize the subject role to the exclusion of more complex sex-related roles that may be prevalent in the field” (1984, p. 108). The implication is that situational demands may take precedence over subjects’ otherwise natural tendency to invoke their gender’s sex role. For example, if the procedure just described were employed, subjects might be alerted at once that their reactions to the short printed message would be sought. This might provide them with the time and motivation to engage in and use as a basis for judgment literal message processing rather than relying on their natural proclivity to adopt a sex role-consistent perspective in evaluating the information.

The studies reported herein attempt to address this potential problem in two alternative ways. Experiment 1 used a sex role prime to prompt subjects to rely on their sex role proclivities. Experiment 2 used a different means of activating subjects’ sex roles entailing making both one’s own and others’ views about a product highly salient.

**EXPERIMENT 1**

The first study examined the contention that gender differences in persuasion might be tied to sex roles. This entailed presenting subjects with a message for a product that contained either relatively self-oriented or other-oriented persuasive appeals. If the characterization of the genders’ sex roles is accurate, males would be expected to be more persuaded by the self-oriented than the other-oriented message, while females should be equally favorable toward the two appeals because each appeal would address but a single component of their communal orientation.

However, Deaux’s (1984) contention that in controlled settings one’s subject role may overwhelm one’s sex role implies that the genders’ judgments might vary depending upon whether their sex roles are activated in memory prior to judgment. To address this possibility, some males and females were administered a prime that embodied sex role-relevant concepts prior to rendering judgments. The predicted gender differences in persuasion were anticipated to emerge most strongly among these subjects. Among the other subjects whose sex roles were not stimulated prior to judgment, it was expected that gender differences in persuasion that aligned with the genders’ sex roles would be less likely to emerge. Assuming that the self- and other-oriented messages were generally equally favorable in content, the genders’ judgments should be similar in favorableness in this condition regardless of variations in message orientation. This pattern of null effects would be of interest because it would imply that any gender differences in judgments observed in the presence of a prime would not simply be a matter of males’ and females’ outright preferences for alternative message content.

However, stimulation of the genders’ sex roles via a prime posed a dilemma. From a theoretical perspective it would seem appropriate to use different statements to stimulate sex role orientations. Yet, on methodological grounds, presenting different inductions to males and females would be inappropriate. To resolve this issue, two primes were designed and each was administered to different groups of male and female subjects: an agentic prime made more explicit the consideration of self as opposed to others, and a communal prime made the consideration of others as well as self explicit.

This operationalization of the prime made it unclear how judgments would be affected when the genders were exposed to a “gender-inappropriate” sex role prime. One possibility was that each gender would respond to the sex role consistency of the message only when the sex role prime was gender-appropriate. When the prime was gender-inappropriate, judgments might be no more favorable for the sex role-consistent message than for the inconsistent one. A second possibility was that the genders would assume the sex role perspective of the opposite gender in response to a gender-inappropriate sex role prime. This might suggest that subjects were responding to experimenter demands. Finally, a third and more theoretically interesting possibility was that males’ agentic self-oriented sex role in fact might be activated by the communal prime just as it would be stimulated by the agentic prime. Likewise, females’ communal self- and other-oriented sex role might be activated by the agentic as well as the communal prime. This might occur because responding to such sex role information that is inversely related to concepts applicable to one’s own sex role may activate “gender-appropriate” sex role concepts.

Evidence consistent with the latter notion is offered by Kuiper and his colleagues (Kuiper 1981; Kuiper and Derry 1981). They found that subjects exhibited faster rating times for judging items that were extremely like or unlike the self relative to those items that were only moderately self-descriptive. Thus, self-relevant knowledge was presumably accessed in making judgments concerning items falling at both ends of the self-descriptiveness continuum. This implies that males’ and females’ exposure to a gender-“appropriate” or “inappropriate” sex role prime might activate associations to one’s “appropriate” sex role. In light of the evidence consistent with the latter premise, this outcome was anticipated.

A second issue arose that pertained to the timing of sex role activation via the prime. Nearly all studies that have examined the effects of primes on judgments have administered the prime prior to the presentation of the
judgment-relevant stimulus information (e.g., Bargh and Pietromonaco 1982; Higgins and Chaires 1980).
Although priming effects have been obtained in such
studies, it is unclear whether these effects occurred dur-
ing the initial encoding of the stimulus information or
when such information was retrieved at the time of
judgment. Wyer and Srull (1980) have hypothesized
that priming effects might be obtained when the prime
is introduced after stimulus presentation. If such an ef-
fect was produced, it would provide evidence that
priming effects can occur uniquely at the time of re-
trieval. As Wyer and Srull reasoned, information might
be stored in memory in rather unadulterated form until
the time of judgment. Then, stimulus information
might be retrieved and re-encoded in terms of concepts
that were primed after stimulus presentation.
Although this view has yet to receive empirical sup-
support, it is compatible with findings indicating that late
caption activation influences both what and how ma-
terial is remembered (Anderson and Pichert 1978; Sny-
der and Uranowitz 1978; Spiro 1977). Thus, because
a demonstration that poststimulus priming affects judg-
ments would be of interest in its own right, the prime
was administered in this manner in Experiment 1.
To summarize, the focus of Experiment 1 was to as-
sess whether sex role orientation could explain the gen-
ders’ judgments. Subjects read a message about a pro-
duct that contained either self- or other-oriented appeals.
When sex role-relevant concepts were externally ac-
tivated prior to judgment by means of a prime, it was
anticipated that the genders’ judgments would vary in
accordance with the values inherent in their sex roles.
Moreover, these differences were anticipated regardless
of whether the prime was explicit in activating each
gender’s “appropriate” sex role. Thus, either prime
should activate males’ agentic orientation, leading them
to be more favorable toward the self- than the other-
oriented appeal. And either prime should activate fe-
male’s communal orientation, rendering them equally
persuaded by both messages. Furthermore, females’
 adherence to a communal concern with self and others
might lead them to exhibit less favorable judgments
than would males in the self-oriented message condition
because the message would fulfill only the self com-
ponent of females’ sex role. However, females should
exhibit more favorable judgments than males in the
other-oriented message condition because although the
message would again fulfill only one component of the
female sex role, it would be completely at odds with the
male sex role.
When external stimulation of one’s sex role was ab-
sent prior to judgment, both genders were expected to
be sensitive to the demands of the experimental setting
and thus base their judgments on an objective and literal
analysis of the message information. Hence, when no
prime was presented prior to judgment, males and fe-
male were expected to respond similarly to the self-
and the other-oriented messages.

Method
Subjects. One hundred thirty-two males and 128 fe-
male participated in a product evaluation. The research
was conducted in large groups in which the genders were
randomly assigned to experimental treatments.
Stimulus. Subjects read a persuasive communica-
tion for a mouthwash. The message began by stating
that the product “works by coating the teeth and gums
with a thin invisible film. This film provides 2-way pro-
tection that lasts 12 hours.” At this point, the message
orientation induction was introduced by describing
medicinal or cosmetic attributes. Subjects in the self-
oriented message condition read that the product “kills
germs and bacteria that cause decay, and it gently stim-
ulates the gums.” Those in the other-oriented condition
read that the product “provides pleasing fresh breath,
and it prevents common staining of the teeth.” The
final sentence in both versions of the message reiterated
the critical product benefit.
This variation in message orientation was based on
the premise that medicinal attributes are more related to self
than to others, whereas cosmetic attributes are more rel-
levant to others. To test this premise, a pilot study
was conducted. Forty-two males and females rated the me-
dicinal and cosmetic attributes used in this study on a 7-
point scale ranging from self-oriented (1) to other-oriented
(7). It was found that the genders perceived the attributes
similarly and that medicinal attributes were regarded as
more self-oriented ($M = 1.71$) than the cosmetic attributes
($M = 3.63; t = -8.65, p < 0.01$).
Procedure. A cover sheet indicated that a new
mouthwash was being considered for introduction. Subjects
read at their own pace either the self- or the other-
oriented message, and they evaluated the product
on seven 7-point bipolar adjective scales. Subjects also
were exposed to a prime that was intended to activate
concepts associated with their sex role. Half of the sub-
jects received the prime immediately after they had read
the message but prior to their judging the product. The
remaining subjects received the prime after judgments
were rendered. Because the prime could have affected
the judgments of the subjects in the former but not the
latter treatment, these treatments will be referred to as
the prime-present versus the prime-absent conditions,
respectively.
Two sex role primes were administered to different
groups of subjects, each composed of four statements.
One prime contained statements that emphasized agentic
concerns by making the consideration of self
somewhat more explicit than the consideration of others
(e.g., “It’s important to stand by your own convic-

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1A prime was included in the experimental materials distributed
to all subjects to avoid having subjects become suspicious if they
noticed that other subjects seated next to them were administered
materials different from those they received.
The other prime was more communal and stressed the consideration of others as well as that of self (e.g., "I try to consider others' feelings in making decisions"). Subjects indicated whether they agreed with each of the four statements.

Results

Treatment effects on the evaluation items were analyzed on the full 2 (gender) by 2 (message orientation: self versus other) by 2 (nature of prime: agentic versus communal) by 2 (presence/absence of prime) design. ²

²Because questionnaires containing the experimental treatment inductions were randomly premixed and distributed to large groups of subjects comprised of males and females, the experimenter could not ensure that precisely the same number of males and females received each of the eight versions of the questionnaire. By chance, only 10 subjects received the version of the questionnaire corresponding to one of the treatments (females who received the self-oriented message and the communal prime, which was administered after judgments were rendered). Most of the remaining cells were comprised of 15-19 subjects. To adjust for problems that can be posed in interpreting outcomes resulting from studies with unequal cell sizes, an analysis procedure specified by Appelbaum and Cramer (1974) was employed. Because factor analysis revealed that four of the evaluation items that were administered comprised a unidimensional scale, analyses are reported for the sum of these items.

This analysis indicated the presence of a significant message orientation effect ($F(1,241) = 3.81, p < 0.05$). Evaluations were more favorable when the message was self-oriented than other-oriented ($M = 14.92$ and $M = 13.94$, respectively). This effect was qualified by the significant three-way interaction of gender-by-message orientation-by presence/absence of prime ($F(1,241) = 4.37, p < 0.04$) shown in the Figure. All other effects were nonsignificant, including those involving the agentic versus communal prime manipulations. Thus, the effect of the prime on the genders’ judgments was the same whether the prime was gender-appropriate or inappropriate.

Further analysis of the three-way interaction revealed a two-way interaction between gender and message orientation when the prime was present prior to judgment ($F(1,241) = 8.78, p < 0.003$). This interaction was nonsignificant when the prime was absent ($F < 1$). Moreover, in the absence of the prime the genders’ judgments were similar ($F < 1$) and were not affected by message orientation ($p > 0.14$).

Simple effects tests performed on the two-way interaction that emerged when the prime was present indicated that males were more favorable toward the product in response to the self-oriented than the other-oriented message ($F(1,241) = 13.56, p < 0.001$), whereas
message orientation did not affect females’ responses ($p > 0.23$). Thus, males evaluated the product more favorably than did females in the self-oriented message condition ($F(1,241) = 3.66$, $p < 0.05$), but females evaluated it more favorably than did males in the other-oriented message condition ($F(1,241) = 8.70$, $p < 0.004$).

**Discussion**

The data from Experiment 1 lend support for the view that the genders adhere to alternative sex roles that can systematically affect their judgments. The persuasibility of either gender is enhanced when “gender-appropriate” sex role concepts are activated prior to judgment and used to interpret messages that embody sex role-consistent values. More specifically, when males’ agentic sex role was activated prior to judgment, males were more favorable toward the self-oriented than the other-oriented message. This occurred because the former message was more consistent with the values of their sex role than was the latter message. By contrast, the activation of females’ communal sex role prior to judgment led females to exhibit equivalent favorableness toward both messages, which were each partially consistent with the values of their sex role. As a result, males were more persuaded than were females by the self-oriented message, whereas females were more persuaded by the other-oriented message. This implies that either gender may be more persuaded depending upon the consistency between the values represented in a message and the genders’ activated sex roles.

These differences between the genders’ judgments seem not to be simply due to males’ and females’ unqualified preferences for particular message content. This is demonstrated by the observation that when a prime was absent prior to judgment, these gender differences were eliminated, presumably because contextual demands encouraged both genders to engage in and use for judgment purposes literal message processing rather than consider message appeals in light of their sex role consistency.

Several other issues of interest are also addressed by the data. One is the observation that variation in the gender appropriateness of the prime produced no significant effects. Thus, both the explicitly agentic and communal prime apparently activated each genders’ “appropriate” sex role. While this conclusion rests on a null effect and thus must be regarded as tentative, it is noteworthy that parallel findings have been reported in other research (cf. Kuiper 1981; Kuiper and Derry 1981). Moreover, the observation that the genders’ judgments were not differentially affected by the explicitly agentic or communal prime also argues against the likelihood that the observed effects are due to hypothesis guessing or demand artifacts. If demand were operating, subjects who received a “gender-inappropriate” prime would be expected to judge the message in a manner consistent with the sex role explicitly implied by the prime rather than with their own gender’s sex role.

A second noteworthy aspect of the data is that a priming effect of the genders’ sex roles was obtained when the introduction of the prime occurred prior to judgment but after the presentation of the stimulus material. This finding demonstrates that primes can produce their effect at retrieval, thereby offering support for the theorizing of Wyer and Srull (1980), which suggests that individuals can retrospectively reinterpret information in a manner consistent with concepts introduced after their initial encoding of stimulus material. This study offers the first demonstration of this sort. Future research is needed to identify the preconditions that determine when this effect is likely to emerge.

One possible objection to Experiment 1, however, is that some ambiguity surrounds the manipulation of the self- and the other-oriented message appeals. Though pretests indicated that these appeals were significantly different from one another on a bipolar adjective scale measuring self- versus other-orientation, the ratings of both appeals fell below the scale’s midpoint, suggesting that the other-oriented appeal was not devoid of self-relevant benefits. While such weak manipulations should only reduce the likelihood of producing the predicted effects that did obtain, confidence in the theorizing might be bolstered by a demonstration of sex role effects that involve stronger manipulations of self- and other-relevant information.

Experiment 2 addresses this concern by employing more direct and obvious representations of self- and other-relevant information that elevate the face validity of these manipulations. Moreover, because the genders’ exposure to such explicit self and other cues should make this information highly salient, it was reasoned that the cues themselves might activate the genders’ sex roles without resorting to the use of primes.

**EXPERIMENT 2**

In Experiment 2, subjects were presented with information that clearly pertained to the views of both self and others and varied in its favorableness. This was accomplished by assigning subjects to judge products toward which they were initially positively or negatively predisposed, and informing subjects of others’ favorable or unfavorable reactions to the products. Next, subjects judged the product, tasted it, and then judged it again. The amount of the product subjects consumed was employed as a behavioral index of their response to the product.

It was reasoned that the genders would differentially employ the self and other cues as a function of their sex roles. Further, the explicit and salient representations of self and other information that were employed might naturally induce subjects to activate their sex roles, obviating the need for primes. That is, in a parallel
manner to Experiment 1, where explicitly agentic and communal primes induced the genders to activate their “appropriate” sex role by making explicit self and other information salient, the strong and highly salient self and other information inductions in Experiment 2 should lead them to spontaneously activate their “appropriate” sex roles.

Specifically, it was predicted that males, who adhere to an agentic self-focused sex role, would use only the self information in rendering judgments, and females, who embrace a communal self- and other-sensitive sex role, would use both self and other information in rendering judgments. Whether these predictions would emerge on both pretaste and posttaste judgments was uncertain. Some evidence suggests that individuals are reluctant to express hypotheses developed on the basis of ambiguous experimental stimuli until they have an opportunity to confirm them through direct experience (Darley and Gross 1983). For this reason the predicted effects were thought most likely to emerge after subjects sampled the product.

Method

Subjects. Sixty-two males and 56 females were recruited by a research firm to participate in a product evaluation. Subjects participated in groups of three to eight persons that were overseen by two females, the experimenter and her assistant.

Procedure. While waiting to begin, subjects overheard the experimenter ostensibly dismissing participants from the previously scheduled session. The experimenter then emerged and informed subjects that their initial reactions were sought to two new diet soft drinks. Subjects read descriptions of the products, designated as Products A and B, and indicated which they preferred. To avoid any self-selection biases, it was necessary that all subjects indicate a preference for the same drink. Thus, Product B was described somewhat more favorably than was Product A.  

Next, subjects were informed that they would be tasting and evaluating one of the two soft drinks. The beverage they would taste was determined randomly by giving subjects cups marked A or B, denoting the beverage to be tasted. Later, all subjects were actually served the same beverage. Thus, subjects assigned to taste Product A, the less preferred beverage, were designated the negative self-information condition, while subjects assigned to taste Product B, the preferred beverage, comprised the positive self-information condition.

Before subjects tasted their assigned drink, a participant ostensibly from the previously scheduled session knocked on the door and conversed with the experimenter. This person was a confederate whose remarks were presented via a tape recording to ensure equivalence in stimulus presentation for all groups. The content of the confederate’s message was used to manipulate the favorableness of others’ view of the beverages. Subjects overheard the confederate explain that his/her group agreed that Product A was much preferred to Product B, or alternatively that Product B was much preferred to Product A. Further information concerning the preferred brand was also requested. Thus, subjects were exposed to information indicating how others judged the beverage they were evaluating.

Three dependent measures were administered. Subjects evaluated the beverage on nine 7-point bipolar adjective scales just prior to and after tasting it. Between these measures, subjects were given six ounces of beverage to drink. After they departed, the amount they had consumed was measured.

Results

The data were analyzed first in terms of the full 2 (gender) by 2 (self-information: positive or negative) by 2 (other information: positive or negative) factorial design. These analyses were followed up by separate analyses for each gender that specifically examined whether the predicted effects emerged. Treatment means for all measures are reported in the Table.

Analysis on aggregate pretaste attitudes revealed main effects of sex ($F(1,105) = 7.92, p < 0.01$) and self-information ($F(1,105) = 19.86, p < 0.01$). Females evaluated the product more favorably than did males, and all subjects’ evaluations were more favorable when self information was positive rather than negative. All other effects on this measure were nonsignificant ($F < 1.41, p > 0.24$). Follow-up analyses of specific contrasts of self and other treatment means revealed that, as predicted, self information would be greater for female subjects; and that the interaction of self- and other information would be positive for female subjects, and negative for male subjects.

Footnotes:

1. This implies that a main effect of self information should obtain for males, and main effects of both self information and other information should be observed for females. As a three-way interaction of gender-by-self information-by other information is not anticipated because there is no reason to expect that females will be disproportionately affected by the other information induction.

2. Twenty-four subjects who indicated an initial preference for Product A were dropped from all analyses and replaced. Because the basis for excluding these subjects was determined prior to randomly assigning subjects to treatments, random assignment was not violated. As the description of the procedure indicates, treatment assignment involved randomly informing subjects that the product they would be evaluating in detail and tasting was either Product A or B and randomly arranging for subjects to overhear one of two accounts of others’ view of these products. To include the responses of the deleted subjects in the analysis would have meant that (1) subjects themselves would determine which treatment they were assigned to because only by examining subjects’ self-selected responses post hoc could the nature of self and other treatments be deduced; thus, random assignment would be violated; and (2) subjects with nonequivalent product perceptions would be included in the same treatments, making unique interpretation impossible.

3. Factor analyses of pretaste and posttaste items revealed that all nine of the posttaste item scales that were administered loaded on a single factor and seven pretaste item scales loaded on a counterpart factor. Hence, analyses reported herein are on the sum of these items.
**TABLE**

**EXPERIMENT 2: TREATMENT MEANS BY GENDER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pretaste attitudes</th>
<th>Posttaste attitudes</th>
<th>Ounces consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self information positive</td>
<td>27.56</td>
<td>43.72</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self information negative</td>
<td>21.70</td>
<td>33.26</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information positive</td>
<td>24.80</td>
<td>40.65</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information negative</td>
<td>24.46</td>
<td>36.32</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self information positive</td>
<td>29.20</td>
<td>47.73</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self information negative</td>
<td>25.54</td>
<td>40.76</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information positive</td>
<td>28.04</td>
<td>49.09</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information negative</td>
<td>26.99</td>
<td>39.40</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concern revealed that the main effect of the self information held both for males ($F(1,55) = 13.02, p < 0.01$) and females ($F(1,50) = 5.54, p < 0.02$).

Parallel effects emerged on aggregate posttaste attitudes. A main effect of gender ($F(1,110) = 4.98, p < 0.03$) revealed that females' evaluations were more favorable than those of males, and an effect of self information ($F(1,110) = 12.03, p < 0.01$) indicated that evaluations were more favorable when self information was positive rather than negative. In addition, a main effect of the other information emerged ($F(1,110) = 5.86, p < 0.02$) such that attitudes were more favorable when other information was positive rather than negative. No other posttaste attitude effects reached significance ($F < 1$). Follow-up analyses of the contrasts of focal concern, however, revealed that, consistent with predictions, these effects were not maintained for both genders. Males' attitudes revealed only a main effect on the self information ($F(1,57) = 7.46, p < 0.01$). However, analysis of females' posttaste attitudes revealed main effects for both the self ($F(1,53) = 4.66, p < 0.04$) and the other information ($F(1,53) = 7.76, p < 0.01$). All other effects on the males' and females' posttaste attitudes were nonsignificant ($Fs < 1.05$).

Finally, the aggregate analysis of the behavioral measure revealed only a main effect of other information ($F(1,110) = 4.08, p < 0.05$). The amount of product consumed was greater when other information was positive rather than negative. However, separate follow-up analyses revealed that this effect approached significance among females ($p = 0.12$) but not males ($p > 0.25$).

**Discussion**

These data complement those obtained in Experiment 1; however, here the obvious and salient representation of both self- and other-relevant information apparently activated the genders' sex roles in a manner similar to the primes that were employed in Experiment 1. Males, who adhere to an agentic orientation, used only self information in evaluating the product. However, females, in accordance with their communal self- and other-sensitive sex role, employed both self and other information as a basis of judgment. Moreover, these effects emerged despite the fact that all subjects received equivalent sensory experience with the product.

These differences in the genders' judgments did not emerge on pretaste evaluations. Here both genders' attitudes reflected the use of only the self information. This suggests that females refrained from using the other information until the hypotheses implied by such data were tested via direct experience. Consistent with this notion, only females displayed a marginal effect of other information on the amount of beverage consumed. This effect might have been stronger had the study not been conducted during a period of extremely hot weather. Both genders were willing to use the self information in rendering pretaste attitudes, presumably because such information had already been expressed in the initial views subjects were required to make. Further, the observation that females' judgments were influenced by other information in rendering posttaste but not pretaste evaluations argues against the view that females were merely more compliant with the perceived hypotheses of the experimenter. Such compliance would be expected to be uniform whether or not females had direct experience with the product.

Finally, the observation that in the aggregate analyses, females' pretaste and posttaste attitudes tended to be more favorable than those of males may also stem from the genders' sex roles. Females may have manifested their communal concerns by being somewhat more supportive of others' (e.g., the manufacturer's) interests.

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6Examination of treatment means for combinations of self- and other-information conditions for each gender revealed that, as might be expected, females' evaluations were more extreme than males' when both the self and the other information was positive ($M = 53.85$ vs. $M = 46.07$; standard deviations $13.70$ vs. $11.35$) or negative ($M = 31.19$ vs. $M = 31.27$; standard deviations $12.71$ vs. $16.33$), and females' attitudes tended to be more moderate than those of males when the self and other information was opposing in valence (mean attitudes for females and males, respectively: self positive/other negative $M = 41.62$ vs. $41.38$, standard deviations $16.40$ vs. $15.66$; self negative/other positive $M = 44.33$ vs. $35.24$, standard deviations $16.78$ vs. $12.93$).

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Together, these studies provide evidence that the genders' sex role orientations can affect both the bases upon which they render judgments and the favorableness of their judgments. In Experiment 1, subjects' sex roles were activated prior to judgment by means of a prime, and the favorableness of their judgments was found to reflect the sex role consistency of the persuasive appeals. Males were more favorable when the appeal
was self- rather than other-oriented, while females were equally favorable toward self- and other-oriented appeals. These effects were eliminated, however, when the prime was deferred until after judgments were rendered, suggesting that the reliance on sex roles can be overwhelmed in controlled settings that place a premium on detailed, literal message processing. Under such conditions, males and females rendered judgments quite similarly, presumably basing them on a literal interpretation of the message.

Experiment 2 complements the first study by demonstrating similar outcomes when sex roles were activated more spontaneously by saliently representing self and other information. Here, sex role effects were manifested by males' exclusive use of self information cues and females' use of both self and other information cues in rendering posttaste judgments.

Particularly noteworthy in Experiment 1 was the observation that the genders activated their sex roles in response to information that was either consistent with or antithetic to their sex role. This observation complements findings reported elsewhere that reveal similar outcomes for other types of self-relevant information (Kuiper 1981; Kuiper and Derry 1981). Also noteworthy is the demonstration in Experiment 1 of a priming effect in which the prime was introduced after the presentation of judgment-relevant stimulus material. Though not previously demonstrated, this finding is in accordance with the theorizing of Wyer and Srull (1980), which suggests that primed concepts can be retrospectively applied to previously encoded information, thus producing their effects via retrieval.

One question that is unaddressed in the present analysis is whether sex roles influence judgments pertinent to non-self- or other-related information. It is possible that males' single-focused agentic orientation and females' multi-focused communal orientation are special cases of more generalized processing strategies that distinguish the genders. Thus, males' adherence to a single-focused agentic orientation may represent their more general propensity to base responses on a rather selective consideration of available cues. Likewise, females' adherence to a communal orientation may be indicative of a broader tendency for females to consider a variety of cues as a basis of response. Because such a phenomenon would have far-reaching implications for consumer behavior, further research is needed to assess this possibility.

The data also offer other implications of import to consumer behavior researchers. They suggest that the genders' reliance on culturally prescribed sex roles may represent a heuristic device by which the genders assess the persuasiveness of advocacies. As implied by Reder (1982), it may often be faster and more efficient to employ such heuristics than undertake a detailed analysis of specific message claims.

A second implication that merits further investigation is whether in designing messages, ostensibly sex role-inconsistent arguments can be framed to be viewed as consistent with the targeted gender's prescribed sex role. For example, in targeting males, discussion of seemingly communally oriented attributes (e.g., cosmetic or superficial design features of a product) might be framed as promoting self-efficacy in personal and career aspects of one's life. Likewise, when targeting females, seemingly agentic functional product attributes might be framed as facilitating one's desire to nurture others. To illustrate, a recent advertisement for Snickers candy bars exemplifies how a seemingly agentic attribute of a product—satisfies hunger—might be positioned as consistent with females' communal role. The ad claims: "When practice kicks off his appetite, SNICKERS satisfies him. And me , . . . SNICKERS not only tackles my hero's hunger but also satisfies my need to give him something good."

[Received October 1986. Revised May 1987.]

REFERENCES


