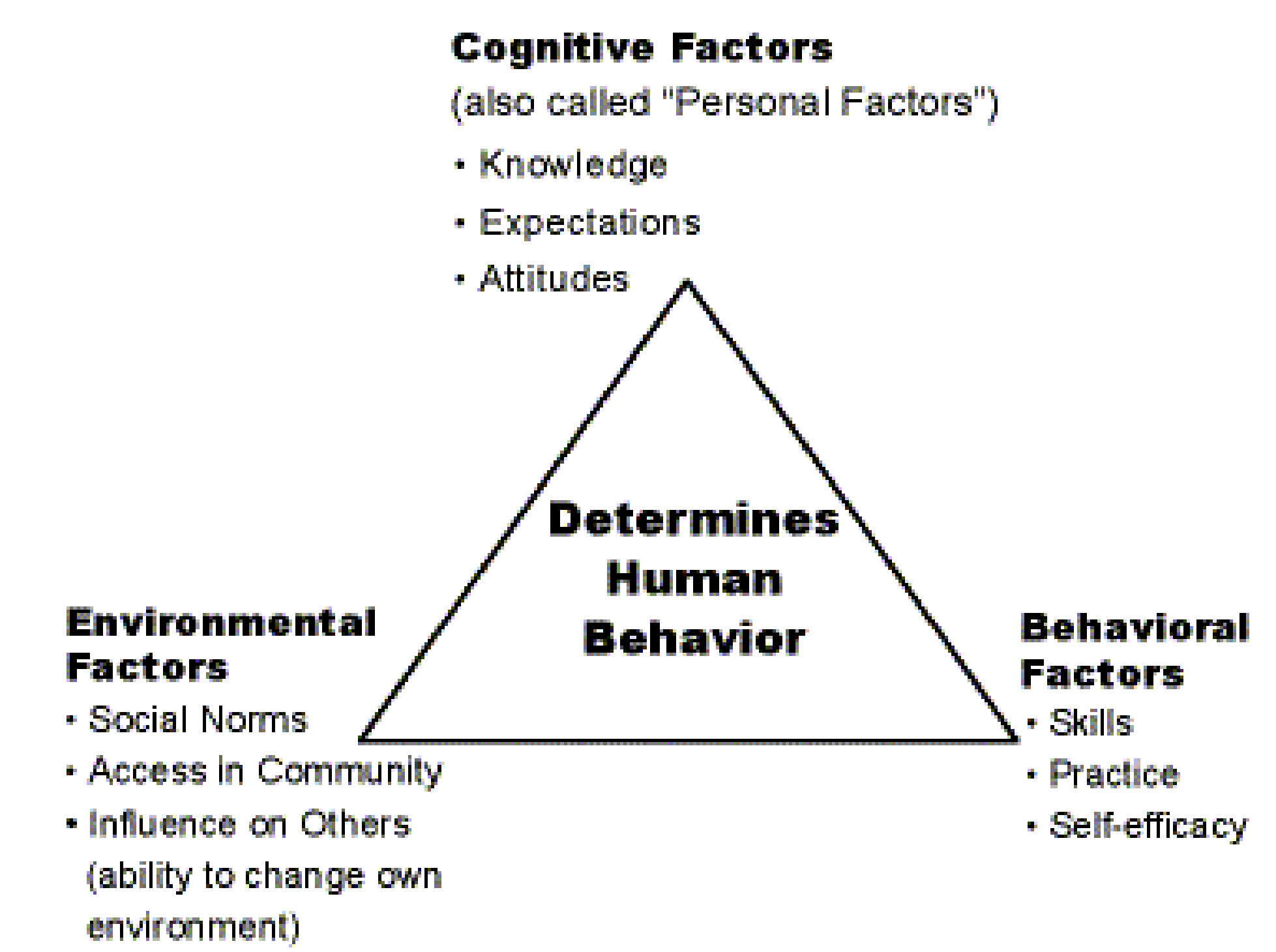


THE EFFECT OF MISOGYNISTIC HUMOR ON THE PERCEPTION OF WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION



BACKGROUND

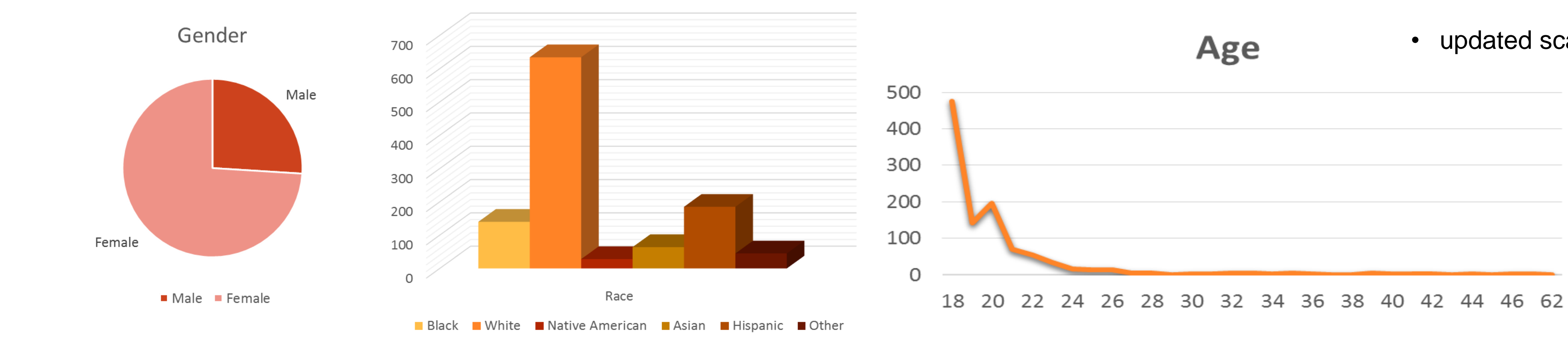
The influence humor has on a social atmosphere is palpable, particularly since exposure to media begins at young ages. Research has found sexist humor to profoundly affect perception of women. Among women, it decreases self-esteem and acceptance of violence among women; among men, it increases sexist views, tolerance of discriminatory events, and rape proclivities (Bill & Naus, 1992; Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998; Thomae & Viki, 2013; Thomas & Esses, 2004).

The study drew from the Social Learning Theory, which explains behaviors with modeling: learning by observations (Bandura, 1971). The Prejudiced Norm Theory (Ford & Ferguson, 2004) builds off Bandura's work to explain how misogynistic humor creates a social norm, making it acceptable to laugh at sexism. The theory proposes a lack of negative reaction or a positive reaction, such as canned/studio laughter following a sexist joke, allows the viewer to believe this is an appropriate reaction. This normalizes degrading and objectifying attitudes toward a target group.

This study examined the relationship between short-term/long-term exposure and preference to sexist humor and the perception of women, including reinforcement of gender norms, heteronormative views, and traditional femininity. It was hypothesized that men and women exposed to sexist humor would hold more sexist views.

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 1,096 students from a four-year university participated, with 561 in the experimental group and 535 in the control group. The majority of students were female (n = 811, 75%), identified as White (n = 634, 57.8%) or Hispanic (n = 185, 16.9%), and were between the ages of 18 to 62 (M = 20.38; SD = 4.64).



RESULTS

Table 1 Scale: *p < .01, **p < .05	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Modern Sexism		.57*	.49*	.34*	.42*	.29*	.28*	.56*	.02	.04	.01	.040
2. Stereotype	.57*		.70*	.51*	.60*	.50*	.38*	.57*	-.00	.04	-.06	.05
3. Dep/Def	.49*	.70*		.43*	.36*	.28*	.22*	.32*	-.04	.02	-.13*	-.05
4. Purity	.34*	.51*	.43*		.56*	.33*	.46*	.33*	-.18*	-.16*	-.20*	-.16*
5. Caretaking	.42*	.60*	.36*	.57*		.42*	.51*	.50*	-.04	-.09*	.00	-.02
6. Emotionality	.29*	.50*	.28*	.33*	.42*		.27*	.38*	-.04	-.01	-.04	.00
7. Benevolent Sexism	.28*	.38*	.22*	.46*	.51*	.27*		.47*	-.05	-.15*	.01	-.04
8. Hostile Sexism	.56*	.57*	.32*	.33*	.50*	.38*	.47*		.07**	-.05	.05	.06**
9. Sexist TV Exp	.02	-.00	-.04	-.18**	-.04*	-.04	-.05	.07**		.27*	.54*	.21*
10. Nonsexist TV Exp	.04	.04	.02	-.16**	-.09*	-.01	-.15*	-.05	.27*		.27*	.43*
11. Sexist TV Pref	.01	-.06	-.13*	-.20*	.00	-.04	.01	.05	.54*	.27*		.21*
12. Nonsexist TV Pref	.04	.05	-.05	-.16*	-.02	.00	-.04	.06**	.21*	.43*	.21*	

Table 2 Scale: *p < .01, **p < .05	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Sexist TV Viewing	.07	-.27**	.09	-.20	.26	.01	.08	-.11
Nonsexist TV Viewing	.24**	-.29**	-.34*	-.80*	-.51*	.07	.14	.00
Sexist TV Preference	-.15	-.46*	.15	.37**	.10	.01	-.37**	-.09
Nonsexist TV Preference	-.46*	-.31*	.06	.12	.36*	.07	.16	.05
R ²	.02	.06	.01	.03	.02	.00	.01	.00
F	6.37	18.74	2.88	7.97	4.31	.55	2.29	.61

1 = Dependency/Deference, 2 = Purity, 3 = Caretaking, 4 = Benevolent Sexism, 5 = Hostile Sexism
6 = Modern Sexism, 7 = Stereotypic Images/Activities, 8 = Emotionality

DISCUSSION & FUTURE RESEARCH

Sexist views did not significantly differ between the experimental and control group, indicating immediate exposure to sexist humor did not make a difference in sexist views. This is consistent with previous research that until a social context is established and the humor in the clips is not approved by one's peers, it may not be accepted (Ford & Gray, 2013). The results suggest that watching isolated clips of TV shows to which one does not have previous exposure or peer approval is more likely to be subject to critical examination.

Participants who reported long-term exposure and preference to inequality-promoting TV shows in the media viewing habits questionnaire had higher levels of sexism, particularly in dependency/deference, purity, caretaking, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism. These results suggest exposure to sexist media must be continuous, in line with Prejudiced Norm Theory (Ford & Ferguson, 2004) and it must be preferred in order to have an effect on personal beliefs. Tolerating and enjoying sexist humor, therefore, is learned over time and cannot be appropriately measured by immediate exposure to brief clips. A much better indication of media portrayals impacting sexist views comes from long-term exposure in which one has peer approval. This will eventually result in the creation of a social context in which one accepts and even actively promotes sexism. Future studies should examine:

- compare long and short-term exposure/preference to sexist humor in controlled setting.
- larger variety in television shows and interpretation of show clips.
- the presence of studio/canned laughter on the perception of sexist humor.
- more diverse sample size, particularly more males and races other than White/Hispanic.
- updated scales to measure levels of sexism.

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