

system has to keep up the pace. Education is the key, and it will move us into the future full speed ahead.

As I stand before you now, I make you a solemn commitment. A commitment to preserve the future for our children. Our children deserve a better life than the one that we are living. Our children deserve the best. With this commitment close to my heart, I stand before you now, and I ask God to bless this goal, and to bless this administration. May He give us the power and the patience needed to serve you well. May we always remember what the astronauts of the Challenger died for. May we always be committed to the opportunities that are held in education, technology, and new awareness. May we never forget the words of President Ronald Reagan in his tribute to the heroes of the Challenger: "The crew of the space shuttle Challenger honored us in the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for the journey and waved goodbye and 'slipped the surly bonds of earth' to 'touch the face of God.'" Their mission was an historic one. May we live each day in remembrance of their dream and in awe of their heroism and their belief.

SUBLIMINAL ADVERTISING

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The term "subliminal advertising" usually applies to material embedded in print, audio, or video messages so faintly that it is not consciously perceived, but the message still gets through at a subconscious level. It has been used to influence social perceptions and behaviors in such matters as stereotypes and prejudice, food preferences, environmental preferences, aesthetic judgments, verbal learning, implicit memory, and attitude formation (Bornstein 545).

The potential of subliminal advertising first caught public attention in 1957 when one researcher claimed that the words "Eat popcorn" flashed very quickly on a movie screen could persuade theater-goers to buy more popcorn. Other researchers claimed there was no good evidence that people detected these messages, much less acted on

them. Possibly because of this criticism, the use of subliminal persuasion dwindled in the 1960s but for some reason resurfaced in the 1970s (Natale 28).

In horror films, moviemakers flashed death masks and other frightening images on the screen in an attempt to maximize scare potential. About that same time, stores who tried to discourage shoplifting by burying "I am Honest" messages into the store music played overhead noticed a decrease in theft. It is also less sly, but no less effective, of stores who play Christmas music that sings of the spirit of giving and generosity to increase sales around the holidays.

Research shows that subliminal messages can stimulate basic drives, such as hunger, but they don't appear to work equally well on everyone, and stimulation doesn't necessarily trigger action. In one study, for example, people were visually exposed to the word "beef" for 1/200 of a second every seven seconds. At the end of the experiment, the people in the test group reported being hungrier than did those who did not receive the messages. But when asked to choose from a menu, few chose beef (Natale 30).

Other studies have shown that people have different thresholds. What is subliminal for one person may be plain as day for another. Furthermore, some people may respond immediately to a subliminal message, while others have a delayed response or no response at all (Rogers 15).

In another study, researchers tried to determine if sexual images would influence how people react to a product. They created two ads containing subliminal images. The first, for Chivas Regal, showed a bottle of Scotch whiskey with the image of a naked woman appearing as a reflection, embedded at a level too low to be detected easily. The second, an ad for Marlboro Lights, showed two men riding horses through rugged countryside with an image of male genitalia hidden in the rocks. These two ads were shown to one test group, and a second test group was shown the same ads without the sexual images.

Members of each group then evaluated the ads for credibility, attractiveness, sensuality, and the likelihood that they might buy the product. Those who saw the whiskey ad with the hidden woman rated it higher on all four scales than the people who saw the same ad without the image. The sexual image in the Marlboro ad, however, did not cause a difference in evaluations (Natale 30).

A number of experiments have been conducted that demonstrate the effects of subliminal advertising methods on the test subjects, without the subjects' recollection or recognition. The findings of these studies suggest that awareness of stimulus content is not required for the production of mere exposure effects.

In fact, research done by Robert F. Bornstein showed that subliminal advertising is even more effective than when the subject is consciously aware of the message. He concluded that "there is an inverse relationship between stimulus recognition accuracy and the magnitude of the exposure effect" (Bornstein 546). Basically, the images were more effective in changing perception and opinion when viewed for a shorter period of time (5 ms versus 500 ms). Bornstein also found that the effect of frequency of the stimuli varied depending on the duration. When the images were shown for 5 ms, the frequency of the image's appearance had no affect, but the stimuli were more effective when shown more frequently at the 500 ms duration (Bornstein 547).

There is still a widespread debate as to whether subliminal advertising works, or even exists. However, many Americans strongly believe that it exists and is extremely effective, even though advertisers claim that research has proven it ineffective. Wilson Bryan Key, for one, is dead-set in believing that Madison Avenue and advertisers around the world consciously lace their ads with sexual and other powerful images. As a journalism professor at the University of Western Ontario, he made this discovery by accident in a picture for an article he was lecturing about one day in 1970. Since then, he actively searched for hidden sexual images and messages in advertisements, and quit teaching to write four books and lecture at colleges nationwide on his findings.

He now supports himself quite nicely, simply trying to convince the public with his examples of intentionally camouflaged genitalia, breasts, and monsters in ads for just about everything from Wrigley's Spearmint Gum to Ritz Crackers. The advertising community has never taken Key seriously, and has even launched ad campaigns that simply mock his claims.

In the mid-1980s the American Association of Advertising Agents mailed an advertising flier to a number of newspapers and magazines reading, "People have been trying to find the breasts in these ice cubes since 1957." Below the enlarged picture of a glass of liquor, it goes on to say, "Well, if you really searched, you probably could see the breasts. For that matter, you could also see Millard Fillmore, a stuffed pork chop, and a 1946 Dodge." Still, a poll commissioned by Seagram Co. found that 62% of American adults believe in Key's theory (Levine 134).

"I've never heard of people using the stuff Key talks about, but we figured we're always being accused of it, so why not do it for real in a jocular way?" says Ogilvy & Mather's John Gruen (Levine 134). A parody ad for Absolut vodka reads "Absolute Subliminal," and shows a glass of vodka with the product name imprinted faintly on the ice cubes.

Other subliminal advertising does not involve quickly shown or hidden images, but rather has a hidden message or theme, usually in tobacco or alcohol ads. A prime example is Newport's long-running and vastly successful "Alive With Pleasure!" campaign. The pictures always portray outdoorsy yuppies horsing around. But amongst this merriness, there is an underlying theme of sexual hostility, usually directed towards women (Leo 18).

Many depict women who seem to be off-balance and menaced, or the target of berserk male energy. Women are about to be clanged by a pair of symbols, carried off on a pole, pulled along in a horse collar, or slam-dunked in the face by a basketball-wielding male (Leo 18). These ads have anything but a violent tone, though, as the characters are laughing and living it up. Viewers don't make this connection in their conscious minds, but they might notice a theme if all these ads were placed next to each other.

This approach does go well beyond alcohol and tobacco ads, though. Nike's "Just do it" and Burger King's "Sometimes you've gotta break the rules" slogans imply their products will help you be independent and law-defiant. So much so, in fact, that the Hispanic agency hired by Burger King would not translate their slogan into Spanish on the grounds that it implied approval for violating laws or Hispanic traditions (Leo 18).

Since its discovery in 1957, subliminal perception has been used in several types of media and advertising, and even though advertisers deny its effectiveness and even its existence, research has proven it effective. If it weren't, it probably wouldn't still be in use today.

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TO ANYONE WHO HAS LOST HOPE

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I recall that chilly March night in 1993. I was sitting on my bedroom floor playing Nintendo with my younger brother and sister. My mother suddenly opened the bedroom door and insisted that we get dressed quickly and go to the car. I could sense a trace of fear in her trembling voice. I asked my mother what was happening. With tears in her eyes, she told me to do what she had said because we needed to get to Indianapolis as quickly as possible. My mother did not have to speak another word. I had a pretty good idea about what was going on.

We quickly stopped what we were doing, shut the Nintendo game off, and ran out of the bedroom. All five of us, my father, mother, brother, sister, and me, scrambled through the house looking for our shoes, socks, and coats. In a matter of a few short minutes we were in our gray Celebrity pulling out of the driveway, ready to make the two-and-a-half-hour trip from Plymouth, a small town in northern Indiana, to an Indianapolis hospital, where my uncle had been staying for the last year.

Everyone in the car was completely silent. I was so frightened, and my heart was pounding so hard that I thought it would burst through my chest. The car seemed stuffy, and I found it hard to breathe. My mother broke into tears, and my father put one arm around her and kept one arm on the wheel. This became the longest and most difficult trip of my life. This was one trip for which I was not anxious to reach the final destination. For an entire year I had been trying to convince myself that I would