



JCR MANUSCRIPT REVIEW HISTORY 004-2 (REVIEWS)

Editor's Decision Letter

Thank you for resubmitting THE INFLUENCE OF CEILING HEIGHT: THE EFFECT OF PRIMING ON THE TYPE OF PROCESSING PEOPLE USE. Congratulations! This is a terrific manuscript and well on the way to making a very nice contribution. I am pleased to conditionally accept it for publication.

The steps to meeting the conditions for publication are contained in the associate editor's report, and I shall simply add some comments to reflect how I suggest that you direct your emphasis. On the question of relevance to consumer research, I find myself well satisfied with the current submission. Since I am normally leading the parade on this issue I am delighted to find the reviewers ahead of me and if the authors want to do more to clinch the case they are welcome, but it is not mandatory.

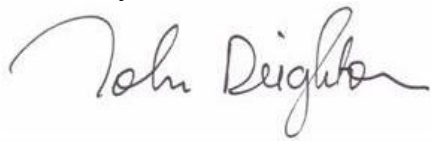
The section of the associate editor's report headed, "What does ceiling height really prime?" is nicely aligned with my own thinking. I think Reviewer B makes an important point regarding the question of what other concepts ceiling height may be priming. I think, however, that it is more than we can ask of you that you do more empirically in this paper to resolve this question. I do think that the issue deserves prominent acknowledgment in the general discussion, but your contribution has been to introduce this ubiquitous prime to the attention of readers and I think we can leave it to another paper to investigate the possibility that B draws to our attention, as long as you acknowledge it.

The issue of sophistication is well-made by A and D, but surely can be easily handled in a revision by replacing the term with something else? One person's sophistication is another's preciousness – can you find a less taste-laden term?

The comment about missing paths in the mediation is a good catch by Reviewer D.

I want to thank the reviewers for an excellent job across two rounds. The authors' response to this letter will go just to the associate editor.

Sincerely,



John Deighton

AE comments for the author(s)

Each of the reviewers and I agree that the streamlined revised version of the paper is certainly improved over the first version. The additional data you collected and referred to in the responses to the reviewers was quite persuasive and made your case considerably stronger. There are a number of issues that need to be dealt with however. I have tried to highlight some of the key issues and when appropriate offered my opinion in terms of how to deal with them.

Motivation Reviewers A & C are still unhappy with the degree to which the manuscript is grounded in consumption and the consumer behavior literature. In terms of the former, I think with another attempt to connect this research to consumption you can do this – I envision another couple of paragraphs in the introduction trying to do so. With respect to reviewer C's concerns about not connecting with potentially relevant consumer behavior literature, you might consider adding some of those references. However, please don't break the flow of what is currently a very well written and easy to read manuscript.

What does ceiling height really prime? Several issues related to what ceiling height actually primes were raised again by the reviewers.

1. With respect to the room volume counter-explanation I agree with reviewer A that perhaps that counter-explanation is best left for the general discussion rather than briefly introduced up front as is currently the case.
2. Reviewer B would like to see a discussion added of what other concepts might be primed by ceiling height under varying conditions – this might be worth adding a paragraph in the GD about.
3. The data you collected to refute a ceiling fan counter-explanation is quite compelling. I'd like to see it added in the very brief form you wrote it up in the reviewer notes. I'll leave it to you to decide where it would fit best.
4. I'd also like to see you add a brief discussion and writeup of your "mood" extra data that you collected, perhaps in the GD? I think mood explanations will occur to many reviewers (reviewer D continues to articulate one) that this data will help refute.

Sophistication At least two reviewers (A&D) continue to have some issues with your sophistication manipulation – please address these as best you can.

Mediation Analysis. As reviewer D correctly notes, you are missing a path/regression in each of your mediation analyses. Specifically, you need to demonstrate that the path between mediator and DV is significant in each (it seems it should be, but please do add it for completeness).

Best of luck with your research.

Reviewer A

Comments for the author(s)

This revision has taken the tack of shortening the paper while attempting to clarify the relevance of this research to consumer behavior. For a revision that the editor labeled as “risky,” this revision seems surprisingly similar to the prior paper. However, as I noted in my earlier review, there were many strengths to the prior paper; there are likewise many strengths to this revision. Additionally, I believe that some of the issues, for example, the salience issue, are developed more clearly in this revision.

I would like to see still greater development of the relevance of this research specifically to *consumer* psychology. (One minor suggestion is that you refer to “consumers” rather than to “people” to help highlight that you are talking about consumer psychology). My personal preference is that new data that shows more relevant consumer perception or behavior effects is provided, but without that, I think that the relevance needs additional conceptualization.

As is, the new comment on p. 5 about room volume doesn’t quite fit. I think that you need to have more of a discussion of this when you bring it up. It seems quite possible to me to leave the volume issue until the discussion section, but the AE may believe that it needs to be brought up earlier. I believe it needs a fuller discussion whenever it is first discussed.

(H1a needs “a” prior to “room”)

p. 9 Please provide some of the real, average ceiling height information that you provided in the revision notes in the stimuli discussion.

p. 14 Seeing the picture of the coffee table and then looking at the numerical ratings has caused some concern with the rationale presented. The rationale proposes that the process is that the overall sense of the product must be that it is sophisticated in order to demonstrate the relational versus item-specific processing. However, the coffee table seems to be a rustic table composed of branches, etc. More important than my perception of the table as rustic, and not sophisticated, the reported means show that the table is rated close to the mid-

point of the scale. That is, all the means except the high salience, high ceiling mean fail to indicate that this table is perceived by the subjects as sophisticated. The conceptual development needs to effectively deal with this. (By the way, I think that in Table 1, “role” should be “row”).

p. 22 I think that separating H 4 into two hypotheses (for example, H4a and H4b) would be clearer.

Good luck with your interesting research.

Reviewer B

Comments for the author(s)

The authors have created a shorter manuscript which focuses on the impact of CH on the priming of freedom/confinement, which in turn influences relational/item-specific processing.

You write quite well. The basic idea is clear. It is easy to read the paper. The first time it was a well written paper; this time it is even better.

Your arguments about the role of salience are well-taken. No problems.

The following are some of the concerns that I continue to have. I would also like to exhort the authors to take it in the spirit of a sincere response of a reader.

CH → Prime Relationship

There is a big disconnect between the authors’ understanding of my critique regarding non-linearity and what I intended.

Let me revisit the issue I raised. The basic thrust of the paper is that CH primes different concepts (freedom/confinement) which leads to relational/item-specific processing. The authors want to argue that a change in CH will lead to a change in the extent to which freedom/confinement is primed. When I said that CH → Primed Concept relationship may not be linear, I did not suggest that the extent of priming will be attenuated at some levels of CH or amplified at other levels. My critique is that the primed concept itself might be *different*.

My concern was that whether difference in CH will lead to differences in the priming of the *same* concept over the range of CH. They authors respond to the concern by conceding that the differences may not be linear, but leave out the question of whether the same concept is primed. I believe that this goes to the heart of the authors’ case. That is why I suggested that CH primes differences in freedom/confinement only for the chosen levels of the stimuli. Their

counterargument by drawing analogy to NFC research is not quite appropriate for which concept is primed, it is appropriate for the differences in the extent to which a given concept is primed. However, my concern was about what will be primed at different levels of CH, not how much.

This is why I raised the question what else does CH do? What other concepts did they measure in addition to freedom/confinement to ensure that there were no other differences (In Study 1, I could not discern any). One can be more confident that it is indeed the primed concepts of freedom/confinement that play a role if the authors can show some that the chosen variation in CH did not influence other factors including evaluations about the room itself, the impact of volume.

Argument for CH→Freedom Prime

The principal case for CH leading to priming of freedom seems to be in the last full paragraph on page 6. But I am not able to discern what the argumentation undergirding this. The paragraph seems to say that others have said CH may be related to sense of freedom, so, CH should prime freedom. Is that all?

In this regard, I have a question regarding why larger CH should prime freedom and why the smaller CH should not prime freedom. After all, one thinks of food, the more one is hungry! If confinement is the opposite of freedom (as argued by the authors), would not priming confinement also prime freedom? This may not be a big issue (and the data seems to support the authors' views), but I was wondering what the authors think about this. I think this seeming disconnect arises because of the argumentation about why CH should influence freedom/confinement is not clear.

In summary, this is a more nicely written paper on an interesting topic. I would encourage the authors to consider addressing the above comments; I think the potential contribution will be in more solid grounds.

Reviewer C
Comments for the author(s)

Overall, I am pleased with the revisions. The author(s) have been responsive. I would like to gently suggest to the author(s) that they could strengthen the theorizing and the paper by citing some relevant marketing literature. Some areas where this literature can be included are:

1. Page 5 (top): The effect of type of processing on product evaluation is discussed here. Malaviya, Kisielius and Sternthal (1996, JMR) also examine how type of processing influences product evaluation.
2. Page 5 (main full paragraph): This paragraph explains how primes could “affect the very type of processing that people use.” In their paper, Malaviya et al. (1996) use pictures and contextual advertising to prime type of processing, and Malaviya, Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1999, P&M) use contextual advertising to prime type of processing. So, there is precedence to show that type of processing can be primed by various variables. In general, other ways of varying the type of processing have been used and this can be mentioned in the general discussion section, at least (page 26, main paragraph).
3. Pages 7-8: Here the effect of freedom/confinement on type of processing is described. Implicit in this discussion is a discussion of what are the two types of processing, and each type of processing is defined. The citation for these definitions is the original papers of Hunt and Einstein. Similar definitions have been provided in the domain of marketing stimuli for relational processing by Law (2002 JMR), Malaviya et al. (1996, 1999), and Meyers-Levy (1991), and for item-specific processing by Malaviya et al. (1996, 1999). This research deserves a mention.
4. Page 14: Here the hypothesis for product evaluation is developed. It might be worth noting that the mechanism posited here, while appropriate for the stimulus and task at hand, is different from the mechanism that Malaviya et al. (1996) and Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999) describe for the influence of type of processing on evaluation. In these earlier papers, both relational and item-specific processing is implicated in the formation of evaluations. In the present experiment, the task is set up such that each type of processing can have an impact on product evaluation. Thus, probably these two views of the influence of type of processing on evaluations are not at conflict, but it would be useful to acknowledge the other view that is out there, at least in the general discussion.

Minor point:

1. The reliability index of the freedom scale in study 1 is .71 (compared to that of the confinement index, which is .84). May be a reason for this is that one of the items in the freedom scale was “unrestricted,” which might be a confinement item (negated, of course). Can the scale reliability be improved if this item were dropped or moved to the confinement scale?
-

Reviewer D

Comments for the author(s)

As before, my overall impression is positive. However, some of my comments on the original ms were not addressed in the current revision. Thus, in what follows, I summarize those previous suggestions.

1. Are the observed effects due to lowering the ceiling, leaving it intact, or both? What is the role of perceived unpleasantness or crowdedness of the low-ceiling room compared with the intact/high ceiling one?

Clearly, the anagram task (in study 1) reveals a greater accessibility of negative content (e.g., faster recognition of negative concepts such as “restrained” and “restricted”, compared with positive concepts such as “liberated” and “unlimited”) in the low-ceiling room. Can the negative experience be responsible for piecemeal (concrete) processing style?

2. I’m not sure exactly how sophistication maps onto abstract processing.

3. Methodological issues: on p. 11, need to report the units of response times (sec?). In reporting mediation, need to report the path between the mediator and the DV (e.g., regression of ARC on freedom-related body state).