


Gender Bias in Psychological Research.

Issues & Debates (PYA5)



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What is Gender bias?



- Gender bias results from the 'male norm' perspective. Traditional psychological research tended to focus itself on the male experience and point of view... this is now changed and there has been development of feminist research methods and a more pronounced interest in women centred psychology- *Androcentric bias*.

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Gender Bias in psychological theories.




- *Alpha Bias*- Theories that exaggerates differences between men and women, thus reinforcing stereotype.
- *Beta Bias*- Minimises the differences between men and women, thus important parts of female life experiences are ignored.

These biases exist because of androcentric views are standard/norm. If women display different behaviour to the norm (men) then it is seen as inferior. . .what does not concern the androcentric world will not be investigated.

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Examples of gender bias in psychological theories.



- *Moral development*- Kohlberg's work derived from male participants- female. He concluded the latter reached lower levels. Gilligan (1982) suggested that female morality is based on different priorities.
- *Childcare*- Bowlby's research on maternal care suggested women should needed to stay at home and care for the child.
- *Socialisation*- Freud suggested women suffered from 'Penis envy' which will leave traces on their personality development.
- Erickson proposed women were destined to bear and take care of the offspring of men!!

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Reporting Bias.



- Through interpretation of results: Results that report differences may well be exaggerating differences and displaying female stereotypes.
- Selection of material to be published: Male biased editors of journals and books may filter out research on women and studies that report no difference.

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Research Bias.



Gender bias in research is likely to be caused by

- Lack of research: Women are not promoted as much as men in academic positions, or female academics may find it difficult to use their knowledge in mainstream psychology.
- Nature of Research: Investigate stereotypical differences rather than real ones.
- (a) Not investigate important issues to women e.g. pregnancy, violence.
- (b) Perpetuate biased ideas by searching for causes within women for different/abnormal behaviour. E.g. PMS/PMT.

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Methodological Bias.



- **Biased sample!!** The use of male only samples...*can you think of some that we have studied??*
- **The use of 'male preferred'** techniques Lab experiments- Women prefer less controlling environments where the emphasis is upon personal experience and participation e.g. interviews.
- **Lack of control** does not distinguish between innate differences and socialisation or biased stereotypes. (Weisstein, 1993).

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Consequences of Gender Bias

- Feminists suggest even though differences may be minimal they are used against females in a negative manner.
- Judgements about women are based upon stereotypes... .
- *What do you think are the possible effects of this????*



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Validity of Gender Bias

Maccoby & Jacklin (1974)



In the majority of areas there were no significant differences found between the sexes... .. So what do we think of Bowlby & Freud now????

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Reducing Gender Bias.

Equal opportunities.



This legislation has worked to address the balance there are now more women becoming psychologists, lawyers doctors etc...so as they become a majority gender bias will become redressed.

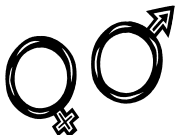
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In Conclusion....

- Gender bias can occur from the following areas:
 - Theories
 - Hypotheses
 - Methodology
 - Results.
- Be familiar with these headings...you will ultimately find it easier to think of these issues in small manageable chunks!!



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