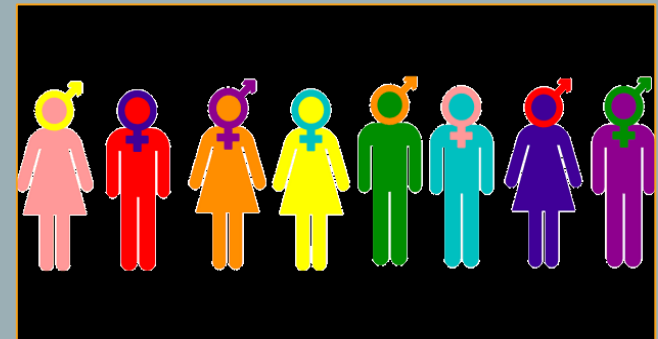


CULTURE BIAS AND GENDER BIAS

Lecture 9





DEFINITIONS

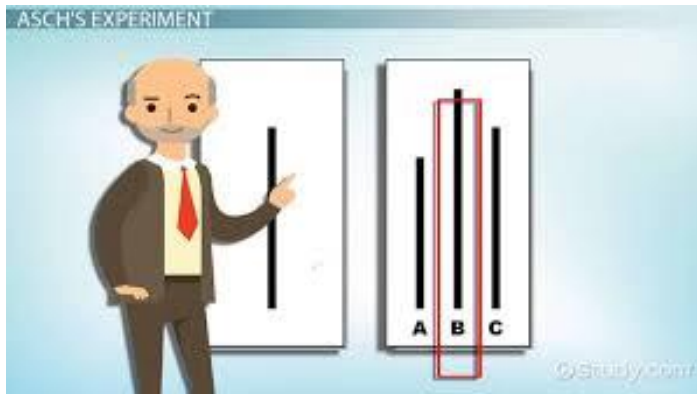
- **Culture bias-** the interpretation and judgement of behaviour and psychological characteristics of another culture by the **standards of our own** culture.
- **Beta bias-** research and theory developed in one culture and **applied to all cultures** cross culturally and ignoring any cultural differences.
- **Alpha bias-** assuming that there are **genuine or real differences** between cultures that make comparisons difficult if not impossible.
- Examples?



BETA BIAS - CULTURE

- Historically the majority of research conducted within Psychology has come from either America or Europe. Rosenweig (1992) reported that 64% of the world's Psychologists are American; meaning that they only represent a proportion of the people within the world and inferring that many cultural groups may be unrepresented within research.
- Why is beta bias such a concern?
- Differences in one study may not be found in others- Amir & Sharon (1987) attempted to repeat findings from 6 US studies on an Israeli population, similar to the one in America. Of 64 significant US findings, only 24 were found in Israeli, making generalisations difficult.

EXAMPLES OF BETA BIAS



- Asch (1956) – his findings were from white educated male students, typically an individualistic culture. Collectivist cultures were not represented, and it could be argued that his sample were not even representative of American culture too!
- Can you think of other examples of beta bias?
- [Asch Conformity Experiment](#)

COLLECTIVIST VS INDIVIDUALIST CULTURES

collectivist

Have an interdependent view of themselves
They see themselves as connected to others
Define themselves in terms of relationships with others
See their characteristics as more likely to change across different contexts
E.g. China, Cuba, Scandinavia, Brazil, India.

individualist

Have an independent view of themselves
View themselves as separate from others
Define themselves based on their personal traits
See their characteristics as relatively stable and unchanging
E.g. Europe, UK, USA.

HOW DOES THIS REFLECT IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH?

- Relationships –
- E.g. Buss
- Attachments –
- E.g. Bowlby
- Conformity –
- E.g. Asch
- Obedience –
- E.g. Milgram





ALPHA BIAS

- This occurs when psychologists are **reluctant to take the findings from one study and apply them** to other cultures as representative of universal behaviour.
- In other words, behaviour is seen as only a product of a specific culture.
- Can you think of any examples of this that you have encountered?
- However, there are exceptions to this. Buss (1989) explored mating preferences across cultures and continents.



BUSS (1989) HUMAN MATE PREFERENCES

- Five predictions were made about sex differences in human mate preferences based on evolutionary conceptions of parental investment, sexual selection, human reproductive capacity, and sexual asymmetries regarding certainty of paternity versus maternity.
- The predictions centred on how each sex valued earning capacity, ambition-industriousness, youth, physical attractiveness, and chastity.
- Predictions were tested in data from 37 samples drawn from 33 countries located on six continents and five islands (total N = 10,047).
- For 27 countries females were found to value cues to resource acquisition in potential mates more highly than males. Characteristics signalling reproductive capacity were valued more by males than by females.
- The findings provide powerful cross-cultural evidence of current sex differences in reproductive strategies.



ALPHA BIAS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- In individualistic cultures the focus is assumed to be on an individual's level of happiness in a relationship, compared to a collectivist culture where the emphasis on relationship development is for the good of the family or group.
- However, have these differences been overestimated?
- Levine (1995) argues that culture shapes our views on the necessity of love for establishing marriage; however in most cultures we are governed also by outside forces such as family, friends and personal choice...
- Trandis et al., (2001) also point out that around 60% of people will conform to the dominant cultural values when selecting a mate. What does this imply for alpha bias?



ETHNOCENTRISM

- This refers to the judgement of another culture based on a comparison to our own. One of the most common forms is Eurocentrism, judging other cultures by American or European standards at the expense of their own.
- Smith & Bond (1998) reviewed psychology textbooks and reported that 98% of the research included was derived from either American or European countries, meaning that the majority of psychological research is based on western ideals.
- This is often taken as evidence of Publication Bias. More on this later...



EXAMPLES OF WESTERN BIAS

- Classic example – the diagnosis and classification of mental illness. Our current systems for diagnosing mental illness are known as DSM5 and ICD 10, which are based on western conceptions of mental health.
- The issue here is when individuals from other cultures present with symptoms which are misattributed to the wrong diagnosis based on these systems.
- One example is depression. In Nigeria, the symptoms of depression are similar to the western symptoms for schizophrenia, meaning that these individuals may receive an inaccurate diagnosis and therefore any resulting treatment.



SOME QUESTIONS

- Are beta bias, alpha bias and ethnocentrism unavoidable?
- Will we always over or underestimate these differences between and even within cultures?
- What is the role for Indigenous Psychology?
- And last but not least- what about Publication bias?

PUBLICATION BIAS IN PSYCHOLOGY



- The phenomenon where non-significant results never see the light of day thanks to editors rejecting them or savvy researchers recasting their experiments around unexpected results and not reporting the disappointments. Often referred to as the 'file drawer' problem.
- Statistical research has shown the extent of this misrepresentation may infect the entire discipline of psychology.
- A team of psychologists based in Salzburg looked at “effect sizes”, which provide a measure of how much experimental variables actually change an outcome.
- Studies with lots of participants (500+) had an average effect size in the moderate range $r=.25$. But studies with smaller samples had effect sizes, as high as .48 when $n=50$ participants. This resulted in a strong negative relationship between number of participants and size of effect, when statistically the two should be unrelated.
- Therefore, the non-publication of non-significant findings or small effect sizes, and the over-representation of spurious large effects lead to publication bias.

GENDER BIAS



- You may be aware of stereotyping in social psychology. To what extent does / has gender stereotyping occurred within psychological research?
- Williams & Best (1982) looked at gender stereotyping of 30 countries and found a pattern of similarities suggesting men are viewed as dominant, aggressive and autonomous compared to women who are represented as upturning, deferent and affiliative.
- What are the implications of these findings?
- Do we stereotype from an early age?

WHYTE (1978)

- Explored 98 non industrialised cultures and reported that men were dominant in 67% of cultures. Equality of the sexes existed in 39% of cultures, with females having a dominant role in only 3% of the cultures studied.
- Moreover, the less industrial the culture, the more likely the male would be the dominant gender.
- However, this study was some time ago and times have changed...
- What are the implications and findings of recent studies?
- Are women more emotional than men?
- Larson & Pleck (1999) – Men and women carried beepers and were asked to stop and report emotions on the bleep...what did they find?
- LaFrance & Banaji (1992) Lab studies using physiological measures (facial expression) of the strength of emotional reactions... three factors predict the size of gender differences in emotional expressiveness: gender-specific norms, social role and situational constraints, and emotional intensity.

When the differences between men and women are shown and may be exaggerated. Either to heighten the value of women or devalue them.

One example; Freuds' theory of psychosexual development – he believed femininity was failed masculinity and that we can never believe that the 2 sexes are equal in position or worth.

However, Horney stated it was wrong to think females were envious of men's attributes but they were jealous of their social class.

She coined the term; Womb Envy, in which males were envious of females ability to have children and compensated for that by achieving in other domains.

ALPHA BIAS (TYPE OF GENDER BIAS)

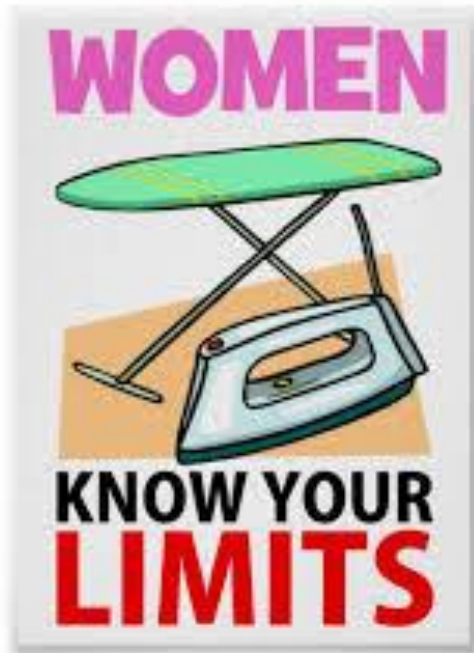
ALPHA BIAS IN GENDER RESEARCH

Hoffman (1975)
assessed the
tendency of children
to do what they had
been told NOT to
do!

The behaviour of
boys and girls was
largely no different;
and where differences
were found, it was
usually the females
that were better at
resisting temptation.

What does this
suggest?

Again, this was an
older study. How do
you think the findings
would differ today?



EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

- Explanations focus on why males dominate over females and why women invest highly in parental responsibility.
- Given that the last 100 or so years has seen much change in the roles of men and women, to what extent can evolutionary psychology be used as an accurate explanation of gender differences today?
- Once again, there is the issue of Publication bias.
- Research has grown in gender bias in recent years to reflect these changing times.
- Two areas of interest are:
 1. in the workplace
 2. in the media

BETA BIAS IN GENDER WITHIN PSYCHOLOGY



- A beta bias refers to theories that ignore or minimise sex differences. These theories often assume that the findings from studies using males can apply equally to females.
- In general, does psychology treat males and female participants differently in research?
- Rosenthal suggests that we do. Researchers are more friendly, honest and encouraging to female participants...
- Eagly (1978) reported that women were more conformist on the Asch paradigm, but only because they are more focused on interpersonal goals.
- What about Kohlberg's (1969) theory of moral development and reasoning?
- How did Gilligan (1982) respond?

MORAL DEVELOPMENT

- Kohlberg's theory was based on extensive research with boys, meaning that real differences were ignored.

Kohlberg's and Gilligan's theory of moral development		
	Kohlberg	Gilligan
Pre-conventional	Stage one: Obedience and Punishment Stage two: Individualism and Exchange	Level one: Orientation to Individual Survival
		The First Transition: From selfishness to Responsibility
Conventional	Stage three: Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships Stage four: Law and Order	Level two: Goodness as Self-sacrifice
		The Second Transition: From Goodness to Truth
Post-conventional	Stage five: Social Contract Stage six: Universal Principles	Level three: The Morality of Nonviolence

EXAMPLES OF BETA BIAS IN RESEARCH

- Male and female participants are used in most studies, but there is normally no attempt to analyse the data to see whether there are significant sex differences.
- Where differences are found, it may be possible that these occur because researchers ignore the differential treatment of participants. For example, Rosenthal (1966) reported that male experimenters were more pleasant, friendly, honest, and encouraging with female participants than with male participants.
- This led Rosenthal to conclude: “Male and female subjects may, psychologically, simply not be in the same experiment at all.”
- In fact most early studies used males, assuming that females would respond in the same way.

CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER BIAS

- Kitzinger (1998) argue that questions about sex differences aren't just scientific questions – they're also political.
- -women kept out of male-dominant universities
- -women have same rights as men
- -women were oppressed
- -women stereotypes (Bowlby)
- So gender differences distorted to maintain the status quo of male power
- Feminists argue that although gender differences are minimal or non-existent, they are used against women to maintain male power. Judgements about an individual women's ability are made on the basis of average differences between the sexes or biased sex-role stereotypes, and this also had the effect of lowering women's self-esteem; making them, rather than men, think they have to improve themselves (Tavris, 1993)

ANDROCENTRISM

- The view that male behaviour is normal and therefore female behaviour is somehow different.
- Is this the case?
- Tavris used conclusions from psychological research and reworded them:
 - 1. Women have lower self-esteem than men – men are more conceited than women...
 - 2. Women value efforts less – men overvalue work...
 - 3. Women are more likely to say they are hurt than they are angry – men are much more likely to attack than seek support.
 - 4. Women find more difficulty in developing a sense of self – men find it more difficult to form attachments.

CONCLUSIONS

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), in a thorough review of the research into sex differences, concluded that in the majority of areas no significant differences were found, and where they were found they were very small. The gender biased views of famous figures in psychology, such as Bowlby and Freud have been refuted.

Equal opportunity legislation and feminist psychology have performed the valuable functions of reducing institutionalised gender bias and drawing attention to sources of bias and under-researched areas in psychology like childcare, sexual abuse, dual burden working and prostitution.

EXAMPLES OF STUDIES/THEORIES THAT YOU CAN USE...

Gender bias

Asch – conformity
Milgram – obedience
Zimbardo – social roles
Kohlberg – moral development
Freud – Psychosexual development
Bowlby – attachment theory

Culture bias

Asch – conformity
Milgram – obedience
Thibaut & Kelley – Social exchange Theory
Sherif – Robbers cave study
Buss – mate preference