

Gender Bias in Research Studies



Today's objectives:

- **You must**...outline different ways in which gender bias can occur in psychological research studies
- **You should**...identify and describe examples of research studies where gender bias may have occurred and comment on the implications of biased research practices for psychological research and for society
- **You could**...evaluate psychological research in terms of its gender bias

Something to get you started...

Below are four extracts from psychological research. Each one could be considered gender biased. For each example:

- Highlight the aspects that show a gender bias
- Identify the type of bias present
- Briefly outline the possible impact of the bias on psychology and/or society

NB: The last one relates to a type of bias that we've come across before, but not recently.

Extract 1

There is no compelling reason to believe that a gender divergence exists in management styles, so it is safe to assume that the results of Cottle & Austen's (1984) work with male junior managers can be used to explain the behaviour of female managers in medium sized organisations.

Extract 2

The results of the meta analysis by Barrel & Parker (1973) suggest that males show a processing bias towards linear tasks and females towards holistic tasks. We therefore recommend that male students be streamed towards maths and science subjects, whilst female students be encouraged to pursue discursive subjects such as Psychology and Sociology.

Extract 3

The longitudinal data on rule-based play in 5 to 9 year old children suggests that girls' development starts to deviate from boys at the age of about 6 years. From this age onwards, girls are less concerned with protecting the integrity of the agreed rules, and more concerned with preserving relationships within the social group.

Extract 4

The data as they stand suggest that homosexuality is a the result of a complex interaction between biological and social factors, including abnormal prenatal exposure to male sex hormones, possibly due to a faulty gene on chromosome 5 and an abnormal family environment characterised by a domineering mother and weak and emotionally distant father.