

Discuss gender bias within psychology (16 marks) - 6 A01, 10 A03

PLAN-

Gender bias definition, limits of universality (define), androcentrism (Asch), beta bias- minimise (Biopsych+Lee&Harley), alpha bias - maximise (relationships + Buss). Objective (Milgram), Feminist (compare females to females)

[A01, Links to topics, A03](#)

Gender bias is when psychological research offers a view which does not represent the behaviour of men or women. Feminist psychologists have argued that psychology has been built on biased research of males in order to uphold male superiority.

The term universality refers to the underlying characteristics of humans which can be applied to all people despite gender or experience. Research should be generalised to both males and females, but this is limited by androcentrism, beta bias and alpha bias.

Androcentrism is the term used to describe research which only caters to males, using their experience as a norm. This causes female behaviour to be misunderstood. For example, in the topic 'social influence', Asch used a male sample but generalised his findings to both males and females, causing gender bias.

As well as this, beta bias may occur. This is when the differences between genders are minimised and assume findings can be equally generalised to males and females. An example of this is from the topic 'biopsychology' as the fight or flight response is generalised to both males and females. Research to contradict this statement was done by Harley and Lee. They found that women do not respond in the same way that men do when faced with stress and tend to 'tend and befriend', seeking social support in a stressful situation, rather than just 'fight or flight'. Due to this, the fight or flight response can be criticised for being beta biased and not universal as women do not react to stress in the same way as men.

When research is alpha biased, this means it has maximised the differences between males and females, typically supporting gender stereotypes. This is seen in the topic 'Relationships' where Buss found males preferred young fertile females where as females preferred dominant and resourceful males.

Due to this, the idea of partner preferences is alpha biased as he claims males and females completely differ in terms of mate selection. Therefore, individual differences are ignored as not all women search for a resourceful male as it is found that in some cultures, women are the 'breadwinners' who in turn do not need a mans resources. Due to this there is a lack of validity as Buss' research reinforces gender stereotypes and not gender differences in mate selection, creating the issue of gender bias.

As well as this, the overall criticism for gender biased within psychology consists of objectivity. This is because it is difficult to see research through completely objective eyes due to everyone having a gender. Therefore it is important to recognise the matter of gender bias in research. This is seen through Milgrams study as his sample was a reflection of the aim of his study as he wanted to investigate the behaviour of Nazi soldiers (who were all male). Therefore the effects of gender bias are reduced due to the recognition within his research.

Feminist psychologist further argue that to reduce the effect of gender bias, females behaviour should be studied in real life environments using qualitative data such as interviews. They believe females behaviour should also be compared to other females, rather than males. If these changes were made, data into the female experience will be more accurate and less biased which in turn will reduce gender bias within psychology.