### Gender Bias in Psychology

1. **THEORIES**
   - **Alpha bias**
     - Exaggerating the differences between men and women, which reinforce stereotypes
   - **Beta bias**
     - Exaggerating the similarity between men and women
     - Findings obtained from men are applied to women without any evidence (i.e. studies completed on men are generalised to women, that’s how most studies end up!)
   - **Androcentrism (vs. Gynocentrism)**
     - Similar idea to ethnocentrism
     - Taking male thinking/behaviour as normal, regarding female thinking/behaviour as deviant, inferior, abnormal, "other" when it’s different
     - (Focus on males, e.g. little Hans, Albert…)

2. **METHODS**
   - Use of standardised procedures in research studies
     - Women and men might be treated differently by RESEARCHER
     - Could create artificial differences or mask real ones
     - Women and men respond differently to research situation! (e.g. women respond better to self-reports, like to chat…)
   - Use of “male preferred techniques”
     - e.g. lab experiments rather than qualitative
   - Biased samples
     - only use male participants

3. **REPORTING**
   - Interpretation of results
     - Tend to emphasise female inferiority
   - Selection of material to be published
     - Male editors may filter out research on and by women, and those which have findings contrary to male opinion
     - Research that finds gender differences more likely to get published than that which doesn’t!
   - Use of research results
     - Genuine differences should not be used to discriminate

4. **RESEARCHER**
   - Caused by…
     - lack of researchers – men predominate at senior researcher level, women are not represented
     - Androcentric researchers – Research agenda follows mal concerns, female concerns may be marginalised or ignored
   - Consequences include…
     - Scientifically misleading
     - Upholding stereotypical assumptions
     - Validating sex discrimination
   - Avoiding gender bias does not mean pretending that men and women are the same!
ADDRESSING GENDER BIAS (how women could be represented)

Feminist perspective
- Re-examining the “facts” about gender
- View of women as normal humans, not deficit men
- Scepticism towards biological determinism
- Research agenda focusing on women’s concerns
- A psychology for women, rather than a psychology of women

EXAMPLES of gender bias

**Freud – psychosexual development**
- Biology is destiny – women’s roles are prescribed and predetermined (*f* = tenders-and-befrienders, *m* = hunters, rule the world)
- Penis envy – women are defined psychologically by the fact that they aren’t men

**Consequences of Freud’s ideas:**
- Reinforcing stereotypes e.g. of women’s moral inferiority
- Treating deviations from traditional sex-role behaviour as pathological (career ambition = penis envy, they want to be men)
- Androcentric (phallocentric)

**Biomedical theories of abnormality**
- Abnormal behaviour explained in terms of neurochemical/hormonal processes
- Higher prevalence of depression in women explained in hormonal terms, not social/environmental (e.g. violence, unpaid labour, discrimination)
- “Is it your hormones, love?”
CULTURAL BIAS IN PSYCHOLOGY

- Psychology is predominantly a white, Euro-American enterprise
  - 64% of psychological researchers from US
  - In some texts, >90% of studies have US PPs
  - Samples predominantly white middle class
- BUT psychology proposes to tell us about a “Universal human nature” – can this really be true?

1) Bias in Theories
2) Bias in Method
3) Bias in Reporting
4) Bias in the Researcher themselves

1. THEORIES
- Cultures differ in many ways, e.g. values, norms of behaviour, social structure
- Ethnocentrism is using our own cultural group as a basis for judgements about other groups. We view our own group as normal, or even superior, other as “primitive” and “underdeveloped”
- Eurocentrism revolves specifically around Western research and the assumptions that come from it
- This limits the theories and neglects important cross cultural differences

2. METHOD
- Biased sampling of participants. The majority of studis only use white P. Less than 5% of P are non-white!
- Method used:
  - And **Etic** approach – looking at a culture from the **outside** (a researchers view of another culture)
    - **Etic** constructs are specific to particular cultures, so they vary from place to place
    - Likely to be ignored or misinterpreted
    - Researchers from one culture may not be sensitive to locals
    - Their own cultural “filters” may prevent them from detecting them or appreciating their significance
  - An **Emic** approach – looking at a culture from the **inside** (an insiders view of their culture, gives really ecologically valid results)
    - **Emic** constructs are assumed to be universal, but may not be
      - This can lead to “imposed etics” where a construct from one culture is applied inappropriately to another (study below!?)

3. REPORTING Bias
- Interpretation of results
  - Results are often interpreted in a way that makes non-American cultures seem deviant
- Selection of material for publishing
  - Two thirds of the psychology published is North American
- Use of results
  - May be used to fit political ideology

4. RESEARCHER Bias
- Cultural bias in research can be caused by several things
  - Lack of researchers – the majority of researchers are white and middle class males!
  - Nature of the researchers – if they are biased or racists they may conduct research that perpetuates the stereotypes, e.g. Blacks and Whites IQ
How to avoid cultural bias:

- Cultures are not the same!
  - The individualist-collectivist dimension reminds us of this, but is still a gross simplification
  - Greater use should be made of research conducted from within each culture, by members of that culture
  - Cross-cultural research should be encouraged

**Conducting Cross Cultural Research**

- 2 possible approaches:
  - Cross-cultural approach – study many different cultures to identify the variations
  - Transcultural approach – study many different cultures to identify the similarities
- When doing this, need to be aware of the pitfalls already considered!

**Problems in Conducting Cross-Cultural Research**

- Researcher must try to relinquish their own cultural world-view, which will influence their interpretations
- Barriers to communication are enormous:
  - Gaining trust of informants
  - Understanding what informants say
  - Relying on interpreters
  - Ensuring equivalence in translation of materials etc…

**Cultural bias examples**

- “Strange Situation Study”, Ainsworth
  - not appropriate for assessing children from non-US or UK populations
  - Cultural differences in child-rearing styles make results liable to misinterpretation (e.g. German or Japanese samples)
- IQ testing and research, Eysenck
  - IQ tests developed in the West contain embedded assumptions about intelligence, but what counts as “intelligent” behaviour varies from culture to culture
  - Non-Westerns may be disadvantaged by such tests – and then viewed as “inferior” when they don’t perform as Westerners do
- Moral Development, Kohlberg
  - Based on a hierarchy of developmental stages, strongly influenced by Western individualism and tradition of abstract moral reasoning
  - Not an accurate reflection of moral reasoning in some others (e.g. collectivist) cultures
  - Consequently, some cultures score “lower” on moral development when they are actually just “different”