

Laboratory Activity 7-2

Gender Bias in Language

Forming a Hypothesis

- The following experiment is designed to test the awareness of gender bias in language. Read the description of the experiment below, then form a hypothesis about the experiment. Write your hypothesis in the space provided.

Hypothesis: _____

Materials Needed

- three copies of a 300-word article or excerpt from a magazine article published in 1965 about space exploration (Article I)
- three copies of a 300-word article or excerpt from a magazine article published in 1985 about space exploration (Article II)
- three copies of a 300-word article or excerpt from a magazine article published within the last year about space exploration (Article III)

Procedure

1. Select two males and two females from your class to be participants in this experiment. The first participant will be called Participant A. The second participant will be called Participant B and so on.
2. Ask each participant to read Article I and circle all words that are gender-biased.
3. Ask each participant to read Article II and circle all words that are gender-biased.
4. Ask each participant to read Article III and circle all words that are gender-biased.
5. Ask each participant to share his or her feelings about the use of gender-neutral language.

Observations and Data

Directions: Record the following observations in the space provided.

1. Indicate the gender of Participant A. Female Male
2. Make a list of the gender-biased words Participant A found in each of the three articles.

Article I _____

Article II _____

Article III _____

3. Summarize what Participant A said when asked about his or her feelings concerning the use of gender-neutral language.

4. Indicate the gender of Participant B. Female Male

5. Make a list of the gender-biased words Participant B found in each of the three articles.

Article I _____

Article II _____

Article III _____

6. Summarize what Participant B said when asked about his or her feelings concerning the use of gender-neutral language.

7. Indicate the gender of Participant C. Female Male

8. Make a list of the gender-biased words Participant C found in each of the three articles.

Article I _____

Article II _____

Article III _____

9. Summarize what Participant C said when asked about his or her feelings concerning the use of gender-neutral language.

10. Indicate the gender of Participant D. Female Male

11. Make a list of the gender-biased words Participant D found in each of the three articles.

Article I _____

Article II _____

Article III _____

12. Summarize what Participant D said when asked about his or her feelings concerning the use of gender-neutral language.

Analyzing the Results

Directions: Answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What is the difference in number of gender-biased words identified by the males and by the females?

2. How can you explain any patterns that you see in your data?

3. How can this concept be applied in daily life? Give examples.

Assessing the Experiment

Directions: Answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What other methods could you use to study gender bias in language?

2. What suggestions do you have to refine this lab activity or to expand it to acquire new or more detailed knowledge on the topic?

3. Recall the hypothesis you formed at the beginning of this experiment. Did your results confirm or contradict your hypothesis? Explain.

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