

GENDER MATTERS

Rethinking Language and Visual Representation Teaching Guide

Video Summary

This video discusses how **language and visual representation** in psychology may uncritically reflect and reinforce gender assumptions.

Discussion Questions

- How has our language when it comes to sex and gender changed over time?
- What are some examples of commonly used gendered language in psychology?
- What is the relationship between the ways that marginalized individuals are depicted in media (such as textbooks) and the ways that they are treated in psychological research?
- What are some strategies you can use to identify and revise gendered language?
- What is androcentrism and why is it important to be aware of it in psychological research? What are some steps you can take to resist androcentrism in your own research?
- What is a metaphor? What are some prominent metaphors in psychology? How do metaphors shape our thinking in psychology?

Activities

- In small groups of 2-4, pick one of your psychology textbooks and examine the images across a number of chapters. Discuss who appears in the images in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, ability, etc. and make a chart in which you tabulate the frequencies with which each appears and note what types of roles they appear in. How frequently are they represented relative to each other? What do your findings tell you about the relationship between social status and representation? Reconvene as a class and have the groups compare their findings. (see, for example, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sound-science-sound-policy/201801/writing-women-psychology>) Also look at the graphs in textbooks in terms of what order gender differences appear. What about race? Sexuality? Discuss whether they impart androcentric, heterocentric, or other messages.
- As a class, list as many gender-neutral grammatical constructions as you can. Keep track of these on a blackboard.
- As a class, list as many psychological constructs that involve metaphor as you can. Keep track of these on a blackboard. Discuss how gender, race, and sexuality fit into each metaphor.

Assignments

- Find an influential psychological theory or study that is constructed around a metaphor. Write a report that responds to the following questions: (1) Describe the metaphor. How does the metaphor create a distinct way of understanding a psychological phenomenon? (2) Who is the metaphor about? How are gender and race understood within the metaphor? (3) What effects might this metaphor have on women, gender-nonconforming people, and people of colour? (e.g., is it liberating? Is it oppressive? How so?) (4) How could you change this metaphor to make it more inclusive of marginalized people?

- Some examples of metaphor in psychology include Alfred Kinsey's heterosexual-homosexual rating scale (Drucker, 2010; Diamond, 1993) and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid (Maslow, 1943; Kenrick et al., 2010).
- Get together in groups of three. Choose one psychological publication on gender, race, or sexuality differences from before 1960, and another one from after 2000. Create a poster that responds to the following questions: (1) How does each article use gender pronouns? Is one more gender-neutral than the other? What effect does pronoun use have on your understanding of their findings? (2) How does the older article describe race, gender, and/or sexuality differently than the new article? What language stands out? What do these differences in language suggest about changes in the construction of gender, race, and/or sexuality over time? (3) Look at the graphs and tables in each article. How do they order their participants? Has participant order changed over time? Why do you think language and visual representation might not change over time in the same way? Present your poster in a class-wide conference-style poster session.
- Find a scholarly article on gender, race, and/or sexuality differences that compares its participant groups using androcentric, white-centric, and/or heterocentric constructions. Choose the most conspicuous paragraph from each section of the article and rewrite it in a way that reverses these constructions. Alan Feingold's *Gender differences in personality: A meta-analysis* (1994) is one example of an article that would be useful for this assignment.

Additional Readings

- Bem, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. New Haven: Yale University.
- Bruckmüller, S., Hegarty, P., & Abele, A. E. (2012). Framing gender differences: Linguistic normativity affects perceptions of power and gender stereotypes. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 42*(2), 210-218.
- Diamond, M. (1993). Homosexuality and bisexuality in different populations. *Archives of sexual behavior, 22*(4), 291-310.
- Drucker, D. J. (2010). Male sexuality and Alfred Kinsey's 0–6 Scale: Toward "A Sound Understanding of the Realities of Sex". *Journal of Homosexuality, 57*(9), 1105-1123.
- Feingold, A. (1994). Gender differences in personality: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 116*(3), 429.
- Hegarty, P., & Buechel, C. (2006). Androcentric reporting of gender differences in APA journals: 1965-2004. *Review of General Psychology, 10*(4), 377.
- Hegarty, P., Lemieux, A. F., & McQueen, G. (2010). Graphing the order of the sexes: Constructing, recalling, interpreting, and putting the self in gender difference graphs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*(3), 375.
- Kenrick, D. T., Griskevicius, V., Neuberg, S. L., & Schaller, M. (2010). Renovating the pyramid of needs: Contemporary extensions built upon ancient foundations. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5*(3), 292-314.
- Luyt, R., Welch, C., & Lobban, R. (2018). *Diversity in gender and visual representation*. New York: Routledge.
- Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370-396.