

Gender and Research

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the following topic of gender and research, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Androcentricity, Gynocentricity, and Overgeneralization
2. Double Standards
3. Interference

1. ANDROCENTRICITY, GYNOCENTRICITY, AND OVERGENERALIZATION

How do issues of gender influence the research that sociologists do?

To begin, it is helpful to explore the concepts of androcentricity and gynocentricity as they pertain to research.

- **Androcentricity** is essentially a focus on the male. It's a biased focus on the male perspective, a privilege of the male perspective over that of the female.
- **Gynocentricity** is just the opposite--a focus on the female, or a biased privilege of the female perspective over that of the male.

Both of these focuses are a problem for social research if you are ignoring one half of the population when you're doing your research. When you operate with an androcentric or gynocentric perspective, you run the risk of **overgeneralizing**, which can be a significant problem in social research.

Overgeneralizing is defined as stepping too far with your conclusion, meaning you are drawing conclusions about all people when you only have data on particular groups.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** You are researching American culture and want to understand what Americans do within a culture. You find that men like to watch football. In your report, then, you write that all Americans like to watch football. However, this is an example of an overgeneralization, because not all Americans enjoy watching football. For instance, some women might not. Further research is needed to support a claim that all Americans like to watch football.

It requires a resolute effort to avoid being either androcentric or gynocentric when executing your research, and similarly to avoid overgeneralization. However, it is also important not to completely ignore the effects of

gender on social life and sociological research. Doing so results in **gender blindness**, which means completely overlooking the role that gender plays in social life.



TERMS TO KNOW

Androcentricity

A focus on the male or on the male perspective.

Gynocentricity

A focus on the female or on the female perspective.

Overgeneralizing

Speaking about an entire population when you only have knowledge of a part.

Gender Blindness

Overlooking or ignoring the role that gender plays in social life.

2. DOUBLE STANDARD

Another related pitfall to be avoided when doing social research is the **double standard**, which means having different standards for two similar groups of people, most commonly males and females.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you're in a relationship, you might be familiar with double standards. Any time you or your partner says, "Why is it okay for you to do that, but not for me?", you're referring to a double standard.

Researchers must be very careful not to carry double standards into their work when they're gathering and analyzing their data.



TERM TO KNOW

Double Standard

Having two different standards for similar groups of people.

3. INTERFERENCE

The last area of concern with respect to gender and social research is the concept of **interference**.

Interference occurs when the sex of the researcher interferes with the data collection process. This is more of a problem for qualitative research than it is for quantitative research.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A researcher is doing her interview fieldwork, and there is a respondent that keeps asking her out on dates. He seems to be exaggerating some of his stories to appear more 'cool,' so that she'll be more likely to go on a date with him. She eventually has to cut off the relationship completely and isn't able to use any of his transcripts because of this. Can you see how the sex of the researcher affected the research process? This is an example of interference.



TERM TO KNOW

Interference

Occurs when the sex of the researcher interferes with the data collection process.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about how issues of gender influence the research that sociologists do, focusing on the concepts of **androcentricity**, **gynocentricity**, **overgeneralization**, **double standards**, and **interference**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



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