

Extra Credit – Week 2

5 points

SEXIST LANGUAGE AND COGNITION

Purpose: This exercise examines the effect of gendered language on people's thought processes. It is based upon Moulton, Robinson, & Elias's (1978) study that investigated the effect of the use of the masculine as a generic pronoun.

Instructions: For this project you will need to select three adults who are willing to spend approximately five minutes writing a brief paragraph for you. Your volunteers should be approximately the same age.

Using the data sheets on the following pages, ask each volunteer to complete the descriptive information at the top of the sheet. Then have each person read the stimulus sentences and write a short paragraph that develops these sentences into a brief story.

Three versions of the data sheet have been prepared. The same sentences appear on each, but you will notice that the pronoun has been manipulated in each version. One sentence contains the masculine pronoun (*his*), one the plural (*their*), and the third contains both (*his or her*). Each volunteer will read only one version.

After your volunteers have written their paragraphs, explain the purpose of the exercise. Moulton and her colleagues found that when the masculine pronoun was used as a generic pronoun (that° is, to refer to both women and men), their college student participants were significantly more likely to think of men. They concluded that gendered language can bias cognitive processes. Be sure to answer any questions your participants might have.

After you have collected your data, summarize your results by answering the questions at the end of this project.

Creative Writing Exercise

Sex_____

Age

Many residential college students have never lived away from home before. In these cases, the homesick student will call home frequently to maintain contact with his family and friends.

Creative Writing Exercise

Sex _____

Age _____

Many residential college students have never lived away from home before. In these cases, the homesick student will call home frequently to maintain contact with his or her family and friends.

Many residential college students have never lived away from home before. In these cases, homesick students will call home frequently to maintain contact with their family and friends.

