

Popular Conceptions of Gender Differences in Cognitive Abilities: How are Men and Women Different?

Purpose: this exercise is a partial replication of an investigation of people's perceptions of the sizes of gender differences compared with the results of meta-analytic studies.

Instructions: Recruit two women and two men who are willing to complete a short questionnaire that assesses popular conceptions of gender differences in mental abilities that have been studied by psychologists. Select a variety of participants for this project. Include four people who vary not only by sex category but by other social categories (for example, age, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, etc.). Be sure to describe each participant by indicating her or his sex category, age, and social attributes (for example, race or ethnicity, social class, etc.) at the top of each interview form.

Explain to your volunteers that the questionnaire contains descriptions of five traits or behaviors. Your participants should read each description and think about whether they believe men and women differ on the attribute. Then, they should provide their estimation of the size of the gender differences using this scale:

- 3 Women are more likely than men to have this ability. There is a large gender difference favoring women.
- 2 Women are more likely than men to have this ability. There is a moderate gender difference favoring women.
- 1 Women are more likely than men to have this ability. There is a small gender difference favoring women.
- 0 No difference. Women and men are equally likely to have this ability.
- +1 Men are more likely than women to have this ability. There is a small gender difference favoring men.
- +2 Men are more likely to have this ability. There is a moderate gender difference favoring men.
- +3 Men are more likely than women to have this ability. There is a large gender difference favoring men.

In your paper, you should basically summarize your findings and then on some level relate them to course material. In your paper, also address the following:

- 1) What do you find in terms of how people see men and women in terms of these cognitive skills? Are your findings consistent with the research talked about in course materials? Do people overestimate gender differences in cognitive/verbal skills? Underestimate?
- 2) How might perceptions of different help to perpetuate "true" gender differences on these traits, skills, abilities?

Participant A

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following mental abilities. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

1. *Mathematics Ability*: Who receives higher scores on general mathematical achievement tests and problem-solving? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

2. *Scores on the Math SAT*: Who scores higher on the mathematics sub-scale of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)? Adolescent girls or boys?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Verbal Tests*: Who receive higher scores on tests of verbal performance? This includes tests such as anagrams (scrambled letters that form words), vocabulary, reading comprehensions, writing skills, etc. Males or females?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Scores on the Verbal SAT*: Who scores higher on the verbal subscale of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)? Adolescent girls or boys?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

5. *Scores on IQ Tests*: Who scores higher on measure of general intelligence? These are standardized tests such as the WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale). Males or females?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Participant B

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following mental abilities. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

1. *Mathematics Ability*: Who receives higher scores on general mathematical achievement tests and problem-solving? Men or women?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

2. *Scores on the Math SAT*: Who scores higher on the mathematics sub-scale of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)? Adolescent girls or boys?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Verbal Tests*: Who receive higher scores on tests of verbal performance? This includes tests such as anagrams (scrambled letters that form words), vocabulary, reading comprehensions, writing skills, etc. Males or females?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Scores on the Verbal SAT*: Who scores higher on the verbal subscale of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)? Adolescent girls or boys?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

5. *Scores on IQ Tests*: Who scores higher on measure of general intelligence? These are standardized tests such as the WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale). Males or females?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Participant C

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following mental abilities. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

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Estimation of gender difference: _____

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Estimation of gender difference: _____

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Estimation of gender difference: _____

4. *Scores on the Verbal SAT*: Who scores higher on the verbal subscale of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)? Adolescent girls or boys?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

5. *Scores on IQ Tests*: Who scores higher on measure of general intelligence? These are standardized tests such as the WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale). Males or females?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

Participant D

Sex _____

Age _____

Characteristics/Comments _____

Psychologists have studied whether men and women differ on each of the following mental abilities. In some cases large gender differences have been found. In others, small to no gender differences have been established. Read each of the following descriptions and provide your estimate of the degree to which women and men (as a group) differ on each trait or behavior.

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Estimation of gender difference: _____

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Estimation of gender difference: _____

3. *Verbal Tests*: Who receive higher scores on tests of verbal performance? This includes tests such as anagrams (scrambled letters that form words), vocabulary, reading comprehensions, writing skills, etc. Males or females?

Estimation of gender difference: _____

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Estimation of gender difference: _____

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Estimation of gender difference: _____
