The Effects of Interviewer Gender on Participants’ Willingness And Comfort Level

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Previous Research

Jones & Zoppel (1982) found that female counselors formed better therapeutic relationships than male counselors.

It was also determined that **female therapists** were preferred for **personal concerns** & **male therapists** for **vocational concerns**. (Blier, Atkinson, Geer, 1987).
Female therapists have more success helping younger women than male therapists.

Orlinsky & Howard (1976)
Hypotheses

- Participants would be more willing to answer questions if they were asked by a female rather than male interviewer.
- Participants would feel more comfortable answering questions if they were asked by a female rather than male interviewer.
Participants were randomly assigned to be questioned by either a **female** or **male** interviewer through convenience sampling.

**Interviewers paired up in two groups with one male & one female.**

After obtaining consent by a participant to take part in the study, each pair flipped a coin to determine whether the **female** or **male** researcher would ask the questions.
Participants

- Female interviewers had 16 female and 6 male participants.
- Male interviewers had 7 female and 11 male participants.
- Age range = 18-33
- Mean age = 22.08
- SD = 3.39
- Median = 21
**Willingness:** Response of participant on Likert scale from 1=Very Unwilling to 5=Very Willing to answer questions.

**Comfort:** Response of participant on Likert scale from 1=Very Uncomfortable to 5=Very Comfortable with answering questions.

([Link](http://0-search.ebscohost.com.libcat.uncw.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9602291367&site=ehost-live) The impact of sex of psychological examiner on sexually abused girls' preference for and...)}
Levene’s test and 2 between groups t-tests were conducted to test our hypotheses for gender effects.
Results

- Hypothesis 1 was not supported. No gender effect was found for willingness to answer personal questions.

- Hypothesis 2 was not supported. No gender effect was found for comfort level with answering personal questions.
No evidence was found to suggest that interviewer gender affects a person’s willingness or comfort with answering personal questions. Neither hypothesis was supported.
Discussion

- The reason that no gender effect was found may have been due to the presence of both a male and female interviewer during the conduction of the study.
- Although participants were led to believe the interviewer would ask personal questions, they did not.
- Participants may have anticipated different williness and comfort levels than they would have shown if actually asked personal questions.
Limitations

- Personality traits of interviewer may have impacted how the participants felt.

- Researcher biases may have affected how interviewers interacted with participants.

- Participants may have been concerned about confidentiality after being told they would be asked “personal” questions.
Future Studies

• Having participants actually answer personal questions and measuring their willingness and comfort level before and after the test

• Having the female interviewers pair up, and the male interviewers pair up, then determine which group will interview the next participant prior to approaching them
