Essay B-2: Give three concrete examples of how mindset might influence the observations made in a research area of Cognitive Systems.

“Mindset” is defined as “the established set of attitudes held by someone.” The mindset has the power to influence many areas of a person’s life by impacting the decisions that they make. For example, a mindset may impact the career path that one chooses, the people that they surround themselves with, or the types of daily habits that they cultivate. Mindsets can source from various places, but some examples include cultural values, education background, and family upbringing. This paper will examine how mindset can affect research in psychology by affecting the researcher and the participants within studies. Namely, experimenter bias, participant bias, as well as how a fixed vs. growth mindset can impact the way researchers do their work.

Experimenter bias is an occurrence in various fields of research, but is prevalent in psychology research, especially in areas of qualitative research. It occurs when a researcher consciously or subconsciously impacts the results of a study because of their beliefs, preconceived notions of the study, or their mindset. [4] For example, an educational psychologist may have been brought up believing that caucasians are smarter than african-americans. He conducts a study on problem solving skills on elementary age students by giving them a variety of open-ended problems and observing their solutions. By holding the mindset that the caucasian children are superior, the researcher may interpret what he observes in a way that maintains his beliefs.

Participant bias, or subject bias, is another way in which observations made in psychology may be unknowingly influenced. Subject bias refers to a tendency that participants may have to either consciously or subconsciously act differently during an experiment. [4] One way that this bias manifests itself is in the social desirability bias, commonly found in surveys, or other self-reported psychology research methods. This describes the conscious or sub-conscious tendency that a participant may feel to act or answer questions in ways that they believe are viewed favourable in others. [4] For example, a female participant in a research study examining emotional reactions in intimate relationships may have the mindset that possessing strong emotions are a negative trait, due to media portraying emotionally driven women as “hormonal” or “crazy.” The participant may then feel inclined to under report the amount of emotional distress she feels from her day to day relationship with her partner, thus affecting the results of the study.

In areas of research, psychologists may do many trials before receiving results that are conclusive. Alternately, research may come up to disprove a researcher’s hypothesis. In the fixed vs. growth mindset theory, Psychologist Carol Dweck suggests that individuals generally have one of two mindsets when it comes to intelligence and success. The growth mindset refers to those who are resilient to challenges, criticism, and failure. The fixed mindset describes the opposite. A researcher who fails to produce or replicate results in their studies and chooses to give up may never receive results.
Works Cited: