

Overdiagnosis of ADHD in boys: Stereotype impact on neuropsychological assessment.

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Abstract

There is vigorous debate regarding the possibility that ADHD is overdiagnosed in boys. We investigated the impact of the gender stereotype depicting boys as inattentive and impulsive on neuropsychological assessment (observation of psychology students and child's cognitive performance). In experiment 1, after the stereotype was activated, psychology students rated a "boy," a "girl," or a "child" on a behavioral assessment scale. In experiment 2, 103 children (boys and girls) completed neuropsychological tasks under stereotype threat or neutral conditions. The gender stereotype led psychology students to assess a child's behaviors more negatively if they thought the child was a boy. Boys' performance on one cognitive score declined following stereotype threat. Regression path analyses suggested moderation by stigma consciousness. Additionally, there were mediating and suppressing (through stereotype endorsement) effects. Our results suggest that the gender stereotype might contribute to the overdiagnosis of ADHD in boys.