

Sexism

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Sexism, also known as gender discrimination or sex discrimination, is the application of the belief or attitude that there are characteristics implicit to one's gender that indirectly affect one's abilities in unrelated areas. It is a form of discrimination or devaluation based on a person's sex, with such attitudes being based on beliefs in traditional stereotypes of gender roles. The term sexism is most often used in relation with discrimination against women, within the context of patriarchy.

Sexism involves hatred of, or prejudice towards a gender as a whole or the blind application of gender stereotypes. Sexism is often associated with gender-supremacy arguments.

Generalisation and partition

In philosophy, a sexist attitude is one which suggests human beings can be understood or judged on the basis of the essential characteristics of the group to which an individual belongs--in this case, their sexual group, as men or women. This assumes that all individuals fit into the category of male or female and does not take into account people who identify as either or both.

Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are sometimes applied at an early age. Various interventions were reviewed including the use of fiction in challenging gender stereotypes.

For example, in a study by A. Wing, children were read Bill's New Frock by Anne Fine. The content of the book was discussed with them. Children were able to articulate, and reflect on, their stereotypical constructions of gender and those in the world at large. There was evidence of children considering 'the different treatment that boys and girls receive', and of classroom discussion enabling stereotypes to be challenged.

Machismo is an example of a male-stereotype.

Clothing and hairstyle expectations that differ for men and women are an example of gender stereotyping.

Sexism in language

Sexist and gender-neutral language

Nearing the end of the 20th century, there is a rise in the use of gender-neutral language in western worlds. This is often attributed to the rise of feminism. Gender-neutral language is the avoidance of gender-specific job titles, non-parallel usage, and other usage that is felt by some to be sexist. Supporters feel that having gender-specific titles and gender-specific pronouns either implies a system bias to exclude individuals based on their gender, or else is as unnecessary in

most cases as race-specific pronouns, religion-specific pronouns, or persons-height-specific pronouns. Some of those who support gender-specific pronouns assert that promoting gender-neutral language is a kind of "semantics injection" itself.

Anthropological linguistics and gender-specific language

Unlike the Indo-European languages in the west, for many other languages around the world, gender-specific pronouns are a recent phenomenon that occur around the early-20th century. As a result of colonialism, cultural revolution occurred in many parts of the world with attempts to "modernise" and "westernise" by adding gender-specific pronouns and animate-inanimate pronouns to local languages. This ironically resulted in the situation of what was gender-neutral pronouns a century ago suddenly becoming gender-specific. (See for example Gender-neutrality in languages without grammatical gender: Turkish.)

Gender-specific pejorative terms

Gender-specific pejorative terms intimidate or harm another person because of their gender. Sexism can be expressed in a pseudo-subtle manner through the attachment of terms which have negative gender-oriented implications. Many examples are swear words and will not be enumerated here.

A mildly vulgar example is the uninformative attribution of the term 'hag' for a woman or 'fairy' for a man. Although hag and fairy both have non-sexist interpretations, when they are used in the context of a gender-specific pejorative term these words become representations of sexist attitudes, to wit, sexism.

The relationship between rape and misogyny

Research into the factors which motivate perpetrators of rape against women frequently reveals patterns of hatred of women and pleasure in inflicting psychological and/or physical trauma, rather than sexual interest. Researchers have argued that rape is not the result of pathological individuals, but rather of systems of male dominance and from cultural practices and beliefs that objectify and degrade women. Mary Odem and Jody Clay-Warner, along with Susan Brownwiler, consider sexist attitudes to be propagated by a series of myths about rape and rapists. They state that contrary to these myths, rapists often plan a rape before they choose a victim, and that acquaintance rape is the most common form of rape rather than assault by a stranger. Odem also states that these rape myths propagate sexist attitudes about men by perpetuating a myth that men cannot control their sexuality.

To counteract this dangerous imbalance, the "Men Can Stop Rape" movement has been

implemented. The success of the MCSR campaign has inspired a similar movement in the military with the tagline "My strength is for defending."

Occupational sexism

Occupational sexism refers to any discriminatory practices, statements, actions, etc. based on a person's sex that are present or occur in a place of employment. One form of occupational sexism is wage discrimination, which is prohibited in the USA.

Gender-role stereotypes

There is a long record of women being excluded from participation in many professions. Often, women have gained entry into a previously male profession only to be faced by many additional obstacles; Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to receive an M.D. in the United States and Myra Bradwell, the first female lawyer in the state of Illinois, are examples.

Professional discrimination continues today, according to studies done by Cornell University and others. It has been hypothesized that gender bias has been influencing which scientific research gets published. This hypothesis coincides with a test conducted at the University of Toronto led by Amber Budden. Based on the results of this study, almost 10 percent of female authors get their papers published when their gender is hidden.

In addition, women frequently earn significantly lower wages than their male counterparts who perform the same job. In the United States, for example, women earn an average of 23.5% less than men.

In 1833, women working in factories earned only one-quarter of men's wages and in 2007, women's median annual paychecks reflected only 78 cents for every \$1.00 earned by men. Women make up most of the "less meaningful, less skillful jobs" such as working in daycares. A study showed women comprised 87 percent of workers in the child care industry and 86 percent of the health aide industry.

Some experts believe that parents play an important role in the creation of values and perceptions of their children. The fact that many girls are asked to help their mothers do housework, while many boys do technical tasks with their fathers, seems to influence their behaviour and can sometimes discourage girls from performing such tasks. Girls will then think that each gender should have a specific role and behaviour.

A 2009 study of CEOs found that more men occupying the position were overweight or obese compared to men in the general population, while the reverse held true for female CEOs. The leader of the study stated that the results "suggest that while being obese limits the career

opportunities of both women and men, being merely overweight harms only female executives -- and may actually benefit male executives."

At other times, there are accusations that some traditionally female professions have been or are being eliminated by its roles being subsumed by a male dominated profession. The assumption of baby delivery roles by doctors and subsequent decline of midwifery is sometimes claimed to be an example.

Prostitution can be seen as a gender-restricted profession or it can be seen as a form of sexual violence.

Wage gap

Women have historically earned less than men.

In the 19th and early 20th century United States, women were paid less than men for the same work. In 1963 the first Equal Pay Act was passed. At that time, women earned approximately 58 cents to a man's dollar. Since then, the wage gap has decreased. Women now earn 78 cents for every dollar a man earns. The difference in wages is reduced when factors such as hours worked and experience are controlled for. For instance, one study found that while women earn 69 cents for every dollar a man earns 10 years after graduating college. When experience, education, training and personal characteristics were controlled for, however, women earned over 96 cents for every dollar a man made 10 years after graduating college. Unmarried women without children may earn 15 to 20 percent more than males in the same situation, depending upon geographical location in the USA.

One hypothesis is that women are less likely to negotiate raises. David R. Hekman

Research done at Cornell University and elsewhere indicates that mothers are 44 percent less likely to be hired than women with otherwise identical resumes, experience and qualifications, and, if employed, are offered on average \$USD 11,000 a year less than women without children. Exactly the opposite form of discrimination is indicated for men; those without children earn, on average, \$7,500 less than men with children.

Glass ceiling

The term "glass ceiling" is used to describe a perceived barrier to advancement based on discrimination, particularly gender discrimination. In academic achievement, great improvements have been made. However, as of 1995 in the United States, women received about half of all Master's degrees but represent only 5% of senior-level managers of the top Fortune 1000 industrial and 500 service companies."A Solid Investment: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human

Capital". 1995-11. Retrieved 2008-05-23.

The United Nations asserts "progress in bringing women into leadership and decision-making positions around the world remains far too slow."

Objectification

It is argued that sexual objectification is a form of sexism. Some countries, such as Norway and Denmark, have laws against sexual objectification in advertising. Nudity itself is not banned, and nude people can be used to advertise a product, but only if they are relevant to what is being advertised. Sol Olving, head of Norway's Kreativt Forum, an association of the country's top advertising agencies explained: "You could have a naked person advertising shower gel or a cream, but not a woman in a bikini draped across a car."

Pornography

It is sometimes asserted that pornography, as a form of objectifying a gender, contributes to sexism. Some researchers suggest that pornography depicting women contributes to violence against women by eroticizing scenes in which women are dominated, coerced, humiliated, or even sexually assaulted.

Historical examples of gender discrimination

Certain forms of sex discrimination are illegal in some countries, while in other countries sex discrimination may be legally sanctioned under various circumstances.

Coverture

U.S. and English law subscribed until the 20th century to the system of coverture, where "by marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage." Not until 1875 were women in the U.S. legally defined as persons (*Minor v Happersett*, 88 U.S. 162).

In many countries, women still lose significant legal rights during marriage. For example, in Chile "the marital partnership is to be headed by the husband, who shall administer the spouses' joint property as well as the property owned by his wife."

Gender discrimination in voting

Suffrage is the civil right to vote. Gender is sometimes used as a criterion for the right to vote.

Women's suffrage in the United States was achieved gradually, at state and local levels, during the 19th century and early 20th century, culminating in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which provided: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Examples

Domestic violence

Domestic violence takes on many different forms which include verbal, physical and psychological abuse. Domestic violence occurs in unequal proportion in men and women and is often considered related to sexism.

Domestic violence is more likely to occur in a relationship where there is perceived to be a natural imbalance of power.

The types of violence (physical, psychological, sexual) also differ in proportion across the gender spectrum.

Hate-motivated sexual assault

Rape and sexual assault are considered to be acts of hate. Their relationship to sexism is that there is often a desire for the perpetrator to feel power over the other due to the sex.

Marital relationships

There is a high rate of pop-culture references to restricted gender-roles in marriage. Today, politicians in the USA such as Mitt Romney encourage the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in marital roles.

Education

Women in the past have generally been disadvantaged from higher education. When women were admitted to higher education, they were encouraged to major in subjects that were considered less intellectual; the study of English literature in American and British colleges and universities was in fact instituted as a field of study considered suitable to women's "lesser intellects". Since 1991, however, the proportion of young women enrolled in college in the United States has exceeded the enrollment rate for young men, and the gap has widened over time. Women now make up the majority--54 percent--of the 10.8 million young adults enrolled in college in the United States.

Research studies have found that discrimination continues today: boys receive more attention and praise in the classroom in grade school along with more blame and punishment, and "this pattern of more active teacher attention directed at male students continues at the postsecondary level". Over time, female students speak less and less in classroom settings.

Girls earn higher grades than boys until the end of high school. Girls in some districts achieve higher marks despite scoring the same or lower than boys on standardised tests.

Military service

Military service is an area where gender roles have often been considered paramount. However, some countries, like Israel, have mandatory military service regardless of gender.

In the United States, women are prohibited from serving in active ground combat. However, in the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, "the unpredictable nature of the attacks in this war blurs the distinction between front-line and rear areas ... (women) find themselves in the thick of the battle." Initially, women deployed in support roles were not trained in active service. This created an imbalanced dangerous situation for women and now all soldiers receive the same combat training.

Some experts purport that women's perceived role as a sub-class of soldier encourages sexual violence against women in the military. In the USA, the Department of Defense's new Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office is addressing these concerns.

Transphobia

Transphobia refers to prejudice against transsexuality and transsexual or transgender people, based on their personal gender identification (see Phobia - terms indicating prejudice or class discrimination). Whether intentional or not, transphobia can have severe consequences for the person the object of the negative attitude. The LGBT movement has campaigned against sexism against transsexuals. One form of sexism against transsexuals is how many "women-only" and "men-only" events and organizations have been criticized for rejecting trans women and trans men, respectively.