Confronting Subtle Sexism in Our Schools
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Sexism

[sek-siz-uh m]

Noun

1. Attitudes or behaviors based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles.
2. Discrimination or devaluation based on a person’s sex or gender, as in restricted job opportunities, especially such discrimination directed against women.
3. Ingrained and institutionalized prejudice against or hatred of women.

Credit: Dictionary.com
“Like a Girl”

Video Credit: Always
Why Care About Subtle Sexism in Our Schools?

Case Study Confirms...

○ Teachers call on boys more frequently than girls
○ Teachers give boys more extensive feedback
○ Teachers punish boys more severely than girls for the same infractions
○ In mixed-sex groups, boys take leadership roles and girls defer to their decisions.

Examples of Subtle Sexism in the Classroom

- Males are called on more frequently and receive more detailed feedback from teachers including praise, criticism, and remediation.
- Males are more likely to be called up to the front of the room to do demonstrations or presentations.
- Girls are more likely to be praised for the appearance and the neatness of their work.
- In mixed sex groups, males take on leadership roles and females default to their decisions.
- Males receive harsher punishments for the same infractions.
Reflection Questions

- Who do I call on when hands are raised in class: boys or girls? Do I address them in the same manner?
- Do I equally scold both genders when problems and issues arise in the classroom?
- Do I distribute classroom duties equally or do I contribute to the stigma that girls should clean and boys should deal with technical issues?
- Do I provide equal amounts of help, feedback, encouragement and praise?
- Do I use gender free language in the classroom?
- Do I interrupt one gender more often then the other?
Strategies to Avoid Sexism in the Classroom

- Use inclusive language.
- Make sure expectations are the same for all of your students.
- Avoid stereotyping jobs for students such as having girls clean up and boys carry things.
- Make the classroom atmosphere one where both girls and boys are encouraged, questioned, and reinforced.
- Actively integrate groups by not allowing self-segregation.
- Apply classroom rules fairly for both boys and girls.
Examples of Subtle Sexism in the Curriculum

- Textbooks and resources tend to be filled with male protagonists and stories
- More male scientists’ and mathematicians’ work are featured in curriculum
- A greater number of male authors’ novels are included in curriculum
- During classroom discussions, higher level questions are more frequently directed towards male students.
Reflection Questions

- Do any texts I use omit girls and/or women, or tokenize their experiences? Are females or males presented in stereotypically gendered roles in any texts I have selected?
- If I have a classroom library, is there a balance in male and female authors? Are there plenty of books with strong female protagonists? Do the nonfiction/historical books feature notable women and girls?
- In what ways do I encourage gender equity of voice and participation?
- Do I ask girls as well as boys complicated questions? During discussions, do I inquire as diligently and deeply with female students as I do with male students?
Instructional Samples

A nurse is trained to understand her patients’ emotions as well as physical symptoms.

- The average teenager worries about his physical fitness.
- The parent who reads to her infant cares for her infant’s intellectual growth.
- Ask a firefighter for help, and he will get your kitten out of the tree.

http://academics.smcvt.edu/writingctr/gender%20bias.htm
Revised Instructional Samples

- Nurses are trained to understand their patients’ emotions as well as physical symptoms.
- The average teenager worries about physical fitness.
- The parent who reads to an infant cares for the infant’s intellectual growth.
- Ask a firefighter for help, and the firefighter will get your kitten out of the tree.
Strategies to Avoid Sexism in the Curriculum

○ If you find more male authors, scientists, and mathematicians featured in the textbook you use, do your own research and add more notable women to the mix.

○ Call out sexist notions or terminology in texts used in the classroom—for example, a textbook, magazine article, poem, research report, or blog post. You can also highlight any gender stereotypical language used by students in the classroom and use it to invite broader discussion.

○ When giving a spelling test, use sentences that challenge gender stereotypes: "The word is festive. He threw a festive party for his dolls." Or "The word is competitive. She became very competitive when she played football."
But I don't wanna go back to school! Nobody likes me! They tease me, and pull my hair, and beat me up! I hate it!

No one said teaching would be easy, dear.

I am not ready to go back to school yet, I am still stressed out from last year.

But dear, you're the principal!
Subtle sex-ism / n.
The kind of sexism that makes you wonder, Am I actually just crazy? (No, you are not.)
Why Care About Subtle Sexism in the Workplace?

Wage Gap

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2014, women who worked full time were, on average earning 79% of men’s median annual earnings.

Fewer Opportunities

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women make up less than 1 in 3 chief executives and just over 1 in 6 software developers. Higher paying jobs are still dominated by men.

https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/stats_data.htm
Unequal Pay

Video Credit: Finansforbundet Norge
Recognizing Sexism
Do Sheryl’s comments resonate true with your own professional life?

Do you believe that women are judged more harshly than men?

How likeable are the women you know who are in positions of power?

How important is it for you to be liked by your peers?
Be the Change!

You don't deserve the success. Just you are not good enough. You'll fail.

Give up.

She is sooo much better.

Shut up brain! People pay you $ to do this.

You deserve this!

Stop comparing yourself to others.

You're enough.
Don’t Underestimate Yourself

- Take on Challenging Tasks
- Take Risks
- Take Credit
Negotiate for Yourself

- Advocate for Yourself
- Ask for Promotions and Raises
- Tiara Syndrome
Attribute Success to Yourself, Not External Factors
Fake It Until You Make It

- Power Pose
- Body Language
- Visualize Success
- Psych Yourself up
Work With Women

- Help Other Women
- Allies Not Enemies
- The Shine Theory
Even if we change our mindsets, attitudes, and confidence levels, those around us may not change.

What do we do then?
The Manterrupter: a man who speaks over you.

- Verbal Chicken
- Lean In
- Womanterruption
Role-Play: Verbal Chicken

Partner A: Choose a topic you know a lot about. You are going to talk about this topic for 60 seconds. No matter what, do not stop talking!

Partner B: You are going to try to continually interrupt Partner A.
The Bropropriator: a man who takes credit for a colleague’s work.

- Thank ‘n’ Yank
- Amplify
- Wingman
Partner A: Share a suggestion you have for improving classroom observation practices.
Partner B: You are going to amplify Partner A’s idea, making sure you give him/her the credit.
The Steno-for-her: a colleague who treats you like an office secretary.

- Bad Barista
- Woman Card
- Throw to a Bro
- No Volunteering
Role-Play: Say NO

Partner A: Take on the role of a male boss. Ask Partner B to take notes at a meeting/get coffee/make copies.

Partner B: Respond (But do not agree to do it!)
The Undermine-Her: a colleague who slowly chips away at your patience and reputation by reducing you to your sex, sexual orientation, race, or age.

○ Earmuffs
○ Confront Him
○ Undermine Him
Role-Play: Confront Them

Partner A: Make a stereotypical statement about women.

Partner B: Confront Partner A
Turn and Talk!

Turn to a fellow attendee and share an instance in which you experienced or witnessed subtle sexism. Which strategies from today’s presentation might help you in these situations in the future?
Thanks!

Any questions?

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Sources


