

Who is better? Sexism as discriminate activities

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and Keywords:

Sexism is a course of action and all possible activities that discriminate people on account of their sex. Sexism includes all social policies which: stigmatize individuals on grounds of sex, contribute to unequal treatment of women and men, lessen the chance of individual and group development.

Similar topics:

Discrimination of sex, sexuality, uneven treatment, stigmatize/mark

Materials:

- sheets of paper
- markers
- sticky tape
- a collection of jokes and/or funny cartoons

Duration:

3 one-hour class sessions of 45 minutes

Number of participants:

10 to 15 boys (and girls)

Age:

10 to 11 years old boys (and girls)

Aims regarding worksheet 1:

- The boys (and girls) have an opportunity to analyze their own school experience paying special attention to sexism
- The boys (and girls) can consider the influence of school experience on shaping individual conceptions of gender roles

Aims regarding worksheet 2:

- realize the influence of sex classification of adults expectations towards boys' behaviour
- analyze their own experience connected with sexist practices
- analyze the influence of sex stereotypes on their own development
- differentiate between biological and socio-cultural limitations connected with sex
- learn the notion of sexism

Aims regarding worksheet 3:

- analyze social code which reveals unbalanced attitude to sex;
- think about how passing judgement on both sexes by others affected their own opinions;
- realize the sexist nature of statements concerning superiority of one sex over the other

(Short) explanation:

See worksheets!

Reflection:

See worksheets!

Variations (Continuation):

See worksheets!

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

Sexism is a policy and all possible activities that discriminate people on account of their sex. Sexism includes all social policies which:

- 1) stigmatize individuals on grounds of sex (attributing them features according to the category of gender they belong to, but not due to individual qualities)
- 2) contribute to unequal treatment of women and men (e.g. inequality before the law, diversification of work possibilities)
- 3) lessen the chance of individual and group development
 - androgenism – masculine element is in the centre of attention as a neutral norm or standard
 - polarization of gender – perception of women and men as different types of personalities
 - biological essentialism – a set of views justifying dissimilarity of women's and men's natures as well as their roles in evolution of human beings and their culture

The existence of sexism is distinguished at four levels:

a) Individual level

refers to individuals and their approach to sex and gender. One can talk about sexist behaviours when characteristics connected with sex are attributed to people only on the basis of classifying them as women or men. Extremely unfair is to impute negative features (e.g. aggression of boys, talkativeness of girls) or to treat women and men unjustly because of common stereotypes (e.g. female candidates are not admitted to exams or job interviews for 'male' posts).

b) Socio-structural level

is connected with the status attached to an interaction partner due to their sex and it is manifested in interpersonal and group relations. Structural status sometimes adds to the status resulting from the sex either reinforcing it (a male boss – a female subordinate) or reducing it to a certain degree (a female boss – a male subordinate). It happens, however, that women of a higher status who show a pattern of behaviour typical of their dominant position are perceived negatively, especially if they manage men.

c) Institutionalized level

serves as an indication of discrimination because of sex in institutions – in their organization, structures, and ideologies or in their deep-rooted traditions, often as unconscious standards of behaviour.

d) Cultural level

these are most of all hidden and open assumptions on sex and gender, widespread in society, having influence on members of a given culture. This category, in general, represents kinds of sexism:

- characteristic of culture transmission of seeing the world of sex, in the process of socialization, which has influence on individual attitudes towards gender as well as behaviours towards a partner, based on sex classification
- socio-cultural approbation of inequality (religion, science, tradition) reinforces polarization of genders and androcentrism on individual and wide-social levels.

Worksheet 1

Sexism at school?

Aims:

The boys (and girls)

- have an opportunity to analyze their own school experience paying special attention to sexism
- can consider the influence of school experience on shaping individual conceptions of gender roles.

Class arrangement:

Tables arranged for group work with the possibility to be rearranged for discussions in a circle.

Duration:

20 to 35 minutes

Materials:

- sheets of paper
- markers
- sticky tape

Activity:

1. Boys work in groups on the following issues, writing down particular phenomena and situations on the sheets of paper.

Group 1: Favouritism over boys.

Group 2: Treating boys badly.

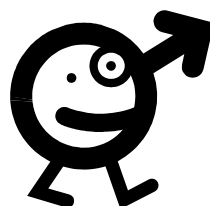
Group 3: Differences in teachers' expectations towards boys and girls.

Group 4: Differences in rewarding/ praising/ punishing/ criticizing girls and boys.

Group 5: Differences in tasks and duties assigned to girls and boys.

2. Boys present and discuss posters and supplement their friends' work with their own examples. They share their conclusions.

3. The leader of the group may add information on research results on treatment of girls and boys at school and introduce the notion of sexism.



Worksheet 2

Have you encountered such situations?

Aims:

Boys (and girls) have an opportunity to:

- realize the influence of sex classification of adults' expectations towards boys' behaviour
- analyze their own experience connected with sexist practices
- analyze the influence of sex stereotypes on their own development
- differentiate between biological and socio-cultural limitations connected with sex
- learn the notion of sexism

Class arrangement:

Circle

Duration:

20 to 35 minutes

Activity:

1. Boys sit in a circle. Following the order of the leader they try to find various situations in which boys wanted to do something but could not because it turned out that these games (activities) were reserved for girls. Boys talk about their experiences and feelings at the time. Finally, boys discuss which of these bans or limitations could be justified from biological point of view (e.g. boys cannot have babies like their mothers) and which could be justified from a traditional point of view.
2. Following analogical procedure, participants analyze similar situations connected with obligations and duties which they did not feel like doing especially when they could see that their peers of opposite sex did not have to do them.
3. Volunteers talk about situations from their present lives when they felt restricted because of their sex.
4. Referring to the participants' experiences, the leader gives a mini lecture defining and characterizing the notion of sexism.

Worksheet 3

Who is better?

Aims:

The boys (and girls) have an opportunity to:

- analyze social code which reveals unbalanced attitude to sex
- think about how passing judgement on both sexes by others affected their own opinions
- realize the sexist nature of statements concerning superiority of one sex over the other

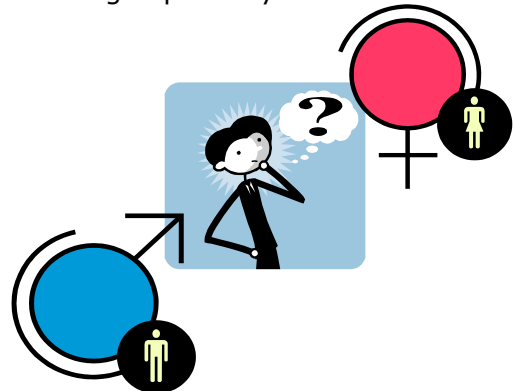
Class arrangement:

Circle

Duration:

20 to 35 minutes

Activity:



1. Each boy recalls and makes a note about statements heard from adults or peers and situations in which conviction about superiority / inferiority / higher / lesser value of men or women was revealed.

	Situations +	Situations -
Men		
Women		

2. Boys share their notes and recollections and then talk about them:

- What image of my sex could they create on the basis of these statements?
- How did they feel hearing statements judging their own sex / higher or lower?
- Which of these statements do they agree with now and which do not they agree with? Why?
- What consequences of higher judgement of one sex can there be for individuals and social life?

3. Explaining the notion of sexism to those who have not heard it before referring to the given examples.