

Challenging Everyday Sexism

Men Against Gender Injustice Collective (MAGIC) workshop, May 26, 2019, Brisbane

Workshop Handout by Dr Michael Flood

Sexism

Definitions:

- Gender-neutral, non-feminist definitions:
 - prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender
- More feminist definitions:
 - Sexism = *prejudice + power*
 - Attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate the gender inequalities that privilege men and disadvantage women and/or that reinforce narrow patriarchal roles for men and women.

Sexism may include attitudes, behaviours, institutions, and societies

Sexist attitudes may be hostile or benevolent:

- *Hostile sexism*: justifies male power and traditional gender roles through negative / derogatory characterisations of women
- *Benevolent sexism*: involves kinder, gentler justifications of male power and traditional gender roles. Is subjectively positive. Involves paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and idealisation of women.
- Also: Traditional / old-fashioned sexism and Modern Sexism: the latter = “a denial of discrimination against women and resentment of complaints about sexism and efforts to assist women”.

Everyday sexism:

Definition:

- Everyday forms of talk, behaviour, and interaction which are sexist – which reinforce patriarchal gender inequalities and patriarchal gender roles.

Key points:

- Everyday sexism is common.
- Everyday sexism is routine and pervasive.
- Other terms: Gender [sexist] microaggressions: “intentional or unintentional actions or behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, oppress, or otherwise express hostility or indifference toward women”
- Everyday sexism is often often unseen, ignored, and excused.
- Everyday sexism causes direct harm.
- Everyday sexism contributes to wider, systemic gender inequalities.
- Men are less aware of sexism than women.

Challenging everyday sexism

Sharing success stories...

Some common types of action:

- Ask for an explanation. Inquire.
- Paraphrase / Reflect.
- Reframe.
- Present another way of viewing the situation.
- Question the assumption.
- Make your concern plain.
- Express your disagreement.
- Explain why you disagree.
- Provide information.
- Personalise the violence or injustice. Bring it home.
- Use impact and “I” statements.
- State principles and values.
- Convey your feelings and principles.
- Use humour.
- Remind him of his ‘best self’.
- Use your friendship.
- Invite group pressure.
- Change or redirect the conversation

Relationships and contexts

- The personal and power relationships among you
- The context
- In families: Honour the past; Change the present; Appealing to shared values; Appeal to parental values; Appeal to family ties; Set limits. ; Reach out (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015)

Wider reflections

- Bad comebacks
- Call-out culture