

All

SEMINAR 9 Gender

Task 1 – Discuss the quotations.

- 1 "Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism, but in fact, this dualism is fluid¹. There is no wholly masculine man; no purely feminine woman." Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 1845
- 2 "It is capitalist America that produced the modern independent woman. Never in history have women had more freedom of choice in regard to dress, behaviour, career, and sexual orientation." Camille Paglia (1947-) American author, critic
- 3 "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman." Virginia Woolf (English Modernist writer, 1882 - 1941)
- 4 "I was raised to believe that excellence is the best deterrent² to racism or sexism. That is how I operate my life." Oprah Winfrey (American talk-show host, journalist, 1954-)
- 5 "If women are expected to do the same work as men, we must teach them the same things." Plato (427 - 347 BC)
- 6 "Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition." Timothy Leary (American author, 1920-1996)
- 7 "One is not born a woman, but must become one." Simone de Beauvoir (French writer, feminist 1908-1986)

Gender: *Socially* defined male and female roles. **Sex:** *Physically* defined male and female differences.

Sexism is discrimination between people based on their sex rather than their individual merits³. It could also refer to the beliefs that **1)** one sex is superior to the other, **2)** men and women are very different and this should be strongly reflected in society, language, right to have sex, and the law, or **3)** to mean the hatred⁴ of men (misandry) or women (misogyny).

Many peoples' beliefs range along a continuum. Some people believe that women should have equal access to all jobs. Others believe that in most aspects men are superior to women. Sexists believe that individuals can be understood (and often judged) based on the characteristics of the group to which they belong, in this case, their sex group (male or female). This assumes that all individuals clearly fit into the category of "male" or "female".

Task 2 – Discussion Questions

1. Is being a woman in Czech society a worse deal⁵ than being a man? In any society?
2. How would you like to organize childcare when you start a family? Who is to provide for the family?
3. Is career in the way to being a good mother for women?
4. How do people in your environment look on 'career women'?
5. Are men and women treated equally by their employers? Are they paid fairly?
6. Do women need "positive discrimination" to make it professionally?
7. Is sexism a problem in your country?

Task 3 – Read the questions following the article and find the answers.

Counting the Cost of Sexism

Women are still second-best in the City - and we all pay the price

1 The City of London is notorious⁶ for having a less than fair approach to its female employees and for having the thickest '**glass ceiling**' in the country. Julie Mellor, the chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), believes City bosses themselves are the losers, wasting the talents of thousands of potential employees.

2 At a conference on women in the economy, she warns firms that 'discrimination costs⁷, and equality pays'. Average earnings for women in the City are as much as 40% lower than those of their male colleagues (double that of the UK). She singles out three issues: a lack of flexibility about family-friendly working practices (preventing women from moving up if they want to care for children or relatives); pay discrimination; and old-fashioned **macho culture**. 'The level of **harassment**⁸ indicated by the number of cases presented is appalling⁹, she says.

3 Instead of speaking the language of women's rights and feminism (though she says she is 'definitely' a feminist), she tells businesses that overcoming inequality in the workplace is not just good for women - it's good for the economy. Fighting sexism, harassment and prejudice¹⁰ is part of her job, but she says there are more subtle¹¹ problems to tackle¹². She believes her best chance of progress will come from appealing to business leaders' **hard-nosed** self-interest. She quotes Marks and Spencer chairman Paul Myners: 'The stock market would not allow the waste of capital in the way we tolerate the waste of female talent and ability'.

4 Britain has already invested in educating women, and employers take an **enlightened approach** to bringing women into the workplace. The rate of female participation is one of the highest in Europe, but when it comes to the race to the **boardroom** - or the top of the pay-scale - women tend to fall behind, particularly if they choose to have children.

5 'It's all about caring: the fact that there are 18 million parents and carers who are at work can't be ignored. The failure of public policy and employer practices to adapt to that is part of why we have the **pay gap** and are failing to use women's skills.'

6 Improving childcare is part of the **battle**, and Mellor welcomes the government's promise to increase childcare and afterschool clubs. A working mother herself, she rejects¹³ the argument that it is better for children if their mothers stick to traditional gender roles. 'People don't want to abandon¹⁴ their families; quality of life is important. I think it's about choices.'

7 Recent EOC research found that when women return to work part-time after having children, they often have to step off the **career ladder**, and watch their pay and status suffer as a result. A third of women working part-time are doing jobs that are below their skill level. 'We've got to change low-paid, low-skilled part-time work to well-paid, high-skilled part-time work,' she argues.

8 Mellor knows she is lucky to have an enlightened employer - the EOC **practises what it preaches** by allowing her to work part time and take the school holidays off to look after her children. Flexible working will be one of the areas in which she will be launching major campaigns, together with discrimination against women in pregnancy¹⁵ and what the EOC calls 'occupational segregation' - the divide between 'women's jobs' and 'men's jobs' that sees girls heading for the four Cs (caring, **catering**, cleaning or clerical work) without thinking about being an electrician or a **bricklayer**.

9 The EOC is encouraging women to start thinking about traditionally male-dominated job options as early as their school years. Careers services should ensure that pupils get more information about potential jobs, offering girls work experience in men's jobs and vice versa.

10 'You see the real issue where we have skills shortages¹⁶, like in construction, plumbing, engineering and IT. The proportion of women and men doing different jobs is so extreme, no wonder we have skills shortages. Both employers and young people are hungry for change.' Until there are many more women plumbers and fund managers, Mellor expects to continue having to **back** many anti-discrimination cases.

Adapted from an article by Heather Stewart, *Guardian*, 9 January 2005.

a) Find the equivalents of the phrases below in the text above.

- 1) an imaginary limit that prevents women from being successful, even though there are no actual laws or rules to stop them _____
- 2) progressive attitude _____
- 3) culture emphasising a man's physical strength, lack of sensitive feelings, and other qualities considered to be typical of men _____
- 4) offensive remarks or unpleasant and often threatening behaviour _____
- 5) a room where company directors have meetings _____
- 6) an attempt to resolve a difficult problem or unpleasant situation _____
- 7) professional or company hierarchy _____
- 8) pragmatic, determined _____
- 9) someone whose job is to build walls, buildings, etc. _____
- 10) the job of providing and serving food and drinks at parties _____
- 11) support financially _____
- 12) does what it says or promotes _____
- 13) difference in salary or wage _____

b) According to the article, decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

- 1) It's harder for women to succeed in London than anywhere else. T/F
- 2) London is known to recruit the best qualified people in the country. T/F
- 3) Mellor complains that the gender pay gap brings profit to the British economy. T/F
- 4) She admits to being a feminist. T/F
- 5) The gap in London is twice as big as in other regions. T/F
- 6) Britain's most profitable companies employ few women. T/F
- 7) British employers are not opposed to employing more women. T/F
- 8) According to Mellor, a lack of childcare facilities is partly to blame for the pay gap. T/F
- 9) Women who return to work after maternity leave want to step off the career ladder. T/F
- 10) EOC would like to offer information for women who seek typically male jobs. T/F
- 11) EOC pays for legal representation for women who sue¹⁷ employers for discrimination. T/F

Task 4 – Skim the following paragraphs and for each choose a heading from 1 to 6 that best matches it. You will not need one heading.

Facts Behind the Pay Gap

- 1 E.O.C. RECOMMENDATIONS
- 2 ACTION NEEDED
- 3 DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES
- 4 STARTING A FAMILY
- 5 CARING FATHERS
- 6 RECRUITING AND RETRAINING STAFF

a) The EOC has been working with employers through the promotion of pay reviews and using its legal powers to prevent pay discrimination under the Equal Pay Act. It will be giving evidence to the Women and Work Commission about reforming the Act. However, its investigations reveal that action on pay discrimination is only part of the picture if the pay gap is to be closed. Government as well as employer action is needed.

b) There need to be more accessible, affordable, quality childcare and services for ill, frail and dependent people; modern maternity and paternity rights which enable choice about staying at home in the early years; choice between parents about sharing in earning family income and looking after children; laws which promote flexible working times in all jobs; education, training and career support for women and men working in untraditional areas; pensions that do not penalise parents and carers for time spent caring; openings in higher paid work in new sectors and at higher levels; flexible training; support of women in areas where they are in a minority; government contracts ensuring public money is spent on businesses which have modern working practices; reporting on the use of human capital to shareholders; and modernised, effective laws which promote good workplace practices.

c) Seven out of ten employers agree that recruiting more young people of the 'non-traditional' sex would help solve skills shortages. In the construction industry, 38% of current vacancies¹⁸ are the result of skills shortages. At least 36% of girls would have liked to try a work placement more traditionally done by boys; 67% of young women would have considered a wider range of career options had they known of the pay differences for jobs usually done by women and those by men. The best employers achieve return rates of over 90% of women returning after maternity leave¹⁹. About 90% of employers with flexible working practices think it is cost effective; 39% think their performance is better than their competitors.

d) Women are nearly half of Britain's workforce, with eight out of every ten new job vacancies to be filled by women. In the global economy, rising customer expectations and technological advances require more flexible work patterns. In 1979, 24% of women returned to work within 8 months of pregnancy; by 2002, about 73% of women returned to work within 10-11 months. Fathers of young children are now undertaking around eight times more childcare than thirty years ago. UK men work the longest hours in Europe. There are 5.6 million carers in Great Britain. As the population ages, these numbers will increase.

e) Each year 30,000 women are sacked, made redundant or leave their jobs due to pregnancy discrimination. Of the 441,000 women who are pregnant at work each year, 45% experience some form of discrimination. The financial penalty for taking a year's maternity leave is greater than the impact of a year's unemployment on lifetime earnings.

Task 5 – Listen to the following *Woman's Hour* radio phone-in show and complete the sentences.

Equal pay was first discussed in *Woman's Hour* in (1)_____.

According to a Royal Commission, women in general didn't have families to (2)_____.

Women still earn on average (3)_____ % less than men.

Ms Roth believes that in some circumstances women should be paid (4)_____ depending on their (5)_____.

Her sister-in-law became an NHS (National Health Service) consultant at (6)_____ as she had taken (7)_____ periods of four years out.

You can phone in on (8)_____.

Dr Elisabeth Digg from Dundee, Scotland was the first successful (9)_____ opportunities case, which was about (10)_____ who were not treated well.

Dr Digg feels that the assumption that women are the (11)_____ and that men are the breadwinners is (12)_____ to fathers, to women in the workplace, and to employers.

According to the solicitor, the law is now focused on giving (14)_____ time off rather than fathers.

Parents can now take (14)_____ weeks' parental leave, available to fathers, and two weeks' paternity leave at the time of the (15)_____.

The new law will make it possible for men and women to (16)_____ whether the father takes the second 6 months of (17)_____ leave and gets limited pay for that period.

After her discrimination case, Dr Digg was paid (18)_____ in compensation.

Women who take cases get a (19)_____ and usually have problems (20)_____ discrimination had taken place.

Adapted from the BBC programme *Woman's Hour* of 22 December 2004 (http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2004_51_wed_01.shtml).

Grammar **Sexism in Language**

Attention has been focused on the replacement of 'male' words with a generic meaning by neutral items – *chairman*, for example, becoming *chair* or *chairperson*, or *salesman* becoming *sales assistant*. In certain cases, such as job descriptions, use of sexually neutral language has become a legal requirement. There is continuing debate between extremists and moderates as to how far such revisions should go – whether they should affect traditional idioms such as *man in the street* and *Neanderthal Man*, or apply to parts of words where the male meaning of man is no longer dominant such as *manhandle* and *woman*. The vocabulary of marital status has also been affected with the introduction of *Ms* as a neutral alternative to *Miss* or *Mrs*.

Task 6 – Transform the following sentences to remove the inherent assumptions about the sex of the people.

This example clearly shows that “man” is not an all-purpose neutral term for human:

Like all mammals, man breastfeeds his young.

Like all mammals, humans breastfeed their young.

- Three firemen helped put out a fire at a warehouse last night.
- A spokesman for the Department of Education provided us with a statement.
- Cleaning lady wanted for house in Priory Street.
- The switchboard is continuously manned even during holiday periods.
- All our air hostesses are fluent in at least three languages.

- f) Policemen today spend more time in cars than on the street.
- g) Brenda's husband is a male nurse while Jim's wife is a woman doctor.
- h) It took a great many man-hours to clean up the stadium after the concert.
- i) This was a great step for mankind.
- j) The man in the street has little time for such issues.
- k) A customer who fails to pay for parking will find his wheels clamped when he tries to leave.

Discussion

- 1 Does your language ever use male words generically?
- 2 Have there been attempts to change them to avoid sexual stereotyping?
- 3 Do you think that using sex-biased words affects people's attitudes to men and women's roles in society?

Vocabulary

1 fluid	proměnlivý
2 *deterrent	odstrašující/zastrašující prostředek
3 *merits	vlastnosti, schopnosti
4 *hatred	nenávisť
5 deal	záležitost, břemeno
6 *notorious	dobře známý; neblaze proslulý
7 *to cost	přijít draho, stát moc peněz
8 *harassment	(sexuální) obtěžování
9 *appalling	děsivý, otřesný
10 *prejudice	předsudek
11 subtle	ožehavý, choulostivý, sotva patrný
12 *problems to tackle	problémy, které se musí řešit
13 *reject	odmítnout, zamítnout
14 *abandon	opustit, vzdát se něčeho
15 pregnancy	těhotenství
16 *shortages	nedostatky
17 *sue for discrimination	žalovat za diskriminaci
18 vacancies	volná místa
19 maternity leave	mateřská dovolená