

A1

SEMINAR 6

Gender

Task 1 – Read and 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 “How can people ask whether woman is man’s equal? If a man truly loves, how can he love someone beneath him? I see no difference between the endowments of men and women.” Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, first Czech president (1850 - 1937)
- 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. How would you feel at a job interview? From the perspective of a woman, a man, an employer?
7. Do women need "positive discrimination" to make it professionally?

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,

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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 may not need two headings.

Headings: **a) Female Mortality** **b) Sociological Consequences** **c) Normal Sex Ratios**

d) Son Preference **e) Changing Attitudes** **f) Causes of Gender Imbalance**

Abnormal Sex Ratios in Human Populations

1 In the absence of manipulation, both the sex ratio at birth and the population sex ratio are remarkably constant in human populations. Small alterations do occur naturally; for example, a small excess of male births has been reported to occur during and after war. The tradition of son preference, however, has distorted these natural sex ratios in large parts of Asia and North Africa.

2 This son preference is manifest in sex-selective abortion and in discrimination in care practices for girls, both of which lead to higher female mortality. Differential gender mortality has been a documented problem for decades and led to reports in the early 1990s of 100 million "missing women" across the developing world. Since that time, improved health care and conditions for women have resulted in reductions in female mortality, but these advances have now been offset by a huge increase in the use of sex-selective abortion, which became available in the mid-1980s. Largely as a result of this practice, there are now an estimated 80 million missing females in India and China alone.

3 The large numbers of "surplus" males now reaching adulthood are predominantly of low socioeconomic class. Concerns have been expressed that their lack of marriageability, and consequent marginalization in society, may lead to antisocial behavior and violence, threatening societal stability and security.

4 Measures to reduce sex selection must include strict enforcement of existing legislation, the ensuring of equal rights for women, and public awareness campaigns about the dangers of gender imbalance. The good news is that the situation can improve if such measures are taken. *In South Korea the sex ratio has*

already declined, and gender preference data from China is also encouraging.*
Almost equal numbers of the women expressed a preference for one girl as for one boy. Fundamental changes in attitudes are starting to happen, which will hopefully see the bias in sex ratio gradually decline over the next few decades. *However, the damage for a large number of today's young men and boys has already been done**.*

Discussion Questions

- 1 What has been reported to happen with sex ratios during and after wars? Any ideas of how this can occur?
- 2 What sorts of "care practices for girls" do you think are implied in paragraph 2?
- 3 What is the difference in paragraph 2 between the 100 million missing women and the 80 million? Why are these figures difficult to compare?
- 4 What might be some consequences of sex ratio imbalance?
- 5 Are there any possible advantages to the given sex ratio imbalance?
- 6 How might the sex ratio imbalance be corrected?
- 7 What do you think of the ending this article (at **)? How would you feel if the author stopped in the middle of paragraph 4 (at *)? Where would you end the article and why?

Adapted from <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/short/103/36/13271> and http://www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/pressoffice/pressrelease_00463 on 5.11. 2006.

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Special note: A Canadian version of this text appeared in print but ended at the single star * (see <http://www.cbc.ca/story/health/national/2006/08/29/gender-imbalance.html>). In a British version of this text, the author ended at ** (see http://www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/pressoffice/pressrelease_00463).

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.

- a) Three firemen helped put out a fire at a warehouse last night.
- b) A spokesman for the Department of Education provided us with a statement.
- c) Cleaning lady wanted for house in Priory Street.
- d) The switchboard is continuously manned even during holiday periods.
- e) 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 (as in the sentences above)?
- 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 gender issues?

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, ošrťavý
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