



A1

SEMINAR 6 Gender

Task 1 – Read and discuss the following quotations.

1 "Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism, but in fact, this dualism is fluidⁱ. There is no wholly masculine man; no purely feminine woman." – Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), American journalist and women's rights advocate in her work *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845)

2 "For most of history, Anonymous was a woman." – Virginia Woolf (1882 - 1941), English Modernist writer

3 "I was raised to believe that excellence is the best deterrentⁱⁱ to racism or sexism. That is how I operate my life." – Oprah Winfrey (b.1954), American talk-show host, journalist

4 "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 (1850 - 1937), first Czech president

5 "Women who seek to be equal with men lack ambition." – Timothy Leary (1920-1996), American author

6 "One is not born a woman, but must become one." – Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), French writer

Gender: Socially and psychologically defined sexual identity. **Sex:** Biological characteristics of males and females.

Sexism is discrimination between people based on their sex rather than their individual meritsⁱⁱⁱ. 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, the right to have sex, and the law, or 3) hatred^{iv} of a particular sex, referred to as misandry (the hatred of men) and misogyny (the hatred of women).

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 deal^v than being a man? In any society?

2 Are men and women treated equally by their employers? Are they paid fairly?

3 About what proportion of women have top jobs?

4 What is the position of women from ethnic minorities/different cultures on the job market?

5 Do women need "positive discrimination" to make it professionally?

6 Should employers make it easier for women to come back to work after maternity leave? How?

Task 3 – Work in pairs.

a) Think about the types of jobs people have in your country and then make two lists:

PRESENT JOBS: jobs which many women do now, but which their mothers did not do in the past.

PAST JOBS: jobs which their mothers' generation used to do, but which few women do now.

b) Note down three reasons why you think the changes have taken place.

c) Compare your lists and reasons with another pair. Then discuss these questions:

- I. Do you agree on the reasons why the changes have taken place?
- II. What sort of changes have taken place in the relationships between men and women at work?
- III. What further changes do you expect and would like to see?
- IV. How have working conditions for women improved recently?
- V. How do they still need to be improved further?

Adapted from New International Business English, Leo Jones and Richard Alexander, CUP 1998

Task 4 – Read the following text and then work out the tasks below.

Six Thousand Women Missing from Top Jobs - From Boardrooms, Politics and Courts

The glass ceiling is still holding back 6,000 women from the top 33,000 jobs in Britain, according to new research from the Equal Opportunities Commission. Thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act, women are “woefully under-represented” in the country’s boardrooms, politics and courts.

Help from nannies has not enabled successful women to maintain their careers after having children, the research suggests. The EOC blames a male-dominated culture in the professions for resistance to flexible working.

The upward trend in the proportion of women in top jobs is “painfully slow”, the report says, and in some sectors there is even a decline. The proportion of women in parliament has slipped in the 12 months since the EOC’s last Sex and Power survey and is now at 19.5% - lower than in Iraq, Afghanistan and Rwanda. Although a woman is chief executive of the London Stock Exchange, and four senior judges are women, the proportion of women directors of top 100 FTSE companies has dipped to 10.4%, and of female judges to 9.8%.

Jenny Watson, chair of the EOC, said: “Today’s troubling findings show just how slow the pace of change has been in powerful British Institutions. They suggest it’s time not just to send out the headhunters to find some of those “missing women”, but to address the barriers that stand in their way. Thirty years on from the Sex Discrimination Act, women rightly expect to share power. But as survey shows, that’s not the reality.”

“We all pay the price when Britain’s boardrooms and elected chambers are unrepresentative. Our democracy and local communities will be stronger if women from different backgrounds are able to enjoy an equal voice, in business, no one can afford to fish in half the talent pool in today’s intensely competitive world.”



The commission identified the 33,000 most influential jobs in the private sector, politics, the legal system and the public sector in Britain. To achieve a representative proportion, women, it said, should fill another 6,000. At the current rate of improvement, it would take 20 years to achieve equality in the civil service, 40 years in the judiciary and 60 years among FTSE 100 companies. But it would take 200 years – at least another 40 elections – to achieve an equal number of MPs in parliament. By contrast, in the Scottish assembly, nearly 40% are women and 51.7% in Wales. The EOC said there was an argument for parties to use all-women shortlists, as in Wales.

But figures for women ethnic minorities are worse. There are only two black women MPs, four non-white top 100 FTSE directors and nine top civil servants from ethnic minority backgrounds. “If we want our communities to thrive, this has to change,” concludes the report. It suggests that more successful women are experiencing the same barriers to getting the jobs they want as women in lower paid jobs. As for age, the pay gap between men and women in their 20s is 3.7%, rising to 10.7% for thirty-somethings – from the impact of childbirth on women’s earnings. The same is not true for men who become fathers.

Female workers in the UK suffer one of the biggest pay gaps in Europe – 17% for full-time staff and 38% for part-time – because they are more likely to be in low-paid jobs and then slip further down the career ladder after having children, the Women and Work Commission found last year.

“Asking for flexible working still spells career death for too many women in today’s workplace,” said Ms Watson. “As a consequence, women with caring responsibilities all too often have to ‘trade down’ to keep working. Extending the right to ask for flexible working to everyone in the workplace would change that culture and enable more women to reach the top.”

This is the last annual report from the EOC. Next year, the EOC is due to be amalgamated with the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission, into a new body called the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. This will be headed by the current chair of the CRE, and some people fear that in the new organisation, women’s rights could be sidelined.

Katherine Rake, another equal rights campaigner, commented: “This research proves beyond a doubt that life is white and male.” Ms Watson summed up: “We haven’t solved the problem of sex discrimination yet. There is so much more to be done.”

Adapted from www.onestopenenglish.com viewed on 5.5.2009.

Task 4a – Are the sentences true (T) or false (F) according to the article above?

- 1 Nannies are not enough to help women get work.
- 2 The position of women has got worse in all areas since the last survey.
- 3 Trying to recruit more women is not enough.
- 4 Everyone will benefit if women have equal opportunities.
- 5 There should be 39,000 top jobs, not 33,000.
- 6 Parliamentary elections happen more or less every 5 years in Britain.
- 7 The EOC thinks all members of parliament should be women.
- 8 Women in their thirties get more money than women in their twenties.
- 9 Women in Britain are paid more for part-time work than if they work full time.
- 10 Giving men the right to request flexible working would actually help women.



Task 4b – Match the beginnings and endings of these compound adjectives from memory.

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| all- | time |
| non- | represented |
| full- | white |
| low- | dominated |
| under- | women |
| male- | paid |

Task 4c – Now match the compound adjectives with the nouns they described.

- 1 Women are _____
- 2 A _____ culture.
- 3 _____ shortlists.
- 4 Four _____ top FTSE directors.
- 5 _____ staff.
- 6 _____ jobs.

Task 4d – See if you can remember the missing words in these expressions from her comments.

- 1 ... if women from different backgrounds are able to enjoy an equal _____
- 2 ... no-one can afford to _____ in half the talent _____
- 3 ... and then slip further down the career _____
- 4 Asking for flexible working still _____ career _____ for too many women.

Task 4e – Now match the above expressions with the meanings below.

- a ... find themselves in even worse jobs.
- b means that they may lose their jobs.
- c ... have as many rights and as much power (as men).
- d ... look for the best staff from only part of the population.

Task 5 – Skim the following paragraphs and for each one 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 behaviour 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 to 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?

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.

Task 6 – 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).

Task 7 – Reading and Vocabulary – Read the text below and do the exercise that follows.

PART-TIME FEMINISTS

Women are their own worst enemy when it comes to climbing the ladders of the Dutch business world. They are not ambitious enough. They don't want to work full-time. And they have been brainwashed into thinking they should not send their children to day-care-centres. These, at any rate, are the arguments on one side of the debate raging in the Netherlands about the "glass ceiling" for women. Interestingly, much of the criticism comes from women themselves, not men.

To outsiders, the debate can be confusing. After all, some 70 per cent of Dutch women work outside the home, which is the highest proportion of women working anywhere in Europe apart from Scandinavia. Polls show that they are happy in their jobs and in their lives generally. So what's the problem, exactly? Indeed, to people in other countries, particularly the US, where men and women alike can often not afford to work part-time because these jobs do not provide health-care-benefits, the Netherlands must sound like paradise.

However, says Heleen Mees, economist and columnist for the NRC Handelsblatt, Dutch women find themselves in career hell, not heaven. This, she says, is because Dutch women are "part-time feminists." Because they are reluctant to work full time, their chances of getting ahead are small.

Dutch women, Mees says, lack ambition. "Only one in ten female professionals with children works full-time in the Netherlands, compared to nine of ten male professionals with children. So it should not come as a surprise that employers don't take women seriously."

Mees is not alone in her concern. The government, facing an ageing population and a shrinking workforce, wants women to work more. Women now make up three-quarters of all part-time workers. By encouraging women to work four or five days a week instead of three, as is common, the workforce would benefit from this home-grown, highly educated talent.

Employers, too, want to increase the number of women in senior roles, but they say they are unable to find enough women with sufficient experience. This, in turn, has caused some people to propose gender quotas similar to those in Norway, where companies are required to give 40 per cent of board-level positions to women.

As is often the case, however, part of the problem – if, indeed, there is a problem at all – is cultural, making it difficult to import foreign solutions. Dutch society has traditionally frowned upon mothers who work full-time, seeing them as having failed in their responsibilities. And childcare is not nearly as well organized or inexpensive as it is in Scandinavia, where the government pays a large part of the bill.

Ultimately, perhaps, working part-time is simply part of the Dutch dream. Even childless women or those with grown children prefer work part-time. Men, too, are increasingly turning to part-time jobs. If Hillary Clinton



were Dutch, she would have no problem getting the job of prime minister, but she would most certainly want to do it part-time.

Article adapted from Business Spotlight.

Task 7a – Match the correct synonyms.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 confusing | a. raise |
| 2 in the end | b. mature |
| 3 apart from | c. really |
| 4 indeed | d. suggest |
| 5 particularly | e. similarly |
| 6 alike | f. after all |
| 7 paradise | g. unwilling |
| 8 reluctant | h. enough |
| 9 ageing | i. baffling |
| 10 shrinking | j. heaven |
| 11 make up | k. besides |
| 12 profit | l. getting old |
| 13 increase | m. especially |
| 14 sufficient | n. benefit |
| 15 propose | o. more and more |
| 16 inexpensive | p. reducing |
| 17 grown | q. form |
| 18 increasingly | r. cheap |

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 8 – Transform the sentences below to remove the inherent assumptions about the sex of the people.

These examples clearly show that “man” is not an all-purpose neutral term for human:

Like all mammals, man breastfeeds his young.

vs.

Like all mammals, humans breastfeed their young.

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



- 5 Policemen today spend more time in cars than on the street.
- 6 Brenda's husband is a male nurse while Jim's wife is a woman doctor.
- 7 It took a great many man-hours to clean up the stadium after the concert.
- 8 This was a great step for mankind.
- 9 The man in the street has little time for such issues.
- 10 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, schopnost |
| 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 |