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No. 6

SEXISM IN RESEARCH AND ITS POLICY IMPLICATIONS

by Margrit Eichler

**CRIAW
ICREF**

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
INSTITUT CANADIEN DE RECHERCHES
SUR LES FEMMES

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THE CRIAW PAPERS

The **CRIAW Papers** comprises a continuing series of publications: original research papers advancing the knowledge and understanding of women's experience.

Such papers may come from the traditional academic disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, from interdisciplinary research, or from action-research. CRIAW is particularly interested in broad review articles written from a feminist viewpoint which explore such areas as feminist theory, analysis, policy, and the history of the women's movement. These may include "fugitive" papers which have not been previously published, interdisciplinary papers based on original research and papers broadly outlining the priorities and concerns of the francophone or anglophone feminist research community. Reprints of significant out-of-print articles may also be considered.

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- each paper must make a significant contribution to feminist research
- each paper must meet scholarly standards of intellectual quality in relation to evidence, argument, thesis, presentation and form, to the degree that each of these factors is required by the discipline and character of the paper presented
- each paper must be non-sexist in methodology and language

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- chaque document doit contribuer de façon importante à la recherche féministe;
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- la méthodologie et le langage doivent être non-sexistes.

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L'ICREF croit que la publication de ces documents, selon les normes établies ci-haut, permettra d'approfondir la connaissance du vécu des femmes et par ce fait, contribuera à l'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie.

SEXISM IN RESEARCH AND ITS POLICY IMPLICATIONS

BY

MARGRIT EICHLER

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INTRODUCTION

As president of CRIAW, I am pleased that our Institute can offer to the public Margrit Eichler's paper "Sexism in Research and Its Policy Implications". This paper, which served as the opening address to CRIAW's annual conference in Ottawa in the autumn of 1982, was conceived, not so much as one of the research papers, but as an eye-opener to the magnitude of the problem of sexism that crops up in the successive phases of research, whether oriented towards academic knowledge or towards policy making.

This document could serve as a first step in setting up guidelines to help eliminate sexism in future research.

The task is enormous, as we can see from Margrit Eichler's paper. Sexism is so deeply embedded in the fabric of our civilization, built by men only, that we will need nothing less than a "Copernican revolution" to integrate, at last, the experiences of women and their views in the various fields of research.

It should be noted that this document is not intended as an exhaustive study of the state of research in Canada. For example, the situation of francophone sources of research is not examined here. However, we can easily presume that the points made by this paper could, probably, be equally applied to research in all cultures.

Let us hope that these ideas will reach both the halls of learning and the corridors of power where decisions are made, so that all significant research will serve at last the interests of both halves of humanity.

Corinne Gallant
CRIAW/ICREF President 1983

Editor's Note

Sexism in Research and its Policy Implications, first published in 1983, remains a valuable introduction to an area of research that Margrit Eichler has subsequently much developed. In her 1988 book, Non-sexist Research Methods: A Practical Guide (Boston: Allen and Unwin), she distinguishes between seven types of sexism and provides practical guidelines on how to avoid them.

INTRODUCTION

As an opener to our consideration of sexism in research and its policy consequences, I would like to start out by telling you a story about Beatrix Potter.

We probably all know Beatrix Potter as the creator of Peter Rabbit. Most of us, however, probably do not know that Beatrix Potter was a gifted natural scientist before she turned to writing and illustrating children's books. She had a passionate love for fungi, and at one point in her life desired nothing more than to observe and paint the approximately 40,000 species of fungi which were known at the time.

During her teens and twenties, Beatrix Potter's search for fungi took her out of doors each day that weather permitted. Nothing discouraged her, not even the average of seventy insect bites ("suspect spiders" [she wrote in her diary]), that she received on each search. What mattered was climbing over a hedge, going into a wood, and finding a "paradise of funguses". Even danger of getting lost in the depth of a black fir forest did not deter her from plunging through the bracken until she found the yellow Peziza in the moss or the gigantic Cortinarius (Gilpatrick, 1972:41).

The area in which she broke new theoretical ground was with respect to lichens. Beatrix Potter was the first person in England to affirm "that the colorful patches growing on trees, fences, tombs, and rocks were actually a merging of two discrete plants

-- an alga and a fungus -- to make a third kind of plant, a lichen, which in function and longevity was different from either of the two originators" (Gilpatrick, 1972:41).

After being consistently set down, in the most galling manner, while trying to attract the attention of the scientific noteworthies of her time, at least to such a degree that she could discuss her theory with them, she received some help and support from her uncle, Sir Henry E. Roscoe, a chemist who had been knighted for his scientific contributions. He encouraged her to write a paper on her theory for presentation at the most prestigious scientific society of the time, the Linnean Society. On April 1, 1897, the paper, entitled "On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae" was read at the Linnean Society -- by a man, George Masee, not by Beatrix Potter, since only men were allowed to attend the meetings of the society. Indeed, for that same reason, Beatrix Potter was not even present when the paper was read (Gilpatrick, 1972:94-95).

The paper was never published, and two years after Potter had asked for its return she gave up the study of spores to write and illustrate children's books, which, after some initial set-backs, became an enormously successful endeavour.

Between that time and today some significant progress has been made. Today, women present papers at scientific association meetings and often their research results do get published.

Nevertheless, we have barely started to address the problem of sexism in research, much less to correct it.

I started out with the example of Beatrix Potter to illustrate that there are several dimensions to the problem of sexism in research, and to place the focus of my own remarks into a wider context.

At a minimum, we can identify four entry points for sexism into the research process, namely:

- (1) the issue of who can participate in the research process in what capacity;
- (2) closely associated with (1), the conditions under which research is conducted;
- (3) the research process itself; and
- (4) how research results get reported and published (or not published) and how they are received.

Beatrix Potter's story provides a poignant example of how women used to be excluded from the research process. Had she been a man, a dedication such as hers, combined with her brilliant ability to observe and theorize, would almost certainly have led to public recognition and rewards in her field of study, and she (had she been a he) would very likely have been held up as a shining example to the next generation of scientists. As it was, she became famous for writing children's books.

While women are today participants in the research process (although in fewer numbers than men), the conditions under which we do participate are very often less than optimal. Even today, women are greatly underrepresented in the prestigious research organizations which conduct much of our research, and, where they are represented, they tend to have junior rather than senior level appointments.

Nevertheless, women have very likely participated in the creation of knowledge to a much greater degree than we tend to realize. Consider, for instance, the many dedications and acknowledgements that husbands have written into the prefaces of their books, in which they thank their wives for what seem to be very substantial contributions to the final product. It is interesting to note that the number of books co-authored by husband-wife teams has increased in the 1970s. I suspect that this does not denote a real departure from previous practise, but merely a more appropriate reflection of what has been going on all the time. There is also the proverb "Behind every great man there is a great woman", to which one of my male colleagues added, when giving credit to the contributions his wife had made to his career (at the expense of hers): "And in front of every great woman there is a man -- in her way."

At this point, however, we will focus neither on who does the research, whether women or men, nor on the circumstances under which research is performed (for a few contemporary descriptions of examples, see Hanmer and Leonard, 1980, or Woodward and Chisholm, 1981), nor on the roadblocks inherent in publishing (see Spender, 1981), but on the research process itself. There are a few men who manage to do non-sexist research, and there are women who do fall into the trap of doing sexist research, so that we are not talking about a straight sex balance issue. It is important to realize, however, that we can start to define the outlines of the gigantic task that remains to be done in order to rid the research process of sexism only because there has been already some slight advance in integrating women into the research endeavour. For as long as research remained an almost exclusively male activity, carried out by men in male-dominated institutions funded by male-dominated organizations for doing research on male-defined issues, we could not even perceive the need for what amounts, in effect, to a Copernican revolution in scholarship. Some of you may think that the historical description I just gave of the collective research endeavour is a pretty good description of research today. However, I would like to remind you that there are now organizations such as the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Canadian Women's Studies Association, and others, as well as special conferences, courses, programmes, publications, etc. which are starting to make the point that research is (and should be) carried out by members of both sexes.

Sexism, then, can enter the research process in at least five ways:

- I. through the use of sexist language,
- II. through the use of sexist concepts,
- III. by taking an androcentric perspective,
- IV. through the use of a sexist methodology, and finally,
- V. through a sexist interpretation of results.

Often, all five types of sexism go together, but any one of them suffices to make a particular piece of research sexist. We will now look at these five ways in which sexism can enter the research process in more detail.

I SEXIST LANGUAGE

Most research is carried out through the medium of language. If the language used is inexact, the results will also be inexact. Both English and French are profoundly sexist languages, and to the degree that language utilized in scientific discourse is sexist, it constitutes an improper medium.

Sexism in language takes a variety of forms, the most easily identifiable one of which is the use of male terms as generic terms. (For a discussion of some of the other problems as well, see Spender, 1980.) For instance, "he" is utilized to mean "he and she" -- but also sometimes only "he". "Man" is utilized to refer to "women and men", but also sometimes only to "men".

Occupational and positional titles, such as chairman, policeman, salesman, fisherman, etc., are used to indicate males and females playing such roles -- but also sometimes only males playing such roles.

There are, then, two issues which concern us here. The first one is that sexist language is highly confused and confusing. In itself, this should be a sufficient reason to rule out totally the use of any sexist language in scientific discourse. Let me give you, in non-sexual terms, an analogy to the use of sexist language which employs male terms to make sex specific as well as generic statements.

Let us assume that we live in a society which discriminates against left-handed people as well as against anything that is left, and that, therefore, we have evolved a language structure in which "right" is considered a generic directional term which subsumes in itself "left" as well as "right". When receiving traffic directions -- for instance, to reach Main Street, you turn right at the second corner, then right at the third corner and right again at the next corner -- we could never be sure whether we were supposed to turn right, right and right, or perhaps left, right and right, or right, left and left, etc. Obviously, there would be a number of difficulties in reaching a destination if we were confined to using such a confusing language. Yet that is exactly the situation in which we find ourselves with respect

to research concerning humans and other animals, where we can never be sure whether statements are in fact applicable to all humans (or monkeys, or rats), or only to males.

The other issue in sexist language is that we have, by now, some empirical evidence that the use of so-called generic male terms does not evoke gender neutral images most of the time for most of the people, but, rather, sex specific images. In reviewing 14 empirical studies on this question, Silveira (1980:170) has noted that:

In all 14 studies the GM [generic male] terms caused more male-biased responses than did the more neutral wording. Thus, pictures illustrating generic man contained more males than pictures illustrating people. Characters referred to as generic -man, he, or his were given a male identity more often than characters referred to as persons, their, he or she or his or her.

In one of these studies, for example, students were asked to select pictures they would use to represent chapters in an introductory sociology textbook. Depending on whether they had been told to illustrate "Social Man" or "Society", "Urban Man" or "Urban Life", etc., students tended to provide significantly more pictures of males in the cases in which male terms had been used than where non-sex specific terms had been used (Schneider and Hacker, 1973).

The fact that so-called generic male terms are not adequate for conveying generic meanings is illustrated by syllogisms in which the substitution of a sex specific term indicates that the statement was not generic to begin with.

For instance, there is the well-known syllogism:

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

It is usually regarded as a generic statement applying to all people. If we introduce a gender specific example, namely a particular man, there is no conflict. However, if we introduce another gender specific example, namely, a particular woman, the statement is perceived as non-sensical. Thus, we would not experience the following syllogism as making any sense:

All men are mortal.

Sophia is a man.

Therefore, Sophia is mortal.

Moulton (1981), from whose work this example is taken, provides a non-sexual analogy by creating another non-sensical syllogism using a term with a double meaning in two different contexts:

All banks are closed on Sundays.

The Outer Banks are banks.

Therefore, the Outer Banks are closed on Sundays.

(Moulton, 1981:110)

Equally, phrases such as "the common man", "the man in the street", etc., are not gender neutral. For instance, we do not

regard it as a contradiction when we hear the following two statements in sequence:

The rich cannot possibly appreciate the impact of inflation on the average working man.

The average working man earns almost twice as much as the average working woman.

(Examples taken from Miller and Swift, 1980:14)

You realize that we have just switched the meaning of the term "man". Since both sentences strike us as reasonable, we are obviously not reading the supposedly generic term as a gender neutral term, but as a gender specific term.

En français, les problèmes sont bien différents de l'anglais. Néanmoins, il y a des similarités. Le problème d'un double sens des mots masculins signifiant le genre masculin et le sens générique sont comparables dans les deux langues. Si "...on dit les grands hommes, on ne pense généralement pas aux femmes, et quand on écrit: 'l'homme est le seul mammifère qui ait recours au viol', on y pense encore moins. Enfin, quand l'Eglise nous dit que Dieu a créé l'homme à son image, il nous est difficile de nous représenter que cela concerne aussi les femmes car Dieu est métaphoriquement mâle." (Yaguello, 1979:187)

Outre le fait que la langue française accorde un genre masculin ou féminin à presque toutes les choses, la question de l'attribution de signification sexuelle est beaucoup plus difficile à circonvenir en français qu'en anglais. "...les locuteurs d'une langue sans genre grammatical sont d'autant plus libres de faire jouer la métaphore sexuelle, car les locuteurs d'une langue à genre sont obligés de faire cadrer les représentations symboliques avec des structures grammaticales préexistantes." (Yaguello, 1979:113)

Mais "les dissymétries les plus criantes, en fin de compte, sont celles qui se cachent dans les sens de mots en apparence symétriques. Ces dissymétries sémantiques proviennent de la péjoration généralisée de tout ce qui sert à qualifier ou à désigner les femmes. Si nombre de mots masculins n'ont pas d'équivalent féminin, là où coexistent masculin et féminin, ils sont souvent connotés différemment.

Femme, dans un sens absolu, peut être équivalent de femme de mauvaise vie (aller chez les femmes, se ruiner pour les femmes), alors que homme, pris dans un sens absolu, ne peut être que laudatif: 'Sois un homme!' On ne dit pas: 'Sois une femme, ma fille!'...

Une femme galante est une femme de mauvaise vie, un homme galant est un homme bien élevé.

Une honnête femme est une femme vertueuse, un honnête homme est un homme cultivé. ...

Une femme légère, l'est de moeurs. Un homme, s'il lui arrive d'être léger, ne peut l'être que d'esprit.

On dit une filie ou une femme facile, mais pas un homme facile, une femme de petite vertu, mais pas un homme de petite vertu; on dit une femme de mauvaise vie, mais on dit un Don Juan. On dit une faible femme, mais pas un faible homme. Un homme faible est un homme trop indulgent.

On aime les petites femmes, mais on admire les grands hommes. Les petits hommes n'existent que chez Gulliver et les grandes femmes ont du mal à s'habiller en confection." (Yaguello, 1979:141-142)

Le but de la recherche est de décrire et d'expliquer. En utilisant un langage dont les mêmes mots sont employés parfois dans des énoncés faisant appel à un genre en particulier, et parfois dans des énoncés sans rapport au genre, autant en anglais qu'en français, nous utilisons un medium embrouillé et en désordre qui nous empêche de faire des énoncés précis et exacts.

De plus, il est impossible d'exprimer des idées non-sexistes avec un langage sexiste, ce qui signifie que nous devons porter une attention très particulière au langage que nous employons. Cependant, on ne peut pas, malheureusement, en dire autant de l'énoncé contraire. Il est tout à fait possible d'émettre des

idées sexistes avec un langage non-sexiste; aussi, soigner notre langage n'est qu'un début, et pas plus. Ceci nous amène donc à la question des concepts sexistes dont le sens sexiste est exprimé dans un langage non-sexiste.

II. SEXIST CONCEPTS

I am suggesting that concepts are sexist if the meaning they convey is sexist. Let me give you a few examples of concepts which are non-sexist in their language but sexist in their meaning.

One concept of this type which has been widely criticized is that of the "head of household". "Head of household" expresses an asymmetrical social relationship in which one adult -- by definition the male if there is an adult male within the household -- is seen as socially, legally, and economically responsible for other household members, such as women and children, who in turn are seen as his dependents. There were historical periods in which this was, indeed, an adequate description of the circumstances that prevailed. In such cases, it is not the concept that is sexist, since it merely provides an adequate description of the type of relationship that obtains, but the social structure. The concept simply expresses this fact. Today (as of 1978 and later), however, we have family laws in Canada which, by

and large, stipulate that the responsibilities of husbands and wives concerning each other and their joint dependents are identical (see Eichler, 1983:273-78). In addition, the majority of Canadian wives today are in the labour force. Due to this fact, women are also to a lesser degree socially placed through their husbands, since most of them now have an independent income and an independent source of status. To use the concept of "head of household" under such circumstances is, therefore, sexist, i.e., incorrect, since it indicates a relationship that no longer exists. The Canadian census no longer uses this concept, but a number of economic and statistical studies do continue to use the concept, which is clearly inappropriate.

Another sexist concept is the social science definition of "work", which, usually, specifically excludes unpaid work (Jaffe, 1972:470), so that, for instance, for the purposes of computing measures of the overall productivity of a society, women's contributions in the form of unpaid labour are customarily ignored. One of the consequences of this definition was that housework has usually been considered non-work. It is only since feminists have challenged this definition that there has been some grudging recognition that housework is, in fact, work (see e.g., Adler and Hawrylyshyn, 1978).

Three other examples will, I believe, suffice. Psychologists have long used the concept of "maternal deprivation" to describe situations in which mothers do paid work that takes them out of the home and therefore away from their children during working hours. This concept is sexist because it is one-sided. When fathers take on paid work that takes them away from their children during working hours, this behaviour is not described as "paternal deprivation"; instead, it is interpreted as good behaviour for a father! Mothers, therefore, are accused of "neglecting" their children, while fathers are lauded for "caring" for their children, when both of them do exactly the same thing! A non-sexist way of describing the absence of parents from their home for specified periods of time would, for instance, be the expression "parental absence".

At a more subtle level, psychologists some time ago developed a method which tests differences in the perception of a stimulus in a surrounding field. In the experiment that was devised, subjects could either separate the stimulus (an embedded figure) from the surrounding field, or they could see the whole; in other words, they could see the stimulus as part of the surrounding field. In general, it turns out that females are more likely to see the stimulus and surrounding field as a whole, while males are more likely to separate the stimulus from its context.

Witkin, who originated this experiment, labelled the male behaviour as "field independence" and the female behaviour as "field dependence". Since dependence is customarily regarded as a negative trait (and not so incidentally also as a female trait), while independence is usually regarded as a positive trait (and not so incidentally also as a masculine trait), two different capacities thus received labels which carry an intrinsic value judgement, with a higher value given to the male capacity. Spender (1980:164-65), who reports this matter, suggests that if one wanted to assign a higher value to the female trait, one might just as well call the female response "context awareness" and the male response "context blindness" -- and the connotations of these two concepts are quite different from those used by Witkin!

The most drastic type of sexist concept, in my opinion, is displayed in the notion that conjugal violence (meaning wife battering) is a form of conflict resolution! The battering is hardly experienced by the woman as the resolution of a conflict, but instead as the problem that needs to be eliminated.

The concepts of "conjugal violence" or "spouse battering" show a form of sexism which is the reverse of the sexism found in the examples we have so far considered. In the vast majority of cases, conjugal violence takes the form of wife battering. A recent study revealed that, of all cases of conjugal violence

which came before the family court in Toronto in 1979, 95% involved wife battering (cf. Kincaid, 1981). To describe this as "conjugal violence" rather than "wife battering" creates an image of symmetry which is uncalled-for, given the actual occurrence of this crime. Therefore, using sex neutral terms when there is, in fact, a sex specific statement to be made is simply the reverse form of sexism as it appears in concepts. Other examples include the use of the word "parents" in cases in which the discussion is, in fact, about mothers (or fathers) only, or the use of "spouses" when in fact only wives (or only husbands) are referred to, etc. In Piaget's work girls are so much of a rarity that the index omits the word "boys" altogether, since the "child" is identified with the male child (Gilligan, 1979:441).

Sexist concepts are one manifestation of an overall androcentric viewpoint. We will turn to this issue next.

III. AN ANDROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

An androcentric perspective expresses itself in two major ways. The most common manifestation of an androcentric perspective occurs when women (or females in general) are largely ignored in the research process. In other situations, we are also dealing with an androcentric perspective if women (or females in general) are considered but only insofar as they pertain to males, or when anything that is male is seen as

establishing the norm and the female counterpart to it is seen as the exception, the deviation from the norm. This is incorporated in the notion of women as the "other" sex. An observation that women are "different" takes men as the reference point and compares women against men. One might just as well take women as the reference point and thereby argue that men are "different". That is, however, not commonly the case at present (and would constitute a gynocentric perspective, the reverse form of sexism). A non-sexist approach incorporates both the male and female perspectives.

When we deal with history, it is predominantly history as it pertains to men, and not to women. Let me tell you a personal story. A number of years ago, I did a little study, together with one of my students, on the way reform histories portray the suffragette movement. For this purpose we examined sixty-one general American history books, as well as twelve reform history books, with respect to their treatment of Suffragism. In order to have a point of comparison, we also examined their treatment of Populism, which, according to all objective indicators, was a social movement of less social and theoretical significance than Suffragism. We found that, by and large, Suffragism was ignored as a serious social movement of its time, and concluded that this seemed to be so because of sexist bias on the part of the historians concerned (see Eichler and Nelson, 1977).

After we had completed a draft of this paper, I spoke to one of my colleagues, one of the major experts on reform history in Canada. I asked him whether we (neither of us being a historian) had omitted any major text, done injustice to anybody in our interpretation of the results, or otherwise committed any errors. He had no substantive criticism to offer, but suggested that it would be a poor idea to submit the paper for publication. Pressed for a reason -- since apparently there were no errors or omissions of which we should have been made aware -- he finally said: "Well, it's like this. In the third edition of my book [a reform history] I had actually included three pages on the suffragist movement. When my publisher read that, he said to me, 'Are you actually throwing that sop to women's liberation?' And so I said, 'You are right', and threw it out again." Sadly, this attitude does not seem to be totally atypical of social scientists in general.

History as it pertains to women is customarily not regarded as general history, but specifically as the history of women, as a subfield (if that!). The same applies to the other social sciences. Why is it necessary to have special courses, programmes, publications, lecture series, etc. pertaining to women? Why do we need to have sub-specialties such as psychology of women, anthropology of women, sociology of women, etc.? Because these fields, as they are currently constituted, in general do not per-

tain to women but to men. To give just one example, a recent content analysis of two basic and widely used Canadian art history texts found that women were grossly underrepresented. Textual references averaged 8.4% female and 91.6% male, colour illustrations averaged 2.1% female to 95.7% male (the remainder were listed as anonymous), and black and white illustrations were 4% female and 94.5% male, the remainder again being anonymous (cf. Sasha McInnes-Hayman, 1981). A current research project demonstrates that such disparity is not due to any great numerical prevalence of male artists, but rather to a selective representation of artists (the Womanspirit Art Research and Resource Centre, in London, Ontario, and its project on "Canadian Women Artists Working Prior to 1930").

Ignoring females and taking a male viewpoint results in overgeneralizations concerning males and undergeneralizations concerning females. However, although the focus is on men in this process, they do not become visible as men. This is one of the unexpected consequences of an androcentric perspective: not only are women largely invisible, but men are also seen in a distorted manner. The British sociologist David Morgan, for instance, in a self-critical essay in which he reflects on his Master's and Doctoral theses, observes that, by ignoring the sex of his subjects as a relevant factor in his study, he managed not to see a crucial factor explaining the behaviour of the clergy. Concerning Max Weber's famous study on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, for instance, he remarks: "In this

study, as in many other studies, men were there all the time but we did not see them because we imagined that we were looking at mankind" (Morgan, 1981:93).

Thus, an androcentric viewpoint views females through masculine eyes, as in a distorting mirror. In addition, an androcentric perspective ignores, not only women, but men as well. "Thus taking gender into account is 'taking men into account' and not treating them - by ignoring the question of gender - as normal subjects of research" (Morgan, 1981:95). I hasten to add that the primary purpose in trying to go beyond an androcentric perspective is not only to understand men as men, but also to understand women as women, and eventually, perhaps, after we have given considerable thought to this question, to understand people as people.

An androcentric perspective is fostered by sexist language, sexist concepts, and a sexist methodology. Next, let us examine how sexism may creep into the very methods we use.

IV. SEXIST METHODOLOGY

A common manner in which sexism enters the methods employed in the research is in the process of creating research instruments. For example, if a researcher creates some instrument with

reference to one sex only, but subsequently treats it as if it were of universal validity, we are dealing with a blatant type of sexism. For instance, Kohlberg developed his famous stages of moral development on an all male sample, but treated the stages as if they were of human applicability. Using this method, it would appear that women usually attain a lower level of moral development than men do. However, if we had developed a system of stages of moral development on an all female sample, maybe men would normally appear to reach a lower level of moral development than women! (Gilligan, 1979). We are not concerned here with the question of whether men or women are generally more moral creatures, but merely with the fact that developing a research tool with reference to one sex, and then claiming validity for both sexes, is not an acceptable scholarly practise.

Similarly, survey research often asks different questions of the two sexes, as a consequence obtains different answers, and then interprets this as evidence that, indeed, women and men are fundamentally different. So, for instance, women have long been asked about conflicts between their paid work and their family involvement and, indeed, when researchers ask these questions, they tend to find a considerable amount of conflict. However, men have rarely been asked about conflicts between their paid work and their family involvement, so that the conflicts they experience are much less well documented (some recent studies have

started to provide evidence that men also experience a considerable amount of conflict; for a summary of some of them see Eichler, 1983:75-78). The conclusion which is often drawn on the basis of such one-sided questions is that women experience role conflict between work and family roles, and that men do not -- a conclusion which is patently absurd, since it is based, at best, on half knowledge. Sometimes it is better to know nothing and to be aware of that fact, than to ask the wrong questions and end up with the illusion that we do know something when, in fact, we do not -- which is generally the case when we employ a sexist methodology.

A parallel case exists with respect to stratification studies, which customarily focus upon men, and therefore tell us -- at best! -- about male stratification, but not about stratification in general. As a consequence, we do not, at present, have a comprehensive theory of social stratification.

As a last example of sexism employed in a method let me read you some questions from an article published in 1978 and entitled, "Do Adolescents Believe the Employment of Wives is a Threat to Marital Relationships?". Respondents in this little study were asked to express their feelings, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", to the following five statements:

1. A husband should feel like a failure if his wife works.
 2. A husband should feel like a failure if his wife earns more than he does.
 3. A working wife is likely to be less of a companion to her husband.
 4. A working wife is likely to neglect her husband.
 5. A working wife is likely to become too independent.
- (King, Abernathy and Chapman, 1978:232)

This is a rather blatant example of sexist research. The questions are premised on the notion of a natural differentiation of tasks based on sex. This idea results in one-sided questions: there are no corresponding items, for instance, that a wife should feel like a failure if her husband works, or if he earns more money than she does, that a working husband is likely to be less of a companion to his wife, is likely to neglect her, and is likely to become too independent. There is also no possibility of finding out if a husband feels like a failure if his wife does not work. Beyond that, there is no possibility of a positive reaction to a wife's working for pay; in other words, the questions allow for only half of a possible continuum of re-

sponses. All the questions are phrased in negative terms. The most a respondent can do is to reject the negativism, but there is no possibility of expressing a positive reaction to a wife's holding a paid job. This could, of course, be easily achieved by phrasing the questions differently. For instance, if the intent of a question was to explore the relationship between perceived companionship within a marriage and working status, a non-sexist way of addressing this issue could be: "A couple in which both spouses have a paying job is likely to share more (less, the same amount of) companionship than a couple in which one spouse only has a paying job".

Another reason why the above represents an example of an androcentric bias is that the wife's job is seen only in relation to her husband, not to herself. Ostensibly, the intent of the article, as expressed in the title, is to see whether adolescents perceive a wife's employment as a threat to a marital relationship, but, in fact, the questions address themselves to the reaction of the husband only. What if the wife's job had a positive effect on her but a negative effect on the husband? In fact, there are some Canadian data which suggest the opposite: the wife's job increases the husband's marital happiness significantly (cf. Lupri and Frideres, 1981). Here, however, we are only concerned with the phrasing of the question. The example does suggest that it may be worse to get answers to sexist questions than to have no answers at all, since we obtain a distorted pic-

ture when employing sexist methods. If you had a situation in which something was experienced as beneficial to one sex and as detrimental to the other, whose definition of the situation should prevail? The fact that in the example used above both female and male respondents were asked to respond to the statements does not alter the fact that they were both asked to respond in terms of an effect on the husband only.

I cannot possibly point out here all the various ways in which sexism can enter into the very methods we use to study a question, and the examples given are just that: suggestive examples. They should, however, suffice to demonstrate that our methods are by no means free from sexism, and where this is the case, we cannot possibly end up with an unbiased account of whatever it was we were studying. Our answers will never be better than our questions.

There is yet another way in which sexism can come into the research process even if all the methods employed are non-sexist and the language employed is non-sexist: through a sexist interpretation of results.

V. SEXIST INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Once data have been collected, they need to be interpreted. If they have been collected with sexist methods, the results will be sexist as well, no matter how the findings are interpreted.

However, even if they have been collected in a non-sexist manner, they may nevertheless be interpreted in a sexist manner. Let us look at just one example from the area of primatology.

Perhaps the most telling example of bias concerns the famous juvenile female, Imo, a Japanese macaque living with her troop at Koshima Islet. Scientists provisioned the troop there with sweet potatoes. Imo discovered that washing sweet potatoes got the sand off. Her discovery quickly spread among the other juniors in the troop, who then taught their mothers, who in turn, taught their infants. Adult males never learned it. Next, scientists flung grains of wheat in the sand to see what the troop would do. Rather than laboriously picking the wheat out of the sand grain by grain, Imo discovered how to separate the wheat from the sand in one operation. Again this spread from Imo's peers to mothers and infants, and, again, adult males never learned it. The fact that these Japanese macaques had a rudimentary culture has been widely heralded. But what are we to make of the way culture spread in this troop?

If Imo had been male, we would never have heard the end of the "inventive" capacities of primate males, and since generalization spreads like prairie fire when the right sex is involved, no doubt their role in the evolution of tool use and -- why not? -- language as well. But the urge to grand theory withers when females are the primary actors, and when the task relates to food - at least food without killing. Imo has been described as "precocious" and left at that. (Precocious, indeed! How would you get the sand out of wheat?)*

* Imo took the wheat to the water where the wheat floated and the sand sank (Weisstein, 1982:46).

CONCLUSION

Altogether, then, we have looked at five ways in which sexism may enter into the research process: through the use of sexist language and sexist concepts, through the use of an androcentric perspective, through a sexist methodology, and, lastly, through a sexist interpretation of results. Often, all five types of sexism go together, but occasionally they do not. Research becomes sexist if any one of these types of sexism appears. We therefore need to work towards the elimination of all five types of sexism.

This means truly a re-orientation of research which would equal the re-orientation that had to take place when scholars realized that the sun does not revolve around the earth but the earth around the sun. I think that this is rather an apt parallel because, until now, we have really structured our social knowledge around men. In metaphorical terms, we have envisioned our social universe as if men were in the centre and everything and everybody -- women, other men, children, social institutions, etc. -- revolved around men. When feminist research is introduced, we sometimes get models that replace men with women. (This approach does not, of course, exhaust all forms of feminist research; it is merely one manifestation of it.)

When we introduce the concept of non-sexist research, we are suggesting that the social universe revolves around men and

women, and this takes us completely out of the metaphor of a circle. Instead, we are dealing with an ellipse, meaning that all our previous assumptions, generalizations, and deductions no longer apply. They need to be re-considered and re-created to fit the model of an ellipse rather than that of a circle.

It is, therefore, a rather awe-inspiring task to rid science of sexism, since we are truly talking about a shift in paradigms. It is understandable if people wish to avoid such a major re-orientation. The alternative, however, is to fiddle around with existing models by trying to fit women into them without fundamentally changing them. The end result of such efforts are such convoluted systems of explanation that they become effectively unmanageable. This is precisely the type of process which Kuhn (1970) describes in his book about the structure of scientific revolutions. Over the long haul, therefore, it would be more complicated to try to adapt models which were created for a different purpose -- in this case, for a social universe that was seen as revolving around men only -- than to face the fact that we have to start out anew with respect to many issues. In any case, and at the risk of sounding "corny", the vast energy which is expended in such labour intensive tasks as research is only warranted if those who engage in it are convinced that they are, in some fashion or other, pursuing the truth. Once we have recognized the simple fact that there are two sexes in this world and that they are of equal importance, it becomes necessary to rid research of sexism.

Quite simply put, sexist research is bad research, since it distorts what it claims to observe and explain. To the degree that the public supports research through tax monies I think that we have the right to expect that the best efforts are made to do research in the best possible manner -- and I therefore believe that we should stop using public monies to support sexist research. To achieve this, I would propose that a standard item in all grant application assessment forms should be a question which screens out sexist elements in proposals, and that monies should only be given if the research design and presentation have been cleared as non-sexist. Of course, other criteria would also have to be considered, as is the case now. Being non-sexist is a necessary, but not, by itself, a sufficient, aspect of any good research project.

Looking beyond the concern to obtain good research, which should be an aim in itself, we must also consider the fact that sexist research serves to maintain sexist social structures. There is an intimate relationship between power and knowledge. Those in power control knowledge, but, on the other hand, by obtaining knowledge, one may be able to alter the power structure.

Let us consider an example of how sexist knowledge has been utilized in order to exclude women from certain types of positions. The fact of menstruation has long been used as an excuse for not admitting women to some high prestige, high stress, high

reward occupations. At the same time, the hormonal cycles of men were neither thoroughly studied nor considered relevant for those same jobs in which female hormonal cycles were considered debilitating factors. Now that male hormonal fluctuations have also been studied and men have also been found to have cyclical fluctuations in their hormonal balance, these arguments have withered away with regard to both sexes.

Let me give you an example of something we do not yet know. Current social welfare practise requires that a family on family benefits receive one cheque only. If there is an adult male "head of the household", that cheque will go in its entirety to him. To my knowledge, there has never been a study which looks at how this money is actually distributed within the family. The assumption which economists make is that it will be used for joint expenses and distributed equitably. However, there is some evidence from Australia which suggests that money which comes to one person does not necessarily benefit all family members equally (Edwards, 1981). If we had a Canadian study which examined how the monies that are given to one person on behalf of an entire family are actually used within different families, we might be able to argue convincingly that welfare cheques should be made out to the two adults (if such is the case) within a family.

Another example which has recently been much in the news concerns wife battering. Until just a few years ago the fact that wife battering has been going on all along was a well kept secret. It was assumed that, within a family, people -- men and women, adults and children -- find security, peace, love, support, etc. However, it now turns out that the family home may be the most insecure, physically dangerous, and psychically debilitating place in which to be for many women, and probably for many children as well -- in fact, more dangerous than many a dark alley. People who have, in the past, argued that wives need protection (in the form of shelters, for instance) were in an extremely weak position because, when asked to produce evidence of the risk, they could not supply it. The evidence did not exist in a researched, accessible form. Even if we had had such studies we still might not have had shelters, but the position of those arguing for them would have been easier. Incidentally, we still do not have a single representative study of wife battering in Canada, although we now do have some appreciation of the scope of the phenomenon (cf. MacLeod, 1980). Incest, which is primarily a crime perpetrated by adult males on female children, has just barely started to penetrate the awareness of policy makers as a problem that needs attention. Again, we have never had a representative study of incest in Canada which would allow us to estimate what proportion of children is at risk.

Having good research on these topics does not imply that the policies will change or that these behaviours will stop, but at least it would be vastly easier to fight for the necessary changes. Non-sexist research, then, will not necessarily result in better policies, but sexist research is extremely likely to lead to or maintain existing sexist policies.

Freeing research from sexism, then, is an integral aspect of the fight for equality for women. It is, in my opinion, one of the great tasks of our times.

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