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Tools for Building Justice, January, 2003

Unit on SEXISM

Session

1. Introduction

Introduces the overall unit, reviewing gender roles and three scenes of sexism

2. Acting like a _____: gender and the conditioning process

Students explore male/female socialization, gender roles and their current effects in students' lives.

3. What is Sexism?

This session connects socialization to institutional forms of sexism and hurtful male conditioning, with final attention to people who have resisted or acted as allies against sexism.

4. Resistance and Alliance

Optionally beginning with a speakout in which men act as allies to women, the session explores how students can resist and be allies against sexism. Students develop short-term interventions to school-based incidents of sexism. The session closes with a visualization of "a world without sexism."

5. Organizing

Session 1. Introduction

Aims

- To introduce the unit on sexism
- To outline the gender socialization process
- To identify and discuss three conflicts involving sexism

Skills

Students will:

- Identify features of gender-role socialization
- Identify target and nontarget group members in three conflicts involving sexism
- Suggest “resistance and alliance” responses to conflicts

Preparation

You will need the appropriate photographs in uncaptioned and captioned form.

Session Description

Introduces the overall unit, reviewing gender roles and three scenes of sexism

Session Outline

1. To Begin	5 minutes
2. It’s a boy/it’s a girl	15 minutes
3. Photographs	25 minutes
4. Closure	10 minutes

Agenda

1. To Begin

5 minutes

Explain that in this unit the class is going to talk about gender: how students are raised as females and males, the different messages and treatment they receive about themselves and each other, and the cost of this to everyone: sexism.

2. It’s a boy/it’s a girl

15 minutes

Write the words “girl” and “boy” as two column headings on the board.¹ Reminding students of the part of the heart exercise in which they held a newborn infant in the arms, ask:

- what’s the first question people usually ask about a newborn child? (*Ans.: “Is it a boy or a girl?”*)
- why is this question the usual first question? Why is it so important?

For the following, construct word-portraits for a child at each of the following stages, writing responses into appropriate columns: birth, ages 5-6, and ages 12-13. At each of these stages, ask:

- What toys are girls given? what toys are boys given?
- If this child/person has its own room, how is that room likely to be decorated?
- What clothes are girls dressed in? What colors? How about boys?
- What activities are girls encouraged to perform? What games? How about boys?
- What jobs or careers are girls prepared for as adults? How about boys?

¹ Adapted from Sherry Wise, Allan Creighton and others, *Relationship Abuse Prevention (RAP) Curriculum*, 1998.

Age	girls	boys
Just born		
Ages 5-6		
Ages 12-13		
Adult		

Finally, ask students to point out any differences they notice between the two columns. Invite them to keep this in mind for the following discussion.

3. Photographs

25 minutes

For each of the following incidents, issue the uncaptioned form of the photograph first, have students discuss it for a few moments, and distribute the captioned version for the fuller discussion.

a. Incident 17: “Girls Do Housework”

(without captions)

- What’s happening in this scene?
- What differences can you see between women and men in this photo?

(with captions)

What’s happening in this scene?

- How does the young woman feel about what the adult man is saying?
- Are the young woman and the young man being treated the same, or differently? If differently, what is the “double standard” here? What does “double standard” mean?
- How do the young men feel about what the adult man is saying?
- Describe the emotion and body language of the adult man. How might this make the young woman feel? The young men?
- What is the young woman being told about women’s and men’s roles? How about the young men?
- How is the young woman already resisting the mistreatment of the adult man? What else could she do?
- How could the young men act as allies to her?
- Who is the “target group,” and who is the “nontarget group”?

b. Incident 18: “Boys Only”

(without captions)

- What’s happening in this scene?
- What differences do you notice between the young men feelings and body language and the young women?
- What is the obvious joke in the picture? Why is it funny?

(with captions)

- What's happening in this scene?
- Are the young men acting according to the messages young men get about appropriate activities or games for young men?
- Are the young women acting according to the messages young women get about appropriate activities or games for young women?
- Do you think the school depicted put as many resources into women's athletics as men's? Do most schools?
- Who is the "target group," and who is the "nontarget group"?
- How can young women in the scene resist this mistreatment?
- How can young men act as allies to young women in this scene?

Close the discussion by having students point out what is common to both of these photographs.

Ask, finally:

- Is there a challenge to traditional expectations about young women in each photo?
- Is there a threat in both photos?
- Describe what you think the threat is: what might happen if the scene continues without young women doing what the men say?
- Why is there a threat—why is the response likely to be violent?

c. Incident 19: "I'm Not Attractive Enough"

(without captions)

- What do you think the young woman looking in the mirror is feeling? Why?

(with caption)

- What is the young woman feeling about herself?
- What is the message in the poster/magazine cover about how young women are supposed to look to be attractive? What shape, age, hair color?
- What skin color? What relation does the scene have to the racism discussed in previous sessions?
- One of the article titles listed in the poster is "New Treatment for Eating Disorders." What is an eating disorder? Why is it an article in this magazine? What connection, if any, can you find between the title and the image of the young, blond woman?
- How many of you have seen a magazine cover like this in the last 24 hours?
- If this were a magazine for men with a picture of a young man on the cover, what would the articles probably be about? Would the physical attributes of the young man be the same, or different?
- If you were a best friend of the young woman, what would you want to say to her?

4. Closure

10 minutes

Have students reflect on all three photographs together. Acknowledge that young women and men have many things in common, and get many of the same messages about how they are to act as young people. Then ask them to point out any differences they can see between how girls and

boys—and women and men—are “socialized” and treated, based on the exercise and the photographs.

Close with students writing for a few minutes, reflecting on the messages they received about what it means to be a girl or a boy.

Session 2. Acting like a _____: gender and the conditioning process

Aims

- To examine current gender-role prescriptions for young women and young men
- To make connections between gender socialization and gender inequality
- To identify forms of resistance to gender socialization

Skills

Students will:

- Specify current different gender-role pressures that affect them
- Identify forms of gender-role socialization that hurt young women and young men
- Identify forms of resistance to gender-role socialization

Preparation

You will need butcher paper, markers and/or art materials for the “boxes” exercise, 1 set for each group of 4-5 students; prepare a place on the classroom wall to put up posters that can be used in this and following sessions. For the closing you will need colored 5x8 notecards or construction papers.

Session Description

Students explore male/female socialization, gender roles and their current effects in students’ lives.

Session Outline

1. To Begin	10 minutes
2. Act Like a Man/Act Like a Lady	5 minutes
3. The Boxes	20 minutes
4. Outside the Box	10 minutes
5. Closure	10 minutes

Agenda

1. To begin

10 minutes

Remind students of agreements. As an introduction to this session, ask them to review what they remember from the “It’s a boy/It’s a girl” exercise in the last session.

Write the words “gender” on the board, and ask for definitions. Make a distinction between biological sex (the physical characteristics of someone at birth, some of which are named “male” and some “female”) and gender, the set of roles or expectations that a society holds about how a “boy” and a “girl” are supposed to act. Explain that in the following, students will be looking at *gender*, the ways “hearts” as they arrived here--beautiful, smart, strong, expecting to be loved, &c.—get shaped and conditioned beyond the biological features they have.

2. Act Like a Man/Act Like a Lady²

5 minutes

Divide students into same-gender groups of 4-5. Have them sit in place in their groups, on chairs or the floor, to go through the following pair of visualizations.

² From Vasquez, Myhand and Creighton, *Making Allies, Making Friends*, 2001.

a. Ask students to sit silently in their chairs and pretend for a few moments that they are all 5-year-old girls hearing the following phrase from an adult. Utter the phrase several times in an “adult” voice, as if you were warning or instructing your students as girls:

I expect you to act like a lady.

Have students notice, silently, what feelings they have and what messages they are being told.

b. Next, ask students to pretend that they are all 5-year-old boys hearing the following phrase from an adult. Utter the phrase several times in an “adult” voice, as if you were warning or instructing your students as boys:

I expect you to act like a man.

Have students notice, silently, notice what feelings they have and what messages they are being told.

3. The Boxes³

20 minutes

Distribute markers and butcher paper to each group and issue instructions in the following stages. Have each group decide who will use the markers to write on paper (one, two, or all students in a group may elect to use the markers).

a. Women’s groups write the statement “Act Like a Lady” across the top of their butcher paper; men’s groups write “Act Like a Man.” Then each group is to follow the instructions below as you guide them:

b. Draw a small heart in the center of your paper. For one minute, conduct a quick brainstorm: what feelings might a 5-year-old girl/boy have when they are told, sternly, to “act like a ___”? Write words or phrases in small print inside the heart.

c. Draw a large box around the heart, under the title, while leaving some room along the borders of the paper for responses to further questions.

d. For 2-3 minutes, write inside the box all the ways that men/ladies are supposed to act—the stereotypes and expectations that come with “act like a man” or “act like a lady.” Point out that the exercise is not about whether the students agree or disagree with the statements, but just to find out what kinds of pressures young people experience. Invite students also to notice and allow for racial/cultural differences, and both to use the stereotypes that fit for their own backgrounds and allow for those of other backgrounds.

(Ans.: men: be tough, in charge, control, no feelings
women: be nice, clean, cook)

e. For a few moments, look at the words you’ve just written; many may be negative, but some will also sometimes mean positive qualities (for example, “brave” in man’s box, “caring” in women’s box). Circle words in your box that can sometimes mean positive qualities.

(Ans. women: caring, sweet, smart)

³ Adapted from *Helping Teens Stop Violence*.

men: responsible, strong, take care of things)

f. For 2-3 minutes, write along the left-hand margin of the page the names that boys or girls get called if they attempt to “step out of the box,” away from the stereotypes.

(Ans.: men: fag, wimp, sissy, mama’s boy
women: tramp, ho, bitch, slut)

g. For 2-3 minutes, write along the right-hand margin the physical things that are done to girls or boys to train them to “act like” the stereotypes, and what physical mistreatment can happen to them if they try to step out of the box.

(Ans.: men: training: “basic training,” football, stop being held or touched gently;
mistreatment: hit, forced to fight, ostracized, stop being touched gently
women: training: restrictive clothes, makeup, feminine “products,” cosmetic surgery
mistreatment: hit, beaten, raped)

h. Across the bottom margin, write in all the places where students your age get these stereotypical messages, whether at home, in school, in the media, &c. Write specific examples people in your group have seen or experienced.

(Ans.: magazines, TV, sports, CDs, family, peers)

i. Finally, turn over your paper. For 2 minutes, make a list of what it takes for a girl or a boy to resist, fight back against the stereotypes, and “step out of the box.” Include examples of the ways that people in your group resist the stereotypes.

(Ans. : courage, self-respect, strength, true friends, back-up)

j. At the top of this list, write: “real women” for women’s lists, “real men” for men’s.

4. Outside the Box

10 minutes

Have groups reconvene as a class, posting all papers (with “box” side showing) in a prepared place on the wall. Conduct the following discussion.

Discussion questions:

- How did you think 5-year-olds felt about hearing the “act-like-a” commands? What similarities were there between how girls and how boys might have felt?
- What did it mean that the negative messages got written “across” the hearts?
(Ans: *They act like the “scars” in the heart exercise, attacking the hurt and hiding its original qualities.*)
- What does your work today tell you about how girls and boys are raised? What’s alike and what’s different?
- What connections can you make between the boxes and the two photographed group scenes from the last session?
- When you think of all the places you wrote down about where these messages come from, what messages are young people *still* getting about how young women and young men are supposed to act?

(Ans.: men: responsible tough, handsome, own car, in shape
women: chic, sexy, skinny, revealing clothes)

5. Closure

10 minutes

Have students volunteer to call out one message about “real women” or “real men” they wrote on their posters, or one new, positive media message, against the stereotypes, about real women and real men.

Distribute colored 5x8 notecards or construction papers. For homework or in class, have each student should boldly and legibly write one positive message of their choice on a 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 sheet of paper (to be glued onto a larger sheet of colored butcher paper for a “Real Women”/ “Real Men” classroom “quilt” for the wall in the next session.)

Session 3. What is Sexism?

Aims

- To connect gender-role socialization with sexism
- To present current facts about gender inequality in the United States
- To apply the concepts of oppression, internalized oppression, and conditioning to the analysis of sexism in the United States

Skills

Students will:

- Understand the links between gender-role socialization and sexism
- Identify the kinds of oppression that happen to women
- Identify forms of internalized oppression affecting women
- Identify benefits and costs of sexism for men
- Identify women and men who have resisted and/or allied against gender oppression

Session Description

This session connects socialization to institutional forms of sexism and hurtful male conditioning.

Preparation

You will need “Box” posters on the wall from last session as well as a large white sheet of butcher paper for the “real men/real women” quilt and tape or glue to post the quilt “pieces.” Prepare 6 new posters, the “Sexism Is...” series following the session below, to be put up during the class.

Session Outline

1. To Begin	10 minutes
2. The boxes in action	5 minutes
3. Sexism	10 minutes
4. Sexism Is...	10 minutes
5. Benefits and Costs	10 minutes
6. Closure	10 minutes

Agenda

1. To Begin

10 minutes

Remind students of agreements; have them review main points from last several sessions, using photographs and “box” posters from the last session. What do the photographs show about how women are treated? What pressures do the boxes put on men? What pressures on women?

Have students construct the “real men/real women quilt” by producing the positive-message notecards they made in class or at home and mounting these as a “quilt” on prepared butcher paper on the wall in proximity to the box posters. Invite students to notice and comment on obvious differences between the posters and the quilt.

Explain that the class has been looking at how boys and girl “hearts” become separated from each other and treated differently; today the class will look at what this means in terms of who is allowed to have more power in the United States—sexism.

2. The boxes in action

5 minutes

Have a male volunteer and female volunteer, or two female volunteers, sit separately in front of and facing the class. The female volunteer, for the following, represents women; the male volunteer, men. If you have two female volunteers, have one volunteer to represent men. Standing behind the chairs, have students answer the following questions, holding your hand above the head of the student volunteer who represents the gender the class selects in response to each question.

Questions:

In the United States, *on average*, is it men or women who:

- have more money
- are more likely to do childcare
- own more property
- have higher-paying jobs
- do more housework
- are more likely to be high elected officials, judges, religious leaders, or chief officers of corporations
- are more likely to be single parents taking care of children

Finally, ask:

What connections do these categories have with the “boxes”—with the different messages and training boys and girls get about the lives they are supposed to have as men and women?

Thank volunteers and return them to the class.

3. Sexism

10 minutes

a. Write the term “Sexism” on the board. Ask students what they think the definition of sexism is. After a few responses, write the formula

“prejudice + power over = ism”

on the board. Have students review and reconstruct this definition of “ism” from the foundation sessions:

An ism happens:

where one group of people has stereotypes or misinformation about another group

and

has power to use prejudice against that group, to control them—hurt them, make them feel bad, or get something from them—or receive better treatment or more resources than them.

b. Apply the formula to “sexism”:

Sexism is prejudice towards women or girls plus power to use that prejudice against women/girls.

Give the following example:

- One prejudice that exists in our society about women is that they are not worth as much as men, that is, they are not as important as men. When people who have the authority and power to pay women for their work hold this belief about women, the result is women being paid less than men for equal work. Today in 2002 women earn \$.84 for every dollar men earn.

Explain that under sexism, men are placed in a position of power over women, men are what we call non-target on sexism, and women are target. This means that women are the ones who are disadvantaged, discriminated against and men have certain privileges or advantages.

Lead a discussion asking them the following questions:

- Are some women prejudiced towards men?
- Are some men prejudiced towards women?

Make the point that individuals can be prejudice towards others, but we are talking about a situation where one group has the power to use their prejudice against the other. Remind them that we are not talking about what an individual does to an individual, but rather how one group is at a disadvantage relative to another. With sexism, men have the power to use their prejudice against women.

c. Under the formula on the board, write the pair of categories from the gender line of the power chart:

Target	Nontarget
women	men

Invite male and female students both to try on the definition, even if it makes them uncomfortable. Remind them that what the class is examining is not what individual people, especially individual men, might do wrong, but rather how systems in the United States can work to elevate one group and lower the other.

Add the target/nontarget line from the racism sessions. Invite students to think about how racism and sexism together might affect them:

Target	Nontarget
women	men
people of color	white

Questions:

- On this chart, who is most likely to be targeted? Nontargeted?
(*Ans.* targeted: people who are both women and people of color
nontargeted: people who are both white and men)
- We talked about pressures on young men to “act like a man.” Is there extra pressure on young men of color? Why might that be?
(*Ans.:* prove yourself, make money, be extra tough, &c.)
- If a woman of color is being targeted by a man of color, for example in an abusive relationship, what might be difficult about going to counselors or police?
(*Ans.* counselors or police may be white and racially unaware, acting in a racist manner toward both the woman and man; the woman will be put in a position of exposing the man to racism)
- What might get in the way of women of color and white women working together, for example, to fight against mistreatment of women? What might get in the way of men of color and white men joining each other, for example, to do something about mistreatment of people of color?
(*Ans.:* racial differences and unawareness between women of color and white women; the same between men of color and white men)

4. Sexism Is...

10 minutes

a. Explain that you are going to have the students look at some statistics about sexism, and then think about how sexism affects women and men. Have students mount the 7 “Sexism Is...” posters on the wall around the room, among the box posters. Then for a few moments have students circulate and examine the poster texts.

b. Group process

Have students “check in” about the posters. How does it feel to see the statistics?

- What are the stereotypes about women that are used to justify mistreatment shown in the posters?
(*Ans.:* they ask for it; they belong in the kitchen, too emotional, acting like a bitch, should take care of the kids)
- What examples of discrimination or outright violence do the posters show? What other kinds of violence happen?
- What are examples of advantages men receive and/or disadvantages that women receive that are shown on the posters? What other kinds of disadvantages happen to women—any ways you know that women and/or girls are discriminated against in the United States or experience inequality?
- Think of the “hearts” of women: how might women **internalize** the stereotypes and experiences of mistreatment? What might they do to themselves?
(*Ans.:* destructive diets, starving, self-hate, distrusting other women, judging appearances of other women, think a woman being abused deserves abuse)

5. Benefits and Costs

10 minutes

Turn the class attention to how sexism affects men. Remind them of the benefits and costs of racism for white people that they have examined in previous sessions, explaining that they will look at the same issues here for men.

a. Benefits

Remind students of what the men's box shows about how men as young people are brought into a system of inequality. Draw attention to the "man-box" posters. Point out that the boxes show how boys and men are—sometimes violently—socialized into the stereotype roles: this is how sexism hurts men.

Ask:

- What works to keep the system in place? What is it about this inequality that may benefit men, even if they don't realize it, and even if they don't want inequality to exist?

Even if students don't agree that there are benefits, invite them to assume for a moment that there are.

- What benefits would men receive from such inequality?

Write the word "benefits" on the board and make a brainstorm list under this heading, without debating particular items. Acknowledge that sometimes men can be hurt by women; remind students that the exercise is not about individual mistreatment, but much larger inequality, how on a society-wide scale women earn less, have fewer jobs, have fewer leadership positions, and suffer more extreme violence from men. What's important is to look at the larger picture of what actually is happening and how women and men can work together to change it.

(Ans.: more money; better jobs; more recognition; more power; get taken care of; have children taken care of; get cared for; history is mostly about men; can expect better, more respectful treatment from salespeople, car mechanics, bank officials, &c.; better-funded sports, better career preparation; get to be "one of the guys")

b. Costs

Finally, ask students to look over the "act-like-a-man" boxes and think about what the short- and long-term costs of sexism are for men, and for men's "hearts." Write the word "costs" on the board, and brainstorm this list.

(Ans.: high-pressure jobs, isolation, stress, danger, violence, health conditions, injuries on job or in military, alcoholism, &c.)

Take a few moments at the close of the brainstorm for students to examine both lists and discuss the "costs and benefits" of sexism for men.

- What makes it hard for men to give up benefits they might get from sexism?
- What might make it difficult for them to ask for help dealing with any of the "costs"?

6. Closure

10 minutes

Have students write privately for a few minutes about how sexism, as above defined, costs each of them personally, whether they are female or male.

Close the discussion by having students sit silently in their places and think of someone of their own gender, a friend or relative, someone in the school, someone in this class, or someone from history, who has resisted mistreatment of women, has intervened against the hurtful socialization of young men, or has acted as an ally to women. Think about the person and about what they did that was an act of resistance or alliance. Have students take 3-5 minutes to write about this woman's or man's courage to resist and/or be an ally. Ask for volunteers to mention the persons they thought of and what they did.

Poster 1

Sexism is...

Women

- do 70% of the world's work
- earn 10% of the world's wages
- own 1% of the world's property

2/3 of the minimum-wage earners are girls or women

Poster 2

Sexism is...

- Every 9 seconds, a girl or woman is being beaten by her partner/spouse/boyfriend in the United States⁴
 - 1 out of 3 or 4 girls is sexually abused before the age of 18
 - 95% of assaults on spouses or ex-spouses are committed by men against women
-

Poster 3

Sexism in Schools is...

- Between 60% and 80% of girls report being sexually pressured, commented upon, or otherwise sexually harassed by boys by the end of 12th grade.
 - Nine boys are called on in class to every 1 girl, and boys are twice as likely to be called on by name
 - Between 1987 and 1997 only 4% of 9th-12th grade girls were enrolled in first-year physics, 10% in chemistry, and 10% in advanced math
 - During the 1996-97 school year, there were an estimated 4000 rapes or other kinds of sexual assaults against girls and women in public schools across the U.S.
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Poster 4

Sexism in the workplace is...

- As of 2002, women earn 84 cents for every dollar that men earn.
- In California women earn less than men in every job category, and an average of \$18,800 yearly compared to \$31,400 earned by California men.

⁴ Commonwealth Fund, 1993.

- Out of 1400 highest paid CEO and other professional positions in the United States, women hold less than 3%.
 - Female lawyers comprise 25% of all associates in law firms and 6% of the partners
-

Poster 5

Sexism in the home is...

- The number one cause of hospital admissions for women is domestic violence.
 - The unpaid labor of women in the household, if given economic value, would add an estimated one-third, or \$4 trillion, to the world's annual economic product.
 - Wives employed outside the home do 70% of the housework; full time housewives do 83%.
-

Poster 6

Sexism in government is...

- Of the voters in the 1992 elections, 54% were women, 46% were men
 - Total number of women who served in Congress from its inception through 1992: 134.
Total number of men: 11,096
 - One in 10 federal and state judges are women
-

Poster 7

Sexism in the media is...

- In 1991 there were 2 newspapers with circulations of more than 250,000 run by women
 - 91% of voiceovers—the “announcer” voices—on TV commercials are men
 - A February 1992 survey of 10 major and 10 small-market newspapers around the country showed:
 - 13% of the front page stories contained references to women;
 - 34% of bylines were female;
 - 32% of front page photographs featured women; and
 - 13% of those solicited for comment were women.
-

Poster 8

Sexism in relationships is...

- Approximately 1 in 5 female students (grades 9 through 12) report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.⁵

⁵ Silverman, J.G., Raj, A., Mucci, L. and Hathaway, J.E. 2001. Quoted in Rosenbluth, Barri, *Expect Respect: a School-Based Program Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships for Youth*, national Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 2002.

Session 4. Resistance and Alliance

Aims

- To apply the concepts of resistance and alliance to the analysis of sexism in the United States
- To form an alliance between female and male students

Skills

Students will:

- Apply the concepts of resistance and alliance to sexism
- Practice active listening as an act of alliance
- Develop practical interventions to everyday situations of sexism

Preparation: Post boxes, posters and mural from the last several sessions for reference throughout the session. Prepare note cards with the roleplay scenarios for small groups. You may want to select and prepare two students for the roleplay before class begins.

Session Description

Optionally beginning with a speakout in which men act as allies to women, the session explores how students can resist and be allies against sexism. Students develop short-term interventions to school-based incidents of sexism. The session closes with a visualization of “a world without sexism.”

Session Outline

1. To Begin	5 minutes
2. Speakout	20 minutes
3. Resistance and Alliance	15 minutes
4. Intervention roleplays	10-30 minutes
5. Closure/Conclusion	5 minutes

Agenda

1. To Begin 5 minutes

Review agreements and have students review previous sessions using posted material. Remind them of the people they thought of at the close of the last session: women and men who fought back against sexism. Explain that in this session the class will be turning to *resistance and alliance*: how women resist sexism and men and women can act as allies against sexism.

2. Speakout 20 minutes

The following exercise can be done if your class includes more than a small handful of young women or a small handful of young men. Otherwise, continue with the next section.

a. introduction

- In a society in which one group is placed in power and another group out of power, whose viewpoint are we most likely to hear, read in our textbooks, see on our TV sets, and see among our political leaders? (Ans: *the viewpoint of the people placed in power*)
- In the society that you have been examining, where there is sexism, whose viewpoint is *most often* what we hear? (Ans: *men*)

Introduce the Speakout as an exercise in hearing viewpoints that may otherwise be hidden; and, more importantly, it is an exercise in building alliances.

Women who wish to will speak out about their experience as women. Men who listen will be acting as allies to women. Explain that you will have women stand in front of the room and complete any of the following statements:

- What I want you to know about women is...
- What I never want to see, hear, or have happen again to women is...
- What I expect from you as my male ally is...

Explain that the job of the listener is to take on the role of being the best friend and ally of the speakers—to listen with complete attention, hear what is really being said, and treat the spoken words with great respect. Especially if or when listeners begin to feel feelings of resentment or guilt, invite them to continue to “try on the process” as an act of support to the speakers. Have students explain why this is important:

- Why is space given for the target group, in this case women, to speak out?
- Why is the nontarget group, in this case men, asked to be silent and listen?
- How can women support each other to speak out?
- How can men support each other to listen?

b. the speakout

Invite women students to the front of the room and conduct the speakout. They will have 5-7 minutes to make their statements. They can go in any order and make any of the three statements, and can speak more than once. Ask them to make one statement at a time.

c. the reportback

At the close of the speakout, take a few moments of silence, women continuing to stand and listeners seated. Then have the male listeners, for 3 minutes, take turns standing and reporting back one thing they heard said by one of the speakers. (If you are a male teacher, you can also participate.) Instruct them to repeat as much as they can, word for word, what they heard, without summarizing, paraphrasing, or adding their own responses. Explain that this is a powerful act of alliance, allowing the speaker to know that they’ve been heard, and breaking with the silencing that happens with racism.

Close by placing students in same-gender dyads. Have students take turns, two minutes apiece, talking about how they felt and what they noticed during the speakout process; remind them not to comment on what their partners said when it is their turn to talk.

Close the entire process by reconvening students and appreciating them, pointing out that the speak-out and the report-back are in themselves acts of resistance to sexism by women and direct alliance by men. Remind students of the agreement of confidentiality—not to repeat what individual people said during the speakout, or in the dyads, without getting the speaker’s permission.

Acknowledge that some or all students in the room may at this juncture want the space to be opened for men to take a turn speaking. Ask them for a reminder of why men were asked, in this situation, to be silent, practicing to be allies. Explain that you will now make space for men and women both to speak—about resistance.

3. Resistance and Alliance

15 minutes

a. Review of the concept of alliance with students—an ally is someone who steps in the way of mistreatment happening to someone. In the case of racism, men can be allies to women, stepping in the way of mistreatment; and women can be allies to each other, stepping in the way of mistreatment.

For the following questions, invite women to answer first for a few moments, and then have men add their responses.

Questions:

- What is useful from an ally to interrupt sexism?
- What is *not* useful from an ally?

b. Relationship roleplay

Remind students of the posted statistic that 1 out of 3 teen-aged youth experience violence in a dating relationship.⁶ Explain that you will now turn to a scene where a boyfriend is putting pressure on a girlfriend, to begin to think about how to act as allies to intervene with the couple.

Have a male volunteer and female volunteer, or two female volunteers, stand in front of the class facing each other. The female volunteer, for the following, represents the girlfriend; the male volunteer, the boyfriend. (If you have two female volunteers, have one volunteer to represent men.) Instruct both the roleplayers and the class that you will be asking the roleplayers to *play roles*; that is, they will be acting not as themselves, but as two characters in this roleplay.

Have students imagine that the pair is in a girlfriend/boyfriend relationship. Explain that the male student will for a moment represent a young man trying to live up to the stereotype produced by the Act Like a Man box. Have him stand or sit, silently, arranging his posture and attitude to live up to the stereotypes from the posters. Repeat instructions for the female student, having her act out the “Lady” stereotype.

Explain to the volunteers that they are a couple, high-school age, having an argument: he wants her to meet him after school; she wants to/has to go home and study (her parent(s) are on her case about grades), and he thinks she is seeing someone else. He is acting in the stereotype, jealous, bullying; she is acting in the stereotype in arguing/trying not to argue with him; however, she is also worried about her parents’ anger. They can stand and move about.

Make an agreement that for this roleplay there will be no physical contact; if the roleplay calls for physical contact ask the players to pretend, or to make an explicit mutual agreement beforehand about how they will touch. Ask students give reasons for this agreement.

⁶ Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, 1996.

(*Ans.* there could be physical pressure or violence in the relationship being depicted; part of the point of the roleplay is that men in the stereotype may feel they have the right to “manhandle” or physically control women, and women should be able to control and define how and whether they are to be touched by men.)

Give role-players two minutes to play out the argument. Conduct the roleplay; then have the role-players sit back in their seats for the following discussion. Ask questions of the performers first, then of the class:

- How is the woman feeling in this argument? What pressure is she feeling? What feelings might she be trying to conceal? Why? What reaction can she expect from him?
- How is the man feeling in this argument? How is the “Box” teaching him to respond? What might he do if his girlfriend keeps resisting him?

Ask first the “girlfriend,” and then women in the class, to talk about what the young woman could use from women in the class as allies to her. They may choose to talk to the young woman (who remains silent) in role.

Ask first the “boyfriend,” and then men in the class, to talk about what the young man could use from men in the class to stop pressuring his girlfriend. They may choose to talk to the young man (who remains silent) in role.

4. Intervention roleplays

10-30 minutes

The following exercise includes both development and presentation of roleplays. If you have conducted a speakout, students will focus on developing their roleplays as problem-solving exercises. If you have not conducted a speakout, students will have the time to present their roleplays before the entire class.

Divide students into small groups, passing out a notecard to each group with one of the following scenarios. Have at least one group (scenario e) be an all-women’s group, and one group (scenario f) an all-men’s group.

The task of the group is to invent a two-minute scene depicting an intervention against sexism; you will give them ten minutes to prepare the roleplay. The roleplay includes

- An introducer, who explains the scene by reading the notecard
- Roleplayers who are in the position of enacting the discrimination or mistreatment described on the notecard
- An action in which other roleplayers intervene in the mistreatment, acting as allies to the person or people being mistreated
- A closing line that all players agree to, to show that the roleplay has ended

Encourage students to develop as interventions that are *realistic*—actions that could really happen—and *nonviolent*, so more likely to be effective in the long-run (rather than bringing about a violent backlash). Actions should support the leadership of the people being most hurt in the scenario, not “rescuing” them but enabling them to define what should happen

Scenarios

- a) Students intervening with boyfriend abusing girlfriend
- b) Women and men going to school administration to get equal funding for women's sports
- c) Men and women intervening against routine sexual harassment of women in the hallways
- d) Women protesting math teacher's favoring of male students
- e) Friends intervening with a woman friend dealing with eating disorder or weight issues
- f) Men confronting a coach who puts down male players as "weak," "mama's boy," &c.

Conduct the small-group preparation, circulating to help groups prepare their scenes.

5. Closure/Conclusion

5 minutes

As a closing exercise, have students sit quietly and visualize, for a few moments, a world in which women and men were able to be who they are without any pressures or experiences or messages of any kind about male and female stereotypes--no ads, no music or TV, no adults who required them or pressured them to act in a certain way to prove they were "real men" or "real women." The exercise closes with each person saying a word or a phrase to describe what it would be like to live in such a world.

Session 5. Organizing

Aims

Skills

Students will

Preparation

Session Description