


Sexism in research and at the university


Why should it matter?
What can we do about it?



What does sexism mean for you?

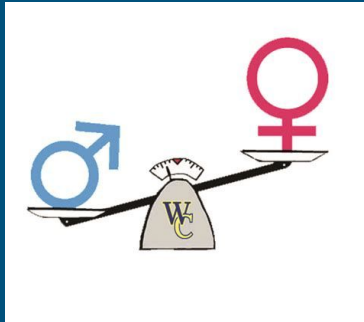
What does sexism mean for you?

sexism

/ˈsɛksɪz(ə)m/ 

noun

prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.
"sexism in language is an offensive reminder of the way the culture sees women"
synonyms: chauvinism, discrimination, prejudice, bias; [More](#)



Gender stereotypes



Sex Differences: A Study of the Eye of the Beholder

John Condry and Sandra Condry

Cornell University

Adults watching a same video of a crying baby will think

- the baby is *afraid* when they're told it's a girl
- The baby is *angry* when they think it's a boy

CONDY, JOHN, and CONDRY, SANDRA. *Sex Differences: A Study of the Eye of the Beholder*. CHILD DEVELOPMENT, 1976, 47, 812–819. In an attempt to assess the effects of labeling on socially mediated sex differences in infancy, 204 male and female subjects rated the same infant's emotional responses to 4 different arousing stimuli: half of the subjects were told they were observing a "boy" and the other half, a "girl." The same infant in a particular situation was seen as displaying different emotions and significantly different levels of emotional arousal depending on the sex attributed to the infant, the sex of the rater, and the rater's experience with young children. The results suggest a healthy caution be exercised in interpreting studies of sex differences obtained by observers who know the sex of the child being rated.

“ In Academia, really? ”

Strong tendency to believe that in a highly educated environment, like academia, with an intellectual elite, there is no sexual or sexist violence



The reality: Impunity and taboo → the credibility of the victims is undermined

Two recent cases in France: Lille (5 months before starting the disciplinary procedure) and Aix-Marseille (7 years!)

A hidden and untold reality



“Moral harassment and sexual harassment, as well as sexual violence remain a largely hidden reality and are much more present in academia than we want to believe. This is found in all the different steps of an academic path, can affect relationships between students and professors or relationships between colleagues, but as far as we can judge in the absence of relevant studies, it seems that doctoral studies are particularly affected.”

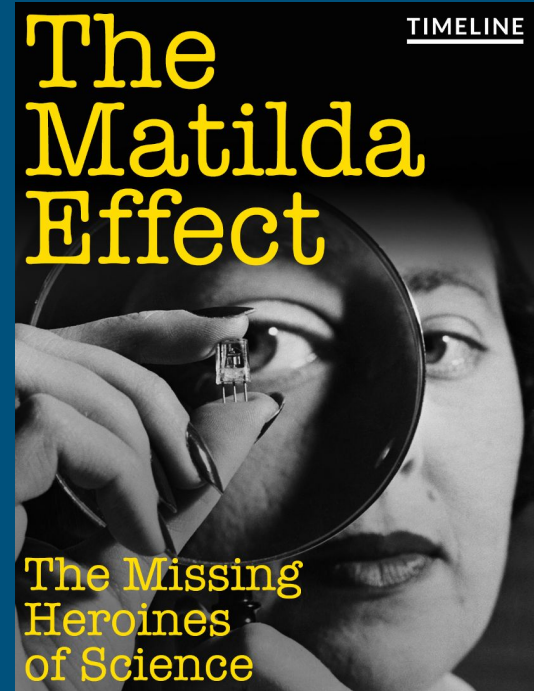
Extract of a French report published by the delegation for women's rights and for equal opportunities between men and women (June 2013)

What forms in academia?

The *Matilda Effect* credits men for the scientific contributions of women.

→ women are being overlooked and receive little to no credit for their scientific achievements because of gender, not because of the quality of the scientific work.

The Matilda effect is related to the Matthew effect, whereby an eminent scientist often gets more credit than a comparatively unknown researcher, even if their work is shared or similar.



Matilda effect



Nettie Stevens (1861-1912)

Discoverer of the XY sex-determination system. Thomas Hunt Morgan, a distinguished geneticist at the time, is generally credited with this discovery



Rosalind Franklin (1920-1958)

Her contributions to the discovery of the structure of DNA were largely recognised posthumously.
cf. Francis Crick and James Watson, who received a 1962 Nobel Prize.



Marian Diamond (1926-2017)

Discovered the phenomenon of brain plasticity. When her paper was about to be published, she discovered that the names of her two secondary male co-authors, had been placed before her name (which had been placed in parentheses).

What forms in academia?

The Motherhood Penalty: double burden

“Women are too busy looking after their kids to devote themselves to the job.”
→ because women are socially expected to provide most of the primary care-giving in families, male employees will be free to work harder.

High income men with kids enjoy the biggest career benefits

VS

Low-income women suffer as a result of having children

Employers think that marriage and children makes men more stable

VS

Women with children are stigmatised as being less reliable



“A lot of these effects really are very much due to a cultural bias against mothers... The best hope we have for getting rid of these effects is policy that conveys that people have the right to coordinate work & family.”

Prof. Shelley Correll, Sociologist

What forms in academia?

Everyday sexism

Sexist jokes, comments = humiliation, incompetence

→ Funny for you but harmful for others

“Many people still think that it is normal to hear more or less questionable comments on their outfit, their physique, or sexist comments about women”

It is not, it only shows how conditioned we are.

Inappropriate sexual and gender-based jokes or sexual comments are not benign. They plant a seed for sexual harassment, making women uncomfortable and unwelcome, and setting the tone for future abuse.



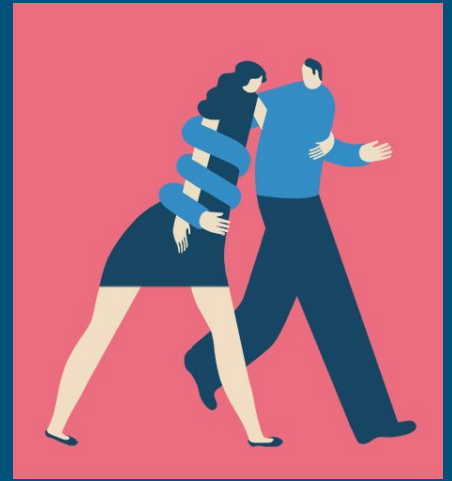
What forms in academia?

Sexual harassment

Clancy et al. (2014) Survey of Academic Field Experiences

→ responses from almost 700 scientists from various disciplines:

- 72% had observed or been told about sexual harassment at their most recent research field site.
- 64% of researchers had experienced sexual harassment, mostly at the hands of a senior researcher.
- Women were 3.5 times more likely than men to report being subject to sexual harassment.



Some testimonies

“You could wear roll-neck sweaters if you don’t want to get into troubles. You’ve been there for one year, and he’s been working at the university for more than 30 years. So ...”

- *a director of a university library, talking about a researcher having inappropriate behaviours*

“The girls in this amphitheatre could get into this [selective] course only because the male students’ level is lower than it used to be”

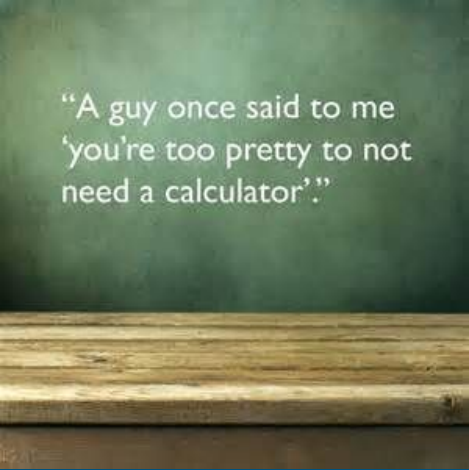
- *an associate professor in a university of technology*

“Don’t worry for your master’s defense, you have assets that I don’t have”

- *an internship supervisor to his female master’s student (talking about her breast)*

“I am against the recruitment of women at CNRS: the three first years there is no scientific production as they have a baby”

- *the director of a research unit*

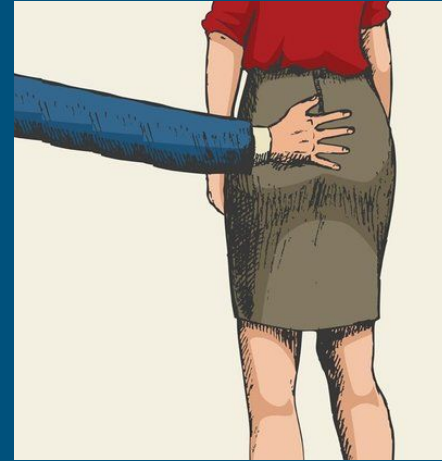


“A guy once said to me ‘you’re too pretty to not need a calculator’.”

What can we do?

As a victim of a sexist behaviour:

- Identify the sexist characteristics of those misbehaviours : do they correspond to the criteria of a legal definition?
- Talk about it to persons you trust
 - family, friends, colleagues
 - a person in charge at your working place*
 - the occupational health doctor



*CNRS: Isabelle Bonnet
UPS: Cathy Armangaud

What can we do?



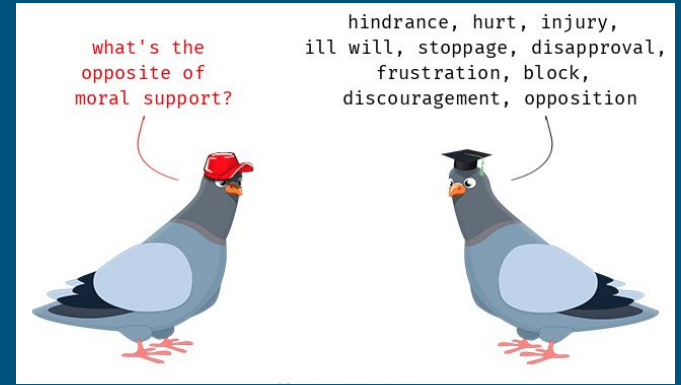
As a victim of a sexist behaviour:

- Keep and collect all the elements that may prove you were victim of sexist misconducts:
 - chronological reports of facts and dids
 - written testimony of colleagues or witnesses of the misconducts or of their consequences on you (impact on your well-being, on your motivation to come to work)
 - exchanged emails
 - medical certificate/sick leave certificate
 - ...

What can we do?

As a witness / a person of trust:

- **Trust the victim: “are you sure”-comments do harm!**
- Kindness, understanding, moral support and help with the emotional burden
- No judgement: the way the person is dressed or behaves is NO excuse
- Help the person in whatever way can be useful: mostly listening, possibly testifying
- Paying attention to other misconducts that may happen



Will that really change anything?



The perception of what is acceptable and what is not goes along with the evolution of societal norms and values.

The increasing number of websites collecting sexist records contributes to raise the level of collective awareness. They represent a reprehensible reality that brings the community to react.

The success of these websites shows that we are now facing behaviours and practices that are more and more unbearable, and that equality values are progressing.

Any thoughts?



References / To go further

In English:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexism_in_academia & https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matilda_effect

<https://womenscience.wordpress.com/>

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<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/astronomers-struggle-to-translate-anger-into-action-on-sexual-harassment/>

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<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/03/08/gender-bias-in-academe-an-annotated-bibliography/>

In French:

<http://www.slate.fr/story/156089/femmes-instances-intellectuelles-enseignement-superieur-parite>

<http://www.letudiant.fr/educpros/actualite/les-etudes-doctorales-seraient-propices-au-harcelement-sexuel-et-moral.html>

https://www.letemps.ch/societe/2017/02/15/sexisme-ordinaire-gagne-milieux-universitaires?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=share&utm_campaign=article

http://www.lemonde.fr/campus/article/2017/12/04/harcelement-sexuel-a-l-universite-une-difficile-levee-de-l-impunite_5224100_4401467.html

<http://www.letudiant.fr/educpros/actualite/harcelement-sexuel-la-difficile-liberation-de-parole-dans-enseignement-superieur.html>

Where to find support?

<http://clasches.fr/>

<http://www.univ-tlse3.fr/harcelement-discriminations/>

<http://www.faireface-autodefense.fr/>

http://www.dgdr.cnrs.fr/drh/protect-soc/documents/fiches_rps/Fiche_7.pdf

<http://www.cnrs.fr/mpdf/>

