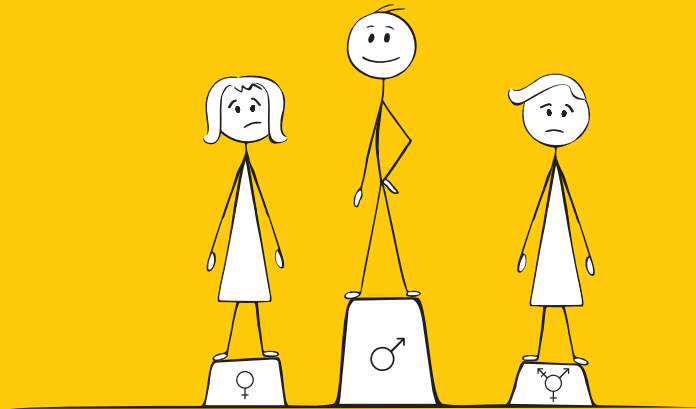


# Exploring Sexual Harassment & The Bystander Effect

A workshop series for youth groups

## TOPIC THREE: SEXISM



# PURPOSE OF TOPIC THREE

To identify prevalent examples of sexism in everyday life and the consequences, and to brainstorm ways to combat this.

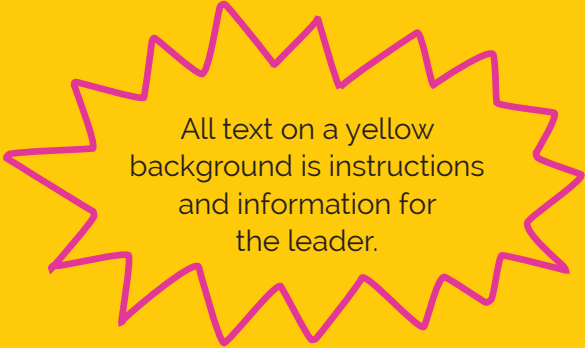


## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NEEDED FOR THIS TOPIC

- Public examples cards (provided in Appendix)
- Blank paper and markers

## STEP BY STEP

1. Leader to pre-read material and choose which activities to include
2. Bible study: Favouritism & Privilege
3. Warm up discussion
4. Activities: Choose some or all of the following...  
Stereotypes; Public Examples cards; Hearing Personal Stories; Ways to Combat Sexism
5. Closing prayer

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All text on a yellow background is instructions and information for the leader.

# INFORMATION FOR THE LEADER




This can be a difficult topic and a trigger for some people because sexism is closely related to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is covered in the next booklet, but may come up for some people during this topic. Review your plan about what to do if someone discloses something of a more serious or distressing nature.

**Gender-based discrimination is very common, to the point where we don't even notice it in many situations. Being a Samaritan and combating the Bystander Effect is about being an ally to those who feel discriminated against.**

As with Topic Two, this topic has a large variety of activities and content. You may decide not to do all the activities, and this is fine, however we recommend reading through the whole booklet to familiarise yourself with the activities beforehand, in order to plan a session of most use for your group.

Some of the topic is quick content delivery, while some activities that incorporate group discussions can take a lot longer.

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**Sexism plays a part in creating environments where discrimination and violence become more likely, so this topic is a precursor to the final topic on sexual harassment.**

# BIBLE STUDY: FAVOURITISM & PRIVILEGE

James 2:1-4, 8-9

1-4 My dear friends, believers in our Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

8-9 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

**Q** why does the bible speak so strongly against showing favouritism, even though it was just part of how society worked?

James wrote at a time where being partial or making judgement based on race, religion, class, wealth, gender, even if you were free or a slave, was ever-present. You were categorised and treated accordingly.

**Q** what reasons might people have had to show favouritism in this passage? Are any of their reasons understandable? Can you empathise with them?

**Q** Is it possible to show favouritism to one group without discriminating against another group?

**Q** What are some examples of where we might be tempted to show favouritism to one group over another? In these situations how favouritism results in others missing out?

Deuteronomy 16:19

"You must not twist justice, show favoritism, or take bribes, because a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the speech of the righteous."

**Q** Deuteronomy 16 suggests that showing favouritism or taking bribes can result in blinding the eyes and speech of even the righteous. What do you think this means? How would it do this?

**Q** What do you think it is about human nature that means showing favouritism can change how even wise people see a situation?

We all want to think well of ourselves. If we are getting something that benefits us, even at the expense of justice towards someone else, it is easy to change how we think about a situation so we can still think well of ourselves.

Discrimination against women (sexism), results in privilege for about half the planet. For those on the privileged side of sexism in this conversation, take note of times in the conversation in which you feel threatened. Is there anything you can learn from this feeling?

# WARM UP DISCUSSION



Break into small groups of 3 - 5

- Q What are your top five favourite movies?
- Q Do you think movies have an influence over what society thinks of as normal/ acceptable, or do they just reflect what what is considered normal and acceptable?
- Q In your favorite movies are there more typical roles men and women play in lead or support? Do you think this has changed much over the last 10 years?
- Q Can you think of 5 movies that show women in a non-sexualised lead role? How difficult is it to do this? Does this have any impact on gender roles or sexual harassment? Or is the media neutral?
- Q What forms of media or content can you think of that support gender discrimination or stereotyping?

# ACTIVITY: STEREOTYPES



**Identify stereotypes and cultural pressure for men and women:**

1. Split into small groups of up to four people.
2. Give each group a piece of A3 paper and some marker pens.
3. Ask the groups to write down as many stereotypes as you can for different genders. Consider some possible examples for non-binary / trans.
4. Ask the groups to brainstorm what the media tells us about sexuality and identity. What do their images tell us they value, cherish or hold as what we should aspire to?

Considerations: The majority of ads and programmes value one type of human: slim, white/ light skin colour, always wearing makeup and having skin which is 'blemish' free for females; tan, tall, muscles, light skinned for males.

Males are meant to be 'manly' and they attain that by driving a 4WD, eating meat, dating and being attracted to women, drinking beer, never being scared or vulnerable etc.

# ACTIVITY: STEREOTYPES (CONT'D)



Females are meant to be slim, wear make-up, ask males for help, be attracted to males, eat salads, never burp or fart etc.

What about the LGBTQI+ community? What happens when the little representation that LGBTQI+ people get in pop culture is the token character, who is only known for being gay/queer and fulfilling that stereotype?

There are even less portrayals of transgender and non-binary people, Is this an indication of how hidden the conversation is? Could it contribute to people feeling as if there is no place for them?

5. Get the group to come back together.
6. Go around the groups and share examples.



# ACTIVITY: PUBLIC EXAMPLE CARDS



Lead a discussion around each card with the group. Lay down cards one at a time. Ask the group if they notice anything about the card, or what the issue is. The aim is to teach people to look at things differently. The discussion questions are also on the back of each card so that a larger group could split up and discuss the cards themselves, then swap and/or come back together to share with the whole group.

## *Card 1: Jacinda Ardern radio interview.*

**Q. Do you think Mike Hosking would have asked then-Prime Minister Bill English about what he was planning to wear to the Leaders Debate? What underlying message do questions like this send to women?**

A. That a women's value is based on her appearance to some degree - rather than her skills, expertise, experience etc first and foremost?

## *Card 2: Newspaper headline*

**Q. What do you notice about this heading?**

A. The large headline is about Michael Phelps getting a silver medal. The subheading is about Katie Ledecky winning gold and setting a new world record.

**Q. Why is it problematic?**

A. So much emphasis, media attention, public support, and money are behind men's sport that Phelps getting second is a bigger headline than a new world record from a female athlete.

# PUBLIC EXAMPLE CARDS (CONT'D)



## Card 3: Starwars action toys

**Q. What do you think might have upset people about this picture?**

**Q. Why do you think the female character was left out?**

A. Hasbro left out a main character of Force Awakens (Rey) because she is female. Even after the initial outcry, they did the same thing again with their Star Wars monopoly set. Is the company making assumptions about their target audience?

## Card 4: "When Women Stopped Coding"

**Q. These people are all computer coders in the 60s. What is unusual about the picture?**

A. They are all women. Now however, computer coding is a male dominated and highly paid industry

**Q. How could an industry go from being female dominated to male dominated?**

A. The proportion of women in computer science started falling around the time when personal computers started showing up in U.S. homes. One explanation is that these early PCs were marketed almost entirely to men and boys. On top of this, 80s movies like Weird Science, Revenge of the Nerds and War Games all had very similar storylines: awkward, geeky boy genius uses tech skills to overcome a challenge and win the girl.

Research from Carnegie Mellon University in the '90s found that families were much more likely to buy computers for boys than for girls, even when the girls were really interested in computers.<sup>5</sup>

# PUBLIC EXAMPLE CARDS (CONT'D)



## Card 5: Toilet sign (male / female)

**Q. What is the difference between sex and gender?**

A. Refer to definitions of sex and gender in the Leaders Handbook

**Q. What does a transgender person have to weigh up when deciding which bathroom to use?**

A. Possible rude behaviour, or even violence vs feeling anything from mild discomfort to extreme anxiety about feeling unable to be themselves and that they are living a lie?

N.B. The aim of this conversation is not to unpick how people personally feel about those who are transgender, but about addressing the very problematic mental health statistics of those who identify as trans.

From a 2012 study<sup>6</sup> of NZ secondary school students, about 40% of transgender students had significant depressive symptoms and nearly half had self-harmed in the 12 months prior to the study. One in five transgender students had attempted suicide.

Mental wellbeing of our transgender community is of concern to everyone.

# PUBLIC EXAMPLE CARDS (CONT'D)



## Card 6: "General Motors Names Its First Female CFO."

**Q. Why is this a headline? Is it cause for celebration or shame?**

A. Because appointing females to a top position of a global company like General Motors is still rare enough that it is cause for a news headline.

There are only 24 women in top positions at the world's top 500 companies.

The latest Grant Thornton International's annual Women in Business report shows 56% of New Zealand companies still have no women in their senior management, and where women are in senior management they make up just 18% of the management team.

This is not to say that overt sexism is necessarily intentionally built into business structures. But does reflect the additional barriers and bias against women when hiring, promotional, and work cultural structures are largely designed and run by men. Bias is a powerful thing.

The disappointment in this headline is that it still needs to exist as a headline.

# FURTHER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Have a general discussion on how your group feels about gender stereotypes. The following questions may be useful to provoke discussion.

- Q Can you think of other examples of this sort of thing?
- Q Has anyone had an experience where they interpreted something as sexist and their friends didn't?
- Q Does any of this really matter? Does it have an impact on how we see or treat people?
- Q Does society need a value shift? How would that happen? Whose responsibility is change?
- Q Does the media just reflect where we are as a society? Or does it influence our values?
- Q What is your experience of sexism in the church or your youth group?

# ACTIVITY: HEARING PERSONAL STORIES



1. Explain that the conversations so far have been very general, but that sexism impacts all of us regardless of gender. The following activity, which is slightly more personal, is to remind the group that sexism has a daily impact.
2. Explain the entire activity so people know what is coming.
3. Invite the group to split into groups based on their gender. The women have a conversation about day to day experiences of being a women at school or work (this could be anything: the experience of countless small 'jokes' or belittling language; coping strategies so as not to escalate the situation e.g smiling as a defense; subtle forms of sexual harassment).

Simultaneously, the males in the group discuss what kind of man society encourages them to be and any daily experiences of that. E.g. being expected not to cry, being hassled for so-called feminine hobbies, etc.

Both groups could also discuss how they are "supposed" to act towards the other genders.

4. Ask each group to share what came up with the others in a way that suits them (e.g. they might choose to act out situations, or draw/write some notes to share. It's important that only experiences of those who are happy to share them are fed back to the other group/s.

# ACTIVITY: HEARING PERSONAL STORIES (CONT'D)



5. Ask both groups how they would summarise the things they heard when they were listening (not repeating them, but seeing if there were themes or summaries of the whole conversation). This is when people learn how what they say gets received and is not a time for argument or justification, or an opportunity to tell people that they are wrong.

N.B. This is not intended as an opportunity for someone to disclose anything of a serious nature. It is intended to provide some insight to people who may be unaware about the daily experience of people in a society with high rates of harassment and abuse, and to draw a link between acceptable social norms and unacceptable and social statistics.

Have a plan ready in case something serious does arise.

# DISCUSSION



The reason for focusing this session on sexism is because it plays a part in creating environments where discrimination and violence becomes more likely.<sup>1</sup>

**Q** why do you think this is?

New Zealand has some pretty shocking statistics when it comes to violence against women:

- One in three girls are subject to an unwanted sexual experience by the age of 16 years.<sup>2</sup>
- One in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence from a partner during their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>
- Ninety percent of sexual violence is committed by someone known to the victim.<sup>4</sup>

Think back to what we learnt about the Bystander Effect, and how to combat it. Moving from being a Bystander to a Samaritan takes courage, and practice.

**Q** Does knowing that sexism and sexist humour can lead to much worse make it easier to become a Samaritan?



# ACTIVITY: WAYS TO COMBAT SEXISM



Split off into pairs or small groups. Brainstorm some ways you can combat sexism. Include both attitudes and helpful phrases/actions.

Examples could include:

- Greet the women in the room first
- Give compliment on a woman's work/mind, not her body
- Offer to bake the birthday cake or get the drinks for a group
- If you see sexist behaviour, speak out even if the woman is not
- If you see a woman being spoken over or interrupted say "I think you interrupted [Name], [Name] would you like to finish what you were saying?"
- Amplify a woman's idea in the workplace or at school while giving her credit; say "I like [Name]'s idea, or "[Name]'s contribution of XYZ is worth pursuing
- Don't use 'like a girl' as an insult
- Don't excuse sexist behaviour e.g. using "boys will be boys" as a justification
- When you see a sexist headline, rewrite it in your head to remove names, objectification and gendered language. E.g. "George Clooney marries super hot woman" becomes "Successful Actor marries Brilliant Lawyer."

# CLOSING PRAYER



For Good Leisure:

O God,  
You rested the seventh day and are still at work;  
In the course of this busy life  
Give us times of refreshment and peace;  
And grant that we may so use our leisure  
To rebuild our bodies and renew our minds,  
That our spirits may be opened  
To the goodness of your creation.

\*From A New Zealand Prayer Book | He Karakia Mihiare O Aotearoa

# APPENDIX 1: "I WAS JUST JOKING"

(Skip to the next page if you've already covered this)


**Q** How can we tell if a joke is funny, hurtful or harmful?

One possible rule of thumb is to ask if the joke you are hearing (or telling) is 'targeting up' or 'targeting down'.

Is it at the expense of a minority or marginalised group? It might still be inappropriate if it is targeting up, but groups in positions of power have less vulnerability and more ability to speak up for themselves. Power imbalance is a common biblical theme, and is ever-present (along with injustice) in society. It is usually less harmful to err on the side of a marginalised group over the sensitivity of a more powerful group.

**Q** Sometimes one listener will find a joke funny, while someone else is offended. Is it our responsibility not to offend? Or is it the listener's responsibility to not take things seriously if we are 'just joking'?

**Q** Does it make a difference if you're telling an in-joke amongst a circle of friends or if the target is a stranger? How can we tell if a line is crossed?



This is a really valuable conversation to have with your group because there is no absolute 'right' answer. It's an opportunity to practice respectfully disagreeing and hearing different opinions without getting defensive.

# "I WAS JUST JOKING" (CONT'D)

A key concept to get across to your group is that consistent, low-level behaviour helps create an environment in which more serious behaviour becomes possible. It's hard to draw a direct line of cause and effect, but the creation of social norms make some attitudes feel more acceptable. By challenging these social norms from the outset, we can help prevent the more serious behaviour (look up Broken Window Theory for more on this).

## So is it really "just a joke?"

- Enjoying sexist jokes has been found to correlate with sexist attitudes.<sup>7</sup>
- Sexist humor also correlates with increased endorsement of false beliefs and myths about sexual harassment and rape. On a society level this makes prosecutions, convictions, investigations, believing a victim, and even the climate in which people will come forward, less likely.<sup>8</sup>
- Exposure to sexist/sexual jokes may activate or prime some problematic behavior<sup>9</sup> or serve as tacit permission to express existing problematic attitudes.<sup>10</sup>

**Sexist jokes – or jokes targeting another marginalised group – can both reflect and influence social attitudes.**

# "I WAS JUST JOKING" (CONT'D)

This is not about presenting a strict black and white rule. These statistics and pointers are about informing a conversation.

There are jokes told within a group that, when taken outside of that group, might be bad, or individuals in a group who do not represent everyone in that group. A dozen variables might be at play.

But because all of us have a bias towards our existing behaviour, it's good to challenge the group to think from other people's perspective, especially those traditionally harassed by others.

# REFERENCES

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10. Ford, T. E. & Ferguson, M. A. (2004). "Social consequences of disparagement humor: a prejudiced norm theory."



Journalist Mike Hosking interviewing Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern about the 2017 pre-election leaders debate:

“What about outfit... so you’ve got something sorted?”

Public Examples of Sexism Card #1



Q Do you think Mike Hosking would have asked then-Prime Minister Bill English about what he was planning to wear to the Leaders Debate?

Q What underlying message do questions like this send to women?







Public Examples of Sexism Card #2

Q what do you notice about this heading?

Q why is it problematic?

(The large headline is about Michael Phelps getting a silver medal. The subheading is about Katie Ledecky winning gold and setting a new world record.)





Public Examples of Sexism Card #3

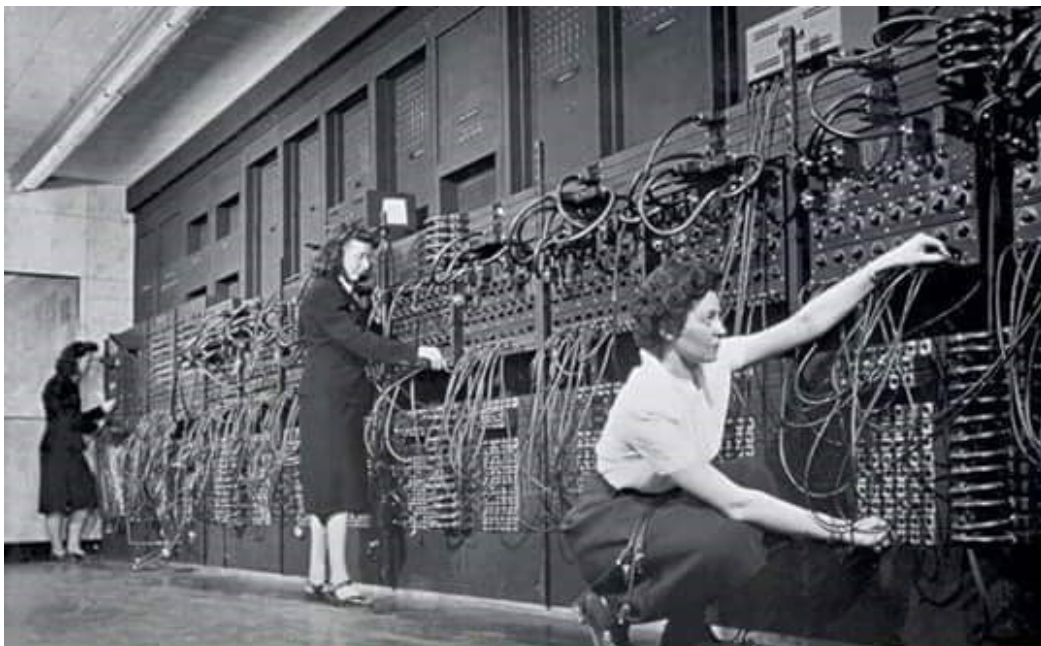


Q what do you think might have upset people about this picture?

Q why do you think the female character was left out?

Q Does it matter?





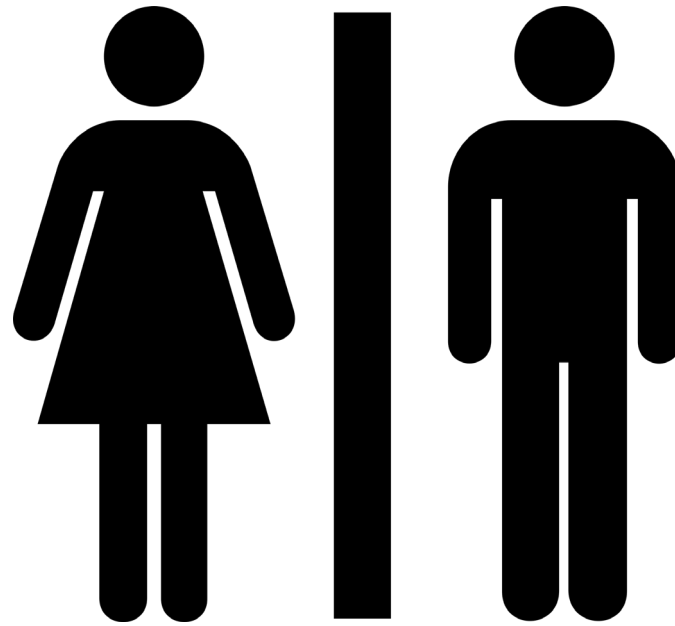
Public Examples of Sexism Card #4



Q These people are all computer coders in the 60s. What is unusual about the picture?

Q How could an industry go from being female dominated to male dominated?





**TOILETS**

Public Examples of Sexism Card #5



Q What is the difference between sex and gender?

Q What does a transgender person have to weigh up when deciding which bathroom to use?







HEADLINE: "General Motors Names Its First Female CFO"

Public Examples of Sexism Card #6



*Q why is this a headline? Is it cause for celebration or shame?*

