

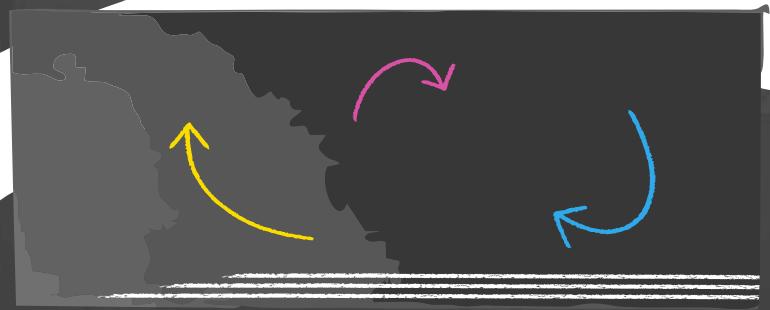


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# SURVEY AND TEACHING GUIDELINES AGAINST SEXISM

KITS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION  
OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS



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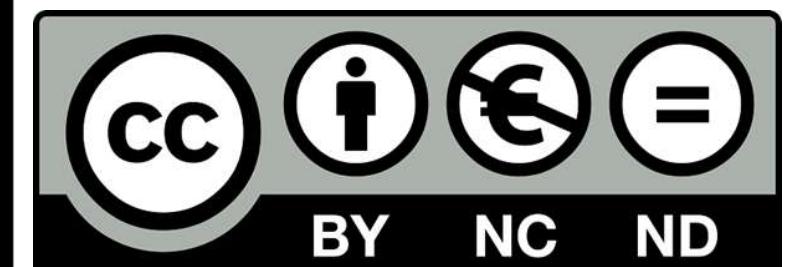
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# Contents

BRIEF THEORICAL INTRODUCTION TO SURVEY 12: SEXISM .....	5
What is sexism? .....	5
What kinds of sexism can happen in the classroom? .....	5
What is the first step to preventing or stopping sexism? .....	6
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TEACHER ON SURVEY 12 .....	8
How can you detect sexist bullying? .....	8
What can you do with a situation of sexism in the classroom? .....	9
SURVEY 12: SEXISM .....	11

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# **BRIEF THEOREICAL INTRODUCTION TO SURVEY 12: SEXISM**

*NOTE: we will refer here only to male-centered sexism, in other words, male chauvinism, as social attitude or belief, since female sexism is almost non-existent in most societies.*

## **What is sexism?**

Male sexism can be defined as the attitude or way of thinking of those who maintain that men are naturally superior to women. It encompasses the set of attitudes, norms, behaviors, and cultural practices that reinforce and preserve the structure of normative masculine and heterosexual dominance over sexuality, procreation, work, and affections. Sexist behavior has been denounced as a substantial part of the patriarchal culture that discriminates and oppresses not only women, but also LGTBIQ+ people.

According to the Feminist Ideological Dictionary, male sexism is “the set of laws, norms, attitudes, and sociocultural traits of men whose purpose -explicit and/or implicit- has been and is to produce, maintain, and perpetuate the oppression and submission of women in all levels: sexual, procreative, labor, and affective”.

## **What kinds of sexism can happen in the classroom?**

Sexism can manifest itself in different ways in the classroom, the most common being undervaluing, insulting, criticizing, ignoring, or harassing a student because of her gender or with any aspect related to gender roles, whether, real or supposed.

Sexism can also affect men and boys when their behavior does not match stereotypical gender roles. In other words, sexism can also be produced towards students who are not “masculine enough” for the harasser, or who have behaviors or traits that are seen as feminine.

Therefore, the teacher must be aware to whether there are sexist attitudes among the students in his/her classroom, as well as reflect on their own attitudes, including unconscious

ones, knowing that the majority of the victims are women.

The most obvious type of sexism is sexist violence or gender violence, that which a man exerts on a woman for the mere fact of being a woman. But bear in mind that violence does not just encompass physical violence, but it can also be psychological, which is more difficult to identify.

There are also other types of sexism that can usually happen in a classroom, such as the so-called "microsexism". Sexism and microsexism are not different things, but the term microsexism has been popularized to refer to everyday, "smaller" sexism gestures: those that happen often, every day, but which we tend to justify, neglect, and even ignore. An example can be: "you run like a girl" (notice the double damage, to the male that this is said, since it is meant to hurt him, and to females in general, since they are assumed to just run worse), or the concept that boys that "make out" with a lot of girls are "badasses", but girls that do the same with a lot of boys are promiscuous.

Another common form of sexism that can happen in the classroom is sexist language or sexist humor, which can even happen unconsciously.

Lastly, note that sexism can also occur in textbooks and other educational materials used in the classroom; in this case the role of teachers is very relevant to dismantle the stereotypes that appear in said materials, create own materials based on equality and

coeducation, or take this aspect into account when choosing books.

## **What is the first step to preventing or stopping sexism?**

It is hard to deny that nowadays we educate children and teenagers in a sexist society, where the privilege of men over women is the usual pattern. This is why one of the first steps to prevent sexism is to understand what it is, and to dismantle the stereotypes and prejudices on which it is based.

In schools, despite the fact that there is currently (no longer) no differentiation by gender or sex in terms of the subjects and contents, real equality between male and female students is still not achieved, among other reasons because sexism and heteropatriarchy are both structural and socially ingrained, and continue to solidify inequality between men and women, albeit unconsciously.

Thus, these are some basic guidelines to prevent or stop sexism in the classroom:

- Break the glass ceiling: there are many types of activities that have examples of people of different genders and jobs as characters. To not fall into sexist topics like "the male boss and the female secretary", try to reverse the roles if it always happens.

- Analyze the material: when working with stories, consider tropes: who the main character is, how the story unfolds... do girls/women have weight in the plot or are they just a complement (mother, girlfriend) of the male character(s)? A way to promote independence and friendship is to critically analyze these tropes with students: “men and women don’t always have to get married, they can be friends”, “girls can also save boys”, “when someone saves another person, the latter doesn’t necessarily have to fall in love or marry them”, etc.
- Work groups: in social groups formed by the students in the classroom, it is very common to find one-gendered majority. This is beyond your control, but you can try to avoid it as much as possible with group activities. Thus, completely avoid dividing by sex, and try to have a balanced number of students of each gender.
- Language: it is difficult at first to speak inclusively, but everyone gets used to it with practice. Many institutions have developed inclusive language guides with a number of very useful formulas.
- Microsexism: to work on equality effectively and get students interested and involved, detecting microsexisms works very well.

After some easy activities, like finding them in sports (different uniforms for boys and girls), in toys (dolls vs superheroes), in TV shows (women are young and wear heels and dresses, men are older and wear informal clothes), students can take this search into their daily life and make their surroundings see them too.

It is very important to develop values of diversity, equality between men and women, empathy, tolerance, and the peaceful coexistence in the classroom to prevent any type of discrimination. To do this, we recommend working on the Gender Equality Didactic Unit, included in the Kit for Gender Equality (OER).



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# **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TEACHER ON SURVEY 12**

## **How can you detect sexist bullying?**

1. The first step is to detect if there are students who are vulnerable to being harassed, either because they are women or because they are men who do not comply with the mainstream perception of their gender role, and watch carefully if they are having any conflict with other students.
2. Know how to differentiate between an isolated incident or a case of bullying related to sexism. For this, it is usually considered that an abuse or harassment repeated three times or more has become bullying. There must also be intentionality and an imbalance of power, which in the case of sexist bullying it is evident because these students are especially vulnerable.
3. Be careful to notice less obvious cases of harassment or discrimination; physical aggression is usually the most obvious, but most bullying is psychological or verbal. Also, pay special attention to cyberbullying, as it is an increasingly frequent and especially serious phenomenon, because vulnerable students can be harassed 24/7, both inside and outside the classroom.
4. Analyze whether there is sexist speech in the classroom that reinforces gender roles, both consciously and unconsciously, such as sexist language.
5. Another key aspect to consider, although it is strictly not bullying, is whether there are sentimental relationships between the students in which sexism is present: if there is a girl who is subject to constant control by her boyfriend, who checks her phone, doesn't allow her to interact with other boys, is very jealous or possessive, or of course if there is any indication of gender violence, whether physical or psychological.
6. In addition to detecting harassment or discrimination, pay attention to other aspects or situations that are a symptom that something is not going well:

- a) Changes in behavior or habits: it is necessary to notice if the vulnerable student drops their average grades, loses interest in certain activities, has a changing mood, changes their friendships, etc.
- b) If you notice that the vulnerable student becomes isolated and their classmates avoid being with him/her, this is considered a relational aggression: exclusion from the group.
- c) Outbursts of anger, problems with authority, and problems regulating emotions are a symptom that bullying may be taking place, and both harassers and the harassed may have these attitudes.
- d) Leaders and privileges: in a classroom there are usually students who assume the role of leaders, and who usually have other students who follow them; these situations must be watched carefully before the leadership becomes negative, using this situation to harass vulnerable students or to encourage “followers” to harass them.

## **What can you do with a situation of sexism in the classroom?**

1. The best option is always prevention, which is why it is key to educate the students in values like dialogue, empathy, tolerance, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, especially at younger ages. It is also essential for them to learn what sexism is, and the main reasons that cause it, in order to avoid it.
2. In cases where prevention is no longer an option (when harassment is already happening), the first step is to investigate and gather information, speaking with the parties involved.
3. Once you have all the necessary information, a sanction is required for harassers, adjusted to the seriousness of their actions, but it is essential that this sanction has an educational and not a punitive nature, meaning that it is necessary to work with the harasser's empathy and respect for diversity, and make them understand how their actions can impact other people, especially the harassed person.
4. In the case of the victim, it is advisable to create and maintain a climate of communication, trust, and show support, but also working on assertiveness, on learning to say no, and to set limits, always without resorting to violence. If they have any feelings of guilt, make it clear to them that the aggressors are to blame, never

him/her. Lastly, show them that a boost in self-confidence and a change in attitude can also improve things.

5. Regarding witnesses, explain to them that not opposing an unfair situation makes them accomplices, that many times harassers seek their applause, the benefits of being dominant, so if they react with rejection towards a bullying situation, it is much more likely to stop.
6. Lastly, one of the most useful prevention tools is to assign the figure of two or three student observers who identify and report situations of bullying (peer prevention).

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# **SURVEY 12: SEXISM**

**Is it right to threaten others to show who rules in the relationship?**

1. Sometimes it is necessary.
2. Yes.
3. It is never right to threaten to show anything.

**Is it right to intimidate with commands, insults, or behaviors of a sexual nature?**

1. Yes, it's just jokes, there's no problem.
2. No, it's not right.

**Is jealousy an expression of love?**

1. Yes, it is one way to show how much you love someone.
2. I've never had jealous partners.
3. I think it shouldn't be.
4. No jealousy just shows a lack of confidence.

**Is knowing at all times what one is doing or where one is an expression of love?**

1. Yes, it is a way of showing concern.
2. No, it is just a form of control.
3. It depends on the situation.

**Is it right to control your partner by checking their smartphone?**

1. It is not control, it's trust.
2. No, it is never right.
3. It isn't control if they give it to you themselves.

**You notice that your partner has logged-in to your social network's profiles. What would you do?**

1. I don't care, I trust him/her.
2. It is natural, since I gave them the password.
3. I'm upset; I am the only one who should manage/ log-in my social networks.



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