AWARDS

Congratulations to these members of the Indiana University family on achieving the following distinctions.

Debbie Akers  ACPA Commission II Outstanding Graduate Student
Patti Boyd  ACPA Essay Contest Winner
Robert Thomas  AAUA Dissertation of the Year
George Kuh  ACPA Outstanding Research Award
Thomas Hennesey  Robert H. Shaffer Award

In addition, heartfelt congratulations from all of us connected with Indiana University to Don Hossler for being granted tenure, a significant milestone in the career of a faculty member.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations of individuals for the 1990 Elizabeth A. Greenleaf award and Robert H. Shaffer award are now being accepted.

The Greenleaf award is presented annually to the alumnus/a of the masters degree program in Higher Education and Student Affairs, "exemplifying the sincere commitment, professional leadership and personal warmth characteristic of the distinguished professor for whom the award is named." Previous Greenleaf Award recipients include: Vicki Mech-Fields, Keith Miser, Louis Stamatakis, Phyllis Mable, James Lyons, Paula Rooney, Joanne Trow, Carol Cummins Collier, and Thomas Miller.

The Robert H. Shaffer award is presented to an alumnus/a of the Indiana University Higher Education doctoral program who exemplifies outstanding service to the student affairs profession. Previous Shaffer award recipients include: John Welty, David Ambler, L. "Sandy" MacLean, and Thomas Hennesey.

Nominations for both awards will close on February 1, 1990. The awards will be presented at the 1990 NASPA and ACPA conferences. Please direct your nominations and supporting materials (e.g. vita) to George Kuh, W.W. Wright Education Building, Room 236, Bloomington, IN 47405. Thank you.

SEXIST LANGUAGE & THE ROLE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS

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Language is a powerful influence in our lives. Through language we learn about ourselves and our environment.

Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world: Our means of manipulating reality. In its structure and its use we bring our world into realization, and if it is inherently inaccurate, then we are misled. If the rules which underlie our language system, our symbolic order are invalid, then we are daily deceived (Spender, 1980, pp. 1-38).

American culture has developed with a strong bias in favor of males. Language, as stated by Spender, is a very important component of this culture. Language both illustrates and perpetuates sexism in our society. Anthropologist Edward Sapir believes that people actually interpret their experiences based on the language habits of the community (Keough, 1982).

The college and university community can have a powerful influence on the educational and personal development of students (Upright & Pilato, 1982). As student personnel administrators, we are educators employed by an institution of higher learning and an important part of its educational mission (Newmann, 1975). According to the committee on the Student in Higher Education (ASPA, 1968), "the institution's instructional goals can not be effectively achieved unless it assumes some responsibility for facilitating the development of the total personality" (p. 6).

Upright and Pilato (1982) discuss five major developmental issues that students typically must deal with during the college years. These issues include formulating a personal value system, developing intellectual and academic competence, deciding on a career and lifestyle, establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, and developing a sex-role identity and capacity for intimacy (p. 56). It is clear that language affects all of these developmental issues (Upright & Pilato, 1982). Therefore, in order for student affairs personnel to accomplish the goal of developing students to their fullest potential, they must direct students toward an accurate reality by recognizing and being able to curtail sexist language.

Sexist Language

Sexist language can be defined as words or actions which arbitrarily assign roles to people based on their sex (Keough, 1982). Kramer, Thorne, and Henley (1978) describe language as defining, deprecatting, and ignoring women. In communicating with others, people sometimes use language styles, phrases, and vocabulary that can be viewed as gender-biased (Murdock & Forsyth, 1985). Much research has been done which illustrates how this can negatively affect women.

First, language defines the roles, occupations, and characteristics most appropriate for women. The first way it does this is with terms such as "mothering," "manhandling,"...
or "manpower." These terms carry with them the ideas that mothering is a feminine, woman's task, while manhandling is a masculine, male characteristic. Language defines the roles of women and men by adding prefixes or suffixes to words. Some examples of this include "lady doctor," "lady truck driver," "author's" "governess," "maquerelle," etc. The important feature of this usage is its derivation from the norm... so specified by the female prefixes and suffixes applied to the male standard. A subtle shift in connotation occurs, from the serious to the slightly comical (Key, 1975). Modifying the noun in this way renders it less important.

Second, language frequently deprecates women and elevates men. Stanley (1977) was able to find 220 terms for sexually promiscuous women and only 22 terms for sexually promiscuous men. She found no linguistic reason for this difference. Baker (1975) has collected terms which he feels are interchangeable with "woman." He categorizes these terms into neutral terms (lady, gal, girl) animal terms (chick, bird, fox, feline), playthings (babe, doll), gender terms (skirt, hem), or sexual terms (snatch, cunt, ass, twat). He found very few similar terms for men (stud, babe, fox). Another example of how language is deprecating comes from pairs of words which, at one time, were equivalent. Examples include, mistress and master, courtier and courtesan, madam and sir, and even queen and king. In all of these cases, the feminine has taken on negative and/or sexual meanings.

Third, language ignores women. There are many words in our vocabulary which are supposed to include an understood "woman" in their meaning. Some examples of these words are "he," "man," "congressman," "chairman," "upperclassman," "fellows," "forefather," and "freshman," to name just a few. If the generic "he" includes the understood "she" then why do most psychology textbooks describe hypothetical professors, physicians, and psychologists as "he," and most hypothetical nurses, teachers, and librarians as "she" (Martyna, 1980)? If "he" included "she" then it would seem logical that all hypothetical professors would be described using "he."

C.S. Lewis (1960) also illustrates that the generic "man" and "he" is not so generic with sentences such as "menstrual pain accounts for an enormous loss of manpower hours" or "man, being a mammal, breast-feeds his young" or "the gynecologist was awarded a medical award for service to his fellow man" (p. 11). He explains "In ordinary language the sense of a word... normally excludes all others from the mind... The proof of this is that sudden intrusion of any irrelevant sense is funny. It is funny because the two meanings rush together from a great distance; one of them was not in our consciousness at all till that moment. If it had been, there would be no detonation" (p. 11).

It seems obvious that the generic "he" may not include the understood "she" after all.

There are three major problems with the use of these generic terms which ignore women. The first problem is that they are ambiguous. "He" is used in both the specific sense and in the generic sense. It is not always possible to determine which meaning is meant. In educational materials, for example, the sex-specific "he" appears five to ten times for every generic "he." Based on this, when a person sees "he" their best guess is to assume that it does not contain an understood "she" (Martyna, 1980).

The second problem with generic terms is that they are exclusive. They are supposed to include all of humankind with their meanings, but in a sentence such as the following, that is not the case. "Man's vital needs include food, water, and access to females" (Martyna, 1980).

The third problem with generic terms is that they are inequitable. The assumption that maleness is equivalent with humanness seems insulting. It connotes the idea that men are the norm and women are a deviant from the norm (Martyna, 1980). These three concerns are the major reasons that many people object to generic terms.

Is the grammatically generic "he" psychologically generic? College, junior high, and elementary school students were asked to pick possible illustrations for a textbook. Results showed that they were more likely to select pictures of men when the textbook was titled "Industrial Man," than when the textbook was titled "Society" or "Industrial Life." Male and female subjects selected 64% more pictures of men when the generic "man" was used (Schneider & Hacker, 1973). Moulton, Robinson, & Elias (1978) report that college students who read sentences containing "his" were far less likely to make references to women than students who read sentences containing "their" or "his or her." Brier and Lanktree (1983) found that a subtle form of sexist language significantly affected the "subject's perception of the attractiveness of employment in psychology for women" (p. 630). They found that "the use of generic masculine nouns and pronouns in written texts may selectively proscribe female interest in subjects they might otherwise seek out" (p. 11). These studies illustrate that grammatically generic terms are not necessarily psychologically generic.

Does this bias in our language have any effect on people? This is a critical question, for if language forms are psychologically innocuous, there is less reason for concern than if they are psychologically powerful and coercive. To study this issue, Dayhoff (1983) had college students read a newspaper article which described a female candidate running for office. In one version of the article, students encountered such terms as "lady candidate," "gal," "woman reporter," and "girl." The other version used neutral terms. The results indicated that the candidate characterized by sexist descriptions was considered less competent than the candidate described neutrally. Bom and Bom (1973) found that sex unbiased advertisements encouraged more high school females to apply for male related jobs than did sex biased advertisements. Brannon (1978) has reported that when a female applicant for an executive decision was described as a "girl" rather than a "woman," she was viewed as being less "tough," "dignified," "mature," and "brilliant" and was given an average salary of $6,000 less per year. These studies indicate that language does have an effect on people and, in the case of women, often a negative effect.

Initiating Change

There are many reasons, including the ones mentioned above, to change language. Legal ambiguity could be another reason to make a change. Legal controversy has arisen in the United States because of language. Examples of this include a dispute over Kiwanis club membership of women because of bylaws specifying "men" as members. Also, a dispute arose over the use of a scholarship fund set-up for "worthy and ambitious young men" (Martyna, 1980).

Along with psychological and legal reasons to change language, there are common
sense reasons. Eliminating the ambiguity of language would allow us to communicate more clearly, effectively, and fairly about the sexes (Martyna, 1980). If language is a representation of reality, it should be structured so that it accurately represents this reality.

Good communication skills are expected of both professional and paraprofessional staff. Good communication respects individual worth, dignity, integrity, and capacity. It treats people equally despite their sex, race, age, disability, socio-economic background or creed (Lee, 1985). As communicators, student affairs administrators can help correct and eliminate irrelevant and inaccurate concepts concerning women and men. Just knowing that sexism exists in our language does not make it go away. However, student affairs professionals have a responsibility as educators to raise awareness of the need for change to occur (Davission, Bernard & Toole, 1985).

Of course it is simplistic to believe that changing sexist language alone will extinguish sex stereotyping, sex bias, and sex discrimination, while generating positive sex-role identities for all men and women. There are many aspects of society which permeate our sexual culture. Some of these include staring, stereotyping, sexist language, myths of menstruation, cat calls and bigotry. Change in one aspect, however, can begin to rectify other aspects of our sexist culture.

Lasor, Lemos, Lemos, and Winniford (1988) discussed ways language sends wrong messages. Language reflects our expectations and can perpetuate oppression. As role models, educators, and change agents, student affairs administrators can help students formulate positive sexual identities. The attitudes of the institution and the students must be assessed before initiating change. Creating an awareness of sexism is best accomplished by using non-threatening programming.

Changes suggested for all American language can be separated into three categories. These changes are "indirect change," "change via emphasis on feminine terms," and "change via circumvention" (Blaubergs, 1978, p. 135). Indirect change is based on the idea that language is a reflection of society. What must first change are societal practice and the norms of the culture. After these changes occur, the language will change itself.

Change via emphasis on feminine terms involves increasing the visibility of females in the roles they hold or could hold. This type of change would actually create a feminine bias which would in turn create a sense of pride in being female (Blaubergs, 1978).

Change via circumvention involves eliminating gender specific words from the American language or substituting neutral terms. There are seven different types of change which would be classified as circumvention. The first type of change is to use plural or neutral pronouns. Plural terms, such as "their" or "you," are not marked for gender and would thus eliminate the male bias. Some people suggest creating neutral pronouns such as "epo," "ae," "na," "per," "co," "tey," or "E" which would be used to replace present sex-biased pronouns. A second type of change is to use circumlocutions. Examples include "chairperson" instead of "chairman," or "first year student" rather than "freshman." A third type of change is to use indefinites. An example of this would be to say "someone who makes..." rather than "a craftsman." A fourth type of change is to use neutral terms which do not portray sex specific roles. Eliminating terms such as "mothering" or "manpower" are examples of avoiding non-neutral terms. A fifth type of change is to avoid prefixes or suffixes which diminish the meaning of a word. It is essential that alternate words or phrases be used to replace the use of words such as "male nurse" or "governess." A sixth possible type of change would be to avoid idioms such as "good will to men" or "a dog is a man's best friend." A seventh type of change would be to incorporate parallel usage of terms such as "his and hers" and "men and women." Rather than say "A student likes to read. He often visits the library," it would be more appropriate to say "...he or she often visits the library."

Plan Of Action

With the aforementioned methods of change in mind, it is necessary for student affairs administrators to develop a "plan of action" for confronting the issue of sexist language on their campuses. The following guidelines may be utilized in order to encourage a non-sexist environment:

A) Heighten the awareness of the issues and implications of sexist language and sexist actions. People's resistance to support nonsexist language is often a result of ignorance of the issues. This may be rectified in several ways:

1. Workshops
   a. Structure conversations that address sex-role issues or role plays that provide self-examination of behavior.
   b. Simulate a selection activity where a group has to choose a candidate described in varying degrees of sex-role stereotypic or androgynous characteristics and discuss the process and issues.
   c. Process the "whys" of stereotypic attitudes and behaviors, the advantages and disadvantages of their existence and why it's important to facilitate change (Davission, Bernard, & Toole, 1985).
   d. Develop training sessions for student leaders. The effect student leaders have on their peers is similar to that of resident assistants. Student government members, orientation advisors, and judicial board members all influence students and should be provided with information on the importance of role modeling nonsexist language.

2. Films
   a. Use films as the main focus of a workshop for groups which might need more content before discussion.
   b. Set up a VCR in a highly trafficked lounge and continuously play a movie. This is often called "soft programming."

B) Develop and consistently model nonsexist language. Nonsexist language is composed of terms which do not ignore, define or deprecate women. Although sexist language is a societal reflection, change must begin with the individual. University employees can be effective role models to help facilitate cultural change.

1. Administrators, faculty, and staff should encourage the replacement of the terms "girls," "guys" or "boys" with "women" and "men" when referring to students.

2. Use and encourage good sense on whether a joke, comment or image is funny or whether it unfairly exploits people and perpetuates stereotypes. It is important to remember that jokes demeaning one sex or certain groups of people embarrass and alienate rather than entertain (Lee, 1985).
Conclusion
Language, in its use and structure, is frequently sexist. It distorts people’s perceptions. It ignores and belittles more than half of the world’s population, as repeatedly demonstrated. Language may once have been a reflection of the subordinated role women played in our society. Yet even though the role of women in society is changing, the language is not reflecting this change (Keough, 1982). Change in people’s attitudes and behaviors will not take place overnight. Change in sexism will come from constant awareness, committed interest and continuing evaluation of the sexist environment of the university or college community. Student affairs professionals have a responsibility as educators to raise an awareness of the need for change to occur.

REFERENCES
Lasek, Lemons, Lemons, & Winniford (1988). Boys will be boys: Language as a reflection of our expectations. Paper presented at the 1988 conference of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, St. Louis, MO.