

3. Cultural Influences that Allow Sexism to Continue

From childhood on, many males and females in our culture are taught to exhibit certain behaviors.

The preference for biological rather than cultural explanations is suggestive of accounts once offered. To experts around the turn of the century, an “innate sexual disqualification” rather than “social prejudice” was obviously to blame. Similar, if more subtle, cultural binders remain, much of the research and even more of the media coverage concerning “real differences” present contested findings as established facts. Yet the point on which there is greatest consensus is that experts have reached no consensus on these issues. (Rhode, 1997, pp. 28-29)

4. Institutional Roles Influencing the Continuance of Sexism

1. Job role labels—There is such a strong gender association with some jobs—we use labels that set others apart (women doctor, male nurse, female service member) and expect men to do certain jobs and women to hold certain jobs.
2. Unnecessary division—Actor: one who acts, why then say actress? Then there is the waiter, but waitress. Men on airplanes/not stewards—all flight attendants
3. Media—Has continued to turn sexual images of both women and men into entertainment.

D. Historical Events that Contributed to Sexism in the Military

1. Historical Events

Historically, sexism has been perpetuated in the military. To demonstrate the historical behavior, let’s use the Three R Syndrome, first introduced in the racism lesson.

- a. Reject: Army regulations did not allow women to enlist, and so many women masqueraded as men in order to serve their country.
- b. Recruit: Spanish American War 1898—When the United States formally intervened to aid in Cuba’s quest for independence from Spain, only men were recruited for an Army that would fight the Spanish American War. Before the war barely got off the ground, an epidemic of typhoid fever spread through the Army camps. The medical treatment facilities were unsanitary and understaffed for handling the large number of sick and wounded. Because the Army was unable to recruit enough men to provide medical treatment, Congress authorized the Army to appoint women as Army nurses under contract, but without military status. Some 1,500 women were recruited and served for approximately four years.
- c. Reject: It was emphasized that the nurses were civilian contract workers and not to be confused with soldiers who cared for the sick. Although medical care was much more