Gender Discrimination and Women’s Mental Health

Justyna Kucharska • 5th November 2018
What Is Gender Discrimination?

**Gender-based violence / Sexual violence**

"Daily sexism" in interpersonal relations:
- Gender-role stereotyping
- Sexual objectification
- Degrading comments

**Institutional sexism**

Members of one group are treated differently in an organization or larger body (for example in society in general). Institutional sexism can result in economic deprivation of one group.

Men don’t leave the Kitchen!

We all know a man’s place is in the home, cooking a woman a delicious meal. But if you are still enjoying the single life and don’t have a little mister waiting on you, then come on down to Hardee’s for something sloppy and hastily prepared.
Main Concepts In The Field

**Schedule of Sexist Events (1995)**
Hope Landrine, Elisabeth Klonoff and colleagues – self-report measure of sexist events at work, in the family life and in relationships.

**Feminist Identity Development Model (1985)**
Nancy Downing and Kristin Roush – “model (...) based on the premise that women in contemporary society must first acknowledge, then struggle with and repeatedly work through, their feelings about the prejudice and discrimination they experience in order to achieve an authentic and positive feminist identity.”

**Objectification Theory (1997)**
Barbara Fredickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts – “(...) theory posits that girls and women are typically acculturated to internalize an observer’s perspective as a primary view of their physical self.

**Ambivalent Sexism Theory / Benevolent Sexism (1996)**
Peter Glick and Susan Fiske – “sexism takes two forms: an overt hostility as well as subtle benevolence”
Research On Gender Discrimination

**Economic inequality and material deprivation**
Murali and Oyebode (2004) argue that relative poverty (also in women) has both direct and indirect effect on mental health and well-being.

**Sexual objectification**
Szymanski et al. (2011) talk about links between self-objectification and increased body shame, appearance anxiety, disordered eating and more severe depressive symptoms.

**Benevolent sexism**

**Everyday experiences of sexist events**
Landrine et al. (1995) found that sexist stress accounted for more of the variance than did generic stressors in premenstrual, depressive, obsessive-compulsive, somatic, and total psychiatric and physical symptoms.
Kucharska (2017) demonstrated relationships between experiences sexism in social interactions and internalising symptoms—this was mediated by self-esteem.
Kira et al. (2017): significant associations between self-reported sexism in the family / in the social context and severity of symptoms.
What Do We Measure When We Measure Sexism?

**Self-report measures of sexist experiences**
Are people “objective” in their reporting of sexist events?
Perceptions of everyday sexism are influenced by subjective appraisals to a greater extent than sexual violence.
Self-report measures of sexist experiences may – in fact – assess to what extent people embrace feminist ideology.
Measures of internalized sexism may provide more insight – but the interpretation of results can also be problematic.

**Experimental manipulations of sexist content**
Ethical issues
Those methods allow to examine short-term effects on mood, but do not allow assessing long term effects on well-being or mental health.
References