Gender Sensitization

Lecture Meeting for HSI 101

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Human Identity at the Workspace

- 2 Case studies
- Key question: when does one's identity justify exemption from usual expectations?
- "special treatment"?

Equity at the Workspace

- Not the same thing as equality
- Goal: ensuring equality in specific terms: the ability to access the resources at a workspace
- Diversity VS Difference
- Reservations or "Exemptions"
- Accommodation

Accommodation

- ADA: Americans With Disabilities Act (1990, revised 2008)
- "reasonable disability"
- requires "reasonable accommodations" that do not impose an "undue hardship" on employers, including "making existing facilities . . . readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities" and such specific efforts as "job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules. . . the provision of qualified readers or interpreters, and other similar accommodations."

Conceptual debate

- whether accommodation requirements are fundamentally different from, or of a piece with, other responses to discrimination.

- Are accommodation requests/demands a form of "anti-discrimination" or not

- For: disability is not an exceptional feature; human beings are different; to accommodate that difference infrastructure needs to be tweaked, etc.

- Against: disability is not an identity like race, gender, ethnicity, etc

Defining Access

- Noun form of "Access": "the power, opportunity, permission or right to come near or into contact with someone or something" first used as early as the 1300s.

- 20th century usage: "Access" describes how the disabled body interacts with the physical environment.

- Most recent context: US origin, describes attempts to reform architecture and technology to address diverse human needs.

2 meanings: literal and figurative

- Literal: efforts to expand the means by which different kinds of bodies can get access to common spaces
- Access = Design
- Or use common resources
- Examples: wheelchair ramps
- Widened toilet stalls
- Level shaped door handles
- Braille lettering, Screen reader capable devices
- Close-captioned video

Figurative meanings

- Access = Opportunity
- An Accessible society is one which has greater opportunities for social and political participation.
- Difference? Defined in this way, accessibility requires more than just ramps, buildings, roads, handles, etc.
- In fact, it may become difficult to ensure that these very things exist, if one does not acknowledge the wider social relationships, and the deeper social inequalities that inform the world in which these physical things exist.
- Societal, attitudinal barriers, perceptions, etc, as we know, can persist, despite and through more sensitive infrastructure

Social Model thinking

- A focus on access is a shift away from attempts to fix or cure disability on an individual level, and toward an emphasis on social or legal interventions. Access implies social potential not dependent on correcting the disabled body, but instead made possible through institutional and material change.

- The demand for improved access follows the logic of the "social model" of disability, which shifts attention from the impaired body to the surrounding environment. Early advocates used the term in a very literal way, evaluating sites and products in terms of their function for people with physical and sensory limitations.
- The category "accessible" delineated the reachable from the unreachable: ramped entrances and clear pathways from stairs and cramped passages.

"Sex" in popular discourse

- Biologically innate
- Shame
- Incompatibility with Disability
- Extremely strong expectations of normality
- Extremely gendered
- Confused with gender
- Gender VS Sex
- Procreation VS Pleasure

Gender VS Sex

- DS distinction between Disability VS Impairment: Maps onto the feminist distinction between Gender and Sex
- Sex:
  - Chromosomal; Anatomical; Physiological
  - Characteristics that mark the body as male, female, or intersex
- Gender:
  - Social; Cultural; Historical
  - Norms of appearance, comportment, behavior and desire that define what is masculine and what is feminine.
  - A normal woman conforms to the expectations of femininity
  - A normal man conforms to the expectations of masculinity

What happens to those who do not conform?

- It is not only homosexuality that requires accommodation, but a whole range of identities; homosexuality is only among the most obviously visible form of discrimination

- "Unnatural" VS "Natural" Behaviors

- Slow process of dehumanization: example of Article 377, which criminalized homosexuality because it was considered "unnatural" (does not lead to procreation)

- Roe V Wade (US Supreme Court case on the legality of abortion): comes from religious ideas of femininity, incapable of imagining women who decouple sex from procreation.

History of Western Feminism: Simone de Beauvoir (1908—1986)

- *The Second Sex* (1949); "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman"
- Separates nature from culture, biology from social expectations
- Thought experiment: procreation and feminine biology
  - Choice, Fate, or Both?
  - How acceptable are right and wrong choices?
  - How selfish or selfless is it, to choose to not have children, for instance?
  - Is it the same if a man or a woman makes the same choice?
- Unresolved contradiction, in both DS and Feminism: how real are bodies?

VINTAGE **DE BEAUVOIR**

The Second Sex

Gender at the workspace

- What counts as a safe space?
- Gender equity requires equal opportunity to access common spaces

WOMEN'S SAFETY

Unsafe by design: Bad infrastructure keeps women watching their backs – fixing this would be a start

Patriarchal anxiety over women's mobility will not change overnight, but an immediate focus on lighting, security and the like could improve safety and access.

Shilpa Phadke
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READ IN APP

Sexual Harassment and its Prevention at the Workspace

- Important to know the following:
- Who can make the complaint
- Who will respond to it
- How the process will take place
- How Confidentiality will be preserved