Androcentrism

Androcentrism ([Ancient Greek](), ἀνήρ, "man, male"[1]) is the practice, conscious or otherwise, of placing a [masculine]() point of view at the center of one's [world view](), culture, and history, thereby culturally marginalizing [femininity](). The related adjective is *androcentric*, while the practice of placing the [feminine]() point of view at the center is *gynocentric*.

Contents

Origin of the term

The term *androcentrism* was introduced as an analytic concept by [Charlotte Perkins Gilman]() in a scientific debate. Perkins Gilman described androcentric practices in society and the resulting problems they created in her investigation on *The Man-Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture*, published in 1911.[2] Because of this androcentrism can be understood as a societal fixation on masculinity whereby all things originate. Under androcentrism, masculinity is normative and all things outside of masculinity are defined as *other*. According to Perkins Gilman, masculine patterns of life and masculine mindsets claimed [universality]() while female patterns were considered as [deviance]().[2]

Education

Some universities such as the [University of Oxford]() consciously practiced a [numerus clausus]() and restricted the number of female undergraduates they accepted.[3]

Literature

Research by Dr. David Anderson and Dr. Mykol Hamilton has documented the under-representation of female characters in 200 top-selling children's books from 2001 and a seven-year sample of [Caldecott]() award-winning books.[4] There were nearly twice as many male main characters as female main characters, and male characters appeared in illustrations 53 percent more than female characters. Most of the plot-lines centered on the male characters and their experiences of life.

The arts

In 1985 a group of female artists from New York, the Guerrilla Girls, began to protest the under-representation of female artists. According to them, male artists and the male viewpoint continued to dominate the visual art world. In a 1989 poster (displayed on NYC buses) titled "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?" They reported that less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art sections of the Met Museum were women, but 85% of the nudes were female.[5]

Over 20 years later, women were still under-represented in the art world. In 2007, Jerry Saltz (journalist from the New York Times) criticized the Museum of Modern Art for undervaluing work by female artists. Of the 400 works of art he counted in the Museum of Modern Art, only 14 were by women (3.5%).[6] Saltz also found a significant under-representation of female artists in the six other art institutions he studied.[7]

Generic male language

In literature, the use of masculine language to refer to men, women, intersex, and non-binary may indicate a male or androcentric bias in society where men are seen as the 'norm', and women, intersex, and non-binary are seen as the 'other'. Philosophy scholar Jennifer Saul argued that the use of male generic language marginalizes women, intersex, and non-binary in society.[8] In recent years, some writers have started to use more gender-inclusive language (for instance, using the pronouns they/them, and using gender-inclusive words like humankind, person, partner, spouse, businessperson, fire-fighter, chairperson and police-officer).

Many studies have shown that male generic language is not interpreted as truly 'gender-inclusive.'[9] Psychological research has shown that, in comparison to unbiased terms such as "they" and "humankind," masculine terms lead to male-biased mental imagery in the mind of both the listener and the communicator.

Three studies by Mykol Hamilton show that there is not only a male→people bias but also a people→male bias.[10] In other words, a masculine bias remains even when people are exposed to only gender neutral language (although the bias is lessened). In two of her studies, half of the participants (after exposure to gender neutral language) had male-biased imagery but the rest of the participants displayed no gender bias at all. In her third study, only males showed a masculine-bias (after exposure to gender neutral language) — females showed no gender bias. Hamilton asserted that this may be due to the fact that males have grown up being able to think more easily than females of "any person" as generic "he," since "he" applies to them. Further, of the two options for neutral language, neutral language that explicitly names women (e.g., "he or she") reduces androcentrism more effectively than neutral language that makes no mention of gender whatsoever (e.g., "human").[11][12]

Feminist anthropologist Sally Slocum argues that there has been a longstanding male bias in anthropological thought as evidenced by terminology used when referring to society, culture and humankind. According to Slocum, "All too often the word 'man' is used in such an ambiguous fashion that it is impossible to decide whether it refers to males or just the human species in general, including both males and females."[13]

Generic male symbols

On the Internet, many avatars are gender-neutral (such as an image of a smiley face). However, when an avatar is human and discernibly gendered, it usually appears to be male.[14][15]

See also

- Gynocentrism
- Honorary male
- Masculinity

- Patriarchy
- Phallocentrism

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External links

- Androcentrism (https://web.archive.org/web/20080917173207/http://www.sociologyprofessor.com/socialtheories/androcentrism.php)

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