

Subtle Sexism

Condescension in the Workplace



Definition

Mansplaining is the act of a man gratuitously explaining a topic to someone who does not need and did not request an explanation.

Academic theories for why it happens:

- Establish status
- Genuine desire to help
- False assumption that audience will be interested

Examples

Let's hear your story!

Why Is It Harmful?

- Reinforces unconscious assumptions that women are less capable
- Undermines women's credibility and questions their competence
- Unevenly distributes attention for men's and women's accomplishments
- These outcomes can fuel poor team dynamic, disillusionment, fewer promotions, and lower salaries in the long run!

It's Not Just Men...

We are all guilty of condescending to minority groups!

- Do not assume that you know how someone else experiences the world.
- If you honestly don't know your audience's background on the subject, then ask before explaining.
- Reflect on biases that you hold about men, women, non-binary individuals, the gay community, people of color, different social classes, etc.
- No one knows everything, and we all make mistakes--it's healthy to recognize that!

What Can We Do About It?

- Support one another: “That’s what she just said.”
- Shut it down: “No explanation needed; please let me finish.”
- Probe and seek mutual understanding: “I know this already. Why did you feel a need to explain it to me?”
- Point it out to your peers, family members, and loved ones.
- Put more women in the room.
- Interrupt, validate, and continue what you were saying: “You made a really great point. Thank you. I’d like to add to that...”

Sources

American Political Science Review: [Gender Inequality in Deliberative Participation](#)

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University: [Women and Men in the Classroom: Inequality and Its Remedies](#)

New York Times: [How to Explain Mansplaining](#)

The Guardian: [How Not to Talk to Female NASA Astronauts](#)

Diversity Inc: [Subtle Sexism, Mansplaining, and Interruptions No Longer Tolerated](#)