

Elementary 3: Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

Lesson #1: Understanding Gender Representations in the Media

Aim/Rationale

Students will identify gender stereotypes represented in the media as well as in their social environment. Students will also reflect on the influence of gender stereotypes and gain a better understanding of gender diversity and equality.

Learning Content

Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) Identifying different gender stereotypes
 - a. representations in mass media and social environment
 - b. characteristics of gender stereotypes
- 2) Outlining various impacts of gender stereotypes

Cross-Curricular Competencies

- 1) To use information
- 2) To exercise critical judgements
- 3) To construct identity
- 4) To cooperate with others

Purpose

Children 8 to 11 years old have an increasing awareness of gender stereotypes, which can easily impact their social behaviours and mental health. It is important for them to learn how to identify stereotypes in their personal and social environments, including various forms of media, where gender stereotypes are persistent and incredibly effective at teaching their audience cultural expectations around gender.

It is important for youth of this age to be aware of the stereotypical messages conveyed both in media and from social relationships with their family, peers, and school. Therefore, the purpose of this lesson is to enhance students' ability to identify and think critically about the gender representations and stereotypes in the media. By equipping students with appropriate knowledge and raising their awareness, students can fight against gender stereotypes and develop healthy attitudes and respect for people of different genders.

Relevant to:

- Promoting egalitarian relationships
- Respecting sexual diversity
- Being aware of the sexualisation of public space

Lesson

Materials

- Projector
- Video clips:
 - Disney movie trailer: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfePzXxluvc>
 - Disney movie trailer: Beauty and the Beast
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD5pcGp62ec&list=PLE5A253B9D5F98CFF>
 - Disney's Frozen "Wolf Chase" Clip
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF7AfwMzrpc&list=PLxnVeUnlga-GKeY2ghGGu_qQkGssuP5HM&index=7
- Projector and speakers to play video clips
- White board
- Paper and markers
- "Talking Gender Stereotypes" hand-out

Essential Questions

- What are common gender stereotypes in the media?
- How do media contribute to creating and spreading gender stereotypes?
- What negative impacts can these stereotypes have on us and on society as a whole?

Using Gender Inclusive Language

When discussing gender stereotypes, chances are that you will have to use gender labels such as *boys* and *girls* when giving examples and explanations. However, it is also possible for these terms to reinforce gender stereotypes and create a “gender binary” (i.e. the idea that there are only two distinct and opposite genders). Be cautious about using these terms and use inclusive language when appropriate. Some suggestions:

- Check yourself and consider gender stereotypes you could have internalized before class begins.
- Avoid stereotyping students and labelling them based on the gender that you perceive them to be.
- Avoid victimizing students of certain genders by making sweeping statements (for example, “as a girl, you must have experienced some gender stereotypes like ‘girls should be thin and beautiful’, how do you feel?”). Instead, allow them to come up with their own ideas and responses freely.
- Remind students that gender is not a binary but rather a spectrum - there are other genders that needed to be represented in the media and in our social environment.

Terms

- Gender stereotype
- Gender representation

Development/Teaching Methods [30 minutes]

1. Begin the class by showing the movie trailers of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Beauty and the Beast* to the class. Tell students that now they are going to be “gender studies experts” and will watch the trailers from different perspectives.
2. Start a class brainstorm.
 - a. Encourage students to come up with some more classic Disney prince and princess figures, such as those in the *Little Mermaid*, *Princess and the Frog*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, etc. List the movies and the characters on the board.
 - b. Supplement the list with some movies with more fleshed out male characters if the majority on the list are princesses or minor male characters. For example, *Hercules*, *Aladdin*, *Robin Hood*, etc.
 - c. Ask students to describe their favourite the princess or princes, such as what they look like, what traits or personalities they have, what they did in the movie etc.
 - d. Ask students questions about what the princes and princesses in Disney movies have in common. For example, “Are most of the princesses beautiful? Are most of them shown doing household chores? Are most of the princes good-looking, strong, and powerful? Are the princesses being judged or talked about by the men?” For an example for this last question, remind students about the male voice in the magic mirror that tells the queen that she is not as beautiful as Snow White.
3. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4.
 - a. Tell students to choose two or three movies on the board and identify the common traits and characteristics that the heroines or the heroes share. For example, are all three of the heroes

- in their movies physically strong? Do all three of their heroines always wear dresses? Give each group a large white paper and some markers so that they can write down what they come up with.
- b. After students have had sufficient time to think, discuss and write, invite them to share what they wrote on their paper group by group.
 - c. Tell students that a lot of Disney movies include gender stereotypes. For example, princesses are always beautiful, obedient and waiting for Mr. Right; strong and brave princes are the most charming ones, etc.
4. Introduce the idea of gender stereotypes to students by giving them a definition: Generally accepted ideas about how people should look, act or be based on their gender.
- a. Elaborate on the definition with examples from the students: classic Disney cartoons depict princesses as obedient and shy girls, while boys are brave and good at fighting. Ask students questions to inspire them to think more about gender stereotypes: do you think boys are stronger and cooler than people of other genders? Are certain jobs best for people of a certain gender? Who can have long hair? Who can wear pants?
 - b. Make connections between gender stereotypes and the development of an individual's own gender identity by asking students questions like, "Do all people fit into the gender stereotypes that we've seen in the Disney movies? Do we all look like the princesses or princes in the movies? What do we really look like? Is the way that princes and princesses are drawn in the Disney movies like what people look like in real life?"
 - c. Conclude that while some people can fit into certain gender stereotypes more than others, almost everyone has times or parts of themselves that don't fit into these stereotypes. Make students understand that it's not realistic to have an appearance or personality like the princesses and princes in the Disney movies. For example, you don't necessarily have white skin, big eyes, huge muscles, handsome features, or desperately want to be married.
5. Tell students to get back into their groups and imagine how the movie characters could be hurt when people put gender stereotypes on them. Ask them questions to get them thinking, for example, "Do you think it's fair to stop Mulan from joining the army because she is a girl and is supposed to be weak and sensitive? How would that make her feel?" "How do you think the hunchback of the Notre Dame would feel about everyone thinking he needs to be rich, strong, and handsome to marry the beautiful Esmeralda?", etc. Instruct students to write their ideas on white paper.
6. Invite students to share their thoughts. Extract some key ideas and put them on the board.

Culmination [15 minutes]

Show the Disney's Frozen "Wolf Chase" clip to the class. Ask students the questions: "Are Anna and Kristoff different from other princes and princesses? How are they different from Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Prince Charming, and other princes and princesses in classic Disney movies? Did Anna change your ideas about how girls should behave? And what about Kristoff?" Encourage students to brainstorm more characters in Disney movies that go against typical gender stereotypes, write their thoughts down, and share within their groups. Conclude with these statements:

- It's not fair to treat people differently because of their gender.
- Gender stereotypes can make it hard to have good and healthy relationships with others.

- Gender stereotypes can make it hard for people to be who they are and to express themselves.
- Stereotypes can be challenged by the media and by us!

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and describe gender stereotypes in the media that they consume.
- Understand how gender stereotypes can impact an individual's identities, and that the impacts can be harmful.
- Understand the importance of challenging gender stereotypes.
- Understand the relationship between gender stereotypes and themselves. Realize that it's possible to internalize stereotypes.

Assessment Ideas

Print out page 5-8 of the “Talking Gender Stereotypes” sheet, and hand out copies to each student. Go through the pages with the class and have students fill in the blank bubble on page 7. Encourage students to write down two or more ideas to step outside the “boxes” of gender stereotypes on page 8.



Tel 514-527-0928 Fax 514-527-0701
2075 Plessis, Ground Level, Montréal (Québec) H2L 2Y4
info@accmontreal.org