

Lesson Plan: Gender Identity, Media & Stereotypes

(based on content from [the Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know](#))

Rationale

This lesson uses the term **biological sex** (which is assigned at birth based on external characteristics) and is sometimes different from **gender identity** (which is someone's personal sense of being a girl/woman, a boy/man, or somewhere in between along the gender spectrum. It will explore the difference between a person's biological sex and their gender identity, and that gender roles and expectations are socially constructed, influenced by media and evolve or change over time. It highlights that everyone defines their own gender identity, and that this identity should be honoured and respected.

A more basic lesson on gender identity, entitled "Identity and Gender Stereotypes" is also available on the TEACH BC website.

Grade/subject(s): PHE 4/5

Big Ideas:

- Understanding ourselves and the various aspects of health helps us develop a balanced lifestyle.
- Personal choices and social and environmental factors influence our health and well-being.

Competencies:

- Describe and assess strategies for responding to discrimination, stereotyping, and bullying
- Describe factors that positively influence mental well-being and self-identity

Content:

- Factors that influence self-identity, including body image and social media
- Physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during puberty, including those involving sexuality and sexual identity

Core Competencies:

- Communication – Acquire, interpret and present information (includes inquiries)
- Creative Thinking – Developing ideas
- Critical Thinking – Analyze and critique
- Personal and Cultural Identity – Personal values and choices
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility – Self-determination
- Social Responsibility – Valuing Diversity

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- Learning is embedded in memory, history and story
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity

Ground Rules

Prior to engaging in the learning activities, consider setting some "ground rules" to help everyone to feel safe in class, ask questions, and express their opinions without fear for being ridiculed or laughed at. Examples include:

- There is no such thing as a stupid question. "Any question is a good question."
- Listen to and respect others' right to express their opinion.
- No put downs (including of one's self)
- No negative statements or comments, looks, groaning, or making gestures
- It is OK to pass.

Gender Roles and Identity

Key Concepts:

- Difference between a person's biological sex and their gender identity
- Stereotypes of gender roles for males and females
- People do not have to change what they like or what they do because something seems "boyish" or "girly"

Learning Activity: Male and Female

- Use the [Gender Unicorn](#) or [Genderbread Person](#) to discuss the differences between biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Note that each of these represent spectrums, versus binary constructs.
- Present students with pictures of babies in diapers or animals. Next, present students with pictures of “gendered” children (e.g. girl in dress, boy in suit). Ask students how they can tell the biological sex of a new baby or animal. Ask students how they can tell what gender someone is.

Learning Activity: Gender Roles

- A gender role is the way a person behaves, or the way society says a person should behave, as either a male or a female.
- Present students with pictures of girls and boys from different cultures. Sample questions for students:
 - What are your favourite games and activities? Can anyone play these games and activities?
 - What are some of the things that we learn from our cultures about differences between genders and gender roles?
 - What are some things that our cultures tell us girls should do? What are things that our cultures tell us girls should not do? What are some things that our cultures tell us boys should do? What are things that our cultures tell us boys should not do?
 - Are these true for you? Do you feel pressure to be different than you are? Why and/or why not?
- Ask students to reflect on their thoughts in writing.
- Unlike a person’s biological sex, which is pretty much fixed, a person’s gender identity (how you think about yourself) and gender expression (how you demonstrate your gender [based on traditional gender roles] through the ways you act, dress, behave and interact) is largely up to the individual.

Learning Activity: Understanding and Respecting Gender Diversity

- Discuss different gender identities beyond the traditional concepts of male and female (see page 4 of [The Gender Spectrum](#)).
- Sample questions for students include:
 - What gender are you? How do you know that?
 - Are people ever uncomfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth? Are there different degrees of discomfort? How might this make a person feel?
 - Do you think people ever change their gender? How might this feel?
- Society plays a very important role in how we behave and in our decisions about what behavior is okay for every gender. Sometimes having to behave a certain way because of other peoples’ expectations can be hard.

Learning Activity: Reflections

- Ask students to reflect on gender identity and gender roles.

Media, Stories and Stereotypes

Learning Activity: Stereotyping in Popular Stories

- Have students read stories that depict stereotypical (e.g. Cinderella, Rapunzel) and non-stereotypical (e.g. Paper Bag Princess, Prince Cinders) depictions of popular character roles such as princesses, princes, and villains.
- Ask students to draw or paint a picture of a stereotypical prince, princess or villain standing beside a non-stereotypical version of the same character.
- The key thing to remember is that a prince can still be a prince, but what makes him unique is what makes him interesting. Perhaps he is a prince who really wants to be a shoemaker, or maybe he has a secret fear of spiders. Just like the characters in media and stories, we are happiest when we celebrate what makes us unique, not when we try to be a two-dimensional version of what someone might say is a “boy,” or a “girl,” or a “9-year old” and so on.

- Watch some short videos which challenge us to think about gender messages

#Like a Girl - 2014 (3:18) - Prim/Int/Sec

This ad compares our stereotypical ideas about “Like A Girl” to the ideas of young girls themselves.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs>

#Like a Girl – Unstoppable 2015 (2:44) - Prim/Int/Sec

This “Always” ad continues the discussion about the messages society gives to girls which reduces confidence and often results in them quitting certain activities.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhB3I1gCz2E>

Inspire Her Mind - 2014 (1:02) - Int/Sec

This ad movingly demonstrates the negative impact of gender stereotypes on girls.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP3cyRRAfX0>

If We Used Childhood Gender Stereotypes on Adults - 2014 (1:47) - Prim/Int/Sec

This comical BuzzFeed video imagines what the workplace would look like if we subjected adults to the same gender messages we regularly send to children.
<https://youtu.be/381belOZreA>

Book Titles For Children About Gender Identity

Picture Books

- Hall, Michael. *Red: A Crayon’s Story*. 2015. 40p. Greenwillow, \$16.01 (978-0062252074) K-4 (A blue crayon mistakenly labeled as "red" suffers an identity crisis)
- Herthel, Jessica and Jennings, Jazz. *I am Jazz*. 2014. 32p. Dial Books, \$16.54 (978-0803741072) K-4 (From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she had a girl's brain in a boy's body)
- Kilodavis, Cheryl. *My Princess Boy*. 2010 36p. \$14.40 (978-1442429888) Gr K-4 (Dyson loves pink, sparkly things. Sometimes he wears dresses. Sometimes he wears jeans. He likes to wear his princess tiara, even when climbing trees. He's a Princess Boy.
 Inspired by the author's son, and by her own initial struggles to understand, this is a heart-warming book about unconditional love and one remarkable family. It is also a call for tolerance and an end to bullying and judgments. The world is a brighter place when we accept everyone for who they are.

Novel

- Gino, Alex. *George*. 2015. 195p. Scholastic Press, \$16.85 (978-0545812542) Gr 4-7 (A pertinent and poignant middle-grade read for kids of all backgrounds about a girl who was born a boy, but refuses to let that stand in the way of her dream)