



Women in Baseball

Exploring Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes and discrimination are part of the history of women in baseball. After your class has explored this history through pre-visit lesson 3, "The All-American Girls Hit the Road" (<https://baseballhall.org/node/2992>) from the National Baseball Hall of Fame, have students continue their examination and discussion of gender stereotypes with this lesson from Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance).



LEARNING FOR JUSTICE

Source: <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/what-are-gender-stereotypes>.

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What are Gender Stereotypes?

Overview: In this lesson, students will think about characteristics they ascribe to either boys or girls. They will learn about the idea of “stereotypes” and will consider whether gender stereotypes are fair or unfair. They will also discuss how it feels to not conform to socially defined gender norms.

Grades: 4-7

Objectives

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to

- define and acquire relevant vocabulary to talk about gender identity
- identify and discuss gender stereotypes
- talk about ways stereotypes can result in unfair or even harmful situations

Essential Questions

- What are gender and gender identity? What are some of our ideas about how people of different genders “should” be or act?
- What is a stereotype? How might stereotypes affect people as they grow up?
- Enduring Understandings
 - ‘Gender’ deals with whether someone is male or female. Gender identity is about how someone expresses his or her gender. Despite the many roles men and women play in today’s world, some people still judge others based on how they think males and females ‘should’ act.
 - Stereotypes are ideas about how people will act, based on the group to which they belong. Many children grow up identifying certain characteristics as belonging only to boys or girls.

Materials

- chart paper
- markers



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Vocabulary

conform [con-form] (verb) to fit in with a group or a group's expectations

identity [ahy-den-ti-tee] (noun) the sense a person has of herself, who she is and what she thinks is important and defining of herself

gender [jen-dur] (noun) the state of being male or female. 'Gender' also refers to the social roles, behaviors and traits that a society may assign to men (masculine) or to women (feminine)

(Note: Many different ideas are considered when defining the term gender. This is a working definition, but one of the goals of Teaching Tolerance's work is for students to develop individual and collective understandings and criticisms of the term so it suits their personal and developmental needs.)

gender expression [jen-dur eks-presh-uhn] (noun) the way a person chooses to show his or her gender to others

stereotype [ster-ee-uh-type] (noun) an oversimplified and/or unfair belief or idea that groups of people have particular characteristics or that all people in a group are the same.

Overview

Gender norms and stereotypes are so ingrained in our society that adults are often surprised to realize how early children internalize these ideas. When young children get caught up in stereotypical notions of gender, though, it can harm their self images and the way they interact with peers. Children need opportunities to consider these internalized stereotypes and think about the problems they cause.

In this lesson, students will think about characteristics they ascribe to either boys or girls. They will learn about the idea of "stereotypes" and will consider whether gender stereotypes are fair or unfair. They will also discuss how it feels to not conform to socially defined gender norms.

Procedure

(Note: Before beginning this lesson, prepare two pieces of chart paper with a large square drawn in the middle. At the top of them, write "Girl" and "Boy." Leave those papers to the side at the beginning of the lesson.)



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- Explain that you will be talking about gender. Ask students to help define the term. Chart their responses without comment. After a brief discussion, provide a working definition. Tell the class that you will be amending this definition together as you learn more. (Note: If you plan additional lessons, save the chart paper with students' initial ideas so that they may reflect on those on as their understanding develops.)
- Ask students to define the word stereotype. Allow them to share a few examples of stereotypes they know. Emphasize that identifying a stereotype does not mean you believe it's true. (Note: If students are confused about the meaning of the word stereotype, provide examples. You may clarify that a stereotype is an oversimplified and unfair belief that a group of people has particular characteristics or that all members of a group are same. So, for example, a stereotype would be that "Women are good at cleaning and cooking; Men are good at making things.")
- Note: If your students do not have much background knowledge with these terms, you can simply follow this step:
- Explain that you will be talking about gender and stereotypes. Review the meaning of the terms. After a brief discussion, write student-friendly definitions on an easel pad or whiteboard. Explain that you will come back to the terms. (Note: If students are confused about the meaning of the word stereotype, provide them with examples. "Stereotypes usually involve assuming that all members of a particular group have, or should have, a certain characteristic; for example, thinking that all tall people are good at basketball or that thin people do not eat enough.)
- Divide students into two groups and explain that they will be talking about gender stereotypes—that is, generally accepted ideas about how boys and girls should act or be. It is important not to segregate the groups by gender. (Note: If your class is large, or if you think that the groups will be too big to effectively work together, you may want to create four groups and have two of each poster.) To help facilitate work you can assign one student in each group write responses or draw pictures to represent students' ideas.
- Give one group the chart paper marked "Girl" and the other group the paper marked "Boy," along with several markers. Challenge students to think of as many gender stereotypes as possible to write, or draw, inside each square. Some examples to get them started might be "love pink" for girls or "like race cars" for boys. Guide groups as they work to make sure the discussions stays on topic and address a variety of questions.



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- Ask: "How are all girls/boys supposed to behave? What are they supposed to like or dislike? How are they supposed to look, think and feel? What are they supposed to be good at?" As the groups work, ask students to think about where these stereotypes come from. Explain that you will talk about this later in the lesson or series.
- After the students have had sufficient time to work on filling the squares, explain that now they should write or draw some ideas outside of their square. Ask, "What might make a girl or boy outside of the box?" An example could be a boy who likes flowers, or a girl who likes motorcycles. (Note: Student's examples may focus on dress or taste, which is important and valid. However, try to direct their thinking to issues of personality and behavior expectations as well.)
- Point out that although some people seem to fit into gender norms or stereotypes more than others, almost everyone has times or parts of themselves that are outside the box. Ask student partners to share one time they felt like they were "inside the box" and one time they felt like they were "outside the box" for their gender. Ask for volunteers to share with the class.
- Have students come together as a group to look at and share their responses, then discuss the different ideas they share. Explain that being inside or outside a box are gender stereotypes, or ways that other people think men or women should act. (This may be a good time to revisit the original student definitions of gender and stereotypes.) Help students begin considering where some of these stereotypes come from. Ask them what might be helpful and harmful about these stereotypes. Discuss a conversation about the ways these stereotypes might be unfair or limiting to children as they as they grow up and decide what they like to do, what careers they strive for, what sports they want to play, and so on. Discuss the importance of accepting others who may not fit stereotypes. Ask: "How might a boy feel if he wears pink clothing to school and people make fun of him? How might a girl feel if she wants to play basketball and boys tell her she can't?"
- Finally, ask students to form a circle. Let each student take a turn and share one character trait he or she has (or wishes to have) from the square of the other gender. (Students may "pass," or repeat others' comments, but emphasize that they should listen to others and respect one another's feelings.



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