



## Beyond pink and blue: A lesson plan examining how gender stereotyping affects relationships

### Learning objectives:

This lesson aims to build candidates knowledge and understanding of gender stereotyping. It hopes to help pupils understand the relevance that issues of gender have, not only in Wales, but across Europe and the World. This class is an opportunity for candidates to consider the social inequalities people face in everyday situations, asking pupils to respond, judge, and to consider the negative implications of certain stereotypes, using both the legacy of the past, current examples, and thinking ahead to how we can all move away from a gendered style of thinking.

### Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC):

Out of ESDGC's 7 themes, 'Beyond Pink and Blue' incorporates at least 2, particularly: Choices & Decisions and Identity & Culture. This lesson plan hopes to teach an understanding about gender stereotypes, but also ensure that a respect for gender difference and a valuing of human diversity can ensue. This lesson reaffirms the need to stamp out discrimination, and prejudice at all levels, and stresses how gender equality is still an issue of great import.

### Welsh Baccalaureate:

This lesson plan fits in with both the WBQ-intermediate level curriculum, and also the WBQ-advanced level curriculum, particularly in Wales, Europe and the World: Element 2 - Social issues, challenges and responses.

This lesson plan hopes to raise awareness of gender inequality, not only in Wales, but across Europe and the World, hoping to educate why gender stereotyping can seem a natural and traditional mode of thought, but in fact, this can be changed, thus facilitating a fairer, and more equal society.



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- Time: 2 x 60 minute sessions
- Age group: 14 – 16 (KS4)
- Planning notes: Choose case studies from this resource pack, or substitute your own if they are more appropriate.

### **Class 1 – Introductory power point and whole class activity (20 minutes):**

The point of this class is to explore different situations where gender stereotyping can alter an outcome, and can both physically and mentally damage a person. It should be emphasised early on that just because we accept something as natural or as traditional, it does not mean that such this opinion is appropriate.

- **Slide one/two** – Define sex and gender. Ensure that pupils are aware that there is a difference, and what that difference is. A person’s sex is biological, but a person’s gender is a socially constructed identity assigned to a person as a result of their sex. Ask pupils what they understand by the term gender stereotyping. Explain that stereotypes about gender roles affect our everyday decisions and actions.
- **Slide three** – General historical context. Although very simplistic, ensure that pupils are aware of the historical continuity of gender inequality. Attitudes surrounding gender stereotyping have long been accepted and taken as the norm. From ancient ritual, to modern day life, men have typically been seen as leaders, and guardians of women. Reinforce this by including examples from popular culture, e.g. the masculinity on show in the film 300, or the way men’s football garners so much more attention than women’s.
- **Slide four/five** – What comes to mind when you think of feminine or manly characteristics? Pose this question to the class, giving five minutes to write down a few sentences briefly noting any thoughts. Then select a couple to present their opinion to the class, encouraging or challenging where necessary. Ask pupils what they understand by girl’s roles and boy’s roles, and thus explain that these perceptions of one’s gender are social constructions. For example, the notion that because men are physically stronger, only they should be allowed to play football or rugby, is inappropriate, and anyone, regardless of their gender can partake in a sport if that person desires to do so. Archaic modes of thinking should be

highlighted, and flagged up as unsuitable, thus reiterating that any form of gender stereotyping should not, and will not be tolerated.

Slide five is a mini-collage of pictures which denote the gendered model of thinking, men as hard labourers, as defenders of the realm... women as dinner ladies, serving people, interested in creative paths, such as hairdressing. Reinforce the notion that these ideas are commonly accepted by society, but they do not have to be the norm.

- **Slide six** – Agents of socialisation – discuss the reasons as to why gender roles are reiterated every day. 1. Family – the differing strategies between raising a boy, and raising a girl, i.e. blue clothes for boys, a pink pram for a girl, and also, from a young age, boys are expected to participate in sports. 2. Peers – friendships and relationships with colleagues strengthens gendered roles in society, for example, boys will typically watch, play, and discuss sports, whereas girls will almost certainly wear makeup and discuss fashion related topics. This is not to say that doing these things is wrong, but, that by doing supposedly gender-correct activities, we conform to the norm that society has set. Stress that we do not have to like/dislike things because of our gender. 3 – Discuss the religious and cultural differences that are apparent across the world. (Suggested case – use another is inappropriate) For example, in China, boys are more often than not seen as the desirable sex for a family, especially because of the one child policy. Thus, a boy can carry on his family name, whereas a girl is seen as being a financial strain. This has resulted in huge numbers of infanticide in China. 4 – Media representations of what we are supposed to be like. Ask the class what modern celebrities offer in the way of role models, for example, Cheryl Cole's brand revolves largely around her image, and is often seen with little clothing, hair extensions, and large amounts of makeup. What message does this give to young girls about how they should behave, all in the cause of impressing men? Perhaps, if suitable, a few YouTube music video clips could be considered by the class, in the hope of better explaining how the media conveys what a man, and a woman, should, and should not, do.
- **Slide seven/eight** – Present these examples of international, and national, gender inequality to the class. Ask them to consider them, and speak over each one. Reiterate that not only are there extreme cases of discrimination in far off places, but also, there is still much work to be done at home here in Wales in the form of changing attitudes and the currently gendered way of thinking. Round the presentation off, by emphasising the incredibly long way we still have to go, before we can speak of a true kind of gender equality. Reiterate what we mean when we talk about gender stereotyping, ensuring that each pupil has a solid basic knowledge of the topic.

### Group activity (40 minutes):

Division of class into small groups (4, 5 or 6), and then clearly go over the following instructions. Each group will receive a case study (see attached) involving issues of gender stereotyping. Each group must read, and discuss together their example, and then prepare to present to the rest of the class how stereotyping has affected the circumstances of their case, and the repercussions of this.

- Each group has the remainder of this class complete this task, during which time you should ensure that pupils engage with the material, understand the point of this exercise, and are prodded in the right direction.

## **Class 2 – Group activity continued (40 minutes):**

Following the previous lesson, each group must now present to the rest of the class their case study, describing in brief the state of affairs, how gender stereotyping has affected this situation, and the outcome of this, on the physical/mental state of a person. Invite questions from other groups, and allow for discussion, if only for a few minutes, assisting either side as appropriate, repeating process until all groups have presented.

## **Independent thought (15 minutes):**

Following the group discussion, each pupil will be asked to silently think about what has been said, and comment, in a few sentences, on the following question:

**What are the benefits that you think would result if everyone looked at male and female roles in an equal and non-traditional way?**

Points to think about would include a fairer society, equal opportunity, developing a state of mind that considers all humans equal: in short, one of the same. Allow 5 minutes for each pupil to think and note down their thoughts, and then select three to read aloud their answers, challenging and encouraging where necessary.

## **Plenary (5 minutes):**

Briefly summarise in five minutes the key terms of the lesson, ensuring each pupil walks away from the class aware of the meaning of gender stereotyping, and the negative impact it can have, not only in Wales and the UK, but across the World.

- Stress the necessity of adopting a modern attitude, for example, boys can be florists, and girls can be footballers, in short every person should be free to do whatever they want to do, without social limitations, without fear of discrimination, and without verbal or physical abuse. A Britain free of gendered stereotyping, and full of social equality, would allow for a happier, and much more just society.

## Suggested case Studies (use alternative examples if deemed more appropriate):

**Number 1:** Jamal and Rebecca have been in a relationship for just under one year. Jamal always decides where they go, what they do, and pays for everything. Rebecca has suggested, that as both of them only have part time jobs, and are low on money, that they should pay an equal share when out together. Jamal, however, believes this is inappropriate, and tells Rebecca that it is a 'man's job' to make decisions and have financial control. Is he right to think this? Suggest that following the group discussion, they should organise a short piece of dramatic role play for the class, whereby the case for both Jamal's and Rebecca's case is heard. For example, the group could be split into boys and girls acting out an argument similar to the above case.

**Number 2:** During a mixed sex football tournament, the referee announces that when a girl scores one goal, it will count as three goals, as he believes 'girls are not as good at football as boys, as it is a male sport'. What is wrong with this statement? Is there such a thing as male and female sports? Suggest that the group present to the class a short list of reasons against discriminating in sport on the grounds of your gender? Suggest that the group write a script in the style of a radio broadcast, reporting on a mixed football match. However, instead of girls being discriminated against, in the script inform them to discriminate against the male players.

**Number 3:** Deepa is thirteen years old, and lives in a small, rural town in Eastern Nepal. She has been told by her father that she is to be married in three months time to an eighteen year old man, whom she has never met, or even seen a picture of. Deepa protests, but her father tells her it is of no use, and that she must marry, and ownership of her will pass from her father, to her new husband. Is it right for Deepa to be forced to marry? Why is it inappropriate for girls to be traded and treated like products? Hand the group a piece of A2 paper, and suggest they create a colourful poster, which can later be exhibited in the school, which argues against forced marriage across the world.

**Number 4:** Kelly has worked as a maths teacher for over ten years. The position of head of year has recently become available, and Kelly is very keen to apply. However, a friend has informed her that, as there is only one position available, it will probably go to a male member of staff, as 'men are more suited to leadership roles'. Is this statement unfair? Do you think that both men and women should be treated equally and be able to reach senior positions regardless of their gender? Hand the class an A2 sheet of paper, and instruct them to create a poster, to be put up in class, which argues the case for female leadership, using past examples in politics, monarchy, and sport.

**Number 5:** Alice has recently completed a politics degree from Bangor University. She hopes, one day, to become a Member of Parliament for her local constituency. However, as of 2012, less than 25% of the House of Commons is female, with it being seemingly more difficult for women to receive candidacy, and therefore gain election to Parliament, than it is for men, making Alice question whether or not she should pursue her political ambition. Why is it inappropriate for people to consider men more suited to governing and dealing in politics than that of women? Three individuals in the group should act out a political debate, two arguing why either as a woman, or as a man, they should be elected, and the third arguing why gender is an ineffective selection tool in politics, and instead policy and the desire to make a change for the better is what matters.