



Defining Gender Stereotypes, Gender Bias, and Gender Discrimination

Grades 6-12

Defining Gender Stereotypes/Bias/Discrimination

Purpose: This activity introduces students to the concepts of gender bias, gender stereotypes, and gender discrimination in order to help students understand and recognize examples of gender bias, gender stereotypes, and gender discrimination in the primary and secondary source documents that will be used during the Agents of Change: Pioneering Women Dentists program.

Program Link: In the Agents of Change: Pioneering Women Dentists program, students will be examining primary source and secondary source documents about pioneering women dentists to learn more about the obstacles they faced and the accomplishments they achieved. Many of these pioneering female dentists encountered gender bias, gender stereotypes, and gender discrimination, which will be evident in the sources the students read.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this program, students will...

- Define the terms stereotype, bias, and discrimination
- Define the terms gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination
- Brainstorm examples of gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination
- Model the relationship between gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination by providing examples of gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination that build off of one another
- Create two questions for the guest speaker Q&A session of the Agents of Change: Pioneering Women Dentists program. These questions should be about gender stereotypes/gender bias/gender discrimination in the dental profession or about the dental profession itself

Materials:

- [Question Guide for Middle School Students](#)
- [Question Guide for High School Students](#)
- [Teacher Copy for Middle School Students](#)
- [Teacher Copy for High School Students](#)
- If doing the extension activity: case studies on gender discrimination/bias from Harvard University's Making Caring Common Project. **Link:** <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/gender-bias-case-study>

Procedure:

1. Warm-Up:

- Present students with the following phrase:
 - *Boys are good at math*
 - You do not have to use this specific phrase, but whatever phrase you use should be an example of a stereotype
- Have students answer the following questions about the statement:
 - Do you agree with this phrase?
 - If you agree with this phrase, why?
 - If you disagree with this phrase, why?

- Review students' answers
 - As you review students' answers to the above questions, help spark discussion by asking these prompting questions:
 - Is the statement true? Why might you believe that the statement is true?
 - Is the statement false? Why might you believe that the statement is false (knowing boys who are not good at math)?
 - If you believe that boys are good at math, is the opposite also true for girls?
 - It is likely that students will struggle to provide a definite answer to the warm-up questions, because they know boys and girls who are both good and bad at math. This struggle will hopefully help students to better understand that stereotypes are generalizations of groups of people that do not account for individual differences.

2. Defining Gender Stereotypes:

- Explain to students that the statement in the warm-up is an example of a stereotype
- Ask students: What is a stereotype?
- Sample definition of a stereotype:
 - According to the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, a stereotype is "a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong."
 - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/stereotype>
 - A stereotype is essentially a broad statement/belief, typically inaccurate or oversimplified, about how groups of people should act/ behave
 - Stereotypes indicate that all members of a group share the same, oversimplified characteristics.
 - Remind students that stereotypes can be positive, but they can also be negative.
- Tell students that people can form stereotypes based on many different factors including a person's race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Many stereotypes are also based on a person's gender. So, for instance, there are gender stereotypes.
- Ask students: Based on our definition for stereotype, how would you define gender stereotypes?
- Sample gender stereotype definition:
 - Broad statements/beliefs about how men and women should act/ behave based on their gender. Gender stereotypes associate certain characteristics/traits with men or women.
- Ask students to brainstorm examples of gender stereotypes. Encourage them to think about examples from multiple sources like TV shows, movies, literature, and their own personal lives.
- Sample gender stereotypes include:
 - Girls are bad at sports
 - Boys love sports
 - Girls like arts and crafts

- Boys like cars
- Girls are emotional
- Boys don't cry
- Boys are aggressive and rowdy

3. Defining Gender Bias:

- Explain to students that stereotypes often lead to people developing biases. One way to help students understand the connection between stereotypes and biases is to tell students that biases often form when people accept stereotypes as being accurate.
- Ask students: What does bias mean?
- Sample definition of bias:
 - According to *Psychology Today*, "A bias is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone"
 - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bias>
 - Biases lead people to prefer/not prefer one thing over another
 - Remind students that biases can be positive, but they can also be negative
- Explain to students that some people's biases are explicit, meaning that people clearly state/know what they believe about other groups of people. However, many people's biases are implicit, meaning that people believe stereotypes about other groups of people without recognizing that they hold these beliefs. Emphasize to students that all people have biases (including them and you) whether they realize it or not, and it is important to acknowledge both our explicit and implicit biases in order to correct inaccurate assumptions we may unknowingly have about others.
- Tell students that just like people say gender stereotypes, people have gender bias.
- Ask students: Based on our definition of bias, how would you define gender bias?
- Sample gender bias definition:
 - Preferring/favoring one gender over another.
 - Having preconceived thoughts, assumptions, or ideas about someone's abilities, behavior, and preferences because of his/her gender
- Have students identify examples of gender bias
- Sample gender biases include:
 - Preferring male political leaders over women political leaders
 - Preferring female childcare workers over male childcare workers
 - Someone assumes that a woman cooked dinner or a man is the head of a company

4. Defining Gender Discrimination:

- Explain to students that gender stereotypes and gender bias can lead to gender discrimination
- Ask students: What is discrimination?
- Sample definition of discrimination:
 - According to the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, discrimination is "Treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin color, sex, sexuality"
 - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/discrimination>

- Explain to students that stereotypes and biases are what people think and say about a particular group, but discrimination is an action that people take against a particular group. So, stereotypes and biases are what people think, and discrimination is what people do (actions) based on biases and stereotypes.
- Ask students: Based on our definition for discrimination, how would you define gender discrimination?
- Sample definition for gender discrimination:
 - Treating someone unequally/less favorably because of his/her gender
 - Again, remind students that discrimination involves someone doing something/taking action
- Have students provide examples of gender discrimination
- Sample gender discrimination examples:
 - Women earning less than men at the same job even though they have the same qualifications
 - Women/girls treated as less competent/less able to complete a task based on their gender
 - A woman being fired because of her gender
 - A teacher interrupting a female student or allowing a male student to interrupt a female student

5. Identifying Gender Stereotypes, Gender Bias, and Gender Discrimination Activity:

- Explain to students that now that they have defined gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination, they will be completing an activity in which they will have to use the knowledge they have gained to come up with examples of gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination. These examples should show how gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination build upon each other.
- Model the activity with students first
- Then have students complete an example either individually or in groups
- Sample Model:
 - **Gender stereotype:**
 - Men are aggressive, assertive, and self-confident
 - Women are emotional, nurturing, and accommodating
 - **Gender Bias:**
 - Because men are aggressive, assertive, and self-confident, men make better business leaders than women
 - **Gender Discrimination:**
 - An equally qualified female candidate is passed over for a promotion in favor of a male colleague

6. Wrap-Up:

- **Note:** This wrap-up activity should only be done if you are planning to invite a female dentist guest speaker into your classroom, or if you are planning on attending the Agents of Change: Pioneering Women Dentists program at the National Museum of Dentistry. For more resources and tips on how to find a female dentist guest speaker see the [So How Exactly do I find a Female Dental Student/Professional?](#) resource. If you

are using this lesson as an individual activity, consider having students complete the **extension activity** as an alternative wrap-up.

- During the program, students will have the chance to hear from and ask questions to a current woman dental student or dental practitioner. The point of this Q&A activity is for students to interact with and hear about a current female dentist or dental student's journey as a dental professional, including any possible instances of gender bias, gender discrimination, and/or gender stereotyping she has faced along with her general experience as a female dentist.
- To facilitate the Q&A portion of the presentation, have each student write down two questions in advance to ask the presenter. These questions should be about either gender bias, gender discrimination, and/or gender stereotypes in dentistry or about the dental profession itself, such as how to become a dentist.
- Explain to students that the purpose of their questions is to learn more about the speaker's dental journey including what she does, what it took to become a dental student/dentist, and the challenges/opportunities she has encountered.
 - The two questions should be collected from each student and given to the speaker in **advance** of her presentation. If you are planning on attending the Agents of Change: Pioneering Women Dentists program at the National Museum of Dentistry, then the two questions should be collected from each student and brought to the museum on the day of your visit. The museum educator will ask for the written questions at the beginning of the program in order to provide them to the speaker in advance of her presentation.
- A resource guide for students and teachers on how to ask questions about gender bias, gender discrimination, and gender stereotypes should be provided to each student. As you are discussing with students how to ask questions about gender bias, gender discrimination, and gender stereotypes, emphasize to them that encountering any type of bias/discrimination is a painful and personal experience that should not be treated lightly by others. While it is important to hear about other people's experiences with gender bias and gender discrimination, it is equally important to ask thoughtful questions about these experiences.

7. Extension Activity:

- Have students read through three case studies provided by Harvard University's Making Caring Common Project (**access link provided in the Materials section**). The case studies primarily provide common examples of gender bias/discrimination in high school, but these case studies also contain some examples of gender stereotypes as well.
- As students read, they should be actively highlighting or underlining examples of gender bias, gender discrimination, and gender stereotypes given in the case studies
- Review students' answers, focusing on why they believe the examples they have identified show gender stereotypes, gender bias, and/or gender discrimination (this would be a good time to review the definitions of gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination that have already been discussed)

Curriculum Connections

National Social Studies Education Standards 6-12	
NSES IV	<p>f. Explore factors that contribute to one’s personal identity such as interests, capabilities, and perceptions.</p> <p>h. Work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.</p>

Common Core	Language	Speaking & Listening
6	L.6.4.A	SL.6.1.C
7	L.7.4.A	SL.7.1.C, SL.7.1.D
8	L.8.4.A	SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D
9-10	L.9-10.4.A	SL.9-10.1.C, SL.9-10.1.D
11-12	L.11-12.4.A	SL.11-12.1.C

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*For more information about this activity or the National Museum of Dentistry please email Patrick Cutter at pcutter@umaryland.edu or call 410-706-0600.

Middle School Question Guide

Do's and Don'ts of Asking Questions

Don't

1. **Don't** downplay or make a joke of the topic or the speaker's experiences
 - **Don't** ask, are you sure that gender bias and gender discrimination happen in the dental field?
2. **Don't** ask off-topic questions
 - **Don't** ask, what's your favorite color?
3. **Don't** ask inappropriate or overly personal questions
 - **Don't** ask, has gender discrimination ever made you cry?

Do

1. **Do** ask questions that you are genuinely interested in knowing the answer to
2. **Do** ask open-ended questions
 - **Don't** ask, do you like being a dentist?
 - **Do** ask, what do you like best about being a dentist?
3. **Do** ask appropriate questions
 - **Do** ask, what improvements in the dental field have you seen when it comes to gender bias and gender discrimination?
 - **Do** ask, what strategies have you found helpful in addressing gender bias or gender discrimination?

High School Question Guide

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 - **Don't** ask, what's your favorite color?
3. **Don't** ask inappropriate or overly personal questions
 - **Don't** ask, have you ever been sexually harassed?

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Middle School Question Guide

Do's and Don'ts of Asking Questions

Teacher Copy

Don't

1. **Don't** downplay or make a joke of the topic or the speaker's experiences
 - **Don't** ask, are you sure that gender bias and gender discrimination happen in the dental field?
 - Remind students that gender stereotypes, gender bias, and gender discrimination are ongoing and well-documented issues. This is not a time for them to question or challenge a well-established problem.
2. **Don't** ask off-topic questions
 - **Don't** ask, what's your favorite color?
 - Remind students that this is a time to ask a current female dental student or dental professional questions about her dental journey and experience as a dentist, including questions about why she became a dentist, how she became a dentist, and the experiences she might have had with gender discrimination, gender bias, and/or gender stereotypes as a dental student or dental professional. This is not a time to ask questions meant to distract the presenter or make their classmates laugh.
3. **Don't** ask inappropriate or overly personal questions
 - **Don't** ask, has gender discrimination ever made you cry?
 - One way to help students think about what might be inappropriate or too personal to ask is to have students place themselves in the presenter's shoes. While this will be an easier task for some students and some age groups more than others, have students look at their questions and seriously think to themselves whether they would be willing to answer their questions in a public setting in front of strangers.

Do

1. **Do** ask questions that you are genuinely interested in knowing the answer to
 - Remind students that this is a unique opportunity for them to learn from a current female dental student or dental professional. While you cannot force

students to care about a topic, you can encourage them to make sure that they are asking sincere questions that will advance their own knowledge on the subject, and their classmates' knowledge as well.

2. **Do** ask open-ended questions

- **Don't** ask, do you like being a dentist?
- **Do** ask, what do you like best about being a dentist?
- Tell students that they should avoid asking questions that the presenter can give a simple yes or no answer to. Instead, they should ask open-ended questions that allow the speaker to share more or less information based on her comfortability level.

3. **Do** ask appropriate questions

- **Do** ask, what improvements in the dental field have you seen when it comes to gender bias and gender discrimination?
- **Do** ask, what strategies have you found helpful in addressing gender bias or gender discrimination?
- Again, remind students that they should not ask inappropriate or overly personal questions. Instead, they should ask general questions that allow the presenter to give more or less information based on her comfortability level. Also, explain to students that their questions on gender bias, gender discrimination, and/or gender stereotypes does not have to be negative.

High School Question Guide

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So How Exactly do I find a Female Dental Student/Professional?

Are you looking for a female dental student/dental professional to come into your classroom as a guest speaker? If you answered yes to this question, then the following resources are for you. Below you will find some tips on where to look for volunteer female dental students/professionals as well as a general question guide to give to a female dental student/professional before she comes to speak in your classroom.

How to Find a Female Dental Student/Professional:

- Ask your local dental school about potential volunteers
- Reach out to your state dental association. For a list of state dental associations click [here](#).
- Reach out to the [American Association of Women Dentists](#)
- Have the National Museum of Dentistry make a connection for you. For more information about how the National Museum of Dentistry can help you find a female dental student or female dental professional to serve as a guest speaker, please contact the National Museum of Dentistry by emailing pcutter@umaryland.edu or calling 410-706-0600.