

Who is superior?

Sex stereotypes as category of culture

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and keywords:

Gender stereotypes create areas of "common knowledge" which exert influence on the community members' behaviour and attitudes towards stereotyped people. Stereotypes are passed on and reinforced by home, family, school and mass media. Social norms and roles have a great influence on shaping stereotypes. There is a tendency to attribute certain qualities to people playing certain roles without paying attention to the fact that their behaviours do not result from their personalities but from the roles imposed on them.

Similar topics:

Distinctness of behaviours attributes of sex

Materials:

- Markers
- Sheets of paper
- Sticky tape

Duration:

2 one-hour class sessions

Number of participants:

10 to 15 boys (and girls)

Age:

10-11 years old boys (and girls)

Aims:

Aim regarding worksheet 1:

- Boys have an opportunity to realize the differences in evaluating attributes connected with female and male roles.

Aims regarding worksheet 2:

- Boys have an opportunity to carry out self-reflection on their own patterns of thought used to assess other people;
- They can see incompatibility of category stereotypes and traits presented by individuals;

- They can enter into the situation of a person assessed from the angle of negative stereotypes;
- They can feel the harmful influence of stereotypical judgment.

Aim regarding worksheet 3:

- Participants have an opportunity to analyze the influence of sex stereotypes on men's choice of profession.

Aims regarding worksheet 4:

- Participants have a chance to analyze images of women and men presented in magazines;
- They have a chance to think about the influence of sex stereotypes on the way women are presented in magazines;
- They have an opportunity to realize the role of magazines in promoting patterns of sex roles.

(Short) explanation:

See worksheets

Reflection:

Discussion: Do the participants know traditional sex roles and stereotypes of femininity and masculinity?

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

A stereotype is a conception usually held in common by members of a social group based on a conventional and simplified perception of reality (social, cultural phenomena, and of a certain category of people) often evaluative and based on prejudice and incomplete knowledge.

There are:

- individual stereotypes which express personal opinions of an individual about characteristics of an object;
- group stereotypes which are a set of opinions and information connected with beliefs and expectations towards certain groups of people divided by members of a given community.

Stereotypes deep-rooted in a given culture are handed down from generation to generation in the process of socialization. They create areas of "common knowledge" which exerts influence on the community members' behaviour and attitudes towards stereotyped people.

Knowledge on stereotypes is usually passed on orally thanks to which members of a community not only share the information on the characteristics of the community representatives but also evaluate it. Stereotypes are passed on and reinforced by home, family, school and mass media (literature, radio, television, press, advertisements, etc.).

Social norms and roles have a great influence on shaping stereotypes. There is a tendency to attribute certain qualities to people playing certain roles without paying attention to the fact that their behaviours do not result from their personalities but from the roles imposed on them.

Mechanism of creating sex stereotypes

- Tasks and duties assigned to men and women are linked to certain psychological traits. As women look after children more often, qualities such as protectiveness, empathy and gentleness are attributed to them. If men are employed on positions that require making decisions and managing people, qualities such as independence, rationalism, decisiveness and courage are attributed to them.
- Interpreting the above qualities as resulting from men's and women's nature and not from the specificity of the tasks they do strengthens the belief that women are "created" to undertake certain types of activities while men are "created" to do others.
- There is a transfer of expectations towards women's and men's behaviours to other situations according to the qualities attributed by stereotypes. These expectations begin to be treated as norms, i.e. positive, proper examples of behaviours' and responses.
- Under pressure resulting from the norms connected with the functioning in the roles of men and women, individuals usually submit to the expectations and present behaviours imposed on them not to lose social acceptance and not to lower their self-esteem.
- Behaviours which are in accordance with expectations confirm the rightness of the image of femininity and masculinity presented in stereotypes.

Stereotypical idea of masculinity (or femininity) in its definition constitutes justification of different social tasks and behaviours of both sexes and different social expectations towards men and women in normative aspect.

Masculinity is associated with professional work, power, and public service on different levels of the social hierarchy, interest in things and not people, orientation towards achieving a position in the social hierarchy and not towards building bonds. Men are attributed with qualities connected with instrumental functions and professional, economic, political and scientific activity such as independence, domination, ambitious pursuit to defined aims, rationality, logic, reservation and self-control, abstract thinking, activity, assertiveness, decisiveness and effectiveness. There are also negative qualities: emotional coldness, aggression, indifference, tactlessness.

Bibliography and List of Sources:

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Worksheet 1:

Who is the superior?

Aim:

Boys have an opportunity to realize the differences in evaluating attributes connected with female and male roles.

Initial knowledge:

Boys know traditional gender roles and stereotypes of femininity and masculinity or they can learn about them during the exercise.

Arrangement:

- Place arranged for group work
- Semi-circle

Duration:

No definite time was given to do this activity as it depends on the line-up of the group, characteristics of its participants as well as situational context and the temperament of the leader.

Materials:

- Markers
- Sheets of paper
- Sticky tape

Activity:

1. Boys make charts about characteristics of stereotyped roles of:

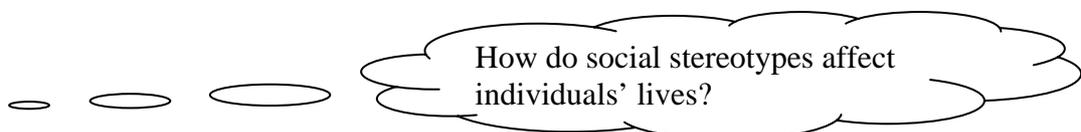
- Group I: Woman
- Group II: Man
- Group III: Wife
- Group IV: Husband
- Group V: Mother
- Group VI: Father

2. After putting up the charts boys put a plus (+) or minus (-).

- highly valued by society (+)
- not highly valued by society or has negative association (-)
- controversial issue (?), neutral or does not matter ()

3. After filling in all the charts, boys sum up the analysis pointing to the most highly or most poorly valued roles in society.

4. The leader brings a question up for discussion: How do social stereotypes affect individuals' lives?



Worksheet 2 (Boys):

Sex stereotypes activities

Aims:

- Participants have an opportunity to carry out self-reflection on their own patterns of thought used to assess other people;
- They can see incompatibility of category stereotypes and traits presented by individuals;
- They can enter into the situation of a person assessed from the angle of negative stereotypes;
- They can feel harmful influence of stereotypical judgement.

Initial knowledge:

The boys know the notion of stereotype

Arrangement:

The tables should be arranged for group work

Duration:

20 to 35 minutes

Material:

- Paper
- Markers

Activity:

1. Boys name categories of people that are often perceived from the angle of stereotypes (men, women, Roma, black people, red-heads, fat people, etc.)
2. They make small groups that make a list of qualities of these categories of people (according to social stereotypes). They present their work and give examples of famous people for each category who do not possess the given qualities.
3. All together they think of various categories of people dividing them according to some absurd criteria so that each participant could be assigned to a category (e.g. blue-eyed people, blondes, people 150-160 cm tall). Then they ascribe various faults to them chosen at random (e.g. blue-eyed people are irresponsible and malicious). They write the faults on the board.
4. Each participant loudly repeats a sentence suitable for their category according to the pattern: "I have blue eyes so I am irresponsible, malicious and silly".
5. Then everybody says how they felt when they repeated the sentence.

Worksheet 3:**Stereotypes connected with the choice of profession****Aim:**

Boys have an opportunity to analyze the influence of gender stereotypes on men's perceptions and attitudes.

Initial knowledge:

Participants can describe the traditional roles of man.

Arrangement:

Semi-circle

Duration:

20 to 35 minutes

Material:

- Board
- Chalk

Activity:

1. Participants make a list of 5 typically female professions and 5 typically male professions (Women's jobs: e.g. kindergarten teacher, beautician, secretary, and babysitter)



Men's jobs: e.g. miner, steel worker, driver, shoemaker, fire fighter, watchmaker).



Divided into groups, they write down reasons why each sex chooses a particular profession and does not choose professions associated with the opposite sex.

2. Groups present their solutions and the leader writes them down on the board (making a note of frequency of appearance of the reasons). They all decide which jobs may be done by the opposite sex and which ones cannot because of biological conditioning.
3. At the final stage, they all share their conclusions.

Worksheet 4:

Sex stereotype in magazines

Aims:

- Participants have a chance to analyze images men presented in magazines;
- They have a chance to think about the influence of sex stereotypes on the way are presented in magazines;
- They have an opportunity to realize the role of magazines in promoting patterns of men sex roles.

Arrangement:

Tables arranged for group work

Duration:

20 to 35 minutes

Material:

Various magazines like "Bravo", "Bravo Girl", Focus, National Geographic, Voyage, Success, newspaper, etc. as well as magazines for all readers presenting people from the world

Activity:

1. Participants are divided into 3 groups: women's magazines, men's magazines and magazines for all readers. They look for articles that present celebrities and analyze their contents and form. Then they define percentage male celebrities that represent various areas of social life (politics, business, culture, sport, science, etc.) Group work is based on the questions:
 - What is the percentage of male celebrities in magazines of different kinds?
 - Which areas of life are represented by men (what is the proportion)?
 - Which qualities (appearance and psychological ones) are emphasized in men's magazines?
 - What are the subjects of interviews with men?
 - How much is said about family and work?
 - What does the photographic material of men include?
 - Which are specific qualities of presentation of men?
2. Analysis of results by group and discussion on the conclusions.
3. The leader discusses the concept of sex roles and stereotypes – consolidates them if they have known about them before.

