

ACTIVITY ≈ Linguistic bias

Language can reflect discrimination and stereotyping through the use of demeaning and patronizing language, the use of masculine pronouns, the use of occupational terms with suffix “man” designating members of both sexes, and through the use of “man” words.

Provide students with the following list of biased words and have them provide an unbiased alternative (provided here in parenthesis).

mailman (mail person)	mankind (humanity)
authoress (author)	man-made (artificial)
chairman (chairperson)	forefathers (ancestors)
foreman (supervisor)	salesman (sales clerk)
co-ed (student)	ladies(women)
watchman (guard)	lady doctor (doctor)
longshoreman (longshore worker)	
the common man (ordinary people)	
busboy (waiter assistant)	
ladylike (well mannered)	
newsboy (newspaper carrier)	
housewife (homemaker)	
stewardess (flight attendant)	

ACTIVITY ≈ Music

Music can be perceived as a reflection of the social and political climate in the era in which it is written. The changing role of women can likewise be perceived through an analysis of music through several decades.

Have students identify stereotypes in musical selections from songs in the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and 90’s. Listen to the lyrics of several songs from each decade. Compare and contrast the role of women in the different decades and discuss the images of women in the songs. Listen to the music and list some of the terms/characteristics used to describe or portray men and women. Make a list of famous female vocalist or female groups and compare to men groups.

ACTIVITY ≈ Career Choices

Women today are still receiving only \$.74 to a man’s \$1.00 in earned wages. They are underrepresented in the more prestigious and higher paying jobs. Today 9 out of 10 women will be working at some time in their life, the predominant reason being economic need. Moreover, 50% of the labor force will be women by the year 2000. It is, therefore, imperative to adequately prepare girls and minorities through encouragement in taking math and science courses to expand their currently limited career goals in traditional jobs. Because of the rules, regulations, or lack of training, sex specific jobs should be made available through opportunity for all.

Place an M next to those careers which you think are primarily male and an F next to those you think are primarily female. In the second column place a check mark next to those careers commanding a high salary and prestige.

Lawyer	___	___	Secretary	___	___
Teacher	___	___	Judge	___	___
Ball player	___	___	Doctor	___	___
Electrician	___	___	Senator	___	___
Librarian	___	___	Carpenter	___	___
Bank clerk	___	___	Principal	___	___
Store clerk	___	___	Cook	___	___
Nurse	___	___	FBI agent	___	___
Computer analyst		___		___	___
Telephone operator		___		___	___
Social worker		___		___	___
General College Professor		___		___	___

Compare and contrast skills required for female jobs and male jobs.

Teaching Your Students About Gender Equity

A Series of Activities



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The Midwest Equity Assistance Center is strongly committed to and working towards helping to provide students with an equal educational opportunity regardless of race, gender, or national origin. The Center has developed this brochure to assist educators in helping students become aware of the nature and significance of gender bias and to create an environment that will help students develop to their fullest potential. The need for gender equity awareness becomes apparent when one looks at the research findings and notes the toll differences in sex-role socialization between girls and boys. Girls enter school at an academic level above or equal to that of boys. They are open to thinking about a variety of occupations and do not yet harbor negative feelings about their sex. However, by the age of twelve, girls fall behind boys in language arts, math, and science. While girls in elementary school may feel that they can enter a variety of occupations, by high school they have generally restricted themselves to the more “traditional” service careers of teacher, nurse or secretary.

Children learn gender roles through interactions with adults and their peers, and through books, television, and other media. Research has shown that the depiction of males and females in the media are frequently stereotyped and limiting. The following set of activities were designed to correct some false assumptions or dispel myths about the sexes while providing opportunities for stimulating discussions and opinions about equity.

ACTIVITY ≈ Magazines

Sexism is manifested in magazines through the unrealistic portrayal of women and men. Women are portrayed as perpetually beautiful, perfectly shaped, young, sex objects. Men are portrayed as “supermen” with sexual virility and physical strength, who are brave and powerful. Our self-image, what we want, and what we need are influenced by advertising. To understand the impact advertising has on us, look at what the ads tell us to be and want?

Check as many different kinds of magazines as possible (sports, romance, news, women’s).

- Is the major character in the ad male, female, or are both included?
- What product is the ad selling?
- Who is the target audience?
- What activity is illustrated in the ad?
- What is the individual in the ad wearing?
- Is the individual portrayed in the ad given an active or passive role?
- What is the message of the ad?

Based on your findings make a list of adjectives describing females and males in the ads. Are these characteristics realistic? Stereotypical? Have students vote on the most sexist ad.

ACTIVITY ≈ Television

Although as parents and educators we may not have control over the content of television programs, we can teach children to be cognizant watchers. The continual negative portrayal of women in television serves to persuade women that their proper role is housewife, mother, and assistant to men in their work while men are rarely perceived as competent homemakers and childrearsers.

Try to watch as many different television shows as possible in the next few days (comedy, drama, news, children’s show...).

- Is the leading character(s) male or female?
- The number of male _____ female _____ support characters
- What are the occupations of the lead characters?
- Who solves the problems (male or female)?
- Who shows caring emotions (male or female)?
- Count the number of male and female news reporters on news shows
- Count the number of males and females in the credits at the end of a show
- Discuss the kind of role models projected by the lead characters and consider and/or have students develop alternative portrayals to the ones viewed.

ACTIVITY ≈ Text books

Textbooks teach not only the topic to be studied, but provide lessons, through subtle techniques, on appropriate values, attitudes, and behaviors. Sex biases in books portray narrow, unrealistic images of men and women. Two classifications of biases to illustrate sexism are invisibility and stereotyping. Research indicates girls/women are included less often in books than boys/men (invisibility), and are portrayed as passive, dependent, and nurturing individuals (stereotyping). Boys lead much more exciting and physically active lives, and spend time getting out of difficulties. The under representation of women implies that women have little impact in the worlds of work, or areas such as math and science.

Have students assess the text books or reading material used in the classroom for sex bias using the following criteria:

The number of males and females in the illustrations:	M	F
Taking an active role	___	___
Taking a passive role	___	___
Portrayed as problem solvers	___	___
Are the main characters in a story involved in sports	___	___

List the different occupations seen for males and females.