



Comparing Gender Roles of My Grandparents' Time to Now

Author: Orlaith Egan

Subject: History

Topic: Family

Grade Level: Elementary School: 2nd Grade

Overview

In this two-part lesson, students will carry out and reflect upon an interview with a parent, grandparent or guardian to acquire a deeper insight into gender roles in the past. Students will compare and contrast, through the lens of gender, the work and dress expected of them and their immediate families today to that of their grandparents, parents or guardians when they were children.

Time: This lesson should be carried out over 2 days (2 sessions x 40 minutes each)

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will define and identify everyday examples of gender roles.
- Students will carry out an interview on a family member.
- Students will discuss and create a Venn Diagram to explore the similarities and differences between the work and dress expected of them and their immediate families today and that of their grandparents, parents or guardians when they were children.

Essential Questions:

1. Are there different expectations of children today based on whether you were born a boy or a girl?
2. Have these expectations changed from when your grandparents were your age?
3. In what ways might this continue to change in the future and why?

Standards:

HSS 2.1 Students differentiate between things that happened long ago and things that happened yesterday.

CCSS SL 2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS SL 2.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue

HISTORY FRAMEWORK: CH 5 P 48 students study the history of a family and may construct a history of their own family, a relative's or neighbor's family, or a family depicted from books.

HISTORY FRAMEWORK: CH 5 P 49 Students are encouraged to compare and contrast their daily lives with those of families who lived in the past. To culminate this unit of study, teachers may have students interview an older adult or family member about life in the past and then create a timeline of the person's life.

Vocabulary:

Gender: complex relationship between physical traits and one's internal sense of self as male or female, both, or neither, as well as one's outward presentation and behaviors that exist within a spectrum.

Gender roles: a set of social beliefs or expectations about how we are expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct themselves based on our assigned sex.

Stereotypes: an often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things with a particular characteristic.

Teacher Background:

Teachers must understand that gender expectations affect all of their students. Children receive formal and informal messages about gender from a multitude of sources— their families, peers, communities and the media. Many of the messages empower them, and many of the messages limit them. Television, movies and toys are examples of places in our culture that divide the world into binary expectations—socially reinforced roles for people around their gender. At school, it is important for educators to create gender-inclusive environments where children can be free to express every part of their personality and interests outside of the restrictions of the gender binary.

Teachers should be sensitive to the variation in children's families and that many children may have experienced the loss of a grandparent or other family member. Teachers should make it clear to students that interviews may be carried out on a "grandparent, parent or guardian".

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Markers

- Blank pieces of white paper for drawing
- Copies of [three-column chart sheet](#)

Instruction:

Day 1:

Introduction (10 minutes)

- On chart paper, write the phrase “All girls like dolls, all boys like sports”. Ask students to share their responses to this- Is this true? Why not?
- Now, write the words “gender role”. Ask students to discuss with their neighbor what they think this might mean.
- Explain to students that the world around us can have set ideas of how men and women/ boys and girls should dress and behave, and the kinds of work and responsibilities that are ‘appropriate’ for them based on their gender.
- Ask children to think of examples of this kind of stereotyping, and discuss how these expectations can be restricting for everyone:

Prompts: Are there separate boys and girls sections in toy shops? How are the toys different? Are boys and girls expected to play differently? What if that’s not how a boy/girl really likes to play all the time? In what similar ways can separate boys and girls sections in clothes shops restrict people?

Activity (20 minutes)

- Distribute blank white drawing paper and instruct students to draw a picture of their immediate family
- Next, ask children to list next to each person in the drawing some of the responsibilities of each family member (e.g. Who goes to work? Who makes dinner? Who cleans up the kitchen? Who puts out the garbage? Who looks after the garden?)

Discussion (10 minutes)

- When students are finished, facilitate a whole-class discussion by allowing students to share their drawings and lists with the rest of the class and reflect on some trends that may appear.
- Prompts to consider discussing:
 - In the drawings are the men and women wearing different kinds of clothes?
 - Do some members of the family have certain jobs? Why?
 - Are there different expectations for men and women?
- Collect students’ papers and keep them for the next lesson.

Homework Assignment in preparation for day 2 of the lesson:

- Ask students: do they think gender roles are something new or, are they part of our history?

- Explain that in preparation for the next part of this lesson they will be interviewing one of their grandparents, parents, or guardians to explore gender roles in the past when they were growing up.
- Have students take notes in a notebook about their interview and bring it back to class for the next part of the lesson.
- Questions students can ask include:
 - When were you born?
 - What sorts of clothes did you wear when you were growing up?
 - What sorts of activities did you do?
 - What was expected of a [boy / girl] or [man / woman] when you were growing up?
 - What were the responsibilities of children in the household?
 - What were the responsibilities of adults in the household?
 - What did your parents do for work?
 - How have you seen gender roles change over your lifetime?

Day 2:

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Review learning from previous lessons by asking the class to explain gender roles by giving examples of some of the expectations society can put on us based on our gender.

Activity (15 minutes)

- Return student's drawings and ask them to take out their interview notes.
- Ask students to share some of the similarities and differences they noted and list responses on chart paper under the categories 'now' vs 'in the past':
- Prompts to consider:
 - How do your family structures compare?
 - Has the expected dress for boys and girls changed?
 - Why do you think this might be?
 - Have the responsibilities of children in the house changed?
 - Have the responsibilities of the adults in the house changed?
 - Are there different expectations for boys and girls/men and women in the house now compared to long ago?
 - What were the expected responsibilities of 'sons', 'daughters', 'mothers', 'fathers' long ago?
 - How do these compare to now? Do you think gender roles will continue to exist in the future?

Assessment (20 minutes)

- Divide children into groups of 4 to 5 students.
- Give each group markers and a piece of paper with a [pre prepared three column chart](#)
- Instruct children to label the leftmost column 'Gender roles today', the rightmost column 'Gender roles in the in the past' and then to discuss and fill in the three areas of the

diagram (If needed, leave categorized lists from earlier discussion on display as supportive prompts)

- When completed, reflect with the class on their diagrams:
 - Prompts to consider:
 - What has remained the same?
 - What has changed?
 - Why do you think this is?
 - What might have been different then than now that reinforced traditional gender roles?
 - What can we do to challenge the remains of these gender roles?

Relevant Resources:

“Changing Gender Roles.” *Khan Academy*, World History Project.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-1750/xcabef9ed3fc7da7b:unit-4-labor-and-society/xcabef9ed3fc7da7b:4-3-gender/a/read-changing-gender-roles-beta>.

Author(s) Information:

Orlaith Egan is an elementary school teacher in San Francisco, CA. She undertook an Education Internship at Our Family Coalition in San Francisco, during 2018-2019.