



VEA
Bringing Learning to Life

Program Support Notes

Senior Secondary

23mins

Talking Gender

Teacher Notes by *Pursuit Consulting and Training Services*

Produced by *VEA Inc*

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Suitable for:

Health & PD

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Talking Gender

Overview of Program

The program shows a group of students and two academics to issues to gender. The academics are Professor Marilyn Lake of La Trobe University and Maria Pallota-Chiarolla of Deakin University.

The program is introduced with the expression of views on what gender is, gender and difference, and stereotyping. Four sections that link gender to other issues follow the introduction. The sections are:

- Gender and education
- Gender and careers
- Gender and the media
- Gender at home

Note to Teachers

Gender issues can arouse strong feelings because they connect to people's value systems. Not every student will feel comfortable discussing their feelings about these issues. It would therefore be appropriate to have a mix of activities: some work in small groups, in gender-segregated groups and some activities where students choose to consider their feelings more privately e.g. in a journal.

Teachers also need to consider their own capacity to listen to views that may contradict or offend their own value systems.

Curriculum Standards Framework

The program is an appropriate resource for the Human Relations strand of the Health and Physical Education Curriculum Standards Framework, particularly levels 4, 5, 6, and 7. It could also be used as a stimulus for activities in other subject areas e.g. English, SOSE and Art.

Program Timeline

Mins: secs	Description
00.45	Gender – Introduction
00.57	Students explain what they understand by gender and gender stereotypes.
2.10	Professor Marilyn Lake and Maria Pallota-Chiarolli comment on the fact that gender distinction is integral to the way society operates.
3.03	Gender and Education
3.05	Male students comment on their views of female students' roles at school.
3.45	Maria Pallota-Chiarolli identifies schools as places of social, cultural and sexual diversity. Professor Lake comments on the traditional separation of subjects on gender lines and the fact that there have been some changes to this in the last twenty years.
4.40	Graph demonstrating that in higher education women still predominantly make the traditional choices of health and education courses and that engineering is still male dominated.
5.00	Female student discusses her choice of the creative subjects, which are traditionally associated with girls.
5.51	Professor Lake and Maria Pallota-Chiarolli discuss the greater freedom that single sex education can offer girls and the ways in which boys and boys issues dominate mixed sex school environments. A male student suggests that gender specific subjects no longer apply.
8.00	Gender and Careers
8.04	Female students discuss their career choices.
8.33	Professor Lake asserts that while women have greater access to education, by the time they reach their 30's and 40's men have greater dominance and earn more in the workforce.

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9.20	Average income graphs. Women earn 81% of what men earn. Single mothers earn 76% of single fathers. Pie chart More women than men work part-time.
10.01	Maria Pallota-Chiarolli discusses the importance of the issue of equity in the workforce.
10.16	Male student discusses the importance of the role of breadwinner in influencing his career choice
13.43	Gender and the Media
13.46	Discussion by students about the gender stereotypes presented by the media.
15.00	Professor Lake comments on the way advertisements sell beauty and motherhood to women and sell power to men.
15.40	Maria Pallota-Chiarolli comments on the need to develop critical skills so that we can judge the messages presented by the media.
16.52	Excerpts from the media and an analysis of the gender roles depicted.
18.35	Gender at Home
18.38	Students comment on the way their family background influences their values and their experience of gender roles.
19.15	Professor Lake suggests that gender difference is worthwhile as long as it does not lead to inequality.
20.30	Maria Pallota-Chiarolli discusses the lack of equity in the division of labour in the home and that being a single mother brings poverty.
21.11	Professor Lake discusses gender difference and ethnicity.
22.45	The End.

Other Relevant Programs Available from VEA

Who am I? Self Esteem. Media and Decision Making
 Define Your Destiny
 Youth Suicide and Depression
 Resilience and Emotional Well-Being

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Preparatory Activities

These are some suggested activities to start students thinking about the issues that are raised in the program.

Activity One – Gender and difference

Make lists of the positive values and activities you traditionally associate with men and women.

The female students could work on the list for women and the male students could work on the list for men. When the lists are complete, the female students and the male students can look at each other's lists and see if they can add to them.

Activity Two – Gender and barriers

The female students can now consider the list for men and the male students consider the list for women. Each group should now asterisk the values and activities, associated with the opposite gender that they would like to have more opportunity to experience.

The students can brainstorm the barriers that make it hard for men and women to operate in non-traditional ways.

Activity Three – Stereotypes

Some definitions:

- **Bias:** Bias is a belief or feeling which justifies the unfair treatment of an individual or group because of their identity.
- **Prejudice:** Prejudice means judging someone without adequate knowledge or information but on the basis of preconceived views. Prejudices are usually negative.
- **Stereotype:** A stereotype is an exaggeration (not necessarily true) of a perceived characteristic or an oversimplified generalisation about a particular group. Stereotyping is usually negative.

In small groups the students could provide examples of bias, prejudice and stereotyping based on gender from their own experience.

Research question one: Cross gender

Collect images of rock stars, like Marilyn Manson, who present themselves as crossing gender lines. Ask a range of people from a range of different age groups how they respond to these images. Note down the reasons they give for their responses.

Do negative or positive responses to cross gender images relate to people's age, gender and ethnicity? Discuss the findings as a whole class and tabulate them. Students could create graphs and pie charts to illustrate their findings.

Research question two: Minority groups

A minority group is one that is different from the mainstream group. Such a group generally has less access to society's resources and is less powerful than the dominant group. Can women be regarded as a minority group?

There are now laws and policies in Australia designed to prevent discrimination against minority groups.

1. What is the difference between a law and a policy?
2. What laws and policies apply?
3. Find out what laws and groups are protected by these policies.

Students will obtain clearly written brochures and pamphlets by contacting the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission of the Equal Opportunity Commission in their own state.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's homepage is <http://hreoc.gov.au/>

Students can then discuss how effective they think these laws and policies are in practice.

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Student Worksheets

Section One – Gender and Education

Activity One – Key reactions to program, section one

Give your first impression in reaction to the program. Include feelings, words that stick in your mind, images or people that you noticed a key statement or anything else which made an impact upon you.

This could be a brainstorm for the whole class, a small group or individual activity.

Activity Two – Asserting an opinion

Pick out something that someone said that you would disagree with and say why. What would you say to that person to express your view?

Activity Three – Traditional Roles

Each student writes a journal entry, looking at the way their own behaviour complies with traditional male and female behaviours. They will then reflect on what pleases them about these behaviours and what they would like to change.

Activity Four – Classroom interaction

A topic relating to gender is set for discussion, for example “In the 90’s men and women are equal in Australian society.”

Each student is given two matchsticks. Each time a student speaks s/he must break one matchstick. Only those with unbroken matchsticks are allowed to speak.

When the discussion is finished the class can discuss their views about this exercise. Do they feel they had a fair opportunity to speak? Are there gender differences in the way the discussion was conducted? Did it seem different to their usual discussions?

It may be useful to again give students matchsticks for the discussion about the discussion.

Note: Research has shown that when female students have equal time to speak in class they are perceived by both students and teachers to have dominated.

Activity Five – Subjects and careers

Invite the careers counsellor to the class to discuss the connection between subject choices and career options.

Research question one

Gather the statistics on the subject choices made by the VCE students in your school, according to gender. Use a computer to graph the findings. Look at the percentage of students complying with traditional subject choices.

Research question two

Conduct interviews with students who have made non-traditional subject choices and discover the influences that have led them to make the choices they have. Questions for the interviews should be prepared in advance.

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Section Two – Gender and Careers

Activity One – Key reactions to program, section two

Give your first impression in reaction to the video. Include feelings, words that stick in your mind, images or people that you noticed a key statement or anything else which made an impact upon you.

This could be a brainstorm for the whole class, a small group or individual activity.

Activity Two – Parenting and careers

“It is the responsibility of every parent to balance the demands of family and career.”

“Expectations to be the breadwinner place a lot of pressure on men.”

Have segregated male/female discussion groups to consider these statements. Then bring the whole group together to compare their views.

Guide questions:

1. Give reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the statement.
2. If you agree, suggest strategies for achieving greater balance.

Activity Three – Non-traditional roles

Invite a panel of male and female speakers who work in non-traditional careers. Students may be able to suggest appropriate speakers. Students should prepare possible questions in advance.

Research question one

Ask students to find answers to the following questions using a recent copy of YearBook Australia or by contacting the Australian Bureau of Statistics at <http://www.abs.gov.au>

1. What is the total population of Australia?
2. How many women are there in Australia?
3. How many families have only one parent living with them?
4. What is the average income in Australia?
5. What is the average income of men?
6. What is the average income of women?

Research question two

Introduce the concept of glass ceiling to the students. Ask them to find current media material which supports this concept. They could also research a range of workplaces: the school, their parents' workplaces, their own workplaces if they have jobs to test the idea of the glass ceiling.

Section Three – Gender and the media

Activity One – Key reactions to program; Section 3

Give your first impression in reaction to the program. Include feelings, words that stick in your mind, images or people that you noticed a key statement or anything else which made an impact upon you.

This could be a brainstorm for the whole class, a small group or individual activity.

Activity Two – Media stereotypes

Create three collages of illustrations from advertisements. One collage that conforms to Professor Marilyn Lake's view is that women are sold beauty and motherhood. The second collage that conforms to her view is that men are sold power. The third collage shows examples of women and men behaving in non-traditional ways.

Activity Three – Advertising

Create your own advertisement, which breaks down the gender stereotypes.

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Activity Four – Media and self-image

The media can have a damaging impact on self-image. Create a health and fitness program for yourself. Set three positive goals e.g. I will walk for half an hour at lunchtime three times a week. There are to be no negatives in the program like “don’t eat chocolate” or “lose weight”. Discuss your program with a friend and ask for their support to implement it.

Research question one

The class members all watch the same 2 hours of television over the course of a week e.g. sitcoms, a football show, a rock show, the news.

Divide the class into quantitative and qualitative researchers. Decide on what will be researched. The quantitative researchers can consider questions like: In each segment of 2 minutes or so has a male or female been the focus? The qualitative researchers can consider questions like: What is portrayed as a positive lifestyle by the program?

Section Four – Gender at home

Activity One – Key reactions to video, section four

Give your first impression in reaction to the program. Include feelings, words that stick in your mind, images or people that you noticed a key statement or anything else which made an impact upon you.

This could be a brainstorm for the whole class, a small group or individual activity.

Activity Two – Family and gender

Students stand in a line in a continuum to indicate whether they have learned traditional roles for men and women from their family.

Traditional roles-----Non-traditional roles

Each student should talk to the students on each side of them why they have stood at that point on the continuum. After discussion students may want to shift their positions. Can any generalisations be made from the class about the relationships between gender and ethnicity?

Activity Three – Family and gender (2)

Students stand in line in a continuum to indicate their preference for traditional and non-traditional roles when they have their own families in the future.

Follow this with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of traditional and non-traditional roles for men and women.

Research question one

Each student will interview their parents or a man and a woman of their parents’ generation. Interview them about whether they think gender has affected their life choices. This is an opportunity to teach the idea of open questions. A useful question is “How do you think your life would have been different if you had been a man/woman?” (Opposite gender)

Research question two

Students ask each member of their household (including themselves) to keep a housework diary for a week. The results should be collated in terms of time spent on housework related to each gender. The teacher should carry out this exercise too.

Research question three

Each student will interview someone of their own gender who they regard as a positive role model. Before the interview they will identify what they admire about the particular person and then try to establish the influences that have shaped that person’s life. Where possible, students should be encouraged to interview members of their own extended family.