



Instructional Support Services, Inc.

Dr. Jane Bluestein • I.S.S. Publications • Father Sky Productions

Gender Stereotyping Survey: Self-Assessment

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Part A: Language

1. In each pair, select the expression you use most frequently:

mail carrier
 mailman

chair, chairperson
 chairman

police officer
 policeman

police officer
 policewoman

fire fighter
 fireman

salesperson
 salesman

salesperson
 salesgirl, saleslady

weather forecaster, meteorologist
 weatherman

flight attendant
 stewardess, steward

doctor
 lady doctor

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2a. Have you ever represented what were once traditionally male occupations, such as doctor, astronaut, carpenter, pilot, dentist, etc. with females (or males AND females), either in pictures, examples, or by association with the pronoun "she" (or "he or she")?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

2b. Have you ever represented what were once traditionally female occupations, such as teacher, secretary, nurse, waitress, etc., with males (or males AND females), either in pictures, examples, or by association with the pronoun "he" (or "he or she")?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

3a. How do you most frequently refer to or label an adult male (over age 21)?

- boy
- guy
- man

3b. How do you most frequently refer to or label an adult female (over age 21)?

- girl
- lady
- woman

4. Which of the titles do you teach or use?

- Mr.
- Mrs.
- Miss
- Ms. to refer to any female (regardless of marital status)
- Ms. as an abbreviation for Miss

5a. How often do you use the words "masculine" or "feminine"?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

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5b. How often do you say things like "Act like a lady" or "Act like a gentleman"?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

Part B: Modeling

6a. How often have you allowed or denied special privileges because of gender? (Example: "Ladies/Girls first" or "Girls sit in the chairs, boys can sit on the floor or tables.")

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

6b. How often have you lined students up in boys' and girls' lines to go somewhere beside the bathroom?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

6c. How often have you grouped girls and boys separately for some activity beside the bathroom?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

6d. How often have you purchased or grouped materials such as books, games, or manipulatives separately for girls and boys based on content and anticipated interest?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

6e. How often have you purchased or grouped toys and recreational materials separately for girls and boys based on anticipated interest and/or ability?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

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7a. How often have you deliberately recognized the role and contribution of women throughout history?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

7b. How often have you deliberately constructed examples that assign both men and women to a variety of roles (such as active, nurturing, ambitious, technical, creative, or scientific, for example) or careers?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

7c. How often have you deliberately drawn attention to examples of sexism or gender discrimination that exist in textbooks, trade books, or films, or on Web sites, for example, to heighten kids' awareness?

- frequently
- occasionally
- rarely or never

Using the following rating scale, tell how frequently you do each of the following for, to, or with boys and for, to, or with girls:

- 3- frequently 2- occasionally 1- rarely or never

8a. Shake hands, hug, make physical contact with:

- boys
- girls

8b. Acknowledge or compliment appearance:

- boys
- girls

8c. Acknowledge or compliment handwriting:

- boys
- girls

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8d. Acknowledge or compliment strength:

___ boys

___ girls

8e. Acknowledge or compliment positive social behavior:

___ boys

___ girls

8f. Acknowledge or compliment technical abilities:

___ boys

___ girls

8g. Acknowledge or compliment general academic performance:

___ boys

___ girls

8h. Ask to help you with moving, carrying, or lifting:

___ boys

___ girls

8i. Ask to help you with grading papers, cleaning, or organizing:

___ boys

___ girls

8j. Contact parents about good behaviors:

___ boys

___ girls

8k. Contact parents about misbehavior, problems in class:

___ boys

___ girls

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Part C: Expectations and Tolerances

Use the following scale to tell how you would respond (or have responded) to each of the following activity:

- 1- Encouraged
- 2- Allowed but not encouraged
- 3- Discouraged but occasionally tolerated
- 4- Forbidden and/or punished

Rate each statement separately for boys and girls:

9a. Getting out of seat in class:

___ boys
___ girls

9b. Daydreaming:

___ boys
___ girls

9c. Fidgeting:

___ boys
___ girls

9d. Playing with dolls:

___ boys
___ girls

9e. Cooking or baking:

___ boys
___ girls

9f. Playing with toy guns:

___ boys
___ girls

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9g. Hitting or physical aggression toward boys:

___ boys

___ girls

9h. Hitting or physical aggression toward girls:

___ boys

___ girls

9i. Teasing, name calling, verbal aggression:

___ boys

___ girls

9j. Working with computers or other technology (when allowed):

___ boys

___ girls

9k. Dressing up, playing house, role playing:

___ boys

___ girls

9l. Sewing, knitting, weaving, crochet, needlepoint:

___ boys

___ girls

9m. Playing with cars:

___ boys

___ girls

9n. Losing things, forgetfulness:

___ boys

___ girls

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9o. Getting dirty, not keeping desk (or workspace) neat:

___ boys

___ girls

9p. Swearing:

___ boys

___ girls

9q. Contact sports with boys (same age):

___ boys

___ girls

9r. Contact sports with girls (same age):

___ boys

___ girls

9s. Watching violent TV shows or movies:

___ boys

___ girls

9t. Playing non-violent video games:

___ boys

___ girls

9u. Playing violent video games:

___ boys

___ girls

9v. Talking in class:

___ boys

___ girls

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9w. Expressing anger:

___ boys

___ girls

9x. Expressing love:

___ boys

___ girls

9y. Expressing fear:

___ boys

___ girls

9z. Crying, expressing sadness, loneliness, emotional pain:

___ boys

___ girls

Scoring and Rationale

Part A: Language

1. **Score** 5 points for each time you selected the first item in each pair.

Rationale: The first career label in each pair is more gender neutral than the second, which is more stereotypical as the second item carries an association with a particular gender. In using the more stereotypical career labels, we risk limiting aspirations (especially girls' aspirations and their sense of career appropriateness).

2. **Score** 5 points for each answer of "frequently," 3 points for each "occasionally," and 0 points for each "rarely or never."

Rationale: Like part 1 above, representation of careers with pictures or language carries subtle messages of appropriateness for a particular gender. If traditional stereotypes are represented exclusively, the occupation may appear appropriate for one gender only, again limiting aspirations of the other.

3. **Score** 5 points if the word "woman" was checked to the exclusion of other female labels. Score 2 points for choosing "girl" ONLY if you also checked "boy" to the exclusion of other male labels.

Rationale: The word "woman," like "man," connotes adulthood by definition, and maturity, competence, and independence by implication. Using "girl" as a female equivalent of "man" implies a lesser degree of the above characteristics in the female than in the male. (Think of Ted introducing the librarian as "the little girl who took Debbie's place." I've often wondered how he would feel being introduced as "the little boy who teaches math." While this reference was in no way intentionally demeaning or malicious, there are subtle messages and expectations conveyed in even innocent

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statements like these.) The term "lady" is subtly loaded with values and implications about behavioral expectations for females and is therefore a less desirable label. Note that other common references to females were omitted as being demeaning and vulgar.

4. **Score** 5 points if you teach all titles, including "Ms." as long as it is explained as a label for females that is non-dependent upon marital status. Score 2 points if you teach "Ms." as an abbreviation for Miss.

Rationale: "Ms." was developed as a non-discriminatory label for females. "Ms." may be used for married or unmarried females. Although frequently explained (and used) as an abbreviation for Miss, this practice misses the point of having a non-discriminatory label where one must be used. Since "Mrs." and "Miss" still have great visibility in the media and are preferred by some individuals, it is reasonable to teach and use these labels as well.

5. **Score** 5 points for each "rarely or never," 3 points for each "occasionally," and 0 points for each "frequently."

Rationale: By definition, the words "masculine" and "feminine" generally carry implications of stereotypical characteristics such as "strong and mannish" or "gentle and delicate" (according to *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*). Even contemporary online dictionaries include references to "strength and aggressiveness" in the definition for "masculine," and "delicacy and prettiness" in the definition for "feminine." These words tend to promote stereotypes and imply traditional gender qualities.

Part B: Modeling

6. **Score** 5 points for each "rarely or never," 3 points for each "occasionally," and 0 points for each "frequently."

Rationale: Most of the activities listed in this section represent a form of gender bias known as fragmentation or isolation. In these instances, students are arbitrarily separated for various activities and materials are separated according to interests and abilities the adult assumes and/or promotes for each gender. These kinds of assumptions are based on stereotypes which categorize boys and girls separately. (What message do children get when they are restricted from certain activities or the use of certain materials they would enjoy simply on the basis of gender?)

7. **Score** 5 points for each "frequently," 3 points for each "occasionally," and 0 points for each "rarely or never."

Rationale: Helping students grow in their awareness of various forms of gender discrimination also may help to free them to develop their own values and goals without being restricted by traditional expectations and limitations. Deliberately recognizing and including the mention of women in various teaching strategies helps students to see competence and worth as non-gender-specific in a variety of roles. Please note the danger, however, in teaching about women as separate, isolated, and fragmented from the mainstream of writers, scientists, inventors, sports figures, or artists, for example.

8. **Score** 5 points for each item for which you marked boys and girls with THE SAME rating, regardless of what that rating was.

Rationale: All teachers differ in their ability to express feelings, acknowledge positive behaviors, or even ask for help. Therefore, this instrument is less interested in the

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specific frequency noted for each question as it is in the similarities and differences in adult behavior toward boys and toward girls. If there is a difference between the frequency of behaviors toward one gender or the other, the adult is probably responding to and reinforcing traditional stereotypes and expectations.

Part C: Expectations

9. **Score** 5 points for each item for which you marked boys and girls with THE SAME rating, regardless of what that rating was.

Rationale: As in the last section, particular tolerances will differ from one teacher to the next. The focus here is the tendency to have different or similar expectations and tolerances for boys and girls for the same behavior. Students can pick up some strong messages about gender-appropriateness of particular behaviors, especially in instances in which one gender can get away with a behavior and the other cannot. Adults who discourage boys from an activity in which girls are encouraged to participate (or vice versa) are most likely limiting student growth and aspirations through gender discrimination.

Discussion

The total possible score is 305 points. On a continuum of 0 to 305 points, clearly the closer your score is to 305, the less likely you are guilty of gender discrimination. If your score is high, I suspect you were either raised in a culture that encouraged gender equity or have put considerable effort into becoming conscious of discriminatory practices and patterns and to overcoming them in your own behavioral repertoire.

If your score is closer to 0, you're in good company. You certainly didn't develop your values and habits in a vacuum and most people have had some very strong models for gender stereotypes. Although many of these patterns are changing (think of gender and ethnic representation in the media that never existed when this survey was first developed), bias can be incredibly stubborn and changes can take a while to appear in generic behavior and the cultural psyche.

Beliefs, behaviors, and bias are not likely to change, however, without an awareness of their existence and the potential damage they can do. This is just the first step, and the entire point of this survey is to help individuals identify patterns in their own behavior and belief of which they may not have been entirely aware. There is no judgment here. Just know that any choice has potential consequences, and hopefully this instrument has made the likely outcomes of our choices a little more evident.

Start noticing language and behavior patterns in the people you work with, live with, hang out with, examples in the media (check out some of the shows filmed in the US about 40 or 50 years ago), examples in advertising. Pay attention to judgments you may be making, consciously or unconsciously, when you see men or women acting, dressing, or choosing careers that don't seem to fit your expectations. Although legislation over the past few decades has attempted to limit discriminatory policies in pay, promotion, job eligibility, sports funding, or access to programs and services, start noticing discrepancies in places where these intentions have not quite caught up.

Assuming you are willing to acknowledge the limiting and demeaning nature of gender discrimination (to both genders) and wish to improve your track record, the next phase

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after awareness involves goal-setting and a commitment to change. Record your instruction or interactions, or if you're truly brave (and have someone in your setting you can truly trust), ask to be observed with the intention of spotting instances in which you practice gender-equitable behavior, language, and attitudes, or examples of possible discrimination. Select one expression you'd like to drop from your vocabulary, one expectation you're willing to change.

And then practice. It may take a while to overcome the initial awkwardness of saying "firefighter" or of consciously inviting both male and female students to run errands or carry a ream of paper across the hall. But don't be surprised if somewhere down the line, you'll remember the story at the start of this post and the thought of hearing a 30-year-old professional educator referred to as a "little girl" generates downright outrage.

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