

Lesson Plan

Module 1: Introduction to Teaching Gender to Secondary and Tertiary Students

Intended Audience

4H Leaders, FFA Advisors, Peace Corps workers and USAID personnel working with secondary and/or tertiary students.

Learning Objectives

Training module leaders will examine their own cultural beliefs about gender issues and identify where gender beliefs may affect teaching through body language, tonal cues or outright spoken statements when teaching the modules. Identify the gender beliefs and relations in the country, area or town in which the students will be taught the gender lessons. This is important to guarantee the safety of the students (especially females) and to gauge the level to which students may be challenged to question cultural beliefs and relations.

At the completion of this lesson, instructors will be able to honestly ask themselves what they believe, why they believe it and are they willing to change that belief. In addition, they will have identified the answers to those questions for the cultural/community from which the students live.

**** It is important that instructors fully complete this section before attempting to instruct students to avoid unintentionally affecting those to whom they are presenting the modules.***

Description of the Activity

This is a five module series designed to show teachers and facilitators a process to walk students through identifying the difference between sex and gender. Students will identify how they feel about culturally set norms and whether those norms are based on sex or gender. This lesson will have international agricultural educators examine their environment, the environment of the part of the world where they are teaching and their own beliefs about the gender roles and relationships they identify in those environments. Modules 2 and 5 are the most important ones to use with students. Modules 3 and 4 are a good way for students to see how gender issues appear in all aspects of their lives whether they are aware of it or not. If you have time, it would be good to work modules 3 and 4 into your curriculum.

Activity Instructions

Read introduction: Gender Bias is a sometimes subtle and sometimes blatant sociological belief in the status of proper feminine or masculine behavior. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations defines “**Gender roles** are those behaviors, tasks and responsibilities that a society considers appropriate for men, women, boys and girls and **Gender relations** are the ways in which a society defines rights, responsibilities and the

identities of men and women in relation to one another.” It is important that you as the teacher understand your own bias and that of your environment (we all have them).

Cognitive neuroscientist and socio-psychologist, Dr. Steve Robbins describes this as “unintentional intolerance.” He talks about how you imprinted the cultural beliefs from your childhood in your ancient brain. Things like your neighborhood, school, parents’ jobs (agriculture, white collar, blue collar, etc.) if your mother worked or not, etc. And it is from this area that we often act, only because our brain is basically lazy and does not think through every thought from a current position. Watch Dr. Robbins introduction on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hO9V_gAs0M&feature=player_embedded According to Dr. Robbins, the ancient brain holds beliefs that have been reinforced through various inputs. For the majority of the world those ancient brain thoughts are centered on a male dominant world. Dr. Robbins, who is Vietnamese, often comes out speaking with a poor Japanese accent and moving very fast. Once he begins speaking normally he asks people what their impression of him was. People don’t usually say things like Asian, poor driver, can’t speak good English, he probably does martial arts, he is probably a math whiz, etc. We don’t say these things because our modern brain tells us that it is not politically correct to say them. But, and this is a big But, our ancient brain is thinking them and we often react out of this place. We may show body language that expresses the ancient brain thoughts. These old attitudes don’t actually match reality. Women do lots of physical labor, carrying water or farming by hand for example, so the idea that women are weaker is not necessarily true. Their strength is physically in their legs where men have more upper body strength. We are not bad people because our brain goes to these biases unconsciously; it just means we have a lot of work to do to consciously react from the modern brain instead of the ancient brain.

Many young people choose their career path coming from thoughts generated by the ancient brain. So, it important to educate them about gender before they make career choices. In developing countries women often work as farmers instead of in other areas of agriculture such as research and education. This may be because of community beliefs that women should not be educated or that they need to stay at home to take care of the family or to be protected. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, this is in part due to domestic responsibilities. FAO also states that women have less access to land, productive resources, services and opportunities than men. Gender is an important issue according to the FAO because gender roles and biases can result in wasted human capital, low productivity that stifles rural development and threatens food security. Evidence shows that many non-governmental and governmental interventions often do not empower women in the various fields of agriculture.

Gender education is an issue that is receiving a lot of support from international organizations who have recognized the disparity in types of employment between men and women in careers such as agriculture. There are many issues centered around gender such as the differences between the general nature between boys and girls. Scientist E.O. Wilson in his book, *On Human Nature*, discusses how these differences show up early with baby girls smiling more than boys. In an article in *Atlantic Monthly* September 25, 2013, “Agriculture Needs More

Women”, Sonia Faruqi, states “Differences between men and women are thought to arise from divergent evolutionary sexual selection pressures in the areas of mating and parenting. But as roles have been shifting in first world nations, developing countries are watching.”

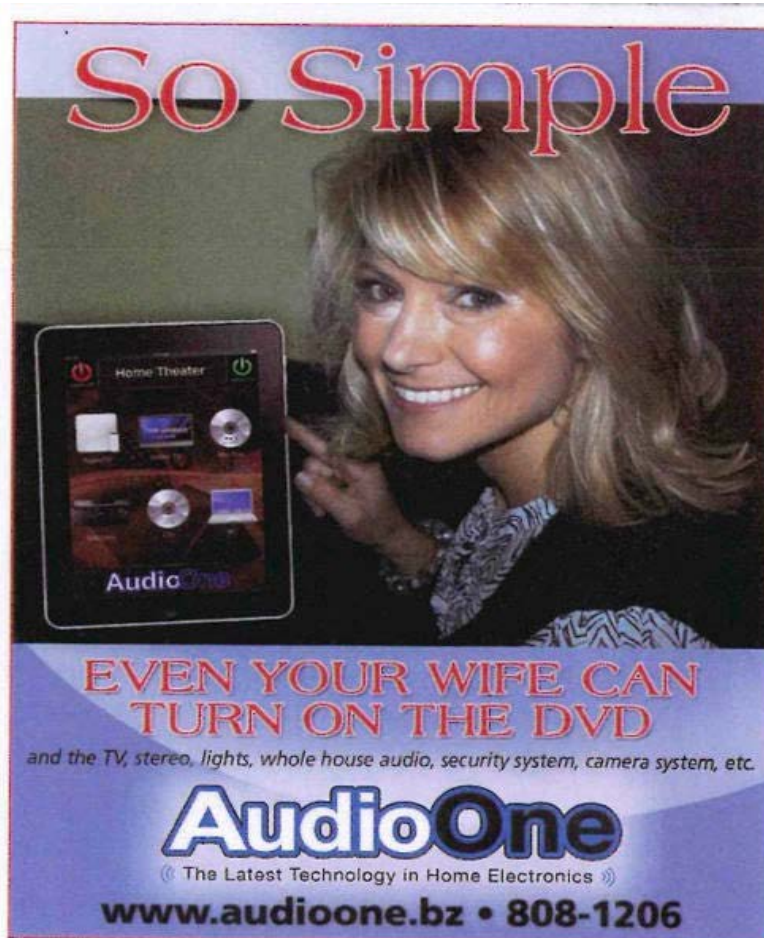
Research has shown that only around 30% of young adults in developing countries who are eligible for tertiary education are enrolled in universities. And of those enrolled, most females are enrolled in “feminine careers such as home economics and not in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). And yet, it has been shown when women are educated productivity increases, malnutrition is improved and poverty is reduced.

As facilitators and educators you will need to do some very important preparatory work for your work with secondary and tertiary students.

You need to honestly examine your own ancient brain and see what your unrecognized gender biases may be. This is important so that you are not unconsciously influencing students’ reactions. Start by gathering 1 advertisement from a magazine, 1 news article and 1 movie or television show. Look at, read and watch the examples. Note your first reaction to the roles of men and women in the example. Do not judge your reaction, just note it. Also note whether there was a physical reaction such as a tension in your jaw, neck, or chest and ask yourself how you feel about your reaction. Then ask yourself about where you learned to think/believe of this idea. Let’s try it: Take a look at these magazine advertisements.



Source: Xnet



Source: Business Insider

What is your very first reaction? Are you uncomfortable or comfortable with the images? Did you make a face when you first saw them? Did your eyebrows go up in shock or surprise? Did your mouth drop open? Did you tense up? Or maybe you didn't move at all? Whatever your reaction, write it down. Now think about how you reacted to the advertisements. How do you feel about the way you reacted? Why do you think you reacted in that way? Does the image remind you of something you've seen or heard or experienced in the past? Is that where your reaction comes from? See if you can determine the origin of your reaction. Is this how you really feel about women? If you can make that determination, you can own your reaction. You know where it comes from and why you react the way you do. This helps you to be able to control the reactions you have to gender roles and relations.

Investigate the local culture where you are teaching for how the general population feels about the behaviors of men vs. those of women; who holds what types of jobs and who performs various household tasks. Are women allowed to make important decisions? Are women in physical danger if they try to impose changes to cultural norms? Are men open to changes in existing norms? Review local newspapers for gender roles and relations. Watch local news programs, talk to local leaders, teachers, parents to find out if there would be safety issues for young people who may question or want to change roles. If there is evidence of

physical or emotional harm to anyone who tries to question or change gender roles you will need to limit each lesson to analytical identification of roles and not incorporate discussion around these roles.

Identify whether there is infrastructure that would support changes to gender norms such as ways for girls to enroll in secondary or tertiary education in fields not common to women. What is the attitude toward change in general? Is this culture undergoing change in farming technology or cell phone use for example? If so, how do people feel about these changes? If they are embracing these changes they may be more open to consider some shifts in gender related issues. If they are feeling threatened by change then you will need to address gender based changes slowly and cautiously. Take a few days or a week before doing this training with students to assess your community. Again, investigate the local environment and identify if any women or men who have stepped outside of cultural gender roles and use them as examples for students.

Assessment

Assessment for this lesson is very subjective. When you, the teacher, feel you can observe instances of gender without reacting physically or emotionally you will be ready to teach gender versus sex to students.

You will have identified the general cultural beliefs about gender roles and the level of safety to discuss and shift ideas so that you understand to what level you will be able to apply the following lessons.