

## FAST FACTS



10-30  
People



75  
Minutes



\$# - \$#



Low-  
Medium  
Risk Level

## Learning Gender

Adapted with permission from *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*

**Purpose of Activity:** This exercise helps participants understand what is gender? How do we learn about ourselves as gendered people? How do we learn about what it means to be a man or a woman? The purpose of this activity is to help participants explore their personal experience of learning gender in order to have an increased understanding of the ways gendered messages are communicated and reinforced.

### Materials Needed:

- Newsprint
- Colored Markers
- Glue
- Sparkles
- Feathers
- Other Available Artistic Materials

### Ground Rules:

- Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.
  - Follow up - What does it mean to be “fully present”?
  - Follow up - What does “challenge by choice” mean?
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone – the most learning happens when we are a little bit uncomfortable.
- Listen respectfully, share air time, and encourage others to participate.
- It’s ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.
- Show respect for one another’s beliefs, values, and experiences.
- Respect and maintain privacy.

### Disclaimer:

If as facilitators you are not a member of the subordinated group (female, transgender) focused on in this program, be sure to acknowledge that. Frame the conversation that you do not understand what it means to be of another gender from personal experience, nor are you an expert because this is the topic of the program. You are simply trying to be an ally by doing education on the topic.

If someone DOES attend the program who is of the subordinated group, be sure not to single them out for the “woman’s perspective,” stare at them to judge their reaction, or basically put them on the spot. They should be treated like every other student, and invite everyone to share/participate as much as she/he/ze is comfortable.

### Suggested Time Allocation:

- Introduction: 5 Minutes

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- Learning Community Guidelines: 10 Minutes
- Instructions: 5 Minutes
- Activity: 35 Minutes
- Processing: 15 Minutes
- Conclusion: 5 Minutes

### Facilitation Guide:

- **Introduction**
  - Thank the participants for coming to the program and introduce the program summary and learning outcomes.
  - Establish that this is an activity that may trigger certain emotions.
- **Learning Community Guidelines**
  - Establish learning community guidelines in order to create a safe learning environment, since the participants will be revealing personal details about themselves.
- **Instructions**
  - Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 to 5 people.
  - Explain that the group's task today is to depict the process of learning gender.
  - State that there are no wrong answers and that this is not a test of drawing ability.
  - Have the questions listed below pre-written on large newsprint and posted in front of the room. Tell the participants that this activity asks them to pool their creativity and draw on their own experiences to understand how gender gets learned and absorbed in our lives.
  - Tell them to do their best and find a way to capture their collective responses on paper.
  - Provide the group approximately 35 minutes to make their drawing.
  - Sharing: Ask each group to share their pictures.
  - Post each of the posters around the room, and have the participants go around and look at each of the pictures, silently, and return to the middle of the room.
- **Questions for Reflection**
  - What were the gendered messages in your home? For example, "girls could...", "boys could...", "girls couldn't...", "boys couldn't..."
  - What roles and behaviors were expected of you in your home because of your gender?
  - Were there consequences for not following gendered expectations?



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- What did you see as models of women's roles/work/place? What did you see as models of men's roles/work/place?
- What were the lessons of your early years in school? What models of maleness and femaleness did you see?
- What were the lessons of your teenage years? How did you see yourself in relation to maleness and femaleness? What did you notice around you?

### **Processing Questions:**

- What did you see around the room when asked to observe?
- What can you say about how gender is learned?
- Ask the participants to think back to their group making the picture.
- How did you feel when working on the activity?
- Were there gendered differences in the tasks performed by each of your group members during the activity?
- Which questions did you find most difficult to depict as a collective experience? Why?
- Which questions, if any, hurt? Why?
- What can you do with this information in the future?

**Possible Facilitation Issues:** This activity can trigger challenging questions and emotions from the participants. The facilitator should be experienced with and prepared for these situations. This activity should be done only in venues in which the facilitator feels comfortable handling issues that may arise.