

GENDER REFLECTIONS

Goal: Identify the external pressures and influences that have shaped students' understanding of and interactions with gender identity.

Time: Recommended as a take-home assignment; anywhere from 15-45 minutes in class.

Materials: No extra materials needed.

When: We recommend using this activity in the middle of the semester when students might feel more comfortable sharing their personal experiences with one another.

Instructions:

1. Ask students to consider what they identify as gender cues (societal messages telling us how to behave as men/women/boys/girls, or what to expect from people we identify as men/women/boys/girls, or how to tell another person's gender).
2. Have students write a short reflective piece (i.e. poem, journal entry, short essay) about an experience, lesson, or message given to them about gender that shaped how they identify or perform gender.
3. Ask them to consider in their pieces what meaning they have assigned to their gender versus what meanings those external messages or gender cues have assigned to their gender.
4. Read some of the pieces aloud (leaving them anonymous unless the author chooses to self-identify after the piece has been read).
5. Discuss each.

Follow-up Questions:

- 1.) Have you ever systematically considered how you developed your gender identity?
- 2.) How are your gender identity and expression still informed or affected by your experiences growing up?
- 3.) What messages do you send to others regarding what it means to be a man or a woman?
- 4.) Have binary gender or sex-based terms (man/woman, male/female) limited your identity and/or discussions with others? How?

- 5.) How has your schooling played into your understanding of what it means to be a man, woman, transgender person, or otherwise non-binary individual?
- 6.) Have you ever been ridiculed or denied an opportunity for doing or saying something that others didn't consider "masculine" or "feminine" enough?
 - a. How did that make you feel? How did you react? How did it affect your life beyond that single incident?
- 7.) Have you ever ridiculed someone else for doing something you didn't consider "masculine" or "feminine" enough?
- 8.) Has your understanding of gender identity limited your ability to listen to others?

SOURCE: Adapted from Gorski, P.C. N.D. *Critical multicultural pavilion awareness activities*. Retrieved from <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activityarch.html>.