

« Gender and cultural diversity »



PREPARED BY: élan interculturel

TAGS (3 categorizations)

Is this activity focusing on one of the 3 steps of the method or tackling a transversal challenge facilitators may face?	Step of the method	NO	Decentering	Discovery of the frames of references of the other	Negotiation
	Challenge treated	NO			
	Sensitive zone treated	YES	GENDER		

Small Description

Please explain in a short paragraph (using grammatically correct full sentences) what your activity is about, why did you create it?

This sequence consists of two activities whose objective is to explore the intercultural dimension of gender, that is: how people in different cultures came up with different categorisations, representations, approaches, and practices concerning gender.



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Quick info

TIME FRAME
30-60min

GROUP SIZE
2-10

FACILITATION LVL
Beginner

COMFORT ZONE
Safe

MATERIALS
Pen and paper
or a
computer/mobile
device.

60 -75 min	4-12	Intermediate	Somewhat challenging	Images Bluetech (to hang on wall) Flipchart papers Markers
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Preparations needed

Selection and printing of images that offer a variety of representations concerning gender. Make sure the selection considers the context of your training (in terms of geography, cultures represented, theme of the training). Try to have a geographically equilibrated selection, also presenting images from your own cultural context. Try to represent different gender identities: binary male, female, non-binary.

Even if this is not the focus of the activity, you should know the contexts of the images you are presenting

You should think in advance about the values and norms that could come up concerning the specific images

For the second part of the activity, check whether the questions are adapted to your context

Instructions Step By Step

Please give step by step instructions of your activity, including debriefing. Be direct, address the reader as a facilitator directly: eg. ask your participants to stand in a circle...

Step 1.

Before starting the activity, we recommend warning the group about the sensitivity of the activity. We will work with images depicting people who are not with us, representing different cultures. We can honor the protagonists of the images. This does not imply that we cannot talk about how we feel, what we think with respect to these images. In fact, the activity only works if we suspend our desire to be perfectly interculturally and politically correct. It is ok if we are surprised. In fact, we should be surprised. To allow us to do that, we should allow us to make mistakes, speak openly, not judge each other. For the same reason, what we do should be confidential, should not go out of the room. (Except of course what the facilitators say.)



Step 2.

Invite participants to visit the “exhibition” you have created and have a look at each image. Ask them to choose the image that triggers the most intense emotional reaction for them (it does not matter whether positive or negative). At this point they should not talk about the images, nor should they analyse them, just chose one. The first choice is often the best choice. Several people will probably choose the same image, this is ok. In the following step you’ll create small groups around the images. Groups of 3-4 people work best, try to ask participants not to be more than 4 with the same image.

Step 3.

As a 2nd step invite the small groups to explore together four questions (they don’t need to agree).

- “How does the image make you feel? “
- “What is the visible element in the image that explains your choice (please point to it if there is confusion.. it must be visible, objective, not an interpretation)”
- “What are your own values / norms / representations that are touched by the image? What are the values that explain the emotional reaction?”
- “What can be the values / norms / representations of the people on the images?”

Step 4.

After 15 minutes you can invite a couple of groups to give their answers. Make sure to help participants stick to the questions: if they are asked about visible element, they should do so. If you ask about emotions, they should talk about emotions etc. As they give their answers, you can write them on paperboard. You can use the metaphor of “iceberg” to be more visual. In this case prepare an iceberg for participants’ perceptions and another one for the people on the images. For the participants’ iceberg: write on the top the “visible element”. Around it, the emotions. Underneath the values and norms connected to it. Don’t hesitate to help them be more precise in naming emotions or values, this is not always easy. Then create for the iceberg of the other person, you can check whether norms / values / representations of the participants have their correspondence for the people in the image.

For example: a group that may have chosen the image with the women wearing burka can point to their norm of “freedom of showing women’s hair in public” and the corresponding value in the other iceberg would be “considering women’s hair as an intimate part of the body not to be shown in public”.

Step 5.

Once you made the analysis of 1-3 images (no need to do all) invite participants to identify what are the differences concerning gender across cultures. Push participants to be precise, not be content with stereotypical statements such as “in some cultures there is equality between men and women and others oppress women”. Several dimensions may be identified, but we propose to continue work around one specific dimension: orientation towards differentiation between genders and convergence of genders. You can draw a line on the flipchart to explain the dimension. This is a dimension that can help create systematic comparison between cultures which are mainly considering two genders. On one extremity of the dimension we can



find a desire to give importance to the distinction between men and women, while on the other, a desire to reduce the differentiation between two genders. Distinction can happen on different levels:

- Space (for instance male and female toilets, separate spaces in the temples / churches / mosques etc.)
- Language: different words or grammatical structures applying to men and women (for instance some words can be accepted from men but considered inappropriate for women)
- Occupation, profession: some professions are seen more male and some more female
- Self-presentation, dress codes: expectations towards how men and women should present and dress themselves can be more or less divergent: women can be allowed (expected?) to wear make-up, but not men. Different parts of the body of women than men are considered appropriate to show in public. Some garments are reserved for women, and some to men.
- Roles in the family: there may be prescriptions concerning tasks that are for the women and the men (cleaning, cooking, taking care of finances and the car etc..)

Step 6.

Make sure participants understand this dimension, then ask examples of national cultures / religious cultures / professional cultures to place on the dimension.

Step 7.

Not only “cultures” but individuals can also position themselves on this dimension. Invite participants to make the test for themselves. Tell participants, you will read statements and you’ll ask them to respond individually – based on their subjective opinion – to what extent they agree. To respond, ask them to move between one end of the room which is dedicated to “YES” and the other end of the room dedicated to “NO”. People are free to move between the YES and NO extremities also occupying the space between if they have a more neutral position. For each statement you can interview some participants why they stand where they stand, but without opening a debate: each person is entitled to have their own position, and in this activity we do not attribute more positive value to one position or another.

Here is a list of statements, that you can adjust to your own context:

- I find it disturbing when men wear lipstick
- I prefer non mixed dressing room (in the sport centre for instance)
- It’s normal that what we consider private body-parts are different for women and men
- To grow up healthy, a child needs a mother who is a biological woman
- There are professions that are more feminine and others more masculine
- A person can be either a man or a woman, but cannot change between the two
- Sometimes I feel like being only with people of my own sex
- One should not change one’s gender identity
- I never had a doubt on whether I was a man or a woman



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After each statement ask participants to see where they stand, where do others stand. At the end of all the statements ask them what they think the two extremities represent. Can they connect it to the dimension we were talking about in the sequence above? Bring up the distinction of binary and non binary orientation and explore together whether people were surprised about their own position or the position of the others. Were they always choosing the same position between YES and NO? If not, what does that tell us about our conceptions of gender?

Hints for the facilitator

Participants may not know about the concept of “value”. Tell them to imagine values as compasses, which indicate for a given society what is considered good and worthy. Norms are the socially accepted representations and behaviours.

For step 6 it is important to remind people that they should give their own personal subjective opinion and not what they think is a general opinion in their country, religion, or any specific culture.

It is also important to remind them that we are not assigning any positive / negative value to the binary and non binary positions.

Ressources (Who invented this activity or who inspired it)

If you invented it, please write the name of your colleague and institution as you'd like it to be referenced

If you used ideas /activities of others please put full reference as concretely as you can

Activity developed by Vera Varhegyi (élan interculturel, Paris) based on Margalit Cohen-Emerique's practice of decentering (Cohen-Emerique, Margalit 2015. ***Pour une approche interculturelle en travail social. Théories et pratiques.*** Rennes : Presses de l'EHESP)

The iceberg was first used as a metaphor of culture in 1977 by Edward T. Hall in his book: ***Beyond Culture*** (Anchor Books)

The activity of Step 6 follows the structure of the “***where do you stand***” activity published in the Compass Manual for human rights education with young people - Council of Europe last accessed on 2/12/2021 at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/where-do-you-stand->