

Expectations and demands¹

“Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if at the same time she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good looking, good-tempered, well-groomed and non-aggressive.” Leslie M. McIntyre

Complexity Level I

Group size 15 to 30

Time 60 minutes

Overview This activity uses brainstorming techniques to help participants understand the different expectations towards and demands on girls/young women and boys/young men in contemporary society. It allows participants to explore concepts of gender further.

Objectives To help participants distinguish between the differing expectations contemporary society puts on girls and boys, young men and young women

Materials

- Five sheets of flip chart paper
- A big wall
- Masking tape
- A marker for each participant

Preparation Hang five flipchart papers on the wall. Each one should be marked with one of the following typical settings in or from which girls / boys and young men / young women face expectations:

- school
- family
- friends
- society
- partner

Divide each flip chart into two columns; one column should have the title ‘boys’ or ‘young men’, and the other should have the title ‘girls’ or ‘young women’ on each.

Instructions

Tell participants they should take a few minutes to think about what they believe is expected or demanded of girls and boys in the different settings identified on the posters on the wall. For this they can walk around or sit down and think, but they should do this part of the activity individually. Once they have ideas, they should write these down on the relevant part of the appropriate flip chart.

Once the brainstorming phase has been completed, divide the participants into five sub-groups. Each group should select one of the flip charts and discuss its content.

¹ Adapted from an exercise developed by “Intercultural Center, Foundation of Women’s Forum, Sweden”.

LEVEL: I



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TIME: 60 MIN.



- The following guiding questions may help participants in the discussion.
- • What differences can you identify between the expectations and demands put on girls and boys?
- • What would you like to change?
- • How do you think it can be changed?

• Each group reports the results of their discussion briefly to the whole group.

• **Debriefing and evaluation**

• Initiate the discussion by reviewing the results of the group work. Ask participants for their initial reactions to the results, how they feel about them, if anything surprised them and, if so, why.

• Continue the discussion using the following guiding questions:

- • Where do these expectations come from?
- • Is it possible for boys and girls / young men and young women to fulfil these expectations?
- • Who promotes these expectations?
- • How do we ourselves promote them (whether consciously or unconsciously)?
- • What are the effects of these expectations on young people?
- • How can we / our organisations contribute positively to changing the situation?

• **Tips for facilitators**

• While this is a classic brainstorming and discussion activity, its theme, ‘expectations on different genders’, can be quite controversial. Expectations on different genders are also a matter of perception. As a result, this exercise can cause disagreement, as what for some participants may be perfectly reasonable expectations, for others may be overly demanding. The perception of expectations on different genders can also be linked to issues of values and socialisation. You can also focus the discussion on these related issues.

• **Suggestions for follow-up**

• Suggest that participants conduct longer-term observations of the expectations placed on different genders in real settings (for example, over one week or one month). The results of these observations could be compared to a survey of young people of different genders in the real settings (for example, school) about their perceptions of the expectations placed on different genders. You can initiate a discussion of the similarities and differences between the perceptions resulting from the survey and those resulting from individual observation.

• **Ideas for action**

• You can encourage members of your group to discuss what they would like to change in relation to this issue, and provide them with the opportunity and facilitation to prepare projects or actions to create change. Make sure that both boys and girls are involved in this process and find an equal voice for their ideas.