



3. Title: Myths about Women and Men & their Consequences

Short Description/Overview

Gender stereotypes are embedded in culture. Important part of traditional culture is full of beliefs about men and women that produce and perpetuate gender stereotypes, prejudice & discrimination.

This activity is part of CESI manual on identities, sexuality and process of socialization "Sex and Gender under Magnifying Glass", Hodžić, A., Bijelić, N., & Cesar, S. (2003).

Themes: gender stereotypes, prejudice & discrimination

Time: 60 minutes

Group size: 12 – 20 participants

Objectives

Analyze the ways in which culture conveys messages and express beliefs about men and women. Participants will become aware of the messages that lie behind traditional myths and how these messages are influencing behaviour.

Materials Needed:

- flipchart paper
- markers
- blank papers (A4 size)
- pens

Step-by-step:

1. Ask participants to individually come up with and write on a piece of paper, a list of poems, stories, proverbs, sayings, games and rhymes from their childhood that are related to gender roles.
2. Divide participants into small groups and tell them that their task is to: discuss the lists and the consequences these messages have on your upbringing as a boy or a girl.
3. Ask the group to pick the most obvious example and prepare a presentation for the entire group in the form of a brief drama.
4. Each group presents their work. During that time comments are prohibited but the facilitator can write down short descriptions of the stories or poems on the flipchart.
5. In a big group ask participants to brainstorm on the meanings of the presentations. Write them down on another flipchart (right next to the flipchart that contains descriptions of the stories/poems).
6. Discuss the ideas that emerged. Possible questions for discussion:



- What did you learn about how it is to be a boy or a girl?
- Where did you learn that?
- What consequences do you notice today in your life?

Debriefing and evaluation

Each culture has its own cultural myths. Myths are usually not analyzed so participants can be surprised to learn about the full meaning behind the myth and their power and covert influence. It's important to stress that boys as well as girls are under a lot of pressure to conform to the expectations of their gender role. Messages that we have internalized as children can have a great impact on our adult lives.

Tips for facilitators

If this activity is conducted in mixed groups, it creates a space for discussion on different gender roles i.e. how they are created and sustained. Analyzing myths can be helpful in discovering the role of the socialization process in creating gender roles and in understanding how these roles are deeply embedded in culture.