

GENDER ROLES

Objective: Students anticipate possible gender roles in their future. They consider how gender expectations affect job and career, family responsibilities and lifestyle.

Materials: None

Time Needed: 50 minutes

ACTIVITY:

1. Ask the group, “What kind of woman/man will you be? If they don’t address the following areas spontaneously, follow up with these questions:

- What kind of life will you lead?
- Do think you will be a “traditional” male? A “traditional” female? What do you think “traditional” will mean when you are an adult?
- Do you think you will marry early in life? Later in life? Or not at all?
- Do you think you will have children?
- Will you stop your career when children are born or ask for maternity/paternity leave?
- What kind of parenting arrangement will you be comfortable with?
- What kinds of interests will you have?
- What will you do to relax?
- Will you have skills and interests similar to those of your same-sex parent?
- Will you share household duties, like cooking, laundry, grocery-buying, paying bills, yard work, mechanical fixing, etc. with your partner?
- Will you be a “homebody,” preferring to relax at home rather than going out?
- Will you stay fit?
- Will you be dependent on your spouse/partner and others for intellectual stimulation and emotional uplifting, or will you be relatively independent and self-sufficient?
- Will you be a “macho man”/“feminine woman” or a male/female with a different kind of attitude and personal style? Will you resist or welcome changes in gender roles?

You might also want to address the above questions one at a time and in depth.

2. Ask the group members some or all of these questions:

- What are your career plans?
- What training or education will be required?
- If you plan to have children, when would you like to have them?
- Do you anticipate any problems with job entrance or advancement in your chosen field because of your gender?

Ask the female group members how they feel about the aspirations of the male group members. Do they seem realistic, idealistic or naïve?

Ask the male group members how they feel about the aspirations of the female group members. Do they seem realistic, idealistic or naïve?

3. Encourage the group to explore their gender role expectations (and stereotypes) by asking the following:

- Would you feel comfortable being supervised, managed or directed at work by a member of the other gender? By a member of the same gender?
- Would resent a coworker’s maternity/paternity leave if it required major adjustments in your own workload?

4. Invite the group to brainstorm some of the problems faced by dual-career couples. Mention the following if they don’t come up during the brainstorming:

- Job transfers
- Child-rearing
- Conflicting schedules
- Little time together
- Commuting
- Division of labor at home
- Mutual exhaustion
- Different income levels

Then ask questions like these:

- How would you deal with your spouse’s job transfer, if it meant you had to leave a good position?
- If you had children, what would be your role in child-rearing?
- When your schedules conflicted, whose schedule would be most important?
- If both of you worked outside the home, would you do half of the housework? More? Less? How would you determine what an appropriate level for you would be?

5. Invite the group to project into the future by asking the following:

- What do you think men’s and women’s roles will be when you are an adult—at home, in the workplace, in the community, and in state and national leadership?
- How will these roles be different from today?
- Have gender roles changed much in your lifetime? How?
- Will your role and attitudes be similar to those of your same-gender parent?

6. For closure, ask the group how they feel when they discuss gender roles. How do they feel when they think about changes in gender roles. Excited? Discouraged? Apprehensive? Scared?