

Session 6: Culture and Society

The notion "Society" describes – in the broadest sense – an independent group of people who have their culture in common, usually living in the same geographic area; internally they are united by familiar contacts and interactions, and depending on defined thinking of roles and status. Its construction is based on social concepts and traditional designs.

Culture is always marked by the social structure and is made up of material and non-material elements. The elements of a culture differ from one place to another. All human cultures, however, make use of the same basic materials: knowledge, language, symbolism, moral values, norms, body concepts, forms of habit, as well as human products. In contrast to the notion "nature" culture is a generalized anthropological definition for the rules of life of human beings.

Each society endeavours to shape and bring up the growing generation in accordance with their own culture. Using its comprehensive cultural styles, a society tries to enable its children to act socially. Gender roles are also among the components of cultural expectations. They determine the way women and men should think, feel and behave. They are often based on stereotypical conceptions of gender differences. Although the social behaviour is changing and is getting more differentiated, gender role stereotypes still exist, which implies that both women and men produce role conflicts and stress between their individual conceptions and social expectations.

The following collection of materials targeting at "Culture and Society" offers five activities with boys (and girls):

1. Remember your childhood – Socialization

In the article "Remember your childhood – Socialization" emphasis is put on the reflection of the children's own gender roles, on their own experiences of socialization (in their family) as well as on their upbringing. Boys should be empowered to become aware of their wishes and their conceptions of "being a boy/being male" in dialogue with others.

2. Let's do gender!

"Let's do gender!" aims at supporting boys in the process of finding their self by playfully looking at male conceptions from a historical/philosophical view.

Boys are expected to get to know different conceptions of masculinity and understand them in a differentiated way, and at the same time understand this diversity of roles as a chance.

3. Who is superior to whom? Gender stereotyping as a form of culture

The activity – "Who is superior to whom? Gender stereotyping as a form of culture" – puts the focus on the cognition and perception of gender role stereotypes for boys.

What is effective respectively obstructive in this context should be dealt with and reflected in this unit.

4. Girls' fashion and boys' fashion – a fashion show to our taste!

The unit "Girls' fashion and boys' fashion – a fashion show to our taste!" is aimed at reducing respectively critically questioning role clichés and gender stereotypes.

Under the central question "What suits me?" fashion criteria linked to presentations in the media will be analysed and will be utilized for thinking about what it means being a boy.

5. Idols (?) in our time

The chapter "Idols (?) in our time" makes models and stars of boys a subject of discussion. What are the meanings and functions they have? What do stars advance? What features/characteristics do they display?
This unit targets at the boys' images of themselves as well as at reflecting their own values and personality traits.