

# Chapter 2

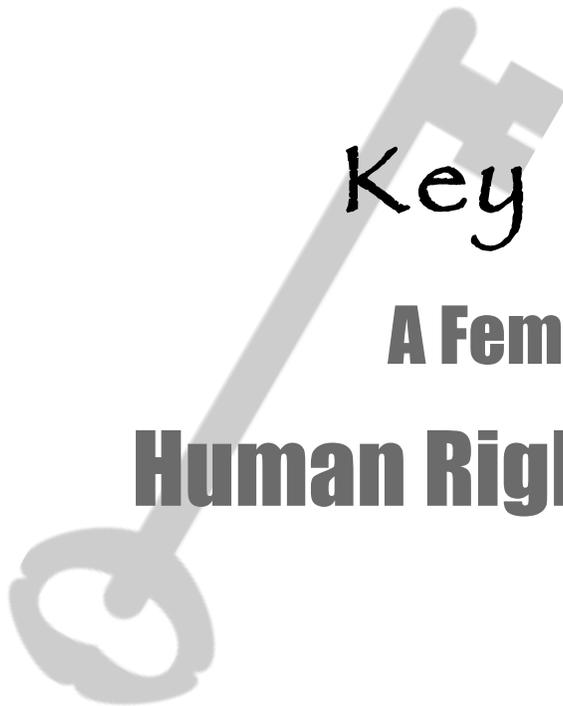
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## Gender

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Key Concepts:

**A Feminist Approach to  
Human Rights Education**



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## Chapter 2

### Key Concept:

# Gender

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Until there is gender equality, there can be no sustainable development. It is impossible to realize our goals while discriminating against half the human race.

—Kofi Annan, *State of the World's Children Report 2007*

### DEFINITION

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From *The New Oxford American Dictionary*:

(emphasis in the original):

**gen·der** l'jendər

noun

1. the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones): *traditional concepts of gender* | [as modifier] : *gender roles*.
  - the members of one or other sex: *differences between the genders are encouraged from an early age*.
2. GRAMMAR (in languages such as Latin, Greek, Russian, and German): each of the classes (typically masculine, feminine, common, neuter) of nouns and pronouns distinguished by the different inflections that they have and require in words syntactically associated with them. Grammatical gender is only very loosely associated with natural distinctions of sex.
  - the property (in nouns and related words) of belonging to such a class: *adjectives usually agree with the noun in gender and number*.

ORIGIN: late Middle English: from Old French *gendre* (modern *genre*), based on Latin *genus* 'birth, family, nation.' The earliest meanings were 'kind, sort, genus' and 'type or class of noun, etc.' (which was also a sense of Latin *genus*).

USAGE: The word **gender** has been used since the 14th century as a grammatical term, referring to classes of noun designated as *masculine*, *feminine*, or *neuter* in some languages. The sense 'the state of being male or female' has also been used since the 14th century, but this did not become common until the mid 20th century. Although the words **gender** and **sex** both have the sense 'the state of being male or female,' they are typically used in slightly different ways: **sex** tends to refer to biological differences, while **gender** refers to cultural or social ones.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENT

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From *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet 33*:  
(emphasis in the original)

### What is gender?

Gender is **relevant to both women and men**.

Gender refers to the **socially constructed differences** between women and men that are:

- Attributed throughout the life cycle
- Learned, not innate
- Changeable for any given society over time
- Manifested with wide variations both within and between cultures

Gender **influences the roles, power and resources** for women and men in any culture.

## GENDER IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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The term *gender* does not appear in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, although it is a major topic in debates about global issues. Indeed, Gender and Development (GAD) provides an important critique of globalization and neoliberal development strategies. By treating gender equality seriously as a human rights topic, this SHREI project brings the UDHR into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

When Eleanor Roosevelt led the UDHR development team, gender did not exist as an element of human identity. In 1948, *sex* was used to denote the concept we now think of as *gender*. The latter term was used exclusively in the field of linguistics to group nouns into categories: masculine, feminine, neuter, and sometimes other categories. These groupings are quite arbitrary, as we can see by considering the gender of *apple* in a few languages. In Russian, *apple* is neuter, in French it is feminine, and in German it is masculine. Some other German words reveal the arbitrary nature of linguistic gender: in German, *mädchen* (girl) is neuter, while *boygroup* (a band of male musicians, is feminine. Clearly, within linguistics, *gender* and *sex* are not synonymous.

As the field of linguistic anthropology grew, cultural anthropologists began to use *gender* to describe what earlier scholarship had referred to as *sex roles*. By using the term *gender*, social scientists were calling attention to the arbitrary, culturally constructed nature of these roles. Just as languages are cultural constructs, so too are gendered divisions within a culture.

Strict gender-role divisions, however, often lead not only to gender inequality, but also to violence against women. Honor killings, acid attacks, dowry deaths—these egregious human rights violations reveal why HR educators must pay attention to gender.

## Activity 6. Gendered Assumptions

This activity combines the arts and sciences through a process that includes creative writing and statistical analysis. In Phase 2 of this lesson, students learn about inductive reasoning in scientific method. By reflecting on the culturally conditioned choices they unconsciously made in their creative pieces, students come to understand the distinction scholars make between gender (a social construct) and sex (a biological construct).

Objectives	<p>Present a definition of <i>gender</i> derived through inductive reasoning.</p> <p>Distinguish between the terms sex and gender as they are used within scholarly discourse.</p>
Time	40 minutes
Process	<p><b>Phase 1. Creating Stories</b></p> <p>First, write the following prompt on the board and give students ten minutes to compose stories in response to the prompt:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Compose a story that includes each of these characters:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>a doctor</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>an athlete</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>a police officer</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>someone at a bus stop</i></p> <p>After writing for ten minutes, students read their stories to a partner (to enjoy their creativity).</p> <p>As they are reading, turn the list of characters into a chart, as shown in Figure 6.</p> <p><b>Phase 2. Analyzing Data</b></p> <p>The next step involves collecting data for a statistical analysis: Ask how many students wrote about a female doctor, a male doctor, etc., and record the number on the chart.</p> <p>When you have recorded the data, ask students to identify patterns; this is the crucial step in inductive reasoning. Students will notice that a majority (usually two thirds) of their stories contained men in the roles of power (doctor, athlete, police officer). Female characters predominate in only the category of relative powerlessness (someone waiting for a bus).</p>

	<p><b>Phase 3. Understanding Concepts: <i>Sex and Gender</i></b></p> <p>Ask students to come up with hypotheses about why their imaginations produced these images. Use this discussion to establish the difference between <b>sex as biologically determined</b> and <b>gender as socially constructed</b>.</p> <p>Finally, have students work in teams to come up with two clear examples of socially constructed gender rules and roles, one from US society and one from another country.</p>
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**Figure 6**

	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Unknown/other</i>
<i>a doctor</i>			
<i>an athlete</i>			
<i>a police officer</i>			
<i>someone at a bus stop</i>			



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## Activity 7. Social Constructs

### *Global Journeys: USA, Cook Islands, Morocco*

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This lesson examines dance forms in three different countries. Students observe how this art form communicates socially constructed ideas about gender to young people as they learn culturally acceptable ways of moving in public. This lesson uses sections from the PBS series *Dancing*, which producer Ronald Blumer has generously made available online for classroom use. Through these videos, students “travel” to Morocco and the Cook Islands with anthropologists to study the connection between dance rules and gender roles.

Objectives	<p>Examine, compare, and contrast the social construction of gender roles in a variety of cultures.</p> <p>Observe how art forms—dance in this case—communicate a culture’s gender ideology to its children.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Videos</b></p> <p>Sections of the PBS series <i>Dancing</i> available online:</p> <p><a href="http://vimeo.com/67016125">http://vimeo.com/67016125</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ minutes 3-16 on ballroom dance in the USA</li> <li>▪ minutes 16-27 on Cook Island dance</li> <li>▪ minutes 27-30 on Moroccan dance</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://vimeo.com/67483113">http://vimeo.com/67483113</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ minutes 0-8 continuation of Moroccan dance</li> </ul> <p><b>Handout</b></p> <p>Handout 7A—<i>Social Construction of Gender Rules and Roles</i></p>
Time	80 minutes
Process	<p>After giving students Handout 2B on the <i>Social Construction of Gender Rules and Roles</i>, show the first section of <i>Dancing</i> on ballroom dance (13 minutes). After viewing this section, students can use the handout to briefly capture ideas about how ballroom dance conveys hetero-normative values and gendered rules (the man leads, the woman follows, for example).</p> <p>Next, show the section on Cook Islands dance (11 minutes).</p>

	<p>After giving students a few minutes to jot ideas on the handout, lead a discussion comparing and contrasting the social values conveyed by American and Cook Islands dance.</p> <p>Finally, show the section on Moroccan dance (11 minutes). After students use the handout to reflect, lead a 3-way comparative examination of gender ideologies in all three countries: USA, Cook Islands, and Morocco.</p>
<p>Extending the Learning</p>	<p><b><i>Global Journey: Morocco</i></b></p> <p><b>Supplemental Reading</b></p> <p>Mernissi, Fatema. <i>Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems</i>. New York: Washington Square P, 2002. Print.</p> <p>Fatema Mernissi is one of the sociologists featured in the Moroccan section of the film <i>Dancing</i>. In <i>Scheherazade Goes West</i>, Mernissi uses Edward Said's concept <i>orientalism</i> to analyze stereotypes of Muslim women in European art traditions: ballet, literature, and paintings by Ingres, Matisse, and other canonical Western artists. Students in Art History, Dance History, or Sociology may find her analysis enlightening.</p>

**Handout 7A**

**Social Construction of Gender Rules and Roles**

After watching each section of the film *Dancing*, fill in each of the boxes for each of these societies: United States, Cook Islands, and Morocco.

<b>United States</b>	
Ballroom dance rules for women	Women's traditional roles in US society
Ballroom dance rules for men	Men's traditional roles in US society
<b>Cook Islands</b>	
Cook Islands dance rules for women	Women's traditional roles in Cook Islands society
Cook Islands dance rules for men	Men's traditional roles in Cook Islands society
<b>Morocco</b>	
Moroccan dance rules for women	Women's traditional roles Moroccan society
Moroccan dance rules for men	Men's traditional roles in Moroccan society

## Activity 8. Stories and Stereotypes

### *Global Journeys: Nigeria, Antigua & Barbuda*

This lesson was inspired by the work of *Professor Erica Onugha*, English Professor at Foothill College. I am grateful to Professor Onugha for her expert guidance during the development of this activity.

Objectives	<p>Examine a theory of stereotype formation developed by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie.</p> <p>Examine and compare the construction of gender roles in two societies: Antigua and the USA.</p> <p>Strengthen emotional intelligence through a creative writing assignment designed to promote empathy.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Website</b></p> <p><i>The Danger of a Single Story</i>: A TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:  <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html">www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html</a></p> <p><b>Handouts</b></p> <p>Handout 8A—<i>Girl</i> by Jamaica Kincaid</p> <p>Handout 8B—Connecting <i>Girl</i> and <i>The Danger of a Single Story</i></p>
Time	40 minutes of class time with a 30-minute homework assignment that students prepare before class
Process	<p><b>Homework</b>—to complete before class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students watch Chimamanda Adichie’s TED Talk <i>The Danger of a Single Story</i>. They should come to class ready to discuss three examples of “the danger of a single story” from Adichie’s speech: 1) the poverty of Fide’s family, 2) the image of Africa held by Adichie’s college roommate in the USA, and 3) Adichie’s image of Mexico based on the US immigration debate.</li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Activities:</b></p> <p><i>The Danger of a Single Story</i></p> <p>First, have students compare their ideas about Adichie’s <i>Danger of a Single Story</i> in pairs or small groups. Use their discussions to establish a shared understanding of her argument.</p>

	<p><i>Connecting Chimamanda Adichie’s Ideas to Jamaica Kincaid’s Girl</i></p> <p>Give each student the prose poem <i>Girl</i> by Jamaica Kincaid (Handout 1). Ask two students to read the story out loud: one reads the advice from the Older Woman, and one reads the responses of the Girl, <i>indicated by italics in the text</i>. This oral reading guides students in hearing two voices, two points of view, two stories incorporated into the prose poem.</p> <p>Next, have students count off from 1 to 5 to form five teams. Ask a volunteer from each team to read aloud one of Adichie’s five claims on Handout 2.</p> <p>After hearing all five claims, each team examines how its assigned claim relates to <i>Girl</i>, and then reports its findings to the class.</p> <p><i>Gender Stereotypes in the USA and Antigua</i></p> <p>Ask volunteers to take turns reading the definitions of these terms out loud: <i>sex, gender, gender roles, gender stereotypes</i> (Handout 2). Then ask students to provide examples of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ gender roles for men and women in the USA</li> <li>▪ gender stereotypes they have encountered in American media (TV commercials, magazine ads, computer games, toys marketed for girls and boys, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Next, have teams examine the gender roles and stereotypes contained in the Older Woman’s instructions to the Girl. Students can then compare and contrast gender stereotypes in Antigua and the USA.</p> <p><i>Re-Writing the Single Story: Identity and Dignity</i></p> <p>To complete this lesson, give students 15 minutes for the in-class writing assignment described on Handout 2. This assignment encourages students to form an empathetic bond with a Caribbean woman by writing from the Girl’s point of view, expressing dignity through her voice and her multi-dimensional story.</p>
<p>Extending the Learning</p>	<p><b><i>Global Journey: Argentina</i></b></p> <p><b>Supplemental Reading</b></p> <p>Lugones, María. “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception.” <i>Hypatia</i> 2.2 (June 1987): 3-19. <i>Wiley Online Library</i>, n.d. PDF file.</p> <p>In this classic essay, Argentinian philosopher María Lugones develops ideas that complement Adichie’s thesis, enriching this activity in Philosophy courses.</p>

# GIRL

BY

JAMIACA KINCAID

(1978)

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk barehead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum on it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the street—flies will follow you; *but I don't sing benna on Sundays at all and never in Sunday school*; this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a button-hole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease; this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants; when you are growing dasheen, make sure it gets plenty of water or else it makes your throat itch when you are eating it; this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner; this is how you set a table for dinner with an important guest; this is how you set a table for lunch; this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all; this is how to make a bread pudding; this is how to make doukona; this is how to make pepper pot; this is how to make a good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don't like, and that way something bad won't fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man; and if this doesn't work there are other ways, and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up; this is how to spit up in the air if you feel like it, and this is how to move quick so that it doesn't fall on you; this is how to make ends meet; always squeeze bread to make sure it's fresh; *but what if the baker won't let me feel the bread?*; you mean to say that after all you are really going to be the kind of woman who the baker won't let near the bread?

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benna: a type of Afro-Caribbean music often accompanied by song and/or dance.

doukona: a Caribbean pudding made from root vegetables and cooked in plantain leaves; doukona is similar to dokono, a popular food in Ghana.

## Connecting *Girl* and *The Danger of a Single Story*

### *Ideas for Class Discussion*

From *The Danger of a Single Story* by Chimamanda Adichie:

1. [This] is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.
2. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.
3. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.
4. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.
5. Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

### *Definitions for Class Discussion*

**Sex:** either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and many other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions.

**Gender:** the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).

**Gender roles:** separate activities, behaviors, and attitudes assigned to women and men by the culture or society to which they belong; specific gender roles vary among societies.

**Gender stereotypes:** assumptions about the inherent capabilities of women and men based on a society's gender roles.

### *In-Class Creative Writing*

The Older Woman presents a stereotyped “single story” about the Girl’s longings, her capabilities, and her future. Imagine that the Girl creates a different story for herself, a story based on uncovering her dignity and pursuing her unique talents. Now imagine that ten years have passed, and the Girl decides to write a letter to the Older Woman.

Using the Girl’s voice, compose her letter to the Older Woman. In her letter, describe the multi-dimensional story of the path she has taken in her life.

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## Activity 9. EnGendering Economics

### *Global Journeys: Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Philippines*

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This lesson uses sections from the film *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies, and Global Economics*, which the National Film Board of Canada has generously made available online for classroom use. During this activity, students use gender as an analytic lens for critiquing approaches to poverty taken by Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. The reflection and self-expression activities provide opportunities to think about *interdependence* as a valuable aspect of human experience.

Objectives	<p>Observe how economist Marilyn Waring's use of gender as a lens of analysis uncovers inequalities that are not acknowledged in standard economic theories.</p> <p>Develop an appreciation of unpaid labor traditionally performed by women—childcare, family healthcare, care for the elderly, subsistence farming, food preparation, provision of water, etc.</p> <p>Critique economic indicators such as GDP that ignore these contributions to a country's welfare.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Film</b></p> <p><i>Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies, and Global Economics</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.nfb.ca/film/whos_counting">https://www.nfb.ca/film/whos_counting</a></p>
Time	2 hours
Process	<p><b>Phase 1. Observation</b></p> <p>Show the following sections of <i>Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies, and Global Economics</i> in class, stopping after each section to discuss 1) what students learn about women's lives around the world, and 2) what students think about Waring's critique of standard economic theories.</p> <p>Sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ minutes 20-27 — women's lives in Zimbabwe</li> <li>▪ minutes 29-33 — women's lives in New Zealand</li> <li>▪ minutes 48-53 — the UN System of National Accounts</li> <li>▪ minutes 61-70 — women's lives in the Philippines</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Phase 2. Reflection</b></p> <p>In a personal journal, have students reflect in writing on these points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify times when you have performed unpaid labor that benefitted another person.</li> <li>2. Identify times when someone devoted unpaid labor to your care and welfare.</li> </ol> <p><b>Phase 3. Self-Expression</b></p> <p>As homework, give students this writing prompt:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Write a letter expressing your gratitude to someone who has given time and unpaid labor to your care and welfare.</p> <p>Finally, have each student rewrite the letter as a poem.</p>
<p>Extending the Learning</p>	<p><b><i>Global Journeys: Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda</i></b></p> <p><b>Supplemental Resources</b></p> <p>ActionAid. <i>Making Care Visible: Women’s Unpaid Care Work in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya.</i>  <a href="http://www.actionaidusa.org/publications/making-care-visible">http://www.actionaidusa.org/publications/making-care-visible</a></p> <p>ActionAid’s report updates Marilyn Waring’s work by providing case studies of women’s unpaid care work in four countries. This report provides students with the opportunity to analyze data from time use surveys and to evaluate the major claim made in the report’s Executive Summary:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><b>Women’s responsibility for care leads to the violation of their basic human rights</b> to an education, political participation, decent work and leisure. It contributes to persistent gender inequalities.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(4; emphasis in the original)</p>

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