

ACTIVITY 8.1

Exploring the Limitations of the Binary Model

Directions: This activity can be done with small or large groups. Allow time for participants to process the information presented and ask questions.

Read the following statement aloud:

The binary model of gender and sexuality has been assumed because of the belief that gender and sexual identity are biologically based. For example, a baby is born, male genitalia are immediately identified, and the child is assigned a male gender and socialized to be masculine. Such work appears to be a “natural” conclusion. Biology is seen as determinative of one’s gender, further resulting in gender and sex being seen as synonymous. Sex and gender are conflated in an attempt to bring order to a diverse world. As such, order is found when a body with a penis is labeled boy, and a body with a vagina is labeled girl.

Spend some time in your group discussing the following questions:

1. How does the gender binary view transgender, genderqueer, or gender nonconforming individuals? Or does it ignore them entirely?
 2. In what ways do you fit into the binary?
 3. In what ways do you not fit into the binary?
 4. When you haven’t fit into the binary, how have other people reacted?
 5. How have you felt oppressed or restricted by the binary model?
 6. In what ways have you enforced the binary in yourself? In others?
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