

## Understanding Adolescence and Gender

### Part II – Understanding Gender

#### Introduction

You all must already know that in general, humans with XX combination of chromosomes are called females while those having XY combination of chromosomes are called males. The terms *female* and *male* represent types of sex in human beings. Sex is biologically determined. This means that biological characteristics (in this case, genetic material / chromosomes) help decide the sex of a person. During adolescence, with the onset of puberty, the sex of a person becomes further prominent through the development of secondary sexual characters. You must have learnt about this in the chapter – “Reaching the age of adolescence”. Can you give some examples of how human females and males can be biologically different?

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In our society, a female is referred to as a ‘woman’ while a male is referred to as a ‘man’. The terms *woman* and *man* represent types of gender in human beings. In contrast to sex, gender is socially constructed. When something is a social construct, it means that it is created by humans and may not be based on biological (natural) characteristics. For e.g. how long should hair be kept, type of clothes to be worn, etc. We, human beings, start developing our gender related identities from birth. The way we think of ourselves and others, in terms of gender (boy, girl, man, woman) is influenced by what we see and hear in our families, school, communities, mass/ social media and the society, in general. You must have seen or heard that in some families, boys are encouraged to study and have a career whereas girls are asked to focus on household work. Often boys who like cooking or stitching are considered girlish, while girls who play sports are called boyish. To build and live in a healthy society, it is necessary to treat everyone equally. It is very important to understand that treating someone as an unequal just because that person is a girl/boy or woman/man is unfair. To be able to contribute to a just and healthy society, we must learn to be aware and notice if someone is being treated unequally, or when a message of gender-based stereotype is being propagated through a forum such as media advertisements.

#### Your task:

You will work in groups of 3-4. Each group will be given a picture card (or shown a video clip). Study the material given to you carefully, try to understand the situation depicted in the picture. Does the situation represent the two genders – boy/ man and girl/ woman equally or unequally or differently? Write down your views in the space provided below. Share and discuss your

thoughts with other members in your group. Later, during class discussion, share your views about the picture card (or video clip) with the entire class. Listen and try to understand the views expressed by other students / groups.

**Some instructions that will help you to get the best out of this unit:**

1. At all times, be considerate of others' feelings and views.
2. Be respectful and understanding about the others students' experiences. Remember there may be things one may not know or understand about gender related issues in our world.
3. During the class discussion, listen to what others have to say. You may learn things you were unaware of till now.

**Study your group's picture card and respond to the following questions.**

1. What does the picture card show? Describe it in a sentence or two.

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2. In the picture card, do the two genders seem to be shown as equal or unequal or different? State and briefly explain your views on this.

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3. List the views stated by other members in your group. Their views may agree or disagree with your views.

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**Share your groups' views about the picture card with the entire class. (Your teacher will tell you when).**

## Vigyan Pratibha Learning Unit

4. How did the other students in your class react to your / group's views? Note some of their responses to your thoughts.

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5. State some situations where you experienced gender inequality directly or indirectly. (For example, you could state some household / outdoor tasks that usually only girls / boys are expected to do).

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6. Do you think that this situation should be changed? If yes, what can be done by you and others to change such situations?

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