

UNDERSTANDING MALE PRIVILEGE

- ✓ 1. To create awareness of male privilege.
- ✓ 2. To create awareness of the pervasiveness of privilege.
- ✓ 3. To help learners to seeing how male privilege is perpetuated by society.

- ★ **Teacher Prompt: 'Male Privileges'**
- 🕒 45 min - 1 hour

PROCEDURE

- 1 Do not tell the class the topic that the exercise addresses.
- 2 Tell the class that you are going to conduct a quick survey. Tell them that you will read out some statements and if the statement applies to them, they should answer 'yes' by raising their hand. If the statement does not apply to them they will not raise their hand. Remind them to answer as honestly as possible.
- 3 Draw two columns on the board and call one 'A' and one 'B'. Number the rows 1-10.
- 4 Without mentioning that these are male privileges, read out the first statement in the Teacher Prompt: 'Male Privileges'. As learners raise their hands count the boys and the girls separately. In column A, note the number of girls who raised their hands, and in column B, note the number of boys. Learners should pick up what you are surveying yet.
- 5 Repeat the process for each statement in 'List of Male Privileges'.
- 6 Once you have completed the list, ask learners what they think columns 'A' and 'B' represent. By now they should have gathered that A is for Girls, and B is for Boys.
- 7 Now ask them if they notice anything about the numbers under each column? What do the numbers tell us?
- 8 Tell the class that the statements you read out are examples of male **privileges**. You may define male privilege as:

A benefit, favour, protection or advantage given to males, simply because they are male. For example the fact that most men can walk down the street without experiencing street harassment is an example of male privilege, even though most men do not even realise that their experiences are different from women.
- 9 Facilitate a discussion by asking of the class:
 - a. Were you surprised by the outcome of the survey?
 - b. Have you noticed these privileges before?
 - c. Given that the examples are from everyday life, why don't we take more notice of these privileges in our daily lives?
 - d. What do you think is the effect on girls and on boys, over time, when they experience male privilege in society? What would be the effect of reducing male privilege?

The emphasis here should be on the idea that male privilege negatively affects everyone.

Possible benefits of limiting male privilege may include:

- More emotionally intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex.
- Ability to learn about life, and experience new perspectives, by sharing with the opposite sex.
- Freedom from rigid gender roles and stereotypes.
- Increasing self-awareness and self-understanding.

e. How can we challenge male privilege?

Answers may include:

- Pointing out male privilege, when you see it.
- Making an effort to hear the perspectives of girls and women, especially in male-dominated environments.
- Not use gender stereotypes to limit what girls and women can and should do.
- Give girls the same options and opportunities as boys.

TEACHER TIPS



General

This exercise provides a safe space to identify and challenge pervasive male privileges that marginalise women in daily life. The teacher should facilitate discussion in such a way that learners respect each other's cultural, religious and personal views when discussing their opinions, but that ultimately these privileges are exposed as unfair, and unearned.

The exercise should be conducted in a way so as boys are not blamed for the privileges they receive and instead become aware, and try to challenge them, in order that girls have the same opportunities.



Making the Link with Gender & Violence

These privileges disadvantage women and girls on a daily basis by portraying them as inferior to men, thereby perpetuating their domination by men and male partners, and increasing the threat of sexual violence.



Assessment Ideas

Learners could do an audit of male privileges in the school environment (e.g. staff in management positions, activities, sports and so on).

MALE PRIVILEGES

1. I am called on frequently when I raise my hand in class.
2. My school offers a wide range of sports for me to play.
3. The school provides good coaches and equipment for the sports I play.
4. There are many well-known sporting personalities of my gender.
5. There are many well-known and respected politicians, civic leaders, and religious leaders of my gender who shape our society.
6. I am encouraged to date, and it's cool to be thought of as attractive and popular with the opposite sex.
7. People think it's cool if I am sexually experienced.
8. I don't worry about people making fun of my love life, or calling me names because of it.
9. I am not expected to do many chores at home.
10. The toys I played with as a child were rarely related to homemaking (cooking, baking, cleaning, washing and taking care of children).
11. I do not feel strong social pressure to get married, or have children.
12. If I have children it will not affect my job or career.
13. I can expect to be financially independent as an adult and not rely on a partner or spouse for money.
14. I will probably earn the same, or more money than my partner or spouse.
15. I do not feel pressure to change the shape of my body to fit the way people in magazines and on TV look.
16. I feel comfortable about my body hair, and am not told to groom or remove it.
17. I feel safe from sexual violence (rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment).
18. I can walk down the street without fear that strangers will comment on what I am wearing, try to touch me, whistle or make rude noises at me.
19. If I get upset or angry, no one will blame it on my sex (gender).
20. I can spend time alone with a new friend of the opposite sex without worrying about my safety.