

Context of Culture and Gender

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WHAT'S COVERED

Both culture and gender play key roles not only in how you perceive your audience, but in how your audience perceives you. This lesson will cover:

1. Understanding Gender
2. Understanding Culture
3. How Gender and Culture Can Impact Public Speaking

1. Understanding Gender

When we think of **gender**, we often think of male or female; that's only half of understanding gender. The denotations of male and female actually refer to biological and physiological sex.

Gender is a sociological construct of values, ideals, and behaviors about what it means to be either male or female, and are often regarded in terms of masculine or feminine, respectively. Many people use sex and gender interchangeably, but one does not have to be male to identify as masculine, and vice versa.



TERM TO KNOW

Gender

The sociocultural phenomenon of dividing people into the categories of "male" and "female," with each having associated clothing, roles, stereotypes, etc.

2. Understanding Culture

In the example above, we have both a biological, physical characteristic (sex) with a superimposed cultural construct (gender). The same applies to both race and **culture**, respectively.

Race refers to groups of people who are distinguished by shared physical characteristics, such as skin color and hair type.

Culture refers to the customs, habits, and value systems of groups of people. People of the same race may not share the same culture; similarly, a culture isn't necessarily comprised of people of the same race.



TERM TO KNOW

Culture

The beliefs, values, behavior and material objects that constitute a people's way of life; the arts, customs, and habits that characterize a particular society or nation.

3. How Gender and Culture Can Impact Public Speaking

When considering both gender and cultural contexts, we often encounter **bias**, both intentional and unintentional, and implicit or explicit. We may have presumptive judgments or opinions about those cultures and races that differ from our own, which are often the result of our own upbringing.

And as much as you might be biased toward or against certain gender and cultural groups, your audience will have just as much bias as you, and in different ways.

As such, it is radically important to know exactly to whom you're speaking when giving your speech. It's helpful for you to anticipate not only the biases you might bring to the podium, but those biases of your audience towards you as well.



BIG IDEA

The speaker's gender and cultural identity and the audience's cultural and gender identities invariably influence one another.



TERM TO KNOW

Bias

An inclination towards something; predisposition, partiality, prejudice, preference, predilection.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **gender** and **culture** are societal constructs of sex and (sometimes, but not always) race, respectively. People who identify as one sex (i.e., female) may not necessarily associate with the corresponding gender traits (i.e., feminine). The same is true of race and culture, respectively. Both **gender and culture can impact public speaking**, as they come with their own set of biases—biases that you may have toward differing genders and cultures, and the biases that differing genders and cultures may have towards you.

Source: Source: Boundless. "Context of Culture and Gender." Boundless Communications Boundless, 27 Feb. 2017. Retrieved 26 Jun. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/introduction-to-public-speaking-1/elements-of-speech-communication-21/context-of-culture-and-gender-104-10669/>

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