

# Gender Bias

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about gender and gender bias in relation to public speaking and communication. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Understanding Gender
2. What is Gendered Communication?
3. Recognizing and Avoiding Gender Bias in Public Speaking



## 1. Understanding Gender

Before we can start talking about gender **bias**, it's first helpful to understand the concept of gender. **Gender** is not necessarily indicative of the sex organs with which we're born. When you're talking about the biological classification of "male" and "female" you're referring to sex, not gender.

Gender is the social construction of a person's sex. Gender refers to the social definition and cultural expectations of what it means to be "man" or "woman. " Additionally, some people may identify with a gender different from their sex, often identifying instead as "transgendered. "

Gender is not something with which you are born; instead it is taught, learned and understood through social interaction and experience.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### **Bias**

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

##### **Gender**

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

---

## 2. What Is Gendered Communication?

At its heart, gender is learned by, defined and taught to us through language and communication.

Gendered communication is often culturally constructed as well, meaning that what is considered masculine or feminine in one culture may not hold true in another.

How people express their gender often relies on the cultural constructs of the society in which they live or identify. The same is said of how people expect certain gender roles to be expressed by others.

---

## 3. Recognizing and Avoiding Gender Bias in Public Speaking

Just as you want to be cognizant and aware of the cultural biases that exist between both you and your audience, you'll want to be equally aware of how gender bias may factor into your speech. Know that when a woman gets up to speak in front of a group of men, she is instantly received differently than her male counterpart. In certain cultural contexts, men may be dismissive of a female speaker. Many times, female speakers have to adapt gendered mannerisms, language and stance of men in order to validate their authority as speaker.

It's not exactly a cut and dry vice-versa situation, either. Women may be at ease with a female speaker, but they may also be more attentive to a male speaker, given that many cultures teach women to be attentive (subservient in the extreme) to men.

Taking a step back and considering what gender bias you bring to the table, as well as what gender biases your audience might have of you is an important step in eliminating or at least addressing gender bias in your speech.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned why it's important to **understand gender** as a concept so that you can **recognize and avoid gender bias in public speaking**. Gender is the social construction and definition

of what it means to be man, woman, masculine or feminine. Gender expression and expectations of how gender should be expressed, or **gendered communication**, vary by culture. Men and women have different expectations and perceptions of each other and thus will receive speakers of opposing genders differently. Additionally, gender bias still exists - for both speaker and audience - when speakers share the same gender as their audience.

Source: Boundless. "Gender Bias." Boundless Communications Boundless, 14 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 22 May. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/wording-the-speech-11/understanding-bias-in-language-61/gender-bias-242-10638/>



## TERMS TO KNOW

### **Bias**

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

### **Gender**

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