

The **diversity of gender** and how to deal with it – a guide to respectful social interaction

an open educational resource about gender diversity

created by Belinda Muntschick

Leipzig University

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Table of contents

1. Short summary – what is this OER about?	2
2. Overview – important information.....	2
3. Background information – what you need to know	3
3.1 Description of the activity	3
3.2 Clarification of terms and concepts.....	3
4. Didactic considerations – how can you use the activity?	5
4.1 Connection to the curriculum	5
4.2 How to use the activity in a classroom.....	5
5. Materials – what you need to do the activity.....	9
6. Work cited	10

1. Short summary – what is this OER about?

This activity aims to inform students about the diversity of gender. By doing this activity, students learn to deal with the tool Taskcards, to interact with one another and to reflect on their own behaviour. Gender inclusive language can be discussed and compared (English and German), experiences can be shared, and knowledge can be tested. The tool contains definitions of the most important terms and provides additional information to reflect upon. The activity includes information from Germany and New Zealand, as it was created during an exchange program between the two countries but it is not limited to those two. Overall, this activity is made to read, speak, discuss, and write about the diversity of gender and what else is included in this topic.

2. Overview – important information

Topic	What do we have to think about when dealing with the diversity of gender?
Aims	<p>Students are able to collaborate with each other while working with the tool.</p> <p>Students are able to define gender identity and state the difference to sexual orientation and gender expression with the help of information provided in the tool.</p> <p>Students are familiar with the categorisation of gender by comparing required gender information from various public institutions with one another.</p> <p>Students are able to interpret comments under a video within a public debate with the help of previously researched knowledge.</p> <p>Students are able to create a situation in their mind, where they might need gender inclusive language and describe difficulties with help of different ideas given by official websites linked in the tool.</p> <p>Students are able to state differences in the English and German language concerning gender inclusive language with help of previously researched knowledge.</p> <p>Students can reflect their own experiences with gender diversity and gender roles and connect them to their own culture by watching a video about gender roles and reading about experiences from others.</p> <p>Students can detect signs of diversity in their own environment by looking at examples given in the tool and by the teacher.</p>
Level	The activity is aimed for students from class 9 and upwards. Looking at the curriculum (Saxony, Germany), it is most suited to do it when talking about diversity and gender issues in class 11/12.
Time	90 minutes (one double lesson)
Materials provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A) the activity on TaskCardsB) a QR Code to access the tool easilyC) a guide for the use of TaskcardsD) a crossword puzzle as a knowledge testing after the activityE) key for the crossword puzzleF) selection of comments below transgender athlete video

3. Background information – what you need to know

3.1 Description of the activity

As a teacher, it is important to make yourself familiar with the tool, videos, and websites, that are linked in the Taskcards, before you introduce the activity to your class. The Taskcard board contains eight sections, and six of them explore different subtopics of gender diversity. The first section (*how to work with these taskcards*) briefly explains how to work with the tool. If things are still unclear, there is a guide to the use of Taskcards in the materials (see part 5). As the name already reveals, a Taskcard board contains cards with tasks in them. These cards have different colours, with different meanings. Blue cards provide information, purple cards contain the tasks and pink cards contain comments/ pictures/ thoughts of participants. The second section (*What does gender diversity mean?*) provides information about different terms that are important to differentiate when working with gender diversity. These terms are explained in part 3.2. In the third section (*Gender identity*) the students are asked to compare required personal information about gender by different public institutions. The next section (*Transgender*) is concerned with a public debate about a New Zealand transgender weightlifter, where the students are required to interpret different comments below a video about this situation. Moreover, the concept of transfeminism is introduced in this section. The fifth section (*Gender inclusive language (GER/NZ)*) concerns itself with the use of gender inclusive language and difficulties of that. It gives the opportunity to compare the English language with the German language by looking at gender inclusive/ neutral language. The sixth section (*Your experiences*) gives an example of a problematic situation about gender roles and more importantly lets students reflect their own experiences and behaviour. In the seventh section (*Signs of diversity (?)*) there are different pictures of signs of diversity and the students are asked to take pictures of signs of diversity themselves. The last section (*Test your knowledge!*) contains a crossword puzzle the students are asked to solve by using the knowledge they gained during this activity. In the following part, there are explanations of the most important terms and concepts concerning gender diversity.

3.2 Clarification of terms and concepts

To know the difference between gender and sex is essential to work with the activity and to be able to engage in discussions. Gender refers to the characteristics of a human being, that are socially constructed and can vary from society to society (World Health Organisation, 2023). Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics, and it is often assigned at birth (WHO, 2023). This difference is important to know, so that the participants and teachers can correctly interpret the following information provided in the tool. Furthermore, the difference between gender identity, sexual orientation and gender expression should be clear to the teacher, so that they can answer questions and follow discussions. Gender identity refers to the understanding and experience of one's own gender (WHO, 2023), so it is something that only an individual itself decides over. Gender expression describes how a person communicates their gender to their environment, for example through behaviour (Oxford University Press, 2023). Sexual orientation is the romantic or physical attraction to another being (Eldridge, 2023). To be able to differentiate these terms is important because sexual orientation is often mixed with gender identity, but sexual orientation can be discussed in the thematic area of sexual diversity, not gender diversity. Moreover, as a teacher, one should be able to explain what pronouns refer to and how one should use them. This video, also provided in the Taskcards (section *Gender identity*) should help with that understanding: [Gender identity and Pronouns](#) (Onlea, 2017). As mentioned in part 3.1, the fourth section is concerned with transgender. The term transgender describes a person or the status of a person, whose gender does not match the sex they were assigned to at birth (Cambridge University Press, 2023). To be familiar with the term is important

to be able to work with the video of a transgender Olympian. As a teacher, you need to watch the video [New Zealand's weightlifter ignites debate over transgender athletes](#) (CBS Mornings, 2021) about this Olympian and read a few of the comments below the video, because the students should read and discuss them as well. This video reports about Laurel Hubbard, a transgender weightlifter, that competed in the Olympic games in Tokyo in 2021 in the women's category. By being familiar with the video and the comments, the teacher can initiate a discussion or show examples of comments the class could talk about. In the material section (see part 5), you can already find screenshots of a selection of comments below the video (more about that in part 4.2). Linked to that topic, the symbol of transfeminism is introduced in the same section in Taskcards. Emi Koyama, a social justice activist, defined transfeminism as "a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond" (Koyama in Dicker & Piepmeier, 2003, p.245). The fifth section is concerned with gender inclusive language in Germany and New Zealand. It is important to be respectful to one another (Council of Europe, 2018), so respectful and inclusive language should be used and talked about in a classroom. The New Zealand government gives some ideas and examples of gender inclusive language. It refers to gender neutral pronouns like they/them, talking about gender neutral terms for jobs like firefighter or businessperson, or talking about different sex, rather than the opposite sex. By following the link [Gender-inclusive language](#) (New Zealand Digital Government, 2022) more information can be found. If this activity is used in a context where the learners of English also speak German, a comparison between the two languages should be done. The teacher needs to think about what opportunities the German language provides to speak gender neutral or inclusive. With the help of the [Duden, geschlechtergerechter Sprachgebrauch](#) (Cornelsen Verlag, 2023) the teacher can initiate a discussion and help students to collect ideas. Next to the students, the teacher should reflect their own experiences with gender diversity or gender roles, as well. By watching the video [A class that turned around kids' assumptions of gender roles](#) (Upworthy, 2016) provided in the sixth section (*Your experiences*), the teacher becomes familiar with an example of a problematic situation and can react to it. In the video, a class is asked to draw a firefighter, a surgeon, and a fighter pilot. 61 out of 66 pictures were drawn as men. The class got to meet 3 people with the jobs who were women, which they could not believe at first. It is helpful to reflect upon one's own imagination of people with certain jobs and the influence that the activity might have on it.

Before doing this activity with your class, it is advised to go around your own city and look for signs of diversity (especially gender diversity), so that you can show some examples to your class and discuss them. These pictures can be used as an introduction to the activity (as mentioned in part 4.2). Moreover, by doing this, the students can reflect on how your city deals with diversity. To use pictures you took yourself, you show how relevant the topic is in your day-to-day life and emphasise that they should be concerned with the topic as well.

4. Didactic considerations – how can you use the activity?

4.1 Connection to the curriculum

The curriculum in Saxony (Germany) contains the topic diversity and gender issues in class 11/12, advanced course, learning area 3 (Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Kultus, 2022, p.67). The learning area not only aims at using speech and knowledge, but also being able to state an opinion (SMK, 2022, p.67). By using this activity, you can introduce the topic to the students, help them to reflect on the topic and provide enough information, so that they can think about their own opinions. Furthermore, in class 11/12 the curriculum talks about gender equality in learning area 3 (SMK, 2022, p.59), where the activity could also be used. This area is close to the one in the advanced course but has a different focus. Here, the aim is for the students to position themselves to the topic of jobs and career. Talking about gender equality in this context should be linked to jobs. In the activity, there is a video about gender roles, but the activity focusses on much more than just that. If the activity is used in this area, it should be mentioned, that it contains more information about gender identity and diversity, than gender equality. Still, using the activity in this context would be suitable as well. Moreover, the activity could be used in class 9/10 in learning area 3, when talking about personal identity and conflicts. (SMK, 2022, p.49.). Here, the activity would be suitable, because gender identity is a part of someone's personal identity by being the internal and individual experience of gender (WHO, 2023). Using the activity in this context brings the opportunity to help students to think about their own identity and being able to position themselves to questions of the search of identity (SMK, 2022, p.49).

4.2 How to use the activity in a classroom

The activity could be used in a school context when the class talks about diversity or gender issues. It provides a lot of information, that can be used as an introduction into the topic. After doing this activity, the participants should have a broad understanding of the diversity of gender, so that they can engage in discussions for example. It does not have to be used as an introduction, some tasks can be left out and the rest can be used to consolidate the knowledge. To use it as an introduction is a suggestion because it saves time for the teacher during the preparation of the lessons. It is suggested that this activity is worked on in one double session. There is potential, to work on it longer than that, but because time is almost always short, I suggest ending it after 90 minutes. If there is homework, it can be presented in the next lesson, of course. Optimally, every student in the class has a technical device (iPad, tablet, or laptop), where they can work on the tool. If there are not enough devices for everyone, it is also okay to give one device to every second person in the class. The activity is worked on with partner work almost all the time, so not everyone needs a device. If there is no possibility of having enough devices, the teacher can show the Taskcard board on the projector and the class works on the tasks by using their folders. Posting comments is a part of some tasks, that is something that needs to be left out if there are not enough devices. Instead of posting comments, the thoughts of students are shared in class and discussed with partners. To do this activity, at least one device with internet connection is necessary to access the tool. How to work with it is described in the following part.

One suggestion for a pre and post task is taking pictures of signs of diversity in one's own city. The teacher looks for signs of diversity in their environment and takes pictures or uses pictures from the internet. In the material section (G), a document with example pictures is provided, from signs of diversity found in Leipzig, Germany. A collection of pictures is presented to the class and the students are asked to describe and comment on the pictures. The students should answer the question how (gender) diversity is represented in these pictures or how it is missing. With a few statements about this, the teacher can introduce the topic of gender diversity and what other terms are linked to it by showing the students the tool. To round this session up, one could end it with the pictures again. The

students should go around their city and look for signs of diversity themselves and present them in the next lesson. After they dealt with the diversity of gender, they should have a broader understanding of it, so you can ask them to keep their eyes open for signs of diversity. This is not just a post task, but more like homework. The post task would be talking about the pictures from a new perspective now that they have more knowledge on the topic. Questions like *How do you look at the picture now? What changed for you? What do you associate with this picture now?* could be asked.

As another pre task, one could use the [video about gender identity](#) (Onlea, 2017) from the Taskcards as an introduction into the topic. With the video, the students already get a glimpse of what they will deal with in this lesson and get the first bits of information. By watching the videos before the activity, you avoid messing around with YouTube during the activity because the students do not have to watch them again. The task (see section 6) where students should think about their imagination of different jobs such as firefighter, surgeon, and fighter pilot could be used as a pre task as well and then be reflected as a post task. By reflecting on their own imagination of gender roles, they can see how their imagination might have changed because of the activity.

The crossword puzzle provided in the materials (D) and in the Taskcards can also be used as a post task. With this puzzle, the students test their own knowledge and think about the terms one more time before leaving the lesson. The teacher can decide if they want to print it out or if they want to provide it digitally on tablets or other digital devices, for the students to fill out.

In the following part, each section will be looked at individually.

Section 1: How to work with these taskcards

As already mentioned in part 3.1, the first section provides information about the use of the tool. Students read through the cards and make themselves familiar with the handling of the activity. The teacher could also explain the cards to the class and show an example of creating a card or adding a picture. By doing that, you make sure everyone got an introduction into the tool and can ask questions.

Section 2: What does gender diversity mean?

This section is concerned with clarifying terms. The task for this section is to inform yourself about the different terms to make sure you know the difference between them. After reading the card descriptions and eventually following the links, the students are asked to explain the terms to their partner, to see if they understood the meanings of the terms. This task could be done in a different way, if the teacher wants to do it with the whole class. A suggestion would be, that the teacher explains the terms to the class and watches the video with everyone, so that the students could ask questions. The students could phrase definitions by using their own words, so that the teacher can check if they understood everything correctly. This can be done in a conversation in class or in partner work, as it is in the activity. The materials provided in this section are a website of [World Health Organization](#) (WHO, 2023) where the difference between gender and sex is explained and a [video about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression](#) (True Colors United, 2015). The students are asked to read the text on the website if they need more information and watch the video for further (visual) explanation of the terms.

Section 3: Gender identity

In this section the students are asked to work with a partner to discuss personal information about gender, that is required by public institutions. As an introduction into the subtopic, the tool provides a video that talks about [gender identity and pronouns](#) (Onlea, 2017). The video shows, that people want to be addressed with certain pronouns and they do not always match our intuition. Therefore, it is important to ask people about their preferred pronouns and respect their answer when addressing

them. This video can be watched in class or individually. Afterwards, students discuss the requirements of personal information from Auckland University, Leipzig University and Deutsche Bahn. There are different options of gender or salutations one can choose when filling out a form by these institutions. Students should think and talk about which versions they prefer, if they would feel included and why there are differences. This task is aimed to let the students engage with one another and reflect everyday situations. To do that in a partner work is suggested, because it encourages students to formulate their own thoughts and to explain them to their partner.

Section 4: Transgender

This section aims to introduce the term transgender to the students. First, the students get a definition of the term in the first card. After familiarizing themselves with the term, they are asked to watch a video about Laurel Hubbard, a [weightlifter that ignited a debate over transgender athletes](#) (CBS Mornings, 2021). Below the video, there are a lot of comments and most of them express negative feelings over a transgender woman competing in the women's league in sports. By watching the video and reading through the comments, students are asked to explain what people are saying about this situation and why it may be problematic. It is advised that students exchange their thoughts with a partner, so that they have the chance to talk about it. Not only are they confronted with a topic that is discussed around the world, but also are they made aware of how the people talk about it on the internet. In the materials (see part 5), there is a document with some comments from below the video. You can see that there are some people who are purposely misgendering Laurel Hubbard. With help of the comments, students discuss the opinions that are represented in the comments and show what problems people have with the situation. To use the comments that are provided is only a suggestion to save some time. You can also look at them yourself and pick some examples to discuss with the class or the students pick some comments they want to talk about. After doing the previous tasks, students should be able to identify the disrespectful behaviour and be able to share their opinions about it with their partners. Furthermore, there is the symbol of transfeminism introduced, which was found at the University of Leipzig. Students discuss and think about the meaning of this symbol and can read about it in the last card of this section by following [the link](#) (StudySmarter US, n.d.). In this section, working with a partner is suggested, because the exchange of thoughts and ideas are asked for.

For additional information about Laurel Hubbard and her competition, read the article by [The Guardian](#) (Ingle, 2021) as an English source or the article by [Die Sueddeutsche Zeitung](#) (Gertz and Knuth, 2021) as a German source. With this information, the debate about the weightlifter can be further discussed in class, if requested or desired.

Section 5: Gender inclusive language (GER/NZ)

After already talking about pronouns and different salutations, this section is concerned with gender inclusive language. It is aimed to give the students an overview of gender inclusive and neutral language. The New Zealand Government has a few tips on [how to speak gender inclusive](#) (New Zealand Digital Government, 2022), which should be discussed by the students. They are asked to reflect on their own speech and to imagine a situation where they would need the use of gender inclusive language. This task is also designed as a partner work. Together, they think about what difficulties can occur, when trying to speak gender inclusive and how they could change their own way of speaking to be more inclusive. To see if they completed the task, the teacher could collect some difficulties and ideas to improve their gender inclusive speech, that the students present. Those ideas could be written down on a piece of paper and hung up in the classroom, to remind the students to use gender inclusive speech.

When working with German learners of English, or students that can speak German, a comparison between the two languages (English and German) can be made. With help of the German dictionary website [DUDEN](#) (Cornelsen Verlag GmbH, 2023) students get an overview of gender inclusive language and are asked to explain difficulties or problems that can occur in the German language after reading the text on the website. Again, this task can be done in a partner work or also a group work. It is aimed to make aware of the differences between the languages and to reflect one's own usage of gender inclusive language.

Section 6: Your experiences

This section is aimed at showing an example of a problematic situation concerning gender roles on the one hand and on the other hand aimed at giving the space to share own experiences and thoughts about the topic. Before watching the provided video, students think about how they imagine a firefighter, a surgeon, and a fighter pilot. Afterwards the class watches the video of [a class that turned around kids' assumptions of gender roles](#) (Upworthy, 2016). The students compare their imaginations to the imaginations from the kids in the video and reflect on how doing the task card activities might have influenced them. By reflecting on their thoughts about gender roles, the students are also encouraged to think about their experiences with gender diversity and all the subtopics. Students think about the topic in their own environment and how and where it appears in their lives by thinking about questions like *What were your experiences with gender diversity? Have you ever felt privileged or underprivileged because of your gender? Is there a diversity of genders in your culture?*. This task is important to show the relevance of the topic for the lives of the students and to make them understand why it is necessary to talk about it. This task is solved individually, but students can read about others' experiences and thoughts.

Section 7: Signs of gender diversity (?)

This task can be linked to a pre or post task, as already mentioned above in the introduction to this part. It is a great way to show the presence of gender diversity and diversity in general in our day-to-day lives. Doing this task in a classroom setting might be challenging, so it is advised to do it as homework. If the school has enough signs to offer, the class can go around the school building and look for signs, but if not, just ask them to look for signs of diversity on their way home etc. By doing this, students are made aware of how diversity is represented in their environment and how it is displayed. After taking pictures, the students upload them to the tool and give a description of what can be seen in the photo and why they chose this picture. The question mark in the title is no accident. Students should reflect on whether the signs show diversity or not and can discuss that. This task can be done in an individual way or if the pictures want to be discussed, in a group setting.

Section 8: Test your knowledge!

This last section contains a crossword puzzle (see in part 5) that was designed to give the students a playful summary of the most important terms and concepts. By solving the crossword puzzle, students think back on what they learned and test how much they remember. The solution for the crossword puzzle is provided in the tool but also in the materials (see part 5). This task should be done individually.

I would suggest letting the students pick at least 3 sections to work on, because solving all the tasks in 90 minutes, might be challenging. The information parts of the activity could be done with the whole class and the tasks in partner work. Still, I suggest to only work on it in one double session, because time is almost always short for a teacher to fit everything from the curriculum into the lessons. In the following lessons, subtopics can be discussed further, but you do not have to use the tool for that. The information and tasks in the tool can be used for further discussion without doing the whole activity. All I can say now is: Have fun exploring gender diversity!

5. Materials – what you need to do the activity

- A) By following this link, you can find the Taskcards which contain the information and the tasks, the students are required to do. <https://www.taskcards.de/#/board/bbb378d0-bfe1-4dfe-9a0a-286014ab1236?token=a9f57021-6c67-48e6-9e8a-d6e9889f328e>
- B) This QR Code can be used to invite the students onto the tool or to open it on your own device.



- C) This pdf contains a guide to use the tool Taskcards. It refers to developing a board, but the information on how to add a card or edit the colours is provided as well. The instruction is in German.
- D) The crossword puzzle can be used to test the knowledge the student should have gained during the activity.
- E) This pdf contains the solution for the crossword puzzle.
- F) This pdf contains a selection of comments below the transgender athlete video and can be used to show examples of opinions, for discussion and for using it in a classroom setting.
- G) This word document contains some pictures of gender diversity that were taken in Leipzig, Germany. A short explanation is provided to each picture. Those pictures can be used to introduce the pre task for example and to give inspiration on taking own pictures.

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