

DOUBLING DOWN ON DOUBLE STANDARDS OF GENDER

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Grade levels: 8th grade – high school
Expected length: 2 – 3 class periods

Gender is indeed complicated. It also is beautiful and inherently fluid. The ability to express gender identity, free from oppressive double standards imposed by unfair “rules” or “principles” on certain people, is paramount to thriving in a democracy. Double standards, or unjust application of different sets of principles for similar situations are seen, for example, in unfair expectations of behaviors deemed acceptable for men but not for women. Unequal treatment often results from biases, leading to unfair judgments, discrimination, and sexism. Justification for the double standard is missing, and when justification is provided, it is typically inappropriate. What does it mean to experience a “double standard,” especially a gendered one? This lesson deconstructs double standards students may have been a victim of or witnessed in their experience through open and honest conversation and artmaking in a safe space.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Art History Inquiry: Students will compare and contrast the ways that Linda Stein, in *The Fluidity of Gender* series, navigates intersections, dualities, limitations, and empowerment that come with gender identity.

National Visual Art Standard: RESPONDING

Anchor Standard: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art

Studio Inquiry: Students will design and construct a collage investigating a personal exploration of double standards, incorporating elements of dominance and symbolism.

National Visual Arts Standard: CREATING

Anchor Standard: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work

Enduring Understanding: Artists and designers balance experimentation and safety, freedom and responsibility while developing and creating artworks

VOCABULARY:

Gender expression: Describes the way in which we present or express our gender, which can include physical appearance, clothing, hairstyles, and behavior. We have control over some

elements of our gender expression, such as behavior, body modification, or ornamentation. (The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>)

Gender perception: Is based on other people's evaluation of our bodies, which, unlike our gender expression, we cannot control. We cannot visually see someone's sex when we look at them, but people perceive gender based on a variety of visual and social cues, including but not limited to a person's gender expression, secondary sex characteristics, and the social role they are playing relative to the expected gender of that role. (The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>)

Collage: Art made by assembling different media and materials together, often juxtaposing disparate elements, styles, and media against each other to create something entirely new; for example: digital elements alongside hand-drawn elements.

Dominance: The element given the most visual weight in a composition.

Palimpsest: A page that contains partial text that has been scraped, concealed, or washed off so that the page can be reused for another document.

ARTWORK:

Fluidity of Gender series: In this series, Linda Stein deeply deconstructs the limitations and expectations that come with masculinity and femininity. Leather-clad warriors, superheroes, and Amazonian beings challenge our assumptions about gender, digging and excavating sexism at its core. The torso-ed figures are muscular, punctuated with metal like zippers, buckles, and chains. Straps and other accessories also appear on the torsos, missing anatomical features above the neck, beyond the thighs and shoulders. Neither purely masculine nor feminine in form, the viewer is left to interpret the gender of the forms, with predominant womanly curves assigned to the female-like body atop bulging muscles.

DISCUSS:

Does/should the body determine gender? How does the body determine our interactions with people in our daily lives? Is it possible to go through life embodying all genders? What does it mean to challenge gender norms? What do zippers and buckles symbolize in Linda Stein's ***The Fluidity of Gender*** works—are they holding parts together? Adorning the surface? Or something else, like showing scars and stories of the figures? How are these torsos survivors of life, as told through their torsos? Why use Wonder Woman as a symbol of “fluid” gender? How can these figures help us achieve gender justice?



Mascu Fem 681

2010; 37" x 18" x 16"

leather, metal, wood, resin

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In Charge 694

2010; 37" x 20" x 16"

wood, metal, leather, fiber

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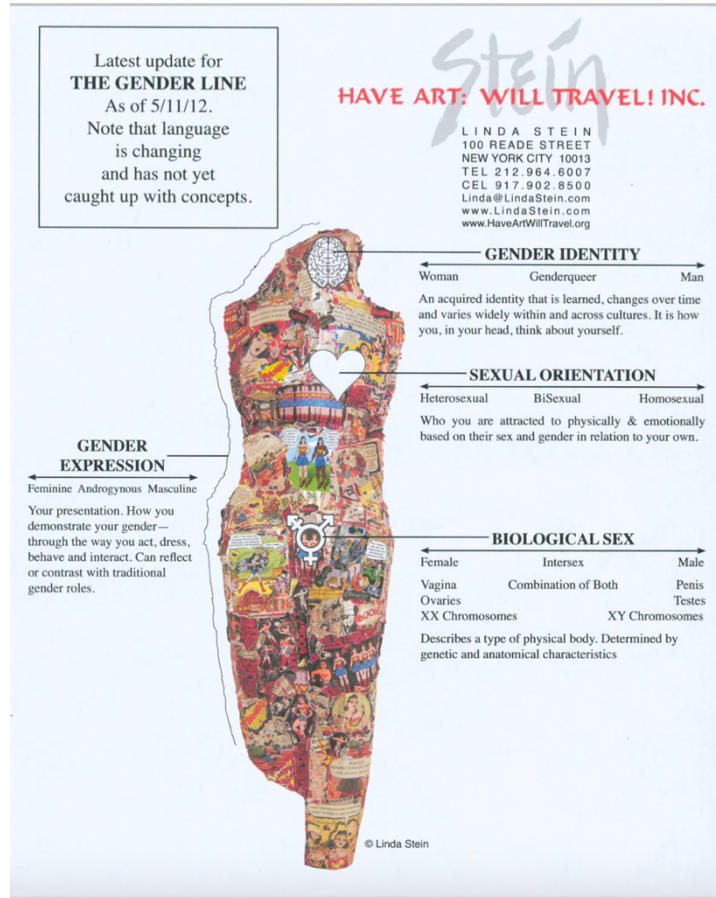


Knight of Courage 655 & Silver Knight 666

2009; Installation: 64" x 60" x 26"

acrylicized paper, archival inks, leather, Velcro, mixed media on coat rack

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Box 1 AX: SP:10094:10005 Linda Stein Art Education Papers: *Studio Event 2012 Teaching Experimental Lesson_The Gender Line*: Adapted from Linda Stein's *The Gender Line and Fluidity of Gender* exhibition:

In The Gender Line workshops, Linda Stein opens with “As I try to open hearts toward the differences of others, and try to change the minds of those who might bully and harass because of differences, I am constantly learning.” She initiated a series of workshops and conversations around different ways to define or express gender. (Note: Acknowledging the terminology surrounding gender is in a state of flux. The reader is reminded to keep updated. A helpful source as of this writing: *Human Rights Campaign*, 5/31/23: Glossary of Terms: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>).

First, establish that in order to create a safe space to have discussions that are sometimes difficult, you expect students will do so in a way that cultivates a community of care and support for everyone’s learning. Say, for example: “Conversations and activities will challenge you to contest, flex, and reconsider topics that reside in experiences that may differ from your own. We will account for gender and its intersections visibly and with purpose, and we will

honor *all* voices in this classroom.” In order to have an open and honest discussion about the work of Linda Stein, become familiar with the terms and concepts in *The Trevor Project: Saving Young LGBTQ Lives: Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth*. Practice using correct terminology, pronouns, and honorifics (the use of respectful titles or forms of address) of your students. Make a conscious effort to model inclusive language that honors all of your students’ sexual orientations and gender identities. It is necessary to be successful in any lesson on gender.

Begin with a discussion about the differences between **sex**, which is biologically based (e.g., male and female; assigned at birth), versus **gender**, which is socially constructed and connected to one’s expression of identity and can fluctuate from day to day (e.g., woman, man, transwoman, nonbinary). **Gender expression** can also change over time. Do we have to be masculine-presenting if we identify as a man? Or feminine if we identify as a woman? What pressures does society put on us when certain gendered expectations are not met? Are gender expectations for how we present ourselves—for example in how we dress—differ for boys and girls? What factors drive **gender perceptions**? What happens when we don’t conform to the “traditional” gender expectations?

Next, discuss **double standards** as related to gender:

Examples: Female superheroes in popular culture are typically scantily clad in revealing clothes, while male superheroes tend to be fully clothed.

When it comes to curfews, teenage boys have later curfew times than teenage girls.

Bossy women are considered “bitchy”; bossy men are seen as assertive and powerful (see America Ferrara explain this to Jimmy Kimmel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4Kt3UcM8mw>).

Women who cry are perceived as being in touch with their feelings; men who cry are seen as being weak.

Fathers are praised for doing housework and viewed as going “above and beyond”, while women are rarely recognized for doing the same work (see Charlotte explain this to husband Harry in *And Just Like That*:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/CwVwj0UqwdK/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D).

A woman who complains is annoying and “shrill”. A man who complains, on the other hand, is considered strong, assertive, and is taken seriously. For an additional example, view Taylor Swift’s video *The Man*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqAJLh9wuZ0>).

Finally, consider the monologue of “Gloria,” played by America Ferrara, in Greta Gerwig’s 2023 film *Barbie*, in which she lays bare the many contradictory double standard experiences of being a woman: <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/leisure/arts-and-culture/a44725030/america-ferrera-barbie-full-monologue-transcript/> .Have students take turns reading the lines aloud “round robin” style. Discuss if they agree or disagree with the double standards.

PREPARE:

Gather discarded maps, contemporary and old magazines (e.g., decommissioned magazines from library sales—be sure to remove “rated R” material), and ephemera items from garage sales and thrift stores that show a variety of people in various traditional and non-traditional roles.

Gather discarded frames, pictures, canvases, and other flat structures that could be suitable for mounting collages. Heavier paper also works for mounting the collages.

Personal images chosen by students (family heirlooms such as family photographs: reproduce on the copier)

Gather scraps of paper and organize by colors, patterns

Craft glue or glue sticks

DISCUSS:

Make an idea generator asking students to reflect:

When have you experienced a double standard?

When has someone you love experienced a double standard?

What images do you associate with those experiences? How might you represent or symbolize them?



Studio Art Example: Carly Sherman: *The Ten Commandments of Womanhood*

Next, **CREATE** the collage:

1. Think of the background first: What will your bottom layer be? Be sure this is a thicker "anchoring" paper to give the final piece structure. It will make assembling everything easier.
2. Then play with layers: Will you use a map? A **palimpsest**?
3. What are the symbols of the double standard?
4. What is the **dominant** visual image, or that which you want the viewer to focus their attention on? Think of it as the thing that has the most visual "weight"—what do you want to stand out the most, if anything?

*Don't glue any pieces down until you have pieced them together and you are satisfied. Take a picture of the composition with your cell phone first once you have decided on your final composition. It is best to take pictures throughout the process. Consider:

Do you want any one thing to stand out and be **dominant** in the composition? How can you make that thing stand out—draw on it to highlight it? Make it the largest thing in the composition?

A map might serve as a metaphor for a journey; or it might mark an actual place. How might you use imagery and objects to symbolize your ideas, like Linda Stein used comics of Wonder Woman in her work?

A **palimpsest** is a page which contains written words or partial text that has been scraped, concealed, or washed off so that the page can be reused for something else — will you scratch out the text? Use the black-out poetry method in which you select words to censor while leaving others? Scratch out words randomly or highlight others? Make your choices meaningful.

Patterned paper or repeated images can create visual interest, too.

Images of people, whether they are of people you know or not, will draw the viewer's eye there. Make your choices meaningful to you.

Who will the people in the space be? Yourself? People you know? Printed images? Magazine or photographs? Ephemera? How will you pick your images?

2-D Embellishment: Will you add hand-drawn elements with markers? Pencils? Permanent markers? Will you cut and paste letters to form words/phrases?

3- D Embellishment: Will dimensional objects enhance the meaning?

Consider: Creating texture by peeling, ripping, and layering paper.

FINAL REFLECTION:

Use the strategy of *Blackout Poetry*, a form of “found poetry”, as a form of reflection on their own work or the work of their peers’ collages. For resources and strategies for the creative and inspiring form of reflection: <https://www.teachkidsart.net/the-art-of-blackout-poetry/>

REFERENCE:

Penn-Goetsch, C. M. (2010). *The Fluidity of Gender: Sculpture by Linda Stein*. Luce Gallery, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa (Sept 5-Oct 3, 2010).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The Trevor Project: *Saving Young LGBTQ Lives: Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth*. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth/>

“What Do You Say to ‘That’s So Gay’”: *Welcoming Schools Guide*: www.welcomingschools.org

Kroeger, J. (2019). School Community Partnerships for Full Inclusion(s) of LGBTQI Youth and Families. In Steven B. Sheldon & Tammy Taylor-Vorbeck (Eds.) *The Handbook of School-Family-Community Partnerships*, Wiley Blackwell.

The Collage Ideas Book, by Alannah Moore (2018), ilex.