

## 4.2 A picture says more than a thousand words

Step 4. Experience

Time: 60 min

2-20 participants

### Summary

“A picture says more than a thousand words” is a revealing saying that is often correct. Throughout history, people have attempted to portray themselves and their surroundings. Norms and values are rarely as clear as in how we portray our surroundings. Usually without us even thinking about it. It can concern everything from who is seen in a photo and what that person can do/ how they can look, to which angle the photo is taken at and with which props. In this exercise you will see how differently we can be perceived in images and also get the chance to see what it can feel like.

### What to do:

- Appoint someone to lead the exercise.
- Go over the guidelines.
- Let everyone read the introductory text and go through the images and texts in this document. Think about it individually at first, then talk in small groups about the questions asked. The introductory text is also good to read as individual preparation before the meeting.
- Do the exercise “Images that change and reinforce”.
- Discuss the reflective questions together.
- End with the clip “Throw like a girl”.
- Bonus for those interested: "Do you want to know more?". The handbook: "Being Seen On Equal Terms", is also available as extra material.

### Materials

- Introductory Text for everyone
- Word Collage
- One camera or mobile phone that can take photos for each small group/couple.

### Conversation guidelines

- Assume that "everyone" is in the room ("those of us who...").

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- Remember that we have different prior knowledge and experience of the themes raised, so show respect.
- Think freely and interpret each other kindly.

## Exercise

“Images that change and reinforce”\*\*

### Keep in mind

Be sure to remember the guideline that everyone is in the room during this exercise. Talk respectfully and don't ridicule or question those of us who break gender norms in appearance or manner. This is important to keep in mind, both during the exercise and in general.

- Read the Introductory Text
- Think about it individually at first, then talk in small groups about the questions asked.
- Split up into small groups (3-4 people per group).
- Each group needs a camera or mobile phone that can take pictures.
- Take pictures of each other in the group as follows:
  1. A portrait image taken from below where the person looks serious.
  2. A portrait image from above where the person looks happy.
  3. At least one group picture where you choose to go against the normal ways that a group presents itself or interacts in relation to gender. For example, two men might touch each other softly and lovingly, or the men might pose idolizing the woman in the picture (who looks serious and assertive). Pay particular attention to respecting the personal space of others during this part.
  4. Maybe you can come up with other ways of going against the expectations and traditional patterns linked to gender and gender norms?
- Get back together as one group
- Choose some of the pictures that each group has taken, show them to the entire group and share some reflections about what it was like to carry out the exercise. No pictures may be saved without the clear agreement of those who are depicted in the photo.

**Discuss:** How did it feel taking the different pictures? What thoughts did it raise?

1. What felt unfamiliar and what felt normal for you to do/see?
2. What link to gender norms and gender norms do you see?

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3. Sometimes images of boys and men that break gender roles often trigger stronger feelings than those where women do the same boundaries. For example, the term “tomboy” is a fairly common term for a girl who is considered “boyish” in her manner, behavior or interests, but there is no popular equivalent expression for boys (“janegirl” is the term). Why do you think this is? Do you see any connection to the fact that the male is in general valued higher in society and is seen as more desirable?
4. Discuss what the image of a leader generally looks like. Are the most common depictions of men or women closest to the image of a typical leader? Look at the word collage, appendix 2, and reflect together.

## End

End by watching the clip “Throw like a girl” below, then talk about how you can continue to work based on what you have observed (for example, in your own communication) and recommend the bonus material.

Link: ["Throw like a girl"](#) (3,18 min)

## Introductory Text

“A picture says more than a thousand words” is a revealing saying that is often correct. Norms and values are rarely as clear as in our pictures. Usually without us even thinking about it. It can concern everything from who is seen in a photo and what that person can do/ how they can look, to which angle the photo is taken at and with which props. Doing a Google image search for various terms, titles and situations can be very interesting in this respect. Try it yourself!

Another example is the front pages of magazines with different target groups. Find a couple of magazines aimed at women and a couple of magazines aimed at men. Another example is the front pages of magazines with different target groups. Here we have put magazines aimed at women on one row and magazines for men on the other. If you compare the magazines’ front pages, you can make some interesting comparisons. What similarities can you see? What differences? Who is depicted smiling? What accessories are there? In what environments are they photographed? What color tones are used? And, finally: What do you think the reasons are for the differences?

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*An arranged photo with a total of six weekly magazines, three per line. On the top row are the magazines KING, Café and GQ. The magazines have dark and dull colors and on each cover a person is seen who is coded as male. The headlines indicate that the newspapers contain headings with the three famous men on the covers. On the bottom line are the newspapers ELLE, Eurowoman and Daisy. The magazines have happy and bright colors. On all covers people who are coded as female are visible. On two of them, the person in the picture has a little less clothes on than the rest. The headlines are mostly about trends.*

**Make room!** Skellefteå municipality has focused on pictures as a means of change. They have carried out a venture called “Make Room” with gender photographer Tomas Gunnarsson. The focus was on leadership, who are seen as leaders and how leaders are portrayed. In their material they show examples of how female leaders are rarely allowed to be seen in comparison to males, and of the differences in how these two groups are portrayed.

Examples of the differences they highlight include men often being photographed from below, with arms folded and a serious expression. Women, on the other hand, are often depicted smiling, with a mischievous look. They may be eating something

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(often with a sensual association) or carrying some accessory that seems harmless. Men are more often photographed in their professional role, e.g. sitting in an office chair or in some other way in action. Women are more often photographed out of context, i.e. in the home, outdoors or in their personal domain.

Do you recognise the pattern? What do you think the reason may be for this? And what effects do you think it can have?

They also highlight images of more than one person and show “untypical” interactions between men and between women and men. What can you see in the pictures that is unusual? What thoughts and feelings do the pictures raise for you?

Link to access the material in full:

<https://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/skellefteaa/images/bildkollage-ge-plats-1963952> (In Swedish)

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## **Continuing work?**

Encourage the group and yourselves to keep wearing the “image-critical glasses” for a time ahead and think actively about the images you see, e.g. in advertising, art, reports.



Vem tänker du på?



Do you want to know more?

[The gender photographer](#)

[https://old.gavle.se/PageFiles/272392/Bildhandboken\\_Gavlekommun\\_Genusfotograf\\_en\\_webb.pdf](https://old.gavle.se/PageFiles/272392/Bildhandboken_Gavlekommun_Genusfotograf_en_webb.pdf) Pictures that changes the world, Gävle Kommun (in Swedish)

[Decent communication, Region Värmland](#) (in Swedish)

[The handbook Being Seen On Equal Terms](#) (in Swedish).