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## Gender stereotypes, body image and the media

Mark Jennett

### What's the problem?

- Girls as young as 5 years old are worried about the way they look and their size
- One in four 7-year-old girls has tried to lose weight at least once
- One third of young boys aged 8–12 are dieting to lose weight
- Data from 13–14-year-olds indicated that these figures increase with age, with 9% of normal weight boys and 28% of normal weight girls rating themselves as 'too fat'.

PSHE Association

### What's the problem?

- Primary age girls are known to associate being slim and conventionally attractive with social and economic success
- Girls as young as twelve feel under pressure to be sexually available – and boys feel similarly pressured into making such demands on girls
- Sexual bullying and bullying in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity remain widespread

- *"It really worries me that, even in KS1 we already have to combat the 'boys don't cry' thing. I can honestly say that no member of staff would say or think that so it is definitely coming from outside.*
- *"Generally, the girls are much more relaxed about expressing their emotions – with the boys it often comes out in aggression or fighting."*

### What's the problem?

- The influence of gender stereotypes limits the range of experiences many children will engage with at school – in terms of the books they read, games they play, subjects they study and even the other people with whom they socialise

**“Stereotypes stop you doing stuff...”**

*‘People seem to be very definite in their ideas of what a “proper” boy or a “proper” girl should do or be interested in. It takes very little deviation from these so called norms for a person to be singled out and picked on’*

Primary Teacher



Where do these ideas come from?





*“They have aisles for boys and girls so they don’t get mixed up and the boys get the wrong things.”*



The HTML5 Gendered Advertising Remixer

Home About LEGO Flash

Ads Targeting Boys

Ads Targeting Girls

Mashup Swap Clear

Requires an updated web browser  
To Windows or Mac OS

INSTRUCTIONS: Drag and drop one clip from each side into the audio and video boxes. Push the green mashup button to see your remix. Hit the red clear button to start again.

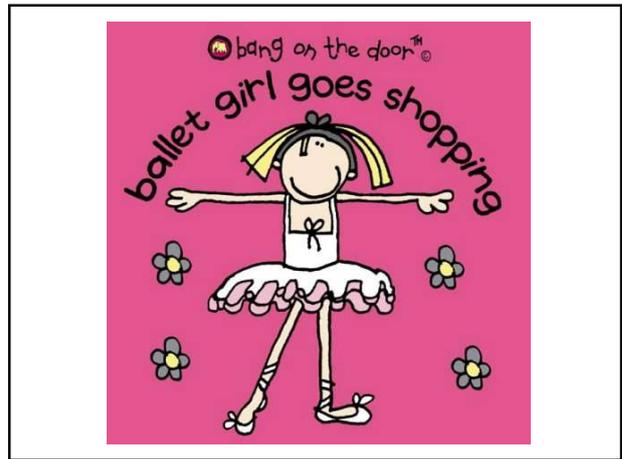
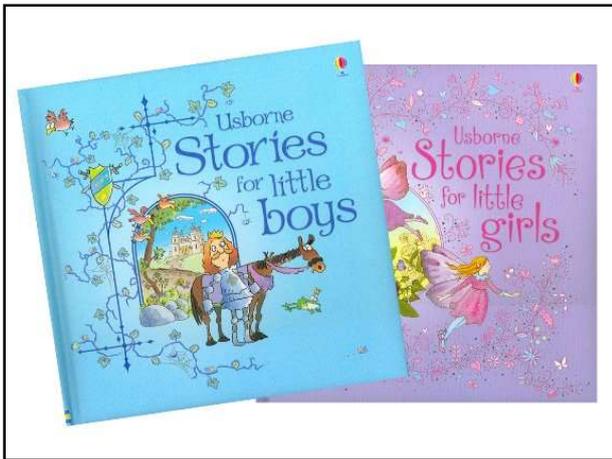
<http://www.genderremixer.com/html5/#>

£4.50

various

Stereotypes are self-fulfilling

If you repeat things often enough, people believe them...



Challenging gender stereotypes through reading

**IT'S CHILD'S PLAY**

"I started playing at school in the playground with my brother, when I was 7 or 8.

"I used to go along and train with his team but I was never allowed to play in games."



- What do we mean by 'body image'?
- How does the media influence this?

**What do children know?**

- Survey the school or your class
- Set up focus groups – what would pupils find useful?
- Suggestion boxes
- Share your curriculum – and ask how it could be improved
- Mind maps, draw and write etc to establish what they know
- Set ground rules



**Opportunities in PSHE and beyond**

KS1

- Identify and respect the differences and similarities between people
- People's bodies and feelings can be hurt
- Recognise when people are being unkind either to them or others, how to respond, who to tell and what to say

## Opportunities in PSHE and beyond

### KS2

- What positively and negatively affects their physical, mental and emotional health (including the media)
- Recognise how **images in the media do not always reflect reality** and can affect how people feel about themselves
- Recognise opportunities to make their own choices about food, what might influence their choices and the benefits of eating a balanced diet

## Opportunities in PSHE and beyond

### KS3

- Recognise and manage what influences their choices about exercise
- **What constitutes a balanced diet and its benefits (including the risks associated with both obesity and dieting)**
- What might influence their decisions about eating a balanced diet
- **How the media portrays young people, body image and health issues** and that identity is affected by a range of factors, including the media and a positive sense of self
- About eating disorders, including recognising when they or others need help, sources of help and strategies for accessing it

## Opportunities in PSHE and beyond

### KS4

- Evaluate the extent to which their self-confidence and self-esteem are affected by the judgements of others
- Make effective use of constructive feedback and differentiating between helpful feedback and unhelpful criticism
- Recognize and manage feelings about, and influences on, their body image including **the media's portrayal of idealised and artificial body shapes** about health risks and issues related to this, including cosmetic procedures

## Try to avoid...and challenge in others

- Talking negatively about your own appearance
- Complimenting people on weight loss
- Talking about unflattering photos of celebrities etc

“If you could change one thing to improve girls’ lives, what would it be?”

### Appearance pressures

*‘Not get criticised for their looks.’*

*‘Increase of real-life images of normal people on social media, without make-up and filters.’*

*‘Focus more on what girls say rather than what they wear or look like.’*

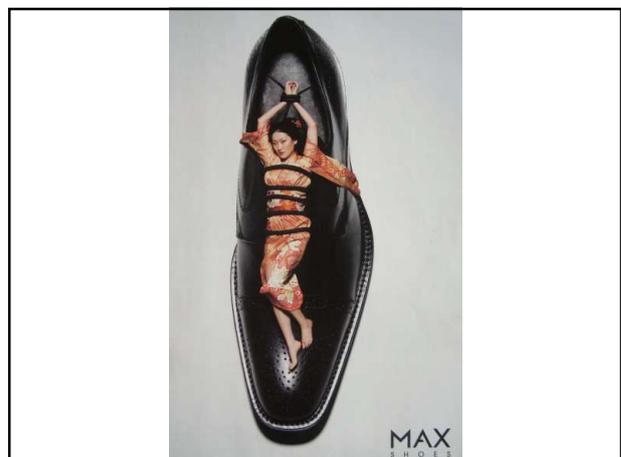
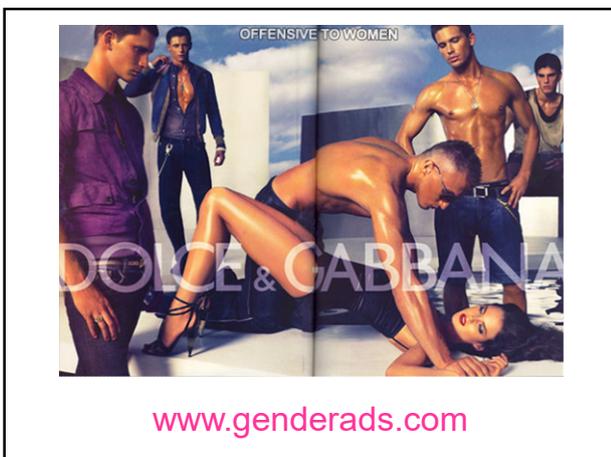
Girls’ Attitudes Survey 2018 – Girlguiding





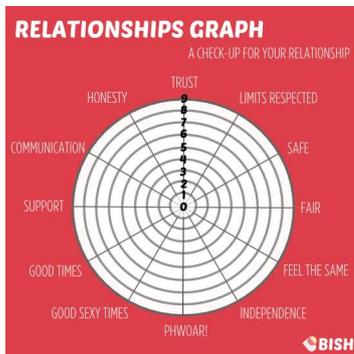
### Think about...

- Avoid using images of people with eating disorders ...
- Or pictures of celebrities and others who are overweight and which might reinforce negative stereotypes (e.g. because they look unhappy or are 'unfashionably' dressed)
- You should also try to include a range of images genders, ethnicities etc

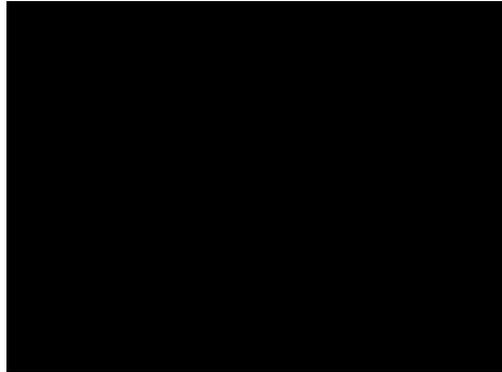




<https://www.bishuk.com/>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U>



How can images be manipulated?



Dove self-esteem project

### Think about...

- Ensure that body image and social media safety are included in mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures as well as anti-bullying policies etc
- Repeat key messages across the curriculum – literacy, art, D&T, science etc
- Share resources and strategies with parents

### Think about...

- Build into work on social and emotional skills and self-esteem  
[www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risk-s-and-protective-factors/lifestyle-factors/social-media/](http://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risk-s-and-protective-factors/lifestyle-factors/social-media/)
- Reflect on how interactions online differ from day-to-day exchanges and why people might say things online that they wouldn't say face to face.

- Should all toys and books be everyone?
- Why?
- Why are toys so often marketed as being 'for' one sex or another?
- How would a girl feel if she wanted to read a 'boys' book' or a boy if he wanted something from the 'girls section' in a toy shop?
- How can we reduce the stress and anxiety around body image that social media might cause?
- How can we celebrate our differences, rather than wanting to conform and look a certain way?
- How can we feel comfortable and confident in who we are?

**UK FEMINISTA** **PLAN YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN** UKFEMINISTA.ORG.UK

WHAT FEMINIST ISSUE DO YOU WANT TO TACKLE?  
 Violence against women • Pay gap • Access to justice • Childcare • Lack of women politicians • Representation of women in the media • Other...

**FIRST DECIDE your aim**  
 You aim is the change you want to see in the world as a result of your campaign. To clarify your aim, write down the problem you want to tackle, then fix the statement into a positive aim.

**ANALYSE the SITUATION**  
 There are reasons why the change you want to see hasn't happened yet. What are they? How can you represent them? Get down to the root causes of the problem to see how it can best be tackled.

**IDENTIFY the OBJECTIVE**  
 Your objective is exactly how you will achieve your aim. Keep it SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound.

WRITE YOUR OBJECTIVE HERE:

**WHO IS YOUR TARGET?**  
 Your target is the person (or people) with the power to make the change you want to see. You should also think about the people who have influence on your target. A power map can help you establish how power is distributed and work out who can help you bring about change.

**DECIDE the TACTICS**  
 What tactics will you use to influence your target? What methods will you use to put things in action?

**PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS**  
 WRITE DOWN YOUR CAMPAIGN NAME:  
 How does it look? Does it capture the change you want to see? Is it short enough to be a Twitter hashtag?

**30 SECOND PITCH**  
 You need to be able to succinctly communicate what your campaign is all about. If you had just 30 seconds to convince someone to support your campaign, what would you say?

WRITE YOUR 3 KEY MESSAGES HERE:  
 1.  
 2.  
 3.

**TRIALITY**  
**MONITOR & EVALUATE**  
 Don't forget to monitor and evaluate your campaign actions. This will help to improve how effective you are and ensure you have the biggest impact possible!

FOR MORE INFO ON HOW TO PLAN A CAMPAIGN VISIT UKFEMINISTA.ORG.UK

**LET TOYS BE TOYS** **RISE ABOVE**

**AGENDA**  
 A YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO MAKING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Opening Doors  
 a school resource in supporting young schools

Challenging gender stereotypes through primary education

**STEREOTYPES STOP YOU DOING STUFF** **NUT**

**SAFER CORRIDORS ACTION TOOLKIT**

IPSP Institute of Physics

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