

**GENDER
STEREOTYPES**

TRAINING MANUAL

students

GENDER NEUTR-ALL

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TRAINING

GENDER STEREOTYPES

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INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes: How do they affect us and what can we do?

When we hear the word “gender,” we often think only of “male” or “female.” However, gender is much more than that: it is a set of ideas, expectations, and social norms that tell boys and girls, men and women, how they “should” act, feel, or look (Moss-Racusin, 2021). These sets of predefined beliefs are called gender stereotypes, and they can affect us in almost every area of our lives, from school to personal relationships.

What are gender stereotypes?

Gender stereotypes are generalized and simplified ideas about the characteristics or behaviors people should have based on their gender. For example, the idea that boys should be strong, never cry, and not show emotions, while girls should be sensitive, caring, and “good” and obedient (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

These stereotypes do not come out of nowhere. They are built throughout history and passed down through family, school, the media (films, series, music, social media), and even through the way people speak to us from an early age (Ridgeway, 2011). The problem is that, very often, these stereotypes limit our choices and can lead to discrimination or prejudice.

How do gender stereotypes affect us?

Gender stereotypes may seem “harmless” at first, but their impacts are deep. For example, studies show that girls may feel discouraged from choosing areas like mathematics, engineering, or science because they are seen as “boys’ stuff” (Master & Meltzoff, 2020). At the same time, boys might avoid activities related to art or caring for others (like nursing or early childhood education) for fear of being judged.

Moreover, these stereotypes influence how we express our emotions. Many boys are taught not to cry, not to show sadness or fear, which can lead to emotional problems and greater difficulty asking for help (Mahalik et al., 2003). On the other hand, girls might be seen as “weak” or “too emotional” when they express their feelings, creating an environment where they feel constantly judged.

The influence of media and social media

The media plays a huge role in maintaining and spreading gender stereotypes. On social media, for example, we constantly see images that reinforce certain beauty or behavior standards: muscular boys, thin girls, and everyone always looking “perfect.” These representations can create pressure to look or act a certain way and can negatively impact self-esteem (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008).

Furthermore, many songs and movies convey the idea that boys should be “dominant” and girls should be “submissive.” These messages influence how we understand relationships and can normalize controlling or violent behaviors (Coyne et al., 2019).

What if we don't fit into these stereotypes?

It is important to remember that no one is obligated to follow these expectations. Each person is unique and has the right to choose who they want to be. Still, those who break away from stereotypes may face criticism, bullying, or social exclusion. People who identify as non-binary or express their gender differently often face discrimination, which can negatively affect mental health and overall well-being (Moss-Racusin, 2021).

That's why it is crucial to create safe spaces where all identities are respected and valued. By questioning stereotypes, we help build a fairer and more inclusive society.

What can we do?

As young people, there are several things we can do to fight gender stereotypes:

- 1. Question:** Before saying or thinking “this is for boys” or “this is for girls,” ask yourself where that idea came from. Who said that? Is it really true?
- 2. Support others:** If we see someone being criticized for doing something “unusual” for their gender, we can show support. A simple “It's okay, do what you like” can make a big difference.
- 3. Educate ourselves:** Reading books, watching documentaries, or following people who talk about gender equality and diversity can open our minds and help us understand different realities.
- 4. Reflect on media:** When watching a movie or series, try to identify what stereotypes are present. Then, think about how they could be different or more inclusive.
- 5. Express who we really are:** Even though we might fear judgment, being true to ourselves can inspire others to do the same.

Gender stereotypes are like “boxes” that society tries to put people into. But no one fits perfectly into these boxes — and we shouldn’t! Our identity goes far beyond fixed ideas about “how a boy or a girl should be.” By questioning and fighting gender stereotypes, we are creating space so everyone can live more freely, healthily, and happily.

Each of us has an important role in this change. It is not easy to break patterns that have existed for centuries, but step by step, we can build a society where all people have the right to be who they are, without fear or shame.



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1

IDENTIFY AND DECONSTRUCT STEREOTYPES

1.1. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

How Do Stereotypes Form?

From an early age, we are exposed to messages that reinforce traditional gender roles. Toys, clothes, TV shows, and even language contribute to creating rigid images: cars and superheroes for boys; dolls and caregiving for girls (Martin & Ruble, 2010). These messages shape what is expected from each gender and influence personal choices, such as interests, friendships, and careers.

Impacts of Stereotypes

Although they may seem “harmless,” gender stereotypes can have deep negative consequences:

- **Limiting Opportunities:** When people believe that certain roles belong exclusively to one gender, access to fields like science, technology, arts, or caregiving is limited. For example, the idea that “women are not good at technology” can discourage girls from pursuing careers in this area (Ceci, Williams, & Barnett, 2009).
- **Pressure to Conform:** Stereotypes create pressure for people to fit into an expected “box” of behavior. Boys may feel they must not show emotions, while girls may be pressured to be “sweet” and passive (Leaper, 2015). This can harm mental health and self-esteem.
- **Discrimination and Inequality:** Stereotypes form the basis of prejudices that result in discrimination at work, school, and social relationships. This reinforces gender inequality, where men and women do not have equal rights or opportunities (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

How to Challenge Stereotypes?

Challenging stereotypes requires reflection and action. Some strategies include:

- **Critical Education:** Learning to identify stereotypes and think about their validity.
- **Diverse Role Models:** Promoting examples of people who break traditional roles.
- **Inclusive Language:** Using terms that do not reinforce unnecessary differences.
- **Inclusive Environments:** Creating spaces where all identities are respected.

These practices can help build a more equal society and allow each person to freely develop their abilities without gender constraints (Cheryan, Ziegler, Montoya, & Jiang, 2017).

The Role of Media

The media play a powerful role in reproducing or deconstructing stereotypes. Films, series, advertising, and social networks show images that can reinforce traditional roles or, conversely, promote alternative models. For example, representing women in leadership positions or men caring for children helps break prejudices (Collins, 2011).

However, many contents still reinforce stereotypes, such as the objectification of women or the glorification of aggressive masculinity. It is important that young people develop a critical eye towards these messages (Ward & Friedman, 2006).

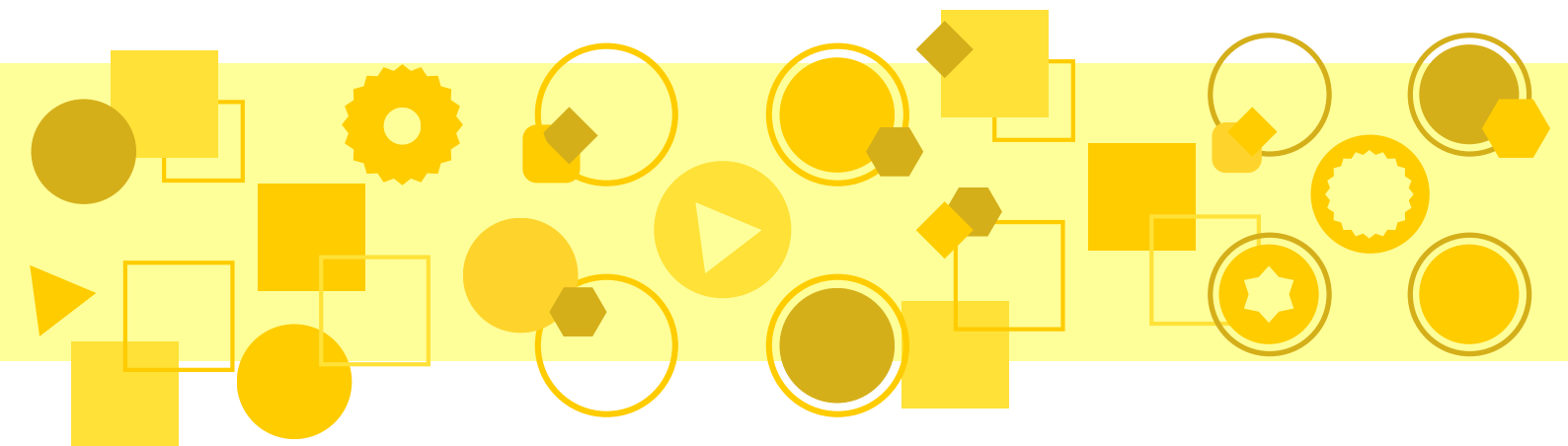
Conclusion

Gender stereotypes are simplified beliefs that affect how we see ourselves and interact. They limit choices and perpetuate inequalities. To create a fairer society, it is essential for everyone to learn to recognize and question these stereotypes, valuing diversity and promoting equality. Schools, families, media, and each individual have a role in this change.

However, many contents still reinforce stereotypes, such as the objectification of women or the glorification of aggressive masculinity. It is important that young people develop a critical eye towards these messages (Ward & Friedman, 2006).

1.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

Students can learn that stereotypes are the result of social constructions and that their prevalence has an impact on personal and social levels.



1.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: “Who’s Who?” – Profile Guessing Game

Objectives:

- Identify stereotypes related to professions, appearance, and gender.

Description:

- Students receive short character profiles (e.g., “Adam, 32, likes taking care of children and works in a hospital”).
- They guess each person's job based on the description.
- Reveal the real job and reflect on what influenced their assumptions.

Materials:

- Printed profiles, board or poster to record answers.

Discussion:

- How do stereotypes make us assume the wrong things? Who gets left out?

Activity 2: “Ads Under the Microscope” – Media Analysis

Objectives:

- Build critical awareness of gender representation in advertising.

Description:

- Students bring in ads (print, video, or digital). In groups, they analyze: Who speaks? Who is featured? What colors, roles, or values are used?

Materials:

- Printed/projected ads, analysis grids.

Discussion:

- What patterns keep repeating? How could they be different?

Activity 3: “My Gender Timeline”

Objectives:

- Reflect on how gender roles have shaped personal experiences.

Description:

- Students create a timeline of moments they felt pressure to “act like a boy/girl.”
- Optional sharing in pairs or small groups.

Materials:

- A3 paper, markers.

Discussion:

- What messages do we receive about how to behave? How can we challenge that?

Activity 4: “Flipped Storytelling” – Writing Exercise

Objectives:

- Challenge traditional gender roles through creative writing.

Description:

- Students write short stories where gender roles are flipped (e.g., a female truck driver and a male full-time caregiver).
- Stories are shared and discussed in class.

Materials:

- Paper, pens, or laptops.

Discussion:

- Did it sound strange? Why? What assumptions do we carry about gender?

Activity 5: “Stereotypes on Stage” – Forum Theatre

Objectives:

- Explore inequality through participatory drama.

Description:

- Groups act out short scenes showing gender bias or microaggressions (e.g., sexist jokes, girls excluded from science lab roles).
- Classmates can “step in” to change the scene and propose better responses.

Materials:

- Open space for acting.

Discussion:

- What works when confronting stereotypes? What can we do as a group?

Activity 6: “Gender Stereotype Quiz”

Objectives:

- Debunk myths and false beliefs about gender.

Description:

- Interactive quiz (digital or paper-based) with questions like:
- “True or false: girls are naturally worse at math.”
- “Which country ranks highest in gender equality?”

Materials:

- Digital platform or printed quiz.

Discussion:

- What surprised you most? What ideas do we need to question?



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**GiRLS ARE MORE
SENSiTiVE THAN BOYS**

2.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

Are we really that different?

Many people believe that boys and girls naturally have different personalities and emotions. This idea is one of the oldest and most deeply rooted gender stereotypes. But is it really true?

Studies on gender stereotypes show that these ideas are neither universal nor immutable. They change over time and can differ from region to region (Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Timm & Sanborn, 2008).

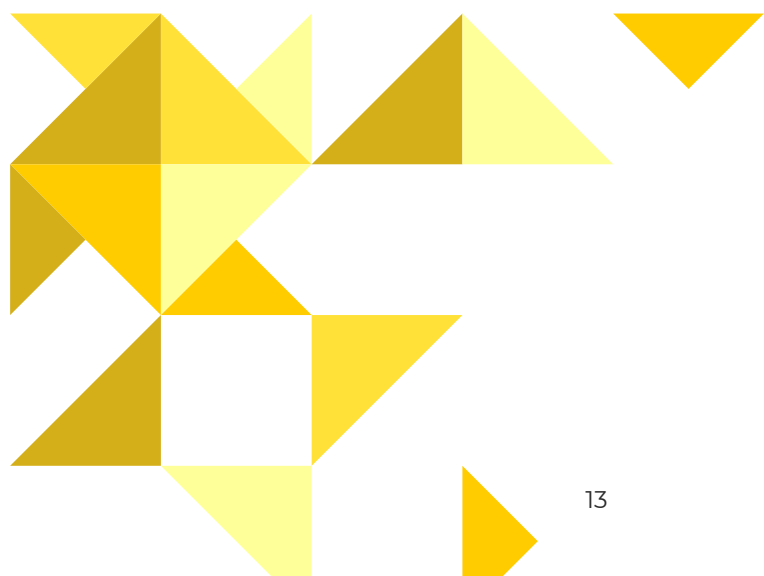
Of course, in everyday life, it seems that boys and girls have certain behaviours or characteristics that “match” these ideas. But the problem is that these stereotypes are exaggerated generalisations: they end up hiding the fact that there are more similarities than differences between the two groups (Spence, 1999).

An example: we often hear about ‘feminine traits’ (sensitivity, care, passivity) and ‘masculine traits’ (strength, rationality, aggressiveness). But these traits are not innate. From an early age, we learn to act in accordance with society's expectations for our gender. It is a process that begins in childhood, in the small messages we receive from parents, teachers, friends and even television.

Therefore, boys are taught to be more active, competitive and independent, while girls are encouraged to be more affectionate, to care for others and to value emotional bonds. When we tell a boy ‘don't cry, that's for girls’ or criticise a girl for being ‘bossy’, we are actively reinforcing these stereotypes (Salih, 2007).

But does this make sense? Science has shown that it does not. Neuroscience explains that the biological differences between male and female brains are minimal (Eliot, 2013). What really makes the difference is neuroplasticity – the ability of our brain to adapt to what we experience, what we learn and what society expects of us.

Ultimately, gender is not something fixed within us, but something we “do” every day, with our gestures, words and attitudes. And if we all start to question these stereotypes, we can be freer to be who we really are – without limits imposed by old ideas.



2.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To understand that there is no biological factor that determines the personality traits and emotions of boys and girls, that stereotypes limit emotional and behavioural expression, and that we all have the right to freely express our behaviours, attitudes and emotions in a responsible manner, respecting the rights and dignity of others.

2.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: Do personality traits and emotions influence sex?

Objectives:

- Be aware of gender stereotypes related to emotions and personality traits.

Instructions:

1. Introduction (10 min)

- Brief conversation about what emotions are and common examples.
- Generating question: "Can we all feel and express the same emotions in the same way?"

2. Emotions quiz (10 min)

- Using their mobile phones, students open the quiz by scanning the QR code and answer the questions (individually).

3. Small group discussion (10 min)

- Groups of 4 are formed.
- In groups, students compare their answers:
Which statements had the most consensus?
Which statements had the least consensus?
- Is there an explanation for these stereotypes?

4. Teacher-led debate (30 min)

- Projection of quiz results.

- Joint reflection on:

Which stereotypes are most prevalent in the class?

What is the origin of these stereotypes?

How do these stereotypes affect each person's emotional freedom?

What impact do they have on mental health?

Material:

- Computer with internet access, online quiz tool with questionnaire, projector, projection screen, mobile phones (students)

Activity 2: Understanding and respecting emotions

Objectives:

- To critically reflect on the effect of stereotypes on personality traits and emotions.

Instructions:

1. Scenario analysis (15 min)

- Using their smartphones, students scan the QR code to access the padlet and analyse a scenario (the scenarios are distributed to the groups in advance).
- In groups, students analyse the scenario in order to answer the following questions:

What stereotype is present?

How might this phrase affect those who hear it?

What other phrase would be fairer?

- Each group creates a response and records it on the padlet, in the post for the scenario they analysed.

2. Large group discussion (20 min)

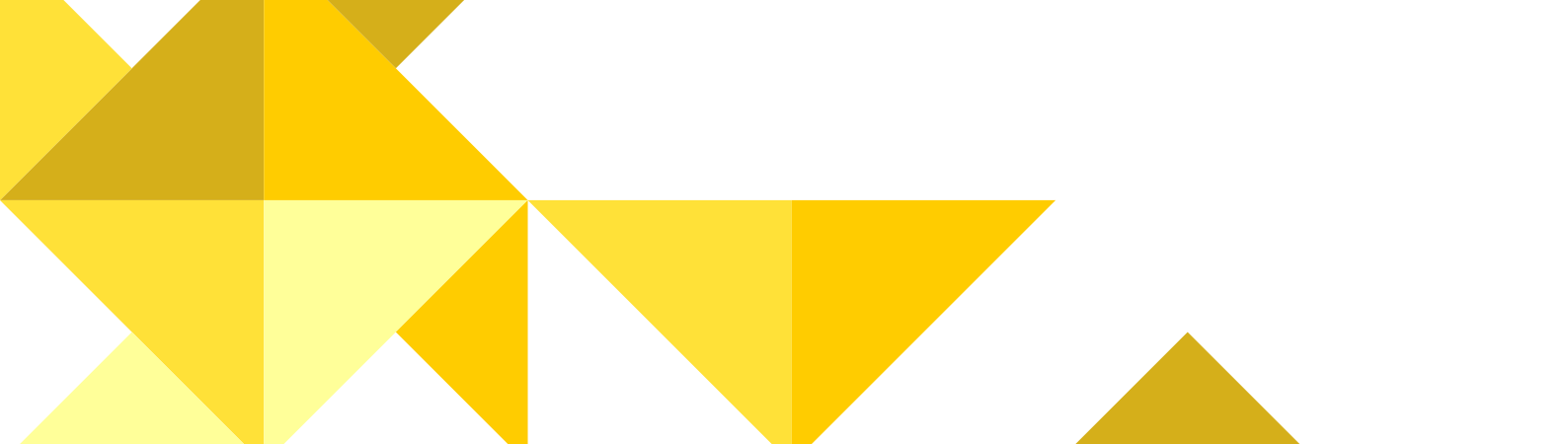
- Using the padlet projection, the groups share their analyses, with the teacher acting as mediator.

3. Creative synthesis (10 min)

- Each student writes a positive phrase on a post-it note that helps to deconstruct stereotypes related to personality traits and emotions. These are placed on the board or on a mural in the classroom.

Material:

- Computer with internet access, projector, projection screen, padlet (online collaborative work tool), post-it notes, pens, mobile phones (students).



2.4 REFERENCES

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**GIRLS PREFER ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES
AS BOYS PREFER SPORTS**

3.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The belief that girls naturally gravitate toward artistic activities while boys prefer sports is a gender stereotype rooted more in cultural norms than in biological reality. While differences in interests can be observed, these are largely shaped by socialization, not innate abilities.

Research in developmental psychology shows that children's interests are heavily influenced by the expectations of adults, peers, and media representations. For example, Coyle and Liben (2016) found that children as young as four already show gendered preferences, but these are strongly predicted by the gender-typing of toys and activities in their environment - not by intrinsic differences.

Neuroscientific studies also show that there are no major cognitive or neurological differences that would explain why girls would prefer art and boys' sports. Instead, reinforcement from parents and teachers often channels boys into more physical and competitive activities, while girls are encouraged to engage in more expressive or sedentary ones.

Moreover, when given equal opportunities and encouragement, boys and girls show overlapping interests in both artistic and athletic pursuits (Halpern et al., 2007). This suggests that the stereotype is not a reflection of ability, but of restricted social norms.

Challenging this stereotype is essential for allowing children to explore a wider range of interests, develop diverse skills, and break free from limiting gender roles.

3.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To understand that there is no biological factor that determinates girls and boys interests.

The expression of personal interests is a human right and encourages the exercise of citizenship.

3.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: Debate about the film Billy Elliot

Objectives:

- Become aware of social patterns and how they affect people

Instructions:

- After the projection of the film, let students to work in groups and provide their opinion about the following questions
- How society provide patterns? How can we encourage our friends and classmates to express their interests without being afraid of the social norms?

Materials:

- Video projector, pc, paper pens

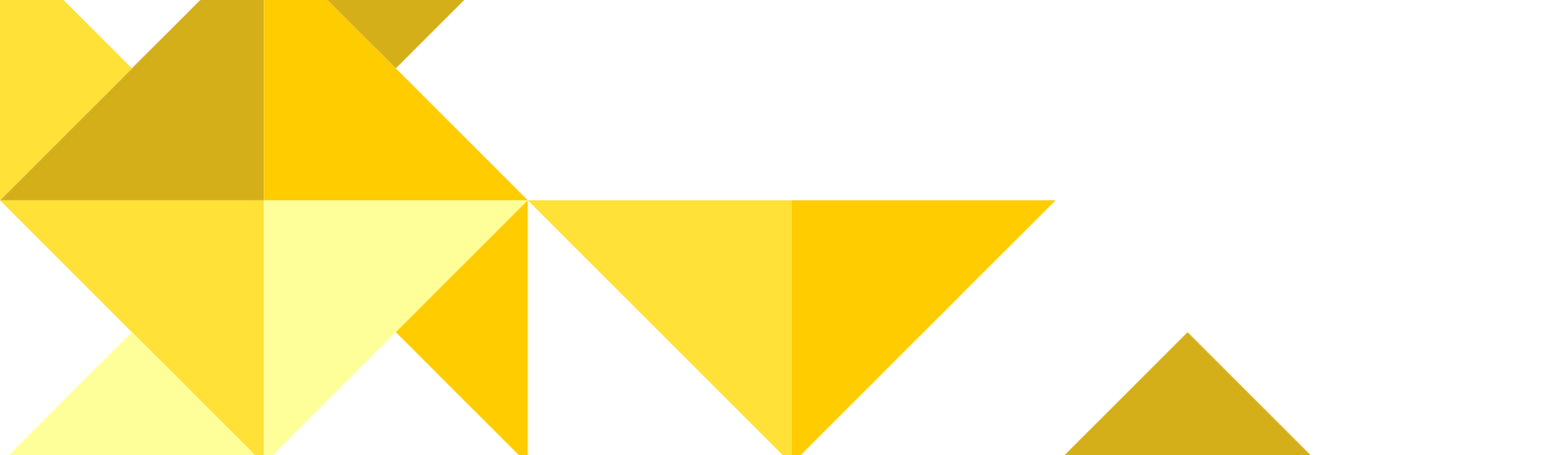
Activity 2: Role Model Research & Presentations

Objectives:

- Discover real-life people who break stereotypes.

Instructions:

- Students pick a person who challenges gender roles in sports or arts (e.g., Serena Williams, Misty Copeland, David Beckham, Frida Kahlo, Billy Elliot).
- Prepare short presentations (poster, slides, or even a social media-style profile).
- Class discussion: What challenges did these role models face? What can we learn from them?



3.4 REFERENCES

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**BOYS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN
TECHNOLOGY AND GIRLS ARE MORE
INTERESTED IN LITERATURE**

4.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The belief that boys are naturally inclined toward technology, while girls are more drawn to literature, is a persistent gender stereotype that significantly influences educational choices and career aspirations. However, a growing body of research demonstrates that these preferences are not biologically determined but are instead shaped by societal expectations, early socialization, and structural inequality.

From a young age, children are exposed to cultural messages that associate technical, logical, and spatial reasoning with masculinity, while linking empathy, verbal expression, and reading with femininity. These messages are embedded in toys, media, school materials, and even adult expectations.

Research found that children's interests develop in "gendered pathways," influenced by parental encouragement, peer behavior, and stereotypes embedded in educational environments. This social conditioning often deters girls from engaging with technology and deters boys from engaging deeply with literary pursuits. There is no biological basis for assuming boys are better suited for technology or girls for literature. Instead, early exposure and reinforcement explain most of the observable differences in interest.

Fine (2010) argues that widely held beliefs about "male" and "female" brains are not supported by scientific evidence. She contends that stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies: when girls are told they are less suited for tech, they internalize this belief and underperform or avoid the subject altogether.

The stereotype has long-term consequences on gender representation in both fields:

- In the EU, women account for only 17% of ICT students, while they dominate in literature-related fields such as education and humanities (European Parliament, 2020).
- Research by Bian, Leslie, and Cimpian (2017) demonstrated that girls as young as six begin to associate high intelligence with males, which directly reduces their interest in STEM fields.

These biases result in underrepresentation of women in technical careers and men in literary and caregiving professions, perpetuating gender inequality in the labor market.

The stereotype that boys prefer technology and girls prefer literature is a socially constructed belief, not a biological truth. Addressing this misconception through education, policy, and awareness is essential for achieving gender equity in both academic and professional domains.

4.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To understand that the interiorization of this stereotype has effects on professional career, to understand that there is no biological basis on the development of different skills.

4.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: “Stereotype Switch” Workshop

Objectives:

- Highlight how gender expectations shape interests.

Instructions:

- Ask students to brainstorm common tech and literature-related roles (e.g., programmer, novelist, gamer, poet).
- In pairs or small groups, assign students the opposite-gender stereotype: boys research/write about famous female technologists, girls about male authors or poets.
- Present findings to the class with a short profile or visual poster.

Activity 2: Reflective Writing: “Who Told Me What I Like?”

Objectives:

- Encourage self-awareness and critique of early influences.

Instructions:

- Prompt: *“Was there ever a time you felt discouraged from liking something because of your gender?”*
- Students write anonymously (or openly) and submit their thoughts to a shared space (wall, Padlet, etc.).
- Read some aloud and hold a respectful class discussion.
- At the end you can conduct a debate about “How do gender expectations shape the freedom to choose?”

Activity 3: Career roleplay

Objectives:

- Expand career horizons and challenge internalized limitations.

Instructions:

- Students choose or are assigned a career they feel they wouldn't normally consider because of their gender.
- They prepare a mock “career day” presentation: dress the part, describe a day in the life, and explain what the job involves.
- Include real-world data (e.g., gender representation in that field).
- At the end, you can debrief about "What surprised you about this career? What might be holding people back from it?"

4.4 REFERENCES

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**BOYS ARE BETTER AT SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND
MATHS, AND GIRLS ARE BETTER AT
EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AREAS**

5.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The idea that boys are more suitable than girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) professions, and that girls are more suitable in the areas of education, health, and social support, has no real basis and is therefore called a work-related gender stereotype (Diez et al., 2022).

This can occur because of various factors, relating either to themselves or to external influences. For instance, the expectations of the society in which they live and what is deemed 'appropriate' for boys and girls can influence their choice of field of study and future professional career (Obioma et al., 2025). Therefore, when considering a scientific area generally chosen by boys, it is possible that girls feel they don't fit in. Similarly, when considering a career that is traditionally chosen by more girls, boys may feel that they don't fit in. When they feel that they don't belong in a particular area and are not comfortable with it, they tend to lose interest and become progressively less committed to the idea (Leopold et al., 2025). Thus, we can say that students feel more comfortable and tend to try to fit in with choices that are more common in their gender. Even when they both show an interest in the same area and choose to pursue it, their justifications for doing so differ. For example, when choosing courses in science, technology, engineering or maths, girls justify it by being able to help others or contribute to improving society, while boys justify it by the possibility of earning a lot of money (Merayo & Ayuso, 2022).

However, this doesn't mean that one gender is better than the other in a certain field of knowledge. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), developed by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), assesses students from 81 countries in reading, maths, and science. In PISA 2015, it was observed that when comparing boys' results in the three subjects, their best results were in science, and when comparing girls' results, their best performances were in reading. However, when comparing boys with girls, there were generally no differences between the two, although there were positive and negative variations in different countries (Stoet & Geary, 2018). Regarding these results, OECD (2015a) stated that differences in achievement cannot be explained by innate ability. As mentioned above, the cultural and social contexts are responsible for stereotypical attitudes and behaviour reinforcement, which people tend to associate with gender differences in students' performance. This suggests that a considerably higher percentage of girls may enjoy studying STEM subjects than go on to major in these subjects. Again, cultural and social contexts may contribute to different boys' and girls' behaviors, and different choices.

To summarize, we can state that, despite different personal and environmental characteristics that shape their behavior and choices, in general, there are no gender differences in STEM disciplines performance.

5.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To internalize that there are no innate differences between boys and girls that make them more adequate or prone to success in specific academic areas.

5.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: What if this?...what if that?!

Objectives:

- To explore how careers in different areas can lead to different lifestyles; to understand and demonstrate how gender stereotypes intersect with these perspectives.

Description:

- Divide the class into groups of 2 students (of the same sex). Ask the groups to imagine and characterize with examples the future life (personal, family, and professional) of one of the members if he goes on to study nursing. After 30 minutes, ask them to do the same, but now thinking about a career as a civil engineer. Guiding questions: How successful do you think this career could be (give an example of how far you could go)? How compatible or conflicting would this career be with your personal and family life? How difficult, on a scale of 1 to 5, do you think this profession can be? How stressful, on a scale of 1 to 5, do you think this job can be? How suitable (fit), on a scale of 1 to 5, do you think this job will be for the person you have imagined?
- In the end, compare the answers of girls' and boys' groups and discuss if you can find gender-based stereotypes in the way you perceive that future lives.

Materials:

- Paper and pencil.

Outcome:

- To observe how boys and girls envisage their professional, personal and family futures in relation to the same profession; to see how they construct their image of the future when the profession in question is more commonly associated with people of the same sex and when it is seen as a more common profession in the opposite sex.

Activity 2: Once upon a time...

Objectives:

- To explore how work-related gender stereotypes have potentially emerged.

Description:

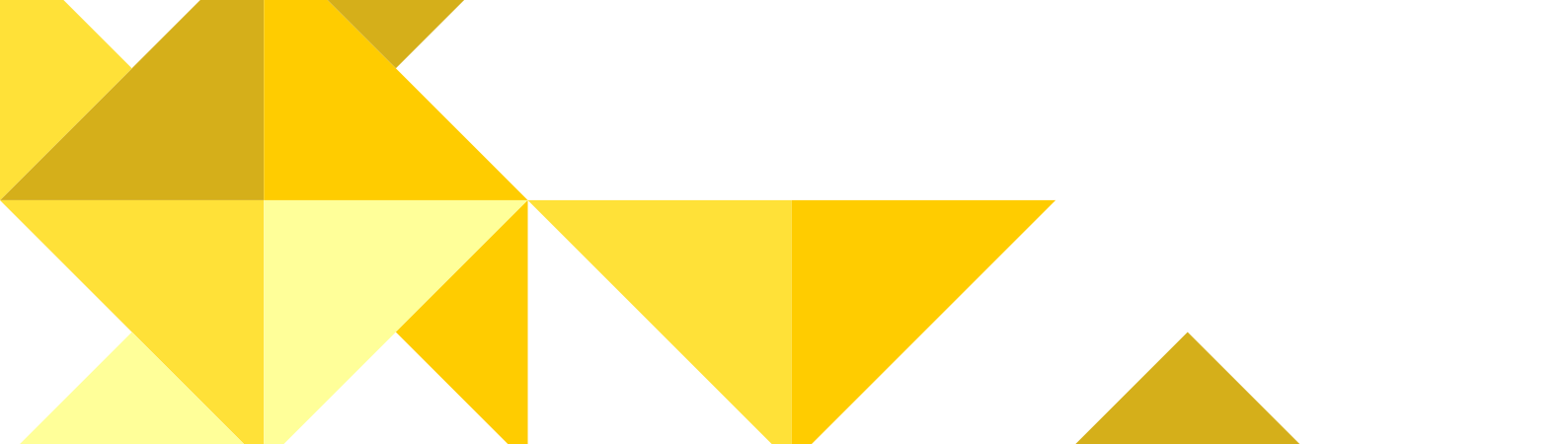
- Discuss what these professions have in common and different. Why are they more associated with women or men? Is there anything that makes them more suitable for women or men? Are there possible cultural, social, economic, or physical explanations for that?

Materials:

- a set of cards with professions in areas usually associated predominantly with one gender. For example, early childhood education, psychology, nursing, fashion, beautician, vs. maths, sport, engineering, physics, theology.

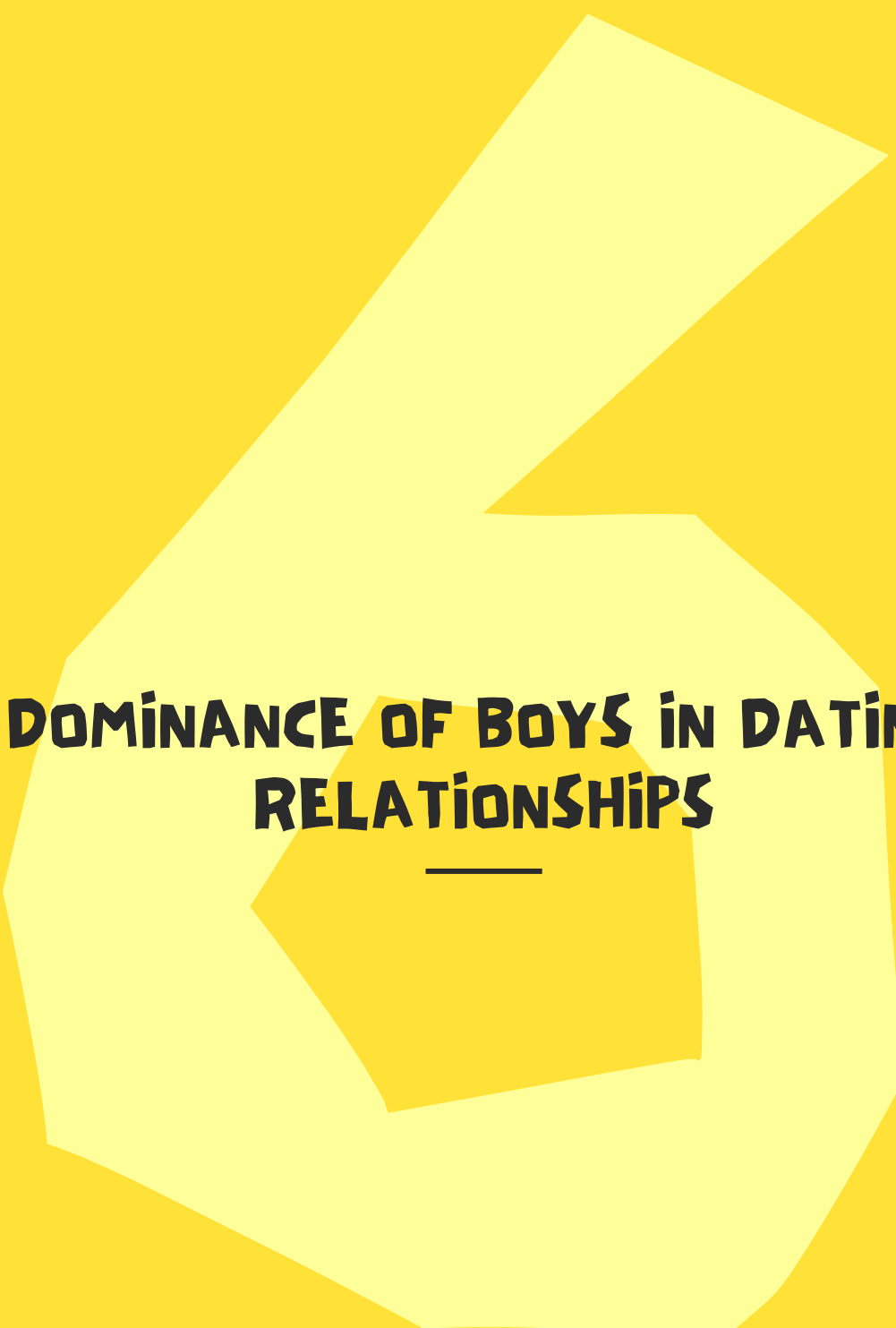
Outcome:

- To think critically about how and why work-related gender stereotypes appeared.



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DOMINANCE OF BOYS in DATING RELATIONSHIPS

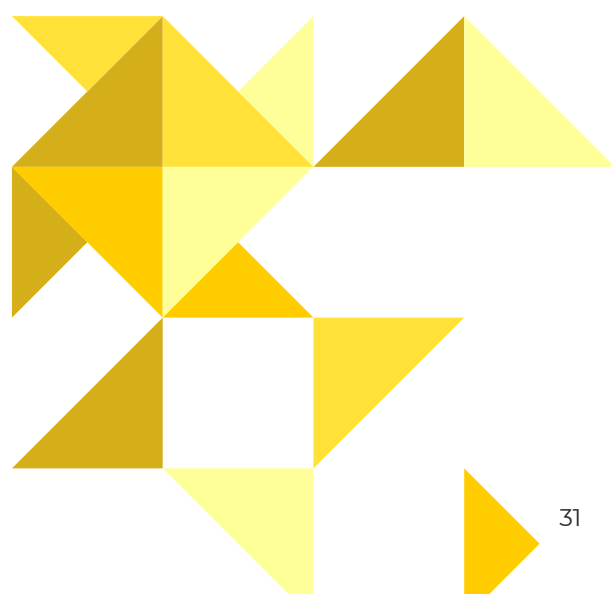
6.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The stereotype that boys should hold dominance in dating relationships—making decisions, setting boundaries, and influencing their partner's behavior—is rooted in traditional gender norms and power dynamics that associate masculinity with authority and control. This belief is especially prominent during adolescence, a period when young people are developing ideas about identity, relationships, and gender roles.

Research shows that many adolescents internalize gendered expectations: boys are encouraged to be assertive and emotionally restrained, while girls are expected to be agreeable, nurturing, and accommodating (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). These expectations influence relationship dynamics, often leading boys to take on dominant roles and girls to adopt submissive or dependent positions. Boys are also more likely to enforce control over their partners' social interactions, appearance, and autonomy—behaviors normalized by media, peer pressure, and cultural messaging (Giordano et al., 2014). This is reflected in what scholars refer to as hegemonic masculinity, where male dominance and emotional control are upheld as ideals.

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, persistent gender stereotypes—like male dominance in relationships—are a key barrier to gender equality. These stereotypes contribute to the normalization of gender-based control, which is a precursor to teen dating violence and emotional abuse. A 2017 Eurobarometer survey revealed that 27% of Europeans agreed that "sex without consent may be justified" in certain situations—highlighting how deeply gendered power imbalances in relationships are embedded in cultural norms. Additionally, gender stereotypes in schools, peer groups, and media continue to reinforce ideas that boys should be dominant in romantic and sexual contexts (European Commission, 2020).

Belief in male dominance in adolescent relationships affects the emotional health, autonomy, and safety of young people. It discourages boys from developing respectful, emotionally open communication styles and pressures girls to accept imbalance, even in harmful situations.



6.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To understand that all genders have a role to play in relationships and in decision-making.

To learn how to promote healthy, equitable, and non-violent relationships during adolescence.

6.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: Media Literacy Campaign

Objectives:

- Critically analyze media portrayals of dating relationships to challenge stereotypes.

Description:

- **Media Analysis (30 min):** Students watch clips from popular TV shows or movies depicting teen relationships. In groups, they identify instances where boys are shown as dominant (e.g., making decisions without input) and discuss how these portrayals reinforce stereotypes.
- **Create Counter-Narratives (40 min):** Students design posters or short social media posts that promote egalitarian relationships, emphasizing shared decision-making and mutual respect. Examples include slogans like “Love is Equal” or visuals showing couples collaborating.
- **Presentation (20 min):** Groups share their creations, explaining how they challenge the stereotype.

Materials:

- Projector, laptops, art supplies, access to social media platforms (optional).

Outcome:

- Students develop critical media literacy and create messages that promote healthy, balanced relationships.

Activity 2: Peer-Led Discussion Groups

Objectives:

- To understanding how stereotypes about the dominance of boys affect relationships

Description:

- **Facilitator Training (Initial Session):** Train peer leaders to guide discussions using open-ended questions like “What does a fair relationship look like?” or “How do stereotypes about boys’ dominance affect dating?”
- **Weekly Discussions (30 min each):** Small groups discuss topics like power dynamics, consent, and mutual respect, using prompts to explore personal experiences and societal pressures.
- **Action Plan (15 min):** Participants commit to one action, such as calling out controlling behavior in peers or modeling egalitarian behavior in their relationships.

Materials:

- Discussion guides, notebooks for reflection.

Activity 3: Simulation of a School council working on management on gender-based violence

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/-/no-violence-he-2>

Objectives:

- To understand that the whole school community can contribute to the development of a culture of equality

Description:

- You are members of a school community. Several cases of gender-based violence have occurred in recent weeks, for example sexist comments on the school Facebook page, people making jokes about a student who identifies as transgender, and a girl who was beaten by her boyfriend. You all want to make sure that there is no place for gender-based violence in your school. For that reason, the school management, in response to claims by a number of students, has decided to draw up a policy against gender-based violence in the school. To begin with, you will work in separate groups:

*students nominated by the school community;
teachers, including school management;
parents.*

- There will also be a group of independent experts to support you in devising such a policy. The task of each group will be to develop a short statement (about 3-5 points) outlining the most important things to be included in a policy against gender-based violence. Each group should also write a short paragraph (or series of bullet points) on how occurrences of gender-based violence should be addressed.
- You will have about 30 minutes to do this, and after 15 minutes, you will be given the chance to consult with some 'independent experts'. The experts will invite each group for a meeting, and the group will have 3 minutes to present the outcomes of their work and discuss their recommendations with the experts.

Materials:

- Paper, pens, dashboard.

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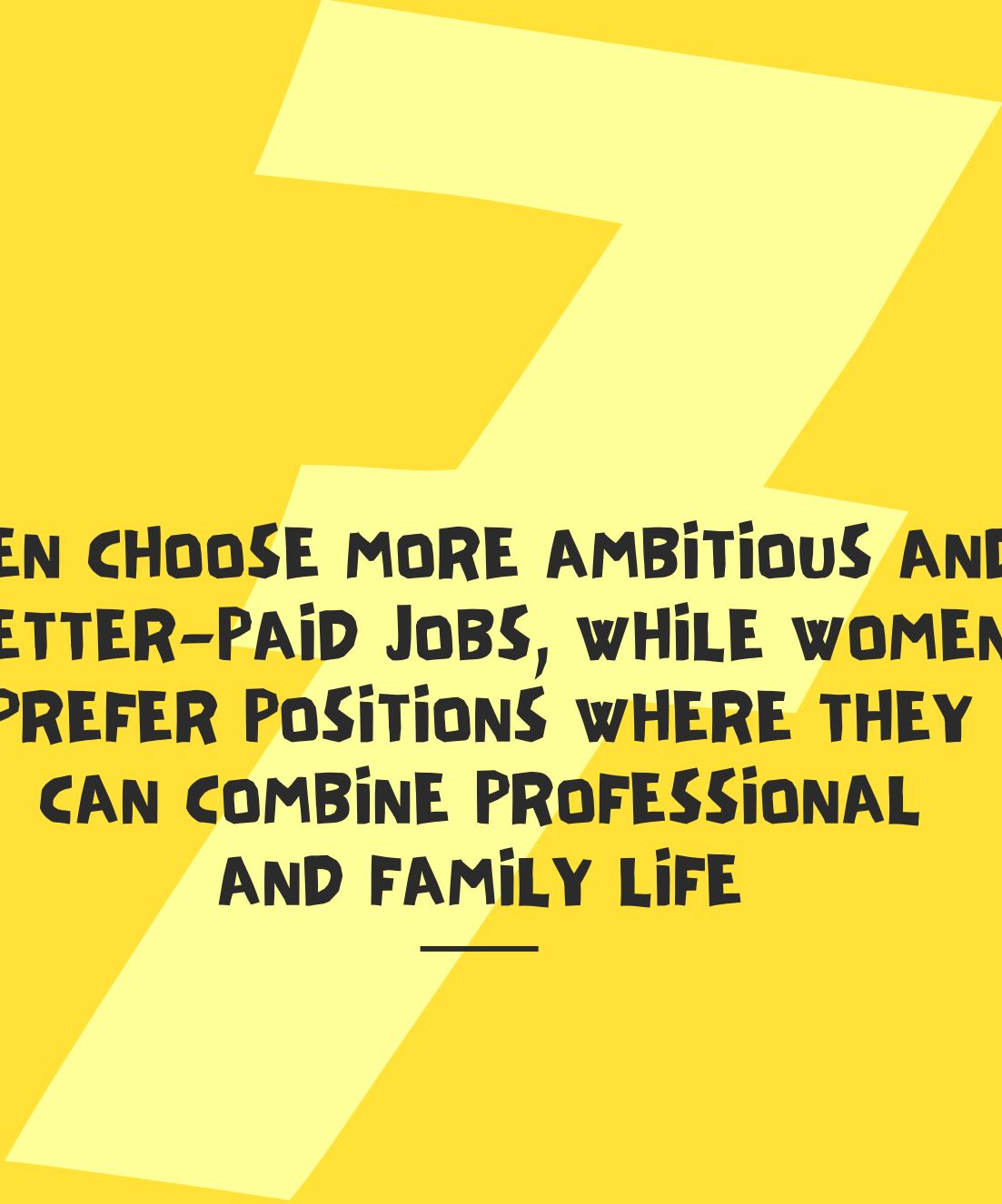
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**MEN CHOOSE MORE AMBITIOUS AND
BETTER-PAID JOBS, WHILE WOMEN
PREFER POSITIONS WHERE THEY
CAN COMBINE PROFESSIONAL
AND FAMILY LIFE**

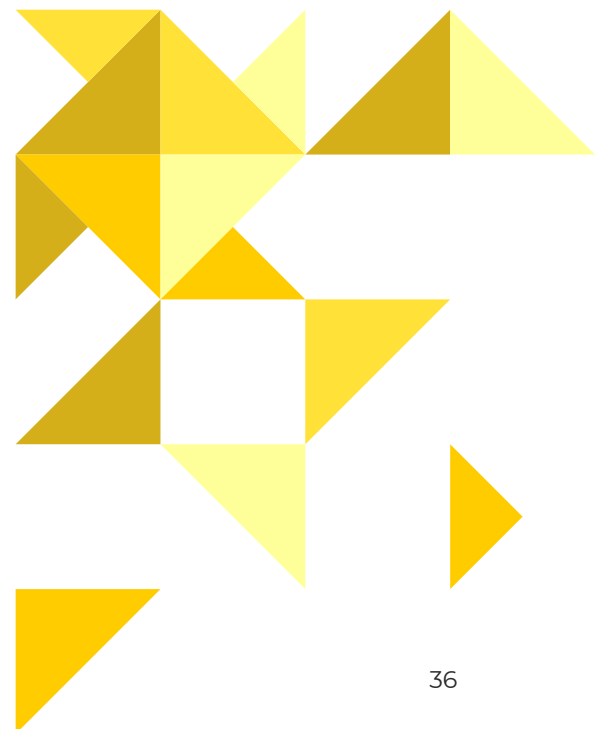
7.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The stereotype that men choose more ambitious and better-paid jobs while women prefer positions that allow them to balance professional and family life has long been a topic of discussion in gender studies and sociology. This assumption is rooted in traditional gender roles, where men were historically seen as primary breadwinners and women as caregivers. While there is some evidence to support differences in career choices between genders, this stereotype oversimplifies complex social, economic, and cultural factors that influence occupational decisions.

Research shows that men dominate high-paying fields like engineering (85% male) and computer science (74% male), while women are overrepresented in lower-paying sectors like education (70% female) and healthcare (75% female). These trends might suggest men prioritize ambition and income, while women opt for flexibility. However, this overlooks structural factors like workplace discrimination, societal expectations, and access to opportunities. For example, women are less likely to be encouraged to pursue STEM fields from an early age due to gendered socialization, which emphasizes nurturing roles for girls (Eccles, 2015).

The stereotype also ignores the impact of work-life balance policies. Studies show that both men and women value flexibility, but women are more likely to face penalties for utilizing it. A study by Burgess found that women in corporate settings often face a "motherhood penalty," where taking maternity leave or part-time roles leads to slower career progression. Men, conversely, are less likely to take paternity leave due to stigma, reinforcing the perception that they prioritize ambition over family. This dynamic creates a self-fulfilling cycle where women are pushed into roles with perceived flexibility, while men are channeled into demanding, high-reward positions.

Cultural norms further perpetuate this stereotype. In many societies, women are still expected to shoulder the majority of childcare and household responsibilities. A 2021 OECD report highlighted that women spend, on average, 2-4 hours more per day on unpaid domestic work than men. This disparity limits women's ability to pursue time-intensive careers, not because of inherent preferences but due to external pressures. Meanwhile, men may feel societal pressure to pursue high-status roles to fulfill the "provider" archetype, even at the cost of personal fulfillment.



However, recent trends challenge this stereotype. Men are increasingly seeking work-life balance, with study showing 60% of young male workers prioritizing flexible schedules. Similarly, women are breaking into high-paying, ambitious fields like finance and tech at higher rates than ever before. These shifts suggest that career choices are less about gender-specific preferences and more about evolving societal norms and economic realities.

In conclusion, while the stereotype that men choose ambitious, high-paying jobs and women prioritize family-friendly roles holds some statistical truth, it fails to account for systemic barriers, societal expectations, and changing attitudes. Addressing these factors through equitable policies and cultural shifts can help dismantle this oversimplified narrative.

7.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To understand that ambition is not influenced by gender.

7.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: “Debate: Ambition vs. Balance – Is It Gendered?”

Objectives:

- Reflecting on gender, ambition and balance

Description:

- **Split the class into two teams:**
- One supports the stereotype (for the sake of debate) and the other one challenges it. Give time to research and prepare arguments using real data (you can supply it). Hold the debate, then reflect: Was one argument more evidence-based? How do societal expectations influence our definition of ambition?

Materials:

- Pc, sheets of paper, pens.

Activity 2: Prepare slides with profiles of:

Objectives:

- To reflect on gender stereotypes and professional choices

Description:

Let students think about these professional choices:

- Women in ambitious, high-paying careers (e.g., CEOs, surgeons, scientists).
- Men in caregiving or “family-friendly” professions (e.g., nurses, kindergarten teachers) - and follow with a class discussion:

What surprised them?

What challenges did these individuals face?

What influenced their career choices?

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**MEN ARE MORE VALORISED IN
PROFESSIONAL LIFE**

8.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The stereotype that men are more valorized in professional life reflects a pervasive belief rooted in historical and cultural norms. This perception suggests that men are more likely to be recognized, promoted, and rewarded in workplaces compared to women, often tied to assumptions about competence, leadership, and societal roles. While progress toward gender equality has been made, evidence shows that this stereotype persists, influencing workplace dynamics, opportunities, and perceptions.

Historically, men dominated professional spheres due to patriarchal structures that restricted women's access to education and employment. These norms fostered the belief that men are inherently better suited for leadership and high-stakes roles. For example, studies show that men are often perceived as more competent in fields like technology, finance, and engineering, even when qualifications are equal. Studies found that men were more likely to receive promotions based on perceived potential, while women were judged on proven performance, highlighting a bias in valorization. The gender pay gap further reinforces this stereotype. In 2023, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that women earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men, with disparities most pronounced in male-dominated industries. This gap reflects not only unequal pay for similar roles but also the concentration of men in higher-paying, senior positions. The stereotype of men as "breadwinners" often justifies their prioritization for promotions, as employers may unconsciously favor men for roles requiring authority or risk-taking.

Social psychology also plays a role. Stereotypes about male traits — assertiveness, confidence, and decisiveness—align with traditional notions of leadership, while women are often associated with nurturing or collaborative qualities, which are undervalued in competitive corporate environments. According to studies male leaders were rated higher than female leaders, even when exhibiting similar behaviors, due to gendered expectations. However, this stereotype is not universal. In fields like education and healthcare, where women dominate, men may still be valorized for taking on "non-traditional" roles, often receiving faster promotions. This suggests the stereotype is less about inherent male superiority and more about societal biases favoring male-associated traits or roles.

8.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To understand that there is no gender influence in the development of professional skills and attitudes.

8.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: Gender Swap Simulation

Objectives:

- Encourage empathy by exploring gendered workplace experiences.

Description:

- In a 45-minute role-playing activity, participants are assigned workplace scenarios (e.g., a performance review or team meeting) and asked to adopt the perspective of the opposite gender. For example, a male participant might play a female employee facing subtle bias in a promotion discussion. Afterward, participants write a short reflection on how the experience altered their understanding of workplace dynamics. A group debrief connects these insights to the stereotype.

Outcome:

- Enhanced empathy and recognition of gendered challenges in professional life.

Activity 2: Role Model Panel Discussion

Objectives:

- Identify and understand unconscious gender biases in professional contexts.

Description:

- Participants engage in a 60-minute interactive workshop. Start with a short video or case study depicting workplace scenarios where men are favored (e.g., promotions based on potential rather than performance). Use a facilitator-led discussion to explore how biases shape perceptions of competence. Participants complete a bias quiz (e.g., based on Project Implicit's framework) to reflect on their own assumptions. Conclude with group brainstorming on strategies to interrupt bias, such as blind resume reviews.

Material:

- Videoprojector, pc;

Outcome:

- Increased awareness of how stereotypes influence professional decisions

Activity 3: A leader of the 21st century

This activity is adapted from the European Commission's "Educational Toolkit to Help Fight Gender Stereotypes in Secondary Education" (2021).

- https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/learning-materials/educational-toolkit-help-fight-gender-stereotypes-secondary-school_en

Activity:

- Explain that there is an advertisement in the newspaper: 'Leading transport company in the region is looking for a new managing director', and ask learners to revise the list of characteristics defining the 21st-century leader. In groups, ask the learners to reflect on the specific skills, knowledge and attitudes one needs to manage a transport company. The learners take several turns to list these characteristics. Learner 1 writes the first idea about the topic and passes the activity sheet on to learner 2, who reads what is written and adds a new idea. The sheet goes around several times in the group until all the learners have finished adding their ideas. Distribute the lists in the classroom so that a common list of ideas is agreed on. Ask the students to reflect individually on their strengths and weaknesses as potential leaders of this company. You can conduct a debriefing based on the following questions: Did any of your strengths or weakness surprise you? Are there any characteristics on the list that are specific to women or men? Have you identify a leader which person could suit do this job position?

Material:

- Paper and pens;

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**WOMEN ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PROGRESS**

9.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

The stereotype that women are primarily responsible for their children's school progress reflects longstanding societal expectations rooted in traditional gender roles. This belief assumes that mothers, as primary caregivers, bear the responsibility of ensuring their children's academic success through direct involvement in education, such as helping with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, and fostering a learning environment at home. While this stereotype may stem from historical family dynamics, it oversimplifies the complex factors influencing academic performance and reinforces outdated gender norms, often marginalizing fathers and other caregivers.

Historically, gender roles assigned women the role of nurturing and managing the household, including child-rearing. In many cultures, mothers were expected to prioritize family over professional ambitions, positioning them as the default overseers of their children's education. For example, studies from the mid-20th century, such as those by Parsons (1955), emphasized women's roles in socializing children, including their academic development. This expectation persists in modern times, as evidenced by research showing mothers are more likely to engage in school-related activities than fathers. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) found that mothers reported higher levels of involvement in their children's education, such as monitoring homework or volunteering at school, compared to fathers, who often cited work obligations as barriers.

However, this stereotype ignores the shared responsibilities of parenting and the diverse family structures in contemporary society. Single-parent households, same-sex parents, and extended family caregivers challenge the notion that mothers alone are accountable for academic outcomes. Furthermore, socioeconomic factors, school resources, and children's individual abilities play significant roles in educational success, often outweighing parental involvement. For instance, Coleman's (1988) research on social capital highlighted that community and school environments significantly influence academic achievement, suggesting that attributing responsibility solely to mothers is reductive.



The stereotype also has implications for gender equity. By placing the burden of academic oversight on women, it reinforces unequal divisions of domestic labor and can limit women's career opportunities. Studies, such as those by Bianchi et al. (2006), show that mothers spend disproportionate time on childcare compared to fathers, which can contribute to workplace disadvantages. Additionally, this expectation can create undue pressure on women, leading to guilt or stress when children struggle academically, as noted in psychological research by Pomerantz et al. (2007). Challenging this stereotype requires recognizing the shared role of all caregivers and societal systems in supporting children's education. Programs encouraging father involvement, such as those studied by Lamb (2010), demonstrate that engaged fathers can positively impact academic outcomes, debunking the idea that mothers are uniquely responsible. Promoting equitable parenting roles and systemic support, such as accessible tutoring or after-school programs, can shift the narrative away from gendered expectations.

In conclusion, the stereotype that women are solely responsible for their children's school progress is rooted in outdated norms and fails to account for modern family dynamics and broader influences on academic success. By fostering shared responsibility and systemic support, society can move toward a more equitable approach to supporting children's education.

9.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

To recognize how gender stereotypes, assign unequal roles in family life.

To understand that both parents can contribute to their education and to their educational achievements.

9.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: Who helps me learn?

Activity:

Divide students into small groups. Give each group a set of fictional family profiles. For example:

- **Family A:** Working mother, stay-at-home father
- **Family B:** Single father
- **Family C:** Traditional working father, full-time mother
- **Family D:** Same-sex couple (2 fathers or 2 mothers)

Task: For each family, answer:

- Who likely helps the child with schoolwork?
- What assumptions are we making?
- What could influence these roles (jobs, personality, culture, etc.)?

Bring the class back together and debrief according to the following questions:

- What patterns did you notice?
- Were there any surprises?
- Why do we often assume that mothers are responsible for school success?

Introduce the concept of gender roles and how stereotypes shape expectations for mothers and fathers.

Material:

- Sheets of paper and pens.

Activity 2: Challenging parenthood in cinema

Activity:

- Several films can be used on this purpose (Kramer vs Kramer (1979), Lion King (1994), Two is a family (2016), To Kill a Mockingbird (1962), I am Sam (2001).
- After the projection a debate can be conducted according to the following questions: *What the responsibility of school progress does include? What are the skills and attitudes of a caregiver? In your family who is assuming this role?*

Material:

- Videoprojector, PC, sheets of paper



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10

SHARING HOUSEHOLD CHORES

10.1 WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS GENDER STEREOTYPE?

Sharing household chores can be a challenge for many families. Even though men and women are more equal today than in the past, research shows that chores are still not shared fairly. Often, this happens because people still follow old ideas, like women should do more housework. When chores are not divided well, it can cause arguments, stress, and problems in relationships. Many things affect how chores are shared, such as the family's money situation, cultural traditions, how much free time each person has, and personal preferences. Understanding these factors helps us learn how families work and find ways to make home life fairer and happier for everyone.

In the past, housework was seen as something women should do. This idea comes from old traditions where men were considered more important and women were expected to take care of the home. Today, even though many women have jobs outside the home, studies show they still do most of the chores compared to men (Pailhé & Solaz, 2024; Vikram, Ganguly & Goly, 2024). Women usually do more tasks and spend more time on housework. Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to spend their free time doing fun activities or working on school tasks instead of helping with chores.

Family structure also matters when it comes to chores at home. Having brothers and sisters, and the way parents share tasks, can change who does what. Kids with more siblings usually help more with housework. When dads do a bigger share of chores, the difference between what boys and girls do gets smaller. Families with fewer very young children and more adults often put less pressure on girls to do chores (Kruger, Berthelon & Soares, 2010). Gender roles and what society expects also make a big difference. In many places, traditional ideas still mean girls do more housework, even in countries that believe strongly in equality between men and women (Leonard 2004; O'Reilly & Quayle, 2021; Nilsen & Wærdahl, 2015). In some cultures, like many in Asia, boys and girls do very different amounts of housework because the rules about what men and women should do are stricter (Webbink, Smits & de Jong, 2012). Whether parents have jobs also changes how much kids help at home. When moms work outside the home, girls usually do more chores. This helps their parents keep working. Boys also tend to do more work when both parents have jobs (Pholphirul & Kaneko, 2020).

Girls often think that the way chores are shared at home is unfair. They usually want the old ideas about boys' and girls' jobs to change. But even now, girls still do more housework than boys because of these traditional ideas (Leonard 2004; O'Reilly & Quayle, 2021). When parents have more education and the family has more money, kids, especially girls, usually do fewer chores (Hossain et al., 2023). This means that families with more resources often have less difference between the chores boys and girls do.

To sum up, boys and girls often do different amounts of chores because of many family, social, and cultural reasons. Research shows that girls usually must do more housework, especially in families that have less money or face difficulties. Boys, on the other hand, often have more time for school and free activities. How much parents help and the way the family is organized can change this. When parents share chores fairly and support their kids equally, boys and girls can have a more balanced share of work at home. This helps make things fairer between boys and girls.

10.2 WHAT STUDENTS CAN LEARN ABOUT GENDER STEREOTYPE

Students can learn that sharing chores at home is often unfair, with girls usually doing more work than boys. This happens because of old traditions and cultural ideas about what boys and girls should do. Family size, parents' jobs, and money also affect how chores are divided. When parents share chores more equally and support their kids, chores can be split more fairly. Understanding this helps us see how families work and why it's important to make chores fair for everyone.

10.3 WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO TO LEARN ABOUT THIS STEREOTYPE

Activity 1: Sharing Household Chores with Bono's Six Thinking Hats

Objective:

To explore the division of household chores from different points of view and encourage balanced and creative thinking.

Step-by-step:

1. Quick Introduction (5 min):

- Ask your teacher to explain it to you the 6 Thinking Hats and what each one represents:

White Hat: Facts and information

Red Hat: Feelings and intuition

Black Hat: Caution, problems, and risks

Yellow Hat: Benefits and positive points

Green Hat: New ideas and creativity

Blue Hat: Organization and summary of thinking

2. Group Division (5 min):

- Divide the class into 6 groups. Each group will use one hat to discuss the topic: *"How are household chores shared at home?"*

3. Discussion by Hat (15 min):

- Each group discusses the division of chores focusing on their hat's perspective:

White: What facts do we know about who does more chores? Research and real examples.

Red: How do boys and girls feel about chores?

Black: What problems exist with how chores are divided now?

Yellow: What are the benefits of sharing chores fairly?

Green: What new ideas could make chore-sharing better?

Blue: How can we organize our ideas to improve the situation?

4. Presentations (15 min):

- Each group presents their findings to the class, explaining from their hat's point of view.

5. Final Discussion (10 min):

- As a whole class, reflect on all the perspectives and create a simple plan to improve sharing chores at home.

Alternative 1:

- The groups can be formed with members using different hats, and the question can be the same at each table: What can make chore-sharing better? In this case, at the end, each group presents their proposals, which should be the result of consensus.

Alternative 2:

- Organize a World Café integrating the Six Thinking Hats methodology.

Materials Needed:

- Computer with internet access, tape and colored cardboard in six colors to make simple hats (a roll that fits on the head).

Outcome:

- By the end of this activity, students will have a better understanding of why household chores are often shared unequally and how cultural, social, and family factors influence this division. They will learn to look at the issue from different perspectives by using the Six Thinking Hats method, considering facts, feelings, risks, benefits, creative ideas, and ways to organize solutions. This process helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they identify problems and propose fair, practical solutions. Working in groups will improve their communication and teamwork abilities, while also encouraging empathy by reflecting on gender roles and fairness in everyday life. Finally, the class will create a simple, realistic plan to make chore-sharing fairer at home, promoting equality and cooperation within families.

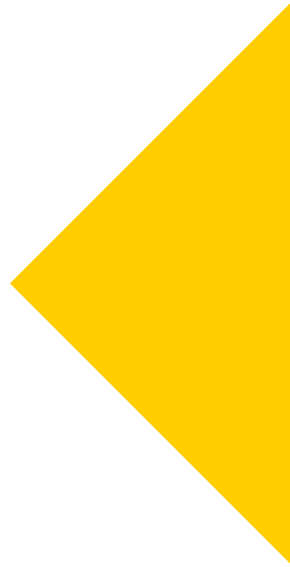
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TRAINING

GENDER STEREOTYPES

MANUAL





GENDER

TRAINING MANUAL

STEREOTYPES