

# A Study of Gender Stereotyping and Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media

## Liberal Studies Teaching Kit



平等機會委員會  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION

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## **Foreword**

The EOC has the statutory responsibility to work towards the elimination of sex discrimination, sexual harassment and the promotion of equal opportunities between men and women. We believe that there should be mutual respect between individuals and between genders, which is a vital pre-requisite for social harmony. Our society needs to be more accommodating and less prejudiced. It is incumbent upon us to properly address the issue of gender dignity in earnest so that we may move forward to a healthier and more caring society.

Alarmed by the increasingly explicit sexual content in the print media that would have a profound real-life effect in inducing co-evolution of media messages and social culture in the society in which our next generation will grow up, the EOC commissioned a survey study during 2007-08 to gain a better understanding on public perception of female gender portrayal in the public media, effect of media materials on such perception and sexual stereotyping of women, and relevance of the perception on future generational development.

The research findings show that magazines and newspapers depicting sexual norms and stereotypes may have a profound influence on the public, particularly teenagers' perceptions about sex, body image and social norms. Many people are uncomfortable with gender representation in advertisements and news pictures, and yet they assume that the community would find them acceptable, possibly on the grounds that their broad and regular exposure to these types of media is an indication of common acceptance by society. Also a respondents' proposed measure of counteracting media negative impacts is to implement critical mind training via innovated education programmes in schools. In response to the request, some of the survey findings of "Study on Public Perception of Portrayal of Female Gender in the Hong Kong Media" are compiled into this "Liberal Studies Teaching Kit", which will enhance teaching module 1 "Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships" and module 5 "Public Health" in the Senior Secondary Curriculum of Liberal Studies. It is anticipated that the kit can enhance critical thinking of the young generation and raise their concerns about media impacts in the society.

Raymond Tang  
Chairperson, Equal Opportunities Commission

## Masculine and Feminine Characteristics

Area of Study: Module 1- Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships

Lesson Time: Two periods (each period lasts 45 minutes)

Targets: Form 4 students

Objectives: Gender stereotyping refers to one of the most common tactics used by the media to generalize female and male characteristics, personalities and attributes. Although the image of women depicted in Hong Kong media seems to be relatively more positive than the past, gender stereotypes and inequality through the Hong Kong media is still a prominent phenomenon. Studies found that half of all the local commercials contained sexist imagery or content that promoted gender inequality and sexual stereotypes. A female identity was specifically connected not only with the consumption of women’s magazines but also with the capitalist consumption commonly practiced by a community of readers and promoted by the magazines. The gender stereotypic notion diffused into or was unconsciously absorbed by audience who were exposed to media daily. During the lesson students will study gender stereotyping and media influence through discussion, so as to build up their critical thinking skills.

### Period 1: Classroom Lesson Plan

Time	Item	Details
5 min	Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grouping: 6 students per group</li> <li>2. Materials: marker pen, A3 paper, worksheet 1</li> <li>3. Use news clipping headlines of “a weak battered mother”, “The brave cop never dropped a tear ...”, or show photos (a crying female, a medal-winning male athlete, etc) to arouse students’ interest.</li> <li>4. Introduce the theme and objectives</li> </ol>
15 min	Group discussion	Supervise group discussion and preparation of oral reporting
20 min	Group reporting	Arrange groups to report (2-3 minutes for each group)
5 min	Conclusion	Reported gender stereotyping will be different for each group, that depends on factors such as experiences of personal growth, and influences from family, school and society.

**Period 2: Classroom Lesson Plan**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Details</b>
5 min	Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Grouping as in period 1</li><li>2. Materials: marker pen, A3 paper, worksheet 2, advertisements / magazine pictures / news reports</li><li>3. Introduce the theme and objectives</li></ol>
15 min	Group discussion	Supervise group discussion and preparation of oral reporting
20 min	Group reporting	Arrange groups to report (2-3 minutes for each group)
5 min	Conclusion	Gender stereotyping refers to one of the most common tactics used by the media to generalize female and male characteristics, personalities and attributes. It aims at achieving the business purposes.

## Masculine and Feminine Characteristics

## Worksheet 1

### Group:

How masculine or feminine do you think the following characteristics are, using the scale "very masculine", "masculine", "both", "feminine" and "very feminine"?

Characteristics	Very Masculine	Masculine	Both	Feminine	Very Feminine
Has leadership abilities					
Defends own beliefs					
Independent					
Aggressive					
Assertive					
Shy					
Gentle					
Sympathetic					
Understanding					
Conscientious					

For discussion:

1. The beauty queens are regarded as “womanly”. Which characteristics do they possess as feminine?
2. The masters of martial arts are regarded as “manly”. Which characteristics do they possess as masculine?
3. If some males possess those “feminine characteristics” as thought, how will you get along with them?
4. If some females possess those “masculine characteristics” as thought, how will you get along with them?
5. Are the masculine and feminine characteristics inborn?
6. Will males mind being described as “effeminate”? Will females mind being described as “boorish”?

## Masculine and Feminine Characteristics

## Worksheet 2

**Group:**

**Which masculine and feminine characteristics do you think the following advertisements/ magazine pictures/ news headlines convey? What are the hidden messages of these advertisements/ magazine pictures/ news headlines?**

<b>Advertisement / magazine picture / news headline</b>	<b>Masculine characteristic?</b>	<b>Feminine characteristic?</b>	<b>Hidden message</b>
Ad 1			
Ad 2			
Ad 3			
Ad 4			
Magazine picture 1			
Magazine picture 2			
Magazine picture 3			
Magazine picture 4			
News report of headline “10-year old girl was poorly abused to be classmates’ sex slave”			
News report of headline “Young women was painfully beaten by her husband when she asked for sex”			

For discussion:

1. Which masculine and feminine characteristics do you think these **advertisements** convey? What are the hidden messages?
2. Which masculine and feminine characteristics do you think these **magazine pictures** convey? What are the hidden messages?
3. Which masculine and feminine characteristics do you think these **news headlines** convey? What are the hidden messages?
4. Will your perceived gender characteristics be influenced by these advertisements / magazine pictures / news headlines? If so, what aspects are they?
5. If you can re-design the advertisements / magazine pictures / news headlines, what will you change to make them align with the facts?

## Objectification

Area of Study: Module 5 - Public Health

Lesson Time: Two periods (each period lasts 45 minutes)

Targets: Form 4 students

Objectives:

The media reinforces gender differences and stereotypes, in that the ideal female image is depicted as thin and beautiful while the negative result of female objectification in the media has been recognized for long. In Hong Kong, the ubiquitous slimming advertisements and messages have serious implications for the self-conception, identity, and social values of women.

Advertising is one of the most powerful sources of education in society that contributes to the cause of problems by fostering an environment in which the selling of women's bodies is seen as acceptable. Many women feel pressured to conform to the beauty standards generally accepted in the society and are willing to go to great lengths to manipulate and change their faces and bodies. Therefore, they are conditioned to view their faces as masks and their bodies as objects, and discover that their bodies and faces are in need of alteration, augmentation, and disguise. Women are taught to internalize an observer's perspective of their own bodies and more concerned with observable body attributes rather than focusing on non-observable body attributes such as feelings and internal bodily states. This is called objectification.

Research shows that advertisements more often sexually objectify women's bodies than men's to sell merchandise, and women are more often depicted in a way emphasizing their sexuality. This cultural milieu of sexual objectification functions to socialize girls and women to evaluate their own value based on appearance, and become preoccupied with their own physical appearance as a way of anticipating and controlling their treatment, viz. an effect termed "self-objectification".

During the lesson students will study objectification and media influence through discussion and debate, so as to build up their critical thinking skills.

### Period 1: Classroom Lesson Plan

Time	Item	Details
5 min	Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grouping: 6 students per group</li> <li>2. Materials: marker pen, A3 paper, worksheet</li> <li>3. Use "body slimming advertisements" to arouse students' interest</li> <li>4. Introduce the theme and objectives</li> </ol>
15 min	Group discussion	Supervise group discussion and preparation of oral reporting
20 min	Group reporting	Arrange groups to report (2-3 minutes for each group)
5 min	Conclusion	Generally speaking, women are overwhelmingly targeted more for sexually objectifying treatment than men. Exploring the implications of female self-objectification indicates that it may contribute to the development of several mental health risks, including body shame, eating disorders, unipolar depression, appearance anxiety and sexual dysfunction.



**Period 2: Classroom Lesson Plan****Option 1****Debate Motion:****Government should regulate body slimming advertisements through legislation**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Details</b>
5 min	Preparation	1. Arrange 6 students as debaters for or against the debate motion 2. Introduce the theme, objectives and debate regulations
20 min	Debaters for / against the debate motion	* Debaters take turn to deliver the speech for / against the debate motion. * Each debater has max. 2 minutes.
10 min	Floor questioning	Floor questioning and debaters responding * Each person has max. 30s. * No speaking twice is allowed.
10 min	Concluding	1. Make conclusion 2. Announce results

**Option 2 (under good classroom management)****Forum: Government should regulate body slimming advertisements through legislation**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Details</b>
5 min	Preparation	1. Grouping: 6 students per group; groups representing <i>media practitioners, government officials, parents, teachers, social workers, Legislative Council Members, etc.</i> 2. Introduce the theme, objectives and regulations for the forum 3. News clippings of information specific to their status for each group
10 min	Discussion	* Each group prepares for their points of reasoning for/against the topic. * Each group elects one representative for presentation.
25 min	Presentation	* Each group has 1 min. for the representative to present their views. * Each group can raise questions for 2 other groups: - Each person has max. 30s for questioning or answering. - No speaking twice is allowed.
5 min	Concluding	1. Make conclusion 2. Announce results of best performing group(s)

## Objectification

## Worksheet

### Group:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often compare how I look with how other people look.					
During the day, I think about how I look many times.					
I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good.					
I often worry about how I look to other people.					
I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made an effort to look my best.					
When I'm not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed.					
I think I could look as good as I wanted to if I worked at it.					
I think my weight is mostly determined by the genes I was born with.					
I can weigh what I'm supposed to if I try hard enough.					

For discussion:

1. Are you satisfied with your body figure and appearance? What standards do you use to make comparison?
2. When others say “Hey, you appear fat. Why not have slimming?”, will you be depressed?
3. Do you think the ubiquitous slimming advertisements and messages have serious implications for the self-conception, identity, and social values of women? Why are women overwhelmingly targeted more from these slimming advertisements and messages than men?
4. If a family member or your friend has eating disorder (bulimia or anorexia) due to slimming, what will you do?

## Sexual Attitudes

Area of Study: Module 1- Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships

Lesson Time: Double period (each period lasts 45 minutes)

Targets: Form 5 / 6 students

Objectives: Survey showed that the pornographic material users tended to be more agreeable to attitudes such as pre-marital sex, more open to homosexual marriage and women's initiative to court males. It is generally believed that sex attitude of teenagers might be influenced significantly by the prevalent sex images and knowledge promoted in the media. During the lesson students will study the relationship between sexual attitudes and media influence through discussion, so as to build up their critical thinking skills.

### Double Period: Classroom Lesson Plan

Time	Item	Details
10 min	Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grouping: 6 students per group</li> <li>2. Materials: marker pen, A3 paper, worksheet</li> <li>3. Use what mothers said "Girls should never dress scantily" and "Girls should never go home with boyfriends for the first dating" to arouse students' interest</li> <li>4. Introduce the theme and objectives</li> </ol>
30 min	Group discussion	Supervise group discussion and preparation of oral reporting
30 min	Group reporting	Arrange groups to report (5 minutes for each group)
20 min	Conclusion	<p>According to the study findings, 57% of the respondents said their friends, classmates or colleagues watched or read pornographic materials such as pornographic films and publications. Statistics generally illustrated that respondents who had contacts with pornographic materials were relatively less aligned with traditional values and more open to socially disapproved behaviours.</p> <p>Statements in the worksheet can be illustrated using recent movies / TV clippings or advertisements in order to indicate media's influence.</p>

### Supplementary Information

The publication and public display of obscene and indecent articles, including printed matters, sound-recordings, films, video-tapes, discs and electronic publications, is regulated by the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (COIAO) (Cap 390) that is enforced by the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA), the Customs and Excise Department and the Police. Under the COIAO, an article may be classified as Class I (neither obscene nor indecent), Class II (Indecent), Class III (Obscene). Class I articles may be published without restriction; publication of Class II articles must comply with certain statutory requirements; and Class III articles are prohibited from publications. The COIAO is under review and details can be obtained from [http://www.cedb.gov.hk/ctb/eng/film/info-press\\_2009.htm](http://www.cedb.gov.hk/ctb/eng/film/info-press_2009.htm).

## Sexual Attitudes

## Worksheet

### Group:

How much do you agree or disagree with what John/Mary think or believe?

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>John</b> believes that he should fight if the woman he's with is insulted by another man.					
<b>Mary</b> thinks that it is acceptable for her to have a career, but marriage and family should come first.					
<b>Mary</b> thinks that many women are so demanding sexually that a man just can't satisfy them.					
<b>John</b> thinks that in a dating relationship a woman is largely out to take advantage of a man. Men are out for only one thing.					
<b>John</b> thinks that most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man.					
<b>John</b> believes that many times a woman will pretend she doesn't want to have intercourse because she doesn't want to seem loose, but she's really hoping the man will force her.					
<b>Mary</b> thinks that a wife should move out of the house if her husband hits her.					
<b>John and Mary</b> have an idea that when women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble.					
<b>John</b> believes that a woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex.					

For discussion:

1. Shakespeare once said “frailty thy name is woman” while another said “woman’s heart is the most evil”. Do you agree at these sayings? How do these sayings align with the reality?
2. For increased use of sexually exploitive women and sexually provocative content in advertising as approaching pornography, do you think they might promote sexual harassment / rape-supportive attitude and beliefs?
3. Magazines, Internet website and Internet games were highlighted as the top three media forms that were believed to have adverse and detrimental messages for teenagers. Do you think the government should regulate pornographic information? How can we as individuals deal with it?

## Reference – Related Curriculum of Liberal Studies

### Secondary 4 -6 Curriculum Framework of Liberal Studies

Areas of Study	Independent Enquiry Study (IES)
<b>Self &amp; Personal Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Module 1: Personal Development &amp; Interpersonal Relationships</li> </ul>	Students are required to conduct an IES making use of the knowledge and perspectives gained from the three Areas of Study and extending them to new issues or contexts. To help students develop their IES titles, the following themes are suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Media</li> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Religion</li> <li>● Sports</li> <li>● Art</li> <li>● Information and Communication Technology (ICT)</li> </ul>
<b>Society &amp; Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Module 2: Hong Kong Today</li> <li>● Module 3: Modern China</li> <li>● Module 4: Globalization</li> </ul>	
<b>Science, Technology &amp; the Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Module 5: Public Health</li> <li>● Module 6: Energy Technology &amp; the Environment</li> </ul>	

### Area of Study: Self and Personal Development

Within an individual's lifespan there are a number of developmental challenges that have to be undertaken, e.g. the development of identity and the taking on of an increasing number of roles throughout adolescence and into adulthood. Society also presents young people with many situational challenges and opportunities that may affect their self-perceptions and their relationships with others.

As they develop, students have to be aware of various physiological, emotional and social factors which are relevant to their personal growth. They need to recognise the significance of self-esteem and self-management skills, so that they can handle their fears in the personal development process. Students also have to learn to communicate effectively and develop social skills in different contexts, e.g. in the family and in school. Community involvement may provide opportunities for adolescents to handle adversity. All these experiences enable students to develop a positive outlook on life and empathy, and become prepared for the challenges of living in a rapidly changing society.

Learning experiences in this Area of Study will enable students to:

- understand the factors which influence personal development, interpersonal relationships, values and beliefs;
- develop self-understanding through an objective assessment of adolescent development;

- (c) be aware of the importance of life skills in handling challenges and opportunities during adolescence, and the complexities involved in their acquisition;
- (d) appreciate the identity, roles and changes in different relationships;
- (e) review their relationships in the family, peer groups and other social groups; and
- (f) appreciate the importance of community involvement.

For details, please visit the webpage below:

[http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content\\_5999/ls\\_final\\_e\\_070508.pdf](http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_5999/ls_final_e_070508.pdf)

Reference – Samples of Advertisements and News Reports



Product Advertisement



Product Advertisement



Product Advertisement

謝光鑽無痛推脂技術，助你輕鬆輕鬆  
**推走啤梨身型**  
回復完美好身段

**優惠開放日**  
**免費試做**  
**淋巴推脂瘦身療程**  
30分鐘  
優惠只限每日10名新客戶  
詳情請致電各分店查詢

**想減肥又唔反彈？必選人手淋巴推脂！**

無痛  
無痕

8星期可減去  
3至5吋腰圍  
10至30磅

豐胸界權威專家 - 謝光鑽 Josephine

- 具18年研究豐胸經驗
- 多年於日本NBA研究深造，擅長開發女性胸部發育及胸腺淋巴腺體
- 適合日本豐胸技術及瑞士醫療科技，自然卓越豐胸秘方
- 榮獲日本豐胸界之最高權威

1個月  
無限次任做  
只需\$998

淋巴推脂  
試做價\$0  
原價\$580-  
（優惠只限每日10名新客戶）

Body Beauty Advertisement

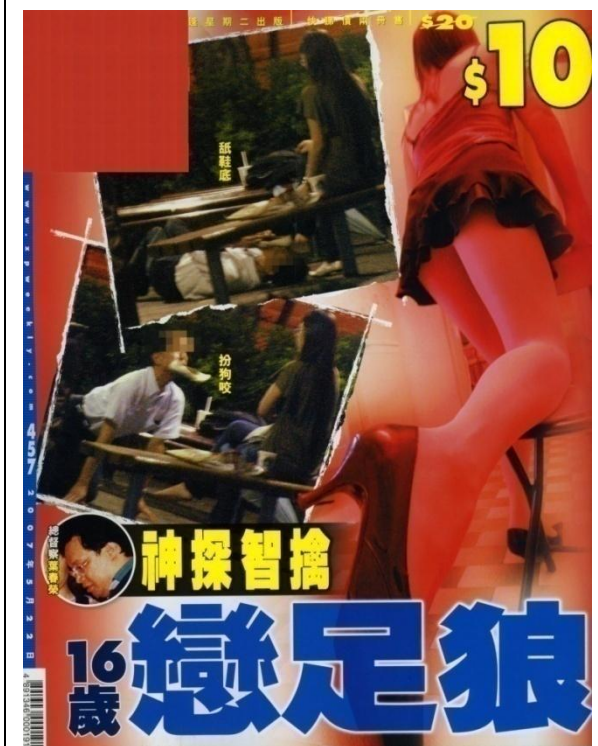
Samples of Advertisements and News Reports



Body Beauty Advertisement



Body Beauty Advertisement



Magazine Cover



Magazine Cover









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