

## Gender Stereotypes

Despite the changes in traditional thinking, the society still harbours many prejudices and misunderstandings about the roles, values, images and capabilities of the two genders that hinder women from developing their full potential. The WoC therefore has been working earnestly to promote public education and publicity designed to eliminate gender prejudices and stereotypes, and to raise public awareness on women issues. The WoC also strives to raise gender awareness in school education and puts forward proposals on curriculum and teaching materials development so as to instil proper concepts of gender equality in school children and eliminate gender stereotyping.

### Socialisation

Every one of us must go through a social learning process in which we acquire our role as expected and accepted by the society. In sociology, this is called the socialisation process. When growing up, children will acquire the gender norms, values and roles prevalent in the society, a process which will reinforce in their minds the traditional stereotypical concepts that "women are homemakers while men are breadwinners" and "men lead while women support". Children are exposed to the socialisation process mainly through game playing and school education. Therefore, from the games, toys and school textbooks of the past and present, we can get a glimpse of the prevalence of gender stereotyping in Hong Kong and the increased gender awareness in recent years.

Public Opinion of the Seriousness of Gender Stereotyping in Hong Kong

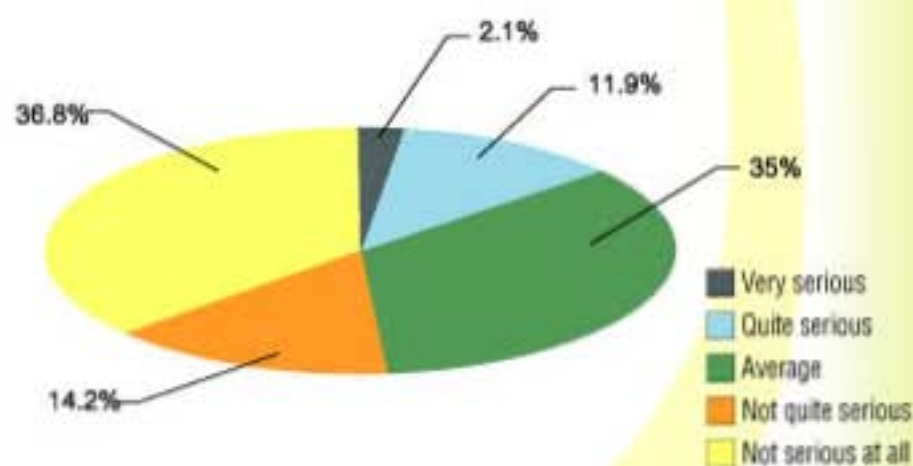


Chart: According to a survey commissioned by the Women's Commission in 2002-2003, about 14% of the respondents to the survey considered that there was quite serious or very serious gender stereotyping in Hong Kong.

## Children's Toys



Source: Donated by  
Ms. CHUNG LAU Kwok-ying



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Source: Donated by Ms. LAU Yuen-sheung

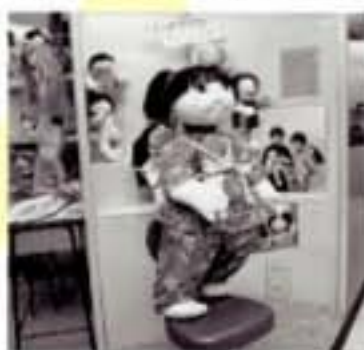
Children's games and toys generally mirror the adult world by imitation and re-enactment. Quite often, toys for girls are in pink to symbolise the tenderness of females while those for boys are in blue, green and brown to reflect the strength of males. Toy figures are even more revealing in reflecting the gender-biased cultural signs. Toys for girls are mostly dolls, and appliances for cooking or house cleaning while those for boys are mostly mechanical devices, such as toy machine guns, cars and trains. Many of the toys available today are free from such gender stereotyping. For example, boys and girls are pictured as playing together in the packaging of toys of kitchen appliances and soccer games. But admittedly there are still toys available in the market portraying the traditional gender stereotypes.



Source: Information Services Department



Source: Donated by  
Ms. Pauline CHENG



Source: Information Services  
Department



Source: Information Services  
Department

## School Curriculum and Textbooks



School education plays a key part in cultivating outlook of life in children, moulding their characters and inculcating in them social norms, values and roles during their development stages. It is therefore of paramount importance to instill proper concepts of gender equality and gender roles in students when they are still young. In the past, textbooks were full of gender stereotypes entrenched in the minds of the general public. For instance, the father was shown carrying a briefcase and going out to work while the mother was depicted as cooking food and boiling water in the kitchen. The situation has now been improved. For instance, women appearing in the textbooks would be working as breadwinner instead of being portrayed always as a homemaker. Moreover, women are also depicted as doctors, lawyers, police officers and fire fighters when examples of professions are cited.

### Way Forward

To eliminate gender prejudices and gender stereotyping, concerted efforts by different sectors of the community are required. We also have to appreciate the diversity in gender development, enhance public, in particular teachers', understanding of gender equality, and promote freedom of development and mutual respect between the genders in our pluralistic society so as to provide a better tomorrow for our girls and boys.



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