

MEDIA STEREOTYPES ABOUT GENDER

- Gender bias
- Media
- Gender
- Bias
- Gender equality
- Women
- Gender roles
- Stereotypes
- Gender-based violence
- Gender norms
- Values

- ✓ 1. To illustrate how subtle **gender biases** in the **media** influence social perceptions.
- ✓ 2. To help learners recognise their assumptions about **gender**.
- ✓ 3. To explore the implications these biases have for **gender equality**.

🕒 1 hour - 1 hour 15 mins

★ A variety of popular magazines

PROCEDURE

PRIOR TO CLASS

- 1 Collect some magazines as a back-up for learners who forget to bring their own. Make sure that you have a variety of magazines available.
- 2 As homework, ask learners to find a magazine of their choice, at home, or from friends - something they would normally read (no pornography).
- 3 Ask them to read cover to cover to identify examples, in the text and in images, that either support or counter the traditional **gender roles** and **stereotypes**.
- 4 They should bookmark the examples in their magazines and bring the magazine to class.

IN CLASS

- 5 In a class discussion ask learners about the gender roles and stereotypes that they identified. Guide the discussion by asking:
 - a. Are the stereotypes mostly concerning men or women?
 - b. Consider magazines for men and for women. Do men's and women's magazines portray different stereotypes? Discuss.
 - c. How are these harmful? How might they relate to gender-based violence?
 - d. What role does the media play regarding gender stereotypes?

TEACHER TIPS

👤 General

Some tips for leading the discussion:

If you have learners who tend not to complete homework assignments, make sure you have magazines in class and ask them to peruse these briefly at the start of the class. This way they can still participate in the discussion.

In discussion point ②, you may ask your learners to observe that the same company advertises in different ways depending on the audience - car ads are especially good examples of this. For ads in men's magazines, the emphasis is on speed, freedom, and sex. For ads in women's magazines, the ads emphasise compactness, attractiveness and safety.

In discussion point ④, the idea is to get learners thinking about how the media is constrained by social or cultural norms, and also responsible for maintaining these expectations. The **media** uses these images and ideas because that is what readers expect, but

what people see is what they come to expect. If this does not emerge in the discussion ask learners: 'Where do norms in the **media** come from?'; and 'Where do your ideas about **gender** come from?'; 'How much media are you exposed to?'

You may want to mention other issues besides gender, such as race (skin, eye, hair colour) and beauty, and discuss how the media perpetuates stereotypes with regards to these.

⚡ Making the Link with Gender & Violence

Learners should consider how women are portrayed, in society and in the media, as being powerless. They should understand that by constantly seeing, hearing and internalising that women are only sex objects; meant to be attractive; have little other value; only have value if they are pretty; or only have value to men when they are young, might impact on a woman's self-image.

You might draw comparisons of these views and those of women in abusive relationships who internalise the abusers's ideas that they are worthless, ugly, only useful for sex and so on.

Are there any adverts that portray violence or domination of women as being sexy? Who are these ads directed at? What messages do they send about the way women should be, or want to be treated? What are they saying about sex?

💡 Assessment Ideas

This exercise is intended to help learners reflect on their own gendered stereotypes and values, and is not recommended for assessment.

📄 Variation

For younger learners you may want to make the exercise more fun by asking them to pretend that they are coming to this planet for the first time. Ask them to use their magazine as a reference for learning what men and women are supposed to act like in our culture.

If they are struggling ask them to think about gender roles, body image, careers, personality. Conduct the discussion as in the 'Procedure'.

