

Gender and Early Years: Toys and Clothes



"Boy" toys vs "Girl" toys

Make a quick list of toys commonly thought of as "boy" toys and those thought of as "girl" toys.

Next to each toy, jot down some ideas as to what skills developments might be associated with each toy. Looking at what you've written down, are there connections between the development/fostering of these skills and future career choices? Which skills are more 'valuable' (in terms of potential salaries) in the future? Can we see connections between the toys children play with and their longer term career/life choices?



Nature or Nurture?

You commonly hear people talk about nature vs nurture. Many people who have raised children themselves will tell you that their girls naturally gravitated towards dolls or their boys naturally gravitated towards trucks and tractors.

What is your initial reaction to this?

Do you agree or disagree that this was likely the children's nature?



Marketing

How are toys marketed?

When you walk into a shop, are you directed to one section or another depending on who you are buying for? If yes, how? Do children notice these things?

What about shopping online? Packaging?

If you're not sure, start to take note next time you are in the shops or browsing online.



Ask yourself again...nature or nurture?

Now reflect back on your initial thoughts on the idea of nature vs nurture. With all the targeted, gendered packaging and marketing we see all around us, can we really know where nature ends and nurture begins?

It is impossible for us to ever really know what is in a child's nature and what has been conditioned in them by society. There is no definite answer to the question of nature or nurture, but one thing is clear: society sends clear messages to children about what is expected of them. The best way we can let children show their natures is to remove stereotyping and give them equal opportunities.



Video: Boys Toys vs Girls Toys – The Experiment from BBC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWu44AqF0il> (3:25 mins)



Clothes

Is there a difference between boys' clothes and girls' clothes for under 5s?
Think colours, messages, images, styles.

Is there a difference between boys' and girls' bodies under 5?

What messages might the clothing be sending?

Do adults comment on children's clothes? All, or just certain ones?

Are clothes marketed differently to boys and girls? In shops? Online?



Does it matter?

Read about how stereotypes affect brain development in this blog post from Not Only Pink and Blue: <https://www.notionlypinkandblue.com/a-gendered-world/>.

When you've got time, it's worth checking out the resource they've created which is linked to in the blog.

Now watch the video on the next page...



Video: 'Made to be underpaid' clip from BBC documentary

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05d9kmg_1:10_mins



Reflection

Take a minute to think how/what you buy for your own children and/or others.

Do you feel you are offering opportunities to explore diverse interests?

Is there anything you would/wouldn't buy for children based on their gender?

Is there any change you can make in your approach to buying, playing with or wearing toys/clothes?



Resources

A few links to websites, resources, videos and blogs that you might find interesting to view when you have the time.

- Let Toys be Toys: <https://www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk/>
- Let Clothes be Clothes: <https://www.letclothesbeclothes.co.uk/>
- Not Only Pink and Blue: <https://www.notonlypinkandblue.com/>
- Video: Boys Toys vs Girls Toys – The Experiment from BBC
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWu44AqF0il>
- Video: 'Made to be underpaid' clip from BBC documentary
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05d9kmg>
- Downloadable "Anyone can play..." posters from Zero Tolerance
<https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Anyone-Can-Play-PDF-Posters.pdf>
- Learn how stereotyping affects the brain: <https://www.notonlypinkandblue.com/a-gendered-world/>

