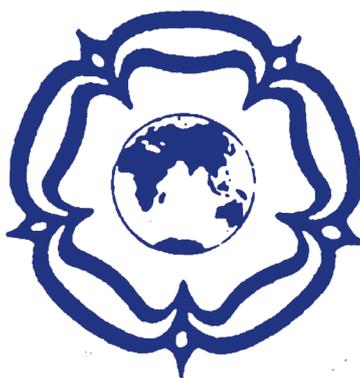


# **Gender Respect Project Scoping Study**

<http://genderrespect2013.wordpress.com/>

**by Helen Griffin and Heather Hunt**



**Development Education Centre  
(South Yorkshire)**

[www.decsy.org.uk](http://www.decsy.org.uk)

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the following:

The Gender Respect Project teacher group and volunteers; students of all the schools involved; Joy Paul, DECSY and Bronwen Maxwell, Centre for Education and Inclusion, Sheffield Hallam University

Written by Helen Griffin, DECSY

Steering and design of scoping study by Heather Hunt, DECSY

© 2014, DECSY. Licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

## Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Context and aim of study</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Methodology</b>	
<b>3.1 Nature of the cohort</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.2 Selection of students</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.3 Interviewers and method of data collection</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.4 Consent and confidentiality</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.5 The students' responses to the interviews</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4. Findings and discussion</b>	
<b>4.1 Introduction</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.2 Gender Roles</b>	
<b>4.2.1 Sport and PE</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4.2.1.1 Primary</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>4.2.1.2 Secondary</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.2.2 Body image and appearance</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.2.2.1 Primary</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.2.2.2 Secondary</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4.2.3 Popularity and respect (secondary only)</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.2.3.1 Popularity</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>4.2.3.2 Respect</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4.2.4 Expression of emotions</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.2.5 Occupations and aspirations</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4.2.5.1 Occupations</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4.2.5.2 Aspirations</b>	<b>32</b>

<b>4.3 Relationships</b>	
<b>4.3.1 Primary</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.3.2 Secondary</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>4.4 Perceptions of fairness / unfairness</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.4.1 Primary</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>4.4.1.1 Inside school</i>	<b>39</b>
<i>4.4.1.2 Outside school</i>	<b>41</b>
<b>4.4.2 Secondary</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5. Recommendations</b>	
<b>5.1 Gender roles recommendations</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1.1 Sport and PE</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1.2 Body image and appearance</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1.3 Popularity and respect</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.1.4 Expression of emotions</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.1.5 Occupations and aspirations</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.2 Relationships recommendations</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>5.3 Perceptions of fairness recommendations</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.4 Recommendations stemming from the study taken as a whole</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix 1 School descriptions</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix 2 Interview schedules / pictures</b>	<b>49</b>

## 1. Summary of report

The Gender Respect Project<sup>1</sup> carries assumptions that children and young people in South Yorkshire are affected by a culture with proscribed gender roles which may limit experiences and aspirations. Focusing on the three primary and three secondary schools that were part of the project in 2013 – 2014, the scoping study for the project set out to examine this assumption and elaborate the range and diversity of perceptions that exist. The research stemmed from a curiosity as to whether there is a wide range of perceptions across ages, sexes and settings, or whether there are patterns related to age or sex or settings that emerge. The research aimed to explore three questions:

- a) How children and young people in our project schools in South Yorkshire perceive expectations on themselves and other children for being a girl or being a boy (gender roles including sport and PE; body image and appearance; popularity and respect; emotional expression; occupations and aspirations) and what they identify as influences on these perceptions;
- b) How they experience friendships and relationships between boys and girls;
- c) Whether they see any restrictions or unfairness because of their gender and what these restrictions may be.

## Methodology

Randomly selected, small, single-sex groups of students from each of the schools were interviewed using pictures as a prompt for discussion, with questions covering gender roles (including sport/PE, occupations, expression of emotions and body image), relationships between girls and boys and perceptions of fairness or unfairness. In total 50 students were interviewed across the age range 7 to 14. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and were transcribed and analysed. Virtually all the students were interested and engaged in discussing these issues.

## Findings and recommendations

The majority of the children and young people in our study, aged 7 to 14, were acutely aware of gender roles and gender expectations on them. This was particularly expressed in sport for the younger age group (with different attributions for boys and girls) and aspirations for all the age groups. This trend held throughout school settings. In other areas such as relationships, there were marked differences between schools suggestive of school ethos and/or teacher/curriculum influence. Experiences of different treatment and

---

<sup>1</sup> A three-year, global education, curriculum development project working with teachers of pupils aged 3-14 in South Yorkshire, developing interventions in schools which support gender equality and respect between genders.

feelings of this being unfair were most pronounced at primary age and more by girls than boys.

As the sample was very small and responses may be particular to different localities it is not possible to make generalisations about other students from this study. However what the students had to say was interesting and significant in its own right. It would be revealing to see this study or similar ones replicated with other groups of students in other schools both in the UK and in other countries. The following recommendations are for the schools involved in the Gender Respect project although they may also apply to schools beyond the project. Rather than merely pointing out areas where the findings indicate intervention is required, the recommendations make the assumption that gender equality and respect is something that schools have an impact upon, and draw on the researchers' pedagogic knowledge and experience beyond the scoping study to make suggestions about appropriate and effective methods of intervening.

### ***Gender roles: Sport and PE***

#### **Key findings:**

- The majority of primary students said that boys were better at football than girls
- Boys mainly attributed this difference to intrinsic ability
- Girls mainly attributed this difference to exclusion and teasing by the boys
- None of the girls said that they were *not* interested in football
- There was a range of views across the different secondary schools which seemed to depend on school policies and ethos

#### **Recommendations:**

- Actively intervene in the primary schools to ensure all children have equal access to all sports, particularly focusing on preventing girls from being excluded from football by boys
- In the primary schools actively challenge gender stereotypes in sport through role models and discussion
- Explore the impact of whole school policy and practice on PE and sport in secondary schools

### ***Gender roles: body image and appearance***

#### **Key findings:**

##### *Primary*

- The girls and boys seemed to care equally about their appearance with the boys not afraid to say so
- There was some evidence of concern by girls over their body weight and muscle definition

##### *Secondary*

- Body weight and muscle definition seemed to be an issue particularly for the girls
- Much more recognition of the influence of the media and pop culture on appearance, particularly by girls

- No evidence with these students of 'sexualisation' of girls from influence of pop videos, more a rejection of this (particularly strong negative feelings towards Miley Cyrus)
- Evidence of a careful 'policing' of appearance by the girls
- Clear division of girls, in one school, into 'girly girls' and 'sporty girls'

**Recommendations:**

- Continue to be aware about the concern some children and young people, particularly girls, feel about body weight
- Continue to develop and use curriculum activities and materials which develop media literacy and a critical awareness of the influences of the media on perceptions of body image
- Give students the opportunity to discuss the historical and geographical contexts of how bodies are presented including notions of 'beauty'
- Continue to use and develop PSHE<sup>2</sup> activities and materials which support children and young people's self-esteem and help them to resist the pressure to conform to others' ideas of how they should look

***Gender Roles: popularity and respect (secondary only)***

**Key findings:**

- Most boys thought that appearance and being sporty or strong would make them popular
- None of the boys thought that being clever would make them popular
- Having 'attitude' was important for popularity of boys and girls in one of the schools
- Boys and girls thought that appearance was important for popularity for girls although the girls had a more nuanced understanding of how to gain popularity
- There were fewer responses about respect, indicating perhaps that this wasn't something that they had considered very much, or that it wasn't as important as popularity
- Girls and boys both said that studying hard could make you respected although being 'big-headed' would not
- Boys mentioned gaining respect of peers through winning fights and 'sticking up for your mates'

**Recommendations:**

- Engage students in critically reflecting on what constitutes popularity in their schools and how this restricts or supports their performance of gender identities and attitudes to learning
- Engage students in critically reflecting on the nature of respect and how it operates

---

<sup>2</sup> Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk>

### ***Gender Roles: expression of emotions***

#### **Key findings:**

- The majority of students (girls and boys) thought it was OK for men to cry
- Some students thought that it was not normal to see men cry and that it could provoke teasing
- A few of the boys (primary and secondary) expressed disapproval about men crying
- There were few responses to women being angry and these were mixed

#### **Recommendations:**

- Continue work in PSHE and SEAL<sup>3</sup> in primary and secondary schools on emotional literacy while ensuring that students know that all emotions are available to and can be expressed by both men and women

### ***Gender Roles: occupations and aspirations***

#### **Key findings:**

- Students at all three primary schools and one of the secondary schools said that it wasn't 'normal' for women to be builders or electricians and men to do childcare or sewing
- More girls than boys thought that it was positive to see women being builders or electricians and men doing childcare or sewing
- At two of the inner city primary schools most of the boys were very concerned for the safety of women (and one in suburban school in a wealthy area) and many of the girls from all six schools thought women wouldn't be as capable as men or have the strength required for jobs such as builders or electricians
- Several boys gave counter-arguments from their own experiences of women showing strength or engaged in occupations such as piloting aeroplanes
- Students' future aspirations were very gender stereotyped with only doctor and police officer mentioned by both boys and girls
- Only nine girls compared to 14 boys chose occupations relating to STEM<sup>4</sup> and of those eight were in caring professions whereas only three of the boys choices could be seen as involving caring roles

#### **Recommendations**

- Engage students in critically reflecting on gender stereotypes in relation to professions and occupations
- Provide role models and examples of men and women in counter-stereotypical roles including direct experience of people in different professions and occupations

---

<sup>3</sup> Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1008> and <http://www.sealgd.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

- Provide more careers education to ensure that all students are aware of the range of professions and occupations that exist beyond their immediate experience

## ***Relationships***

### **Key findings**

#### *Primary*

- Majority of girls in the primary schools mentioned teasing or negative behaviour by boys towards them, some talking at length about this
- Boys also mentioned it and even showed negative attitudes towards the girls in their class during the interviews
- Several primary children wished for better relationships
- Many mentioned difficulty of being just friends without being teased about being girlfriends or boyfriends.

#### *Secondary*

- Where same-sex relationships were discussed (secondary schools) there was a mixed response, with some students being very positive or accepting and others critical or uncomfortable. This tended to cluster in different schools, but more investigations would need to be carried out to ascertain whether this was owing to school ethos / teaching or background of students

### **Recommendations**

- Find ways of improving the relationships between girls and boys in primary schools and continue this work into secondary
- Ensure guidance on LGBT<sup>5</sup> equality is proactively implemented in all primary and secondary schools and that students are given the opportunity to explore and challenge their assumptions, prejudices and beliefs

## ***Perception of fairness***

### **Key Findings**

#### *Primary*

- In each of the primary schools there was some mention of unfairness in the ways boys or girls are treated by adults in school
- Pupils perceived that it is mostly boys who get into trouble and display bad behaviour
- Some girls didn't like that they were expected to be good
- A few boys wished that everyone was treated equally and felt that they were restricted by gender stereotyping
- A few of the girls wished that boys wouldn't get so much attention
- In one of the schools the boys gave several examples of how they were treated differently outside of school

#### *Secondary*

---

<sup>5</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans\*

- Lack of fairness was not perceived to be an issue in the two secondary schools where this question was asked directly
- In the third secondary school mention was made by two of the girls about boys being treated differently owing to their reputation for bad behaviour

### **Recommendations**

- Investigate whether the primary students' perceptions of unequal treatment of boys and girls in school is grounded in reality in which case develop interventions to tackle this. If the students' perceptions are not grounded in reality then the perceptions need to be challenged
- Give all students the opportunity to engage in exploring the issue of fairness in relation to their experiences of gender roles and relationships

### **Recommendations stemming from the study taken as a whole**

The researchers were struck by the strong engagement of both girls and boys in discussing gender issues in their lives during the scoping study. The following recommendations stem from this experience:

- Give children and young people more opportunity to engage in dialogue about gender issues which they see as important and relevant
- Engage boys as well as girls in discussing gender equality and masculinities as well as femininities
- Use Philosophy for Children (P4C)<sup>6</sup> and other methods using dialogic learning approaches which are valuable for engaging children and young people in discussion and developing their skills and aptitudes to be able to tackle controversial issues

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.decsy.org.uk/p4c/introduction--2>

## 2. Context and aim of study

The [Gender Respect Project](#)<sup>7</sup> carries assumptions that children and young people in South Yorkshire are affected by a culture with prescribed gender roles which may limit experiences and aspirations. This scoping study for the project set out to examine this assumption and elaborate the range and diversity of perceptions that exist. The research stemmed from a curiosity as to whether there is a wide range of perceptions and experiences across ages, sexes and settings, or whether there are patterns related to age or sex or settings that emerge. The research aimed to explore three questions:

- d) How children and young people in our project schools in South Yorkshire perceive expectations on themselves and other children for being a girl or being a boy (gender roles including sport and PE; body image and appearance; popularity and respect; emotional expression; occupations and aspirations) and what they identify as influences on these perceptions;
- e) How they experience friendships and relationships between boys and girls;
- f) Whether they see any restrictions or unfairness because of their gender and what these restrictions may be.

The specific areas to focus on were developed following conversations with the teachers involved with the project about issues that they felt were salient for children and young people, and with groups of young people aged 16 to 24<sup>8</sup>.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Nature of the cohort

The scoping study was carried out with the schools involved in the Gender Respect Project in South Yorkshire between January and March 2014. There were three primary schools and three secondary schools located in different parts of Sheffield, a large city<sup>9</sup> in South Yorkshire. The schools have different socio-economic profiles with one of the secondary and one of the primary schools being on the outer edges of the city with mainly white pupils, with below average number of pupils receiving free school meals at the secondary and very few at the primary. One of the other secondary schools has an average number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds (predominantly

---

<sup>7</sup> A 3-year, global education, curriculum development project working with teachers of pupils aged 3-14 in South Yorkshire developing interventions in schools which support gender equality and respect between genders

<sup>8</sup> Summaries and transcripts of these interviews can be found on the Gender Respect Wordpress: <http://genderrespect2013.wordpress.com/about/>

<sup>9</sup> Population 551,800 according to 2011 census, 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in England

Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Eastern European) and average number of free school meals and the other has an above average number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the number of free school meals is well above average. Both of the other primary schools have pupils who are mostly from minority ethnic backgrounds and above average free school meals.

### **3.2 Selection of students**

The interviews were conducted with randomly selected, same-sex groups of four students (one male and one female group) in each of the project schools<sup>10</sup>. These students were selected from a class taught by each of the project teachers using a random number table and the class register except for in one school (school F). In this school the students were chosen by a teacher other than the project teacher (who was seconded out of school for this academic year), to represent a range of ethnicities, class background and attainment reflective of the school. These groups consisted of five male and five female students. Although not ideal for consistency, this was beyond the control of the researchers. A total of 50 students (25 girls and 25 boys) were interviewed for around 30-45 minutes per group.

### **3.3 Interviewers and method of data collection**

Structured group interviews were conducted by two DECSY<sup>11</sup> trained interviewers, one of whom was present for all of the interviews (one of the authors of this report) to provide consistency in the way the questions were asked. Carefully chosen photographs and drawings<sup>12</sup> geared to specific age groups – Primary (7-11) and Secondary (11-14)<sup>13</sup> were used as stimuli for discussion and these appeared successfully to support the students in thinking about their responses without narrowing them.

The questions were designed not to be leading and the interviewers tried to maintain a friendly but neutral attitude. Follow up, probing questions ('Some people in society think...what do you think? What has influenced you / changed your mind?') were asked where it was deemed appropriate and fruitful. Time restrictions meant that in some cases interviews had to be

---

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1 for descriptions of the project schools including an ethnicity breakdown for each of the groups

<sup>11</sup> Development Education Centre South Yorkshire where the Gender Respect project is based <http://www.decsy.org.uk>

<sup>12</sup> Pictures were chosen that the students could relate to and reflecting their diverse ethnic backgrounds. See Appendix 2 for the interview schedules and picture descriptions

<sup>13</sup> The activity was also adapted and carried out with groups of EYFS 1 (3 year-old) children. However because of the age of the cohort, the methods used and the lack of opportunity to improve their effectiveness through further trialling and adaption, very little useful data was gathered so this has been left out of the results and analysis.

hurried to cover all the areas but only in one case (where only 20 minutes was given in school F) was the interview cut short. The questions on the primary and secondary schedules (Appendix 2) were all asked except for question 4.8 on pornography and sexting which was only asked of the 13-14 year-old students. It was decided during the interviews that it wasn't appropriate to ask this of the 11-12 year-old students.<sup>14</sup>

The interviews were audio recorded with simultaneous longhand notes and transcribed in full before analysis.

### **3.4 Consent and Confidentiality**

The students obtained written permission from their parents / guardians for these interviews to take place and had the purpose and process explained to them in advance by the teacher with the opportunity to opt out if they wished. They were also told that the interviews would be confidential in that neither their names nor the school names would be used in the write up or communicated directly to their teachers, but what they said would be published on a website to which anyone could gain access. The interviewers repeated this information at the beginning and end of the interviews, checking that the students understood this and were happy with it.

### **3.5 The Students' Responses to the Interviews**

The researchers were struck by the enthusiasm and interest in discussing the topic displayed by the majority of the students during the interviews. In many cases the students (girls and boys), particularly the younger age groups (11-12 year-old and below) would have continued talking for much longer if time had permitted. One group of primary school boys (school B) spontaneously expressed their disappointment that the interview had come to an end saying 'Ohh.. is this the only time we're supposed to be doing this?' and suggesting to the researchers that the interview could carry on after break and thanking the researchers for talking with them. When asked why they had liked it so much one said 'I like it because you asked us questions and you can really think about what you want to do and normally you don't think about things' and another said 'You weren't shocked at anything we said, like J said he liked to do knitting and you weren't shocked'.

---

<sup>14</sup> A survey on the views of young people on the use of IT in relation to sexting and pornography in local schools conducted by Sheffield Local Authority is in the process of being analysed and will be published on the Gender Respect Wordpress site.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

In the following presentation and discussion of the results of the scoping study the different areas (gender roles and distinct areas within these; relationships and perceived fairness) are looked at separately. However there are overlaps and connections between them. Clear gender binaries<sup>15</sup> can be seen to run through the different areas. The qualities which appear in the interviews and are strongly associated with boys or girls (masculinity/femininity) are: active (boy)/passive or decorative (girl); silly (boy)/sensible (girl); selfish/selfless; strong/weak; clever/stupid; brave/scared and rough/gentle. Binaries also operate within genders with a trend, particularly for the secondary girls, to position themselves in relation to 'sporty girl' or 'girly girl'.

In the discussion each of the areas of the study (gender roles and distinct areas within these, relationships, and perceived fairness) are looked at in relation to these gender binaries: where they are apparent and where there are exceptions; whether this seems to be the norm across the cohort or not; if not what other patterns exist (particular school, nature of intake, age of students etc).

Patterns, or strong trends and rationales are drawn out but where there are exceptions or a lack of pattern this is also indicated.

Another thread running through the results and discussion is the way that the students draw on their own experiences at school and outside of school to make sense of gender roles and relations. The qualitative nature of the study allowed the students to explain and justify their ideas and this has given an insight, not only into what they think, but also the influences on their thinking. Also the process itself of being given the opportunity to respond to non-threatening questions in a group and hear other perspectives gave them opportunities to consider and sometimes change their own responses in relation to these. The students have been quoted from extensively in this study as their words reveal a great deal about their perspectives.

Appendix 2 describes each of the schools including socio-economic make-up and ethnicity of students. It can be seen that the schools differed markedly in their socio-economic and ethnic intake. The researchers were interested to see if any patterns relating to class or ethnicity could be seen. However no patterns could be discerned from this study so the ethnic and class background of a student isn't commented on except in one case where the researchers' assumptions were challenged.

---

<sup>15</sup> 'Gender binary' describes the system in which a society splits people into male and female gender roles, gender identities and attributes

## 4.2 Gender Roles

### 4.2.1 Sport and PE

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses the responses of the students to the pictures and questions about sport and PE. The primary and secondary students were asked slightly different questions<sup>16</sup> so they are treated separately. As stimuli for discussion, the primary students were shown photographs showing boys and girls skipping in a playground and women and men footballers. They were also shown two parallel sketches of girls/boys playing basketball and a boy/girl watching. The secondary students were only shown the photographs of women and men footballers.

**Key findings:**

- The majority of primary students said that boys were better at football than girls
- Boys mainly attributed this difference to intrinsic ability
- Girls mainly attributed this difference to exclusion and teasing by the boys
- None of the girls said that they were *not* interested in football
- There was a range of views across the different secondary schools which seemed to depend on the school policies and ethos

#### 4.2.1.1 Sport and PE – Primary

Across the three primary schools the majority (8 of 12 boys and 7 of 12 girls) said that boys were better at football. Only one boy and one girl (in the same school A) said that girls and boys are the same at everything and two of the boys and two girls said it depends on experience and skills. A few mentioned that girls are better at skipping, gymnastics and swimming with two boys agreeing that girls are good at '*monkey bars and cheerleading*' and a boy in another school saying that girls don't do sport but play with '*dolls and stuff*'. In all three primary schools both the girls and the boys talked at length about the reasons for these differences with boys in two of the schools (A and C) tending to attribute the differences to intrinsic ability (4 of 12 boys mentioned boys being faster or having more muscles) and the girls across all the schools blaming exclusion and teasing by the boys. In school B the boys were clearly attributing any differences to factors such as practice and interest which may reflect a growth mindset<sup>17</sup> to learning in the school as a whole. However one

---

<sup>16</sup> Primary – 'At games and PE are boys better at some things than girls? (and vice versa). Secondary 'In sport and PE in school are boys and girls treated differently...what happens if you don't like sport?...why do some boys or girls hate PE?'

<sup>17</sup> 'fixed mindset – believing that your qualities are carved in stone' 'growth mindset' – (believing) that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through efforts' (Dweck, 2006, p.6&7)

of the girls in the school said *'I'd like to play football but you need lots of training and, like I said on that aeroplane one<sup>18</sup>, you might forget things as well, like if you're shooting a goal you might get it into the wrong goal'* recognising that training makes you good at something but still believing that as a girl she might be forgetful so therefore fail.

In all three primary schools, all of the girls, except for one who didn't comment, talked about how the negative behaviour of the boys was the main factor in why girls didn't play football. Four of the girls mentioned the boys being too rough and getting into fights and 11 of 12 mentioned boys excluding girls or saying that they're not good enough to play. Two of the girls in different schools said that boys don't let girls join in because *'they think they're rubbish'*. Comments from other girls are below:

*'Boys don't want girls in their team',*

*'Boys say they don't think you'd be any good',*

*'They're leaving the girl out because they think the girls can't play basketball because they're just girls',*

*'Normally boys say that they can play football and girls can't',*

*'Boys are always saying that girls aren't very good but we might be good',*

*'Sometimes boys say "aw you're not better at football, we are" and sometimes girls are',*

*'Mostly the boys don't let girls play because they think that girls aren't interested',*

*'They think they're the boss of us...boys were teasing the other girls who weren't good at it',*

*'Boys are more self-centred if they're playing football or something they keep the balls to themselves and they don't let anyone else'.*

None of the girls said that they just were not interested in playing football although one said she thought boys might think girls were not interested (and two of the boys confirmed this). One girl pointed out that boys who choose non-stereotypical sports also receive teasing from other boys *'In my childminder there's these two boys and one does gymnastics and when C said "I do gymnastics" B laughed at him because he was a boy and he thought boys don't do gymnastics and it's a silly thing for boys'*. During the

---

<sup>18</sup> This girl had previously commented on a photograph of a female pilot saying *'Girls are not used to flying planes and everything and sometimes they might not know what they're doing and even if they've had training they might forget or something'*. These comments might usefully have been followed up with a question which asked whether this is because they are women or whether men might forget as well but at the time it seemed fairly apparent that this child meant that it was just women who would have this problem.

interview one of the boys in school A actually exhibited negative attitudes to girls and football saying such things as *'Seriously, girls playing football!'* and mocking the girl in the drawing who is watching the boys play basketball: *'A sad little girl!'* Another boy suggested that in the basketball drawing *'They might be hurting her feelings...and saying "You're not playing because you're not a boy"'*.

These comments are consistent with much of previous British research over the last fifteen years. Paechter (2007) explains that 'in the British context, masculinity is overwhelmingly constructed through participation in football' (Paechter, 2007, p.100). One of the primary girls in the Gender Respect scoping study confirmed this, saying *'Boys just think about football. It's always on their minds'*. Paechter goes on to say that in her own research she found that 'all the dominant boys played, both in and out of school, many every playtime, and had done so since they were very young. Indeed, success at football seems to be central to attaining status within boys' peer groups'. She goes on to suggest that 'Boys' perception of football as central to dominant masculinity means that girls – and subordinate boys – have either to be excluded or their participation marginalized or downgraded' (Paechter, 2007, p. 101).

Although clear overall patterns in attitude and experience could be seen through the three primary schools it is important that these don't mask the other responses that didn't fit with these trends. One of the boys in school A maintained his position that *'We're like the same because boys can do swimming and girls can do swimming and some girls can do boxing... even M plays football'*. Later he said *'I think that girls can still play football. Me and A go to football and there's this girl called L and there's a coach who's a girl and a girls' football team'*.

One of the other boys at school A, who had said that boys are better at football (and consistently noted the differences between men and women), still had as a wish at the end *'You mostly see the boys on TV in gymnastics as well but you don't really see the girls so you should see the girls in football so there should be like a night: Saturday night for boys, Sunday night for girls'*. One of the girls observed how boys may be discouraged from doing things that girls normally did *'When I played skipping with my friends there was one boy doing it but he went off because no boys were doing it'* and another girl suggested that perhaps sometimes girls didn't play football because they were worried about what other girls would think about them.

#### **4.2.1.2 Sport and PE - Secondary**

The secondary students were shown the photographs of women and men footballers.

The gender division in sport / PE was only apparent in one of the three secondary schools (school E) where the group of four girls clearly divided themselves into three girls who didn't see themselves as sporty and one who did. The girl who liked sport spoke very little, only to say that she *'loved mud'* and *'loved sport'* while the three other girls spoke at length about the difficulties of playing rugby in school:

*'When you get muddy and it gets all in your hair and you have to leave it in all day until you get home',*

*'We have to dive and dodge people and it's nasty cos there's accidents and we do rugby us, like we're scared of mud. We have to touch the dirty ball and it's really weird. They should clean the ball because boys have been touching it and girls don't like to touch it when there's mud and stuff'.*

One of the girls also said that gymnastics was embarrassing because *'you have to take your socks off and some people have smelly feet'*. The boys in the same class also suggested that girls wouldn't like to get muddy *'Most girls paint their nails and they don't like to be muddy'* and *'They (the girls) hate running – when they come back they're like "Oh I don't like to be muddy"'*.

These remarks confirm attitudes revealed in a national survey which said that *'40% cent of girls feel self-conscious about their bodies during PE'* and *'26% say they 'hate the way that they look when they exercise/play sport'<sup>19</sup>* and link with section 4.2.2 below on 'Body Image and Appearance' where this gender binary of 'active/passive or decorative' is also apparent. If there is an emphasis on girls' appearance and their decorative role then this potentially has an impact on their feelings about being involved in active sports.

It is hard to conclude, from this limited study, whether these issues are apparent with this 11-12 year-old group in school E because of the age of the students, the particular locality in the city or the ethos of the school since we didn't survey the feeder primary schools to this school or the secondary schools that the 9-10 year-old students at schools B and C feed into. However the other 11-12 year-old groups in school F said there was no difference between girls and boys in PE and sport although one girl said *'Boys constantly play football'* and chose the picture of women footballers because *'You don't see a lot of girls' teams'*. The girls said that if you dislike PE and sport you have to do it anyway and one girl said that it *'doesn't really happen here that people don't want to do it. We always want to do sports and join clubs'* and the other girls seemed to be in agreement.

This is quite a different picture to the one in school E and could have been affected by the fact that the assistant head teacher in school F, who was also a female, Asian PE teacher, was in the room during the interview. However, in conversation with her afterwards, we found out that the school had a 'no-nonsense' approach to PE and sports and she had 'put a stop' to sex discrimination when she came into post. For example, where formerly only boys did table tennis, girls now do it and where boys only did gymnastics and dance up to age 12-13, they now continued it beyond. Further exploration would be needed to confirm that this school's policy and ethos is having a big impact on gender and sport in this age group.

---

<sup>19</sup> Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation (2007) *'It's Time: Future Forecasts for Women's Participation in Sport and Exercise'*, London: Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation

The 13-14 year-old students at the third secondary school (D) also saw no difference between the girls and boys in sport and even felt that they shouldn't necessarily be put into single sex groups: *'I think we are treated the same way but when we were in Y7... we had a supply teacher... so we all went together. A couple of girls wanted to play football but because there were only a couple they couldn't do it because they weren't allowed to play with the boys'*. Another student confirmed *'Yeh I think it should be mixed because if they want to play football they should be allowed to do it'*. Both of these girls were Muslim and wearing hijab thus challenging the researchers' assumptions that all Muslim girls would prefer single sex sports.

## 4.2.2 Body Image and Appearance

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses the students' responses to photographs and questions relating to body image and appearance. The primary and secondary students were shown a different range of photographs (see appendix 2) and asked slightly different questions<sup>20</sup> so they are treated separately.

### Key findings:

#### *Primary*

- The girls and boys seemed to care equally about their appearance with the boys not afraid to say so
- There was some evidence of a concern by girls over their body weight and muscle definition

#### *Secondary*

- Body weight and muscle definition seemed to be an issue particularly for the girls
- Much more recognition of the influence of the media and pop culture on appearance, particularly by girls
- No evidence with these students of 'sexualisation' of girls from influence of pop videos, more a rejection of this (particularly strong negative feelings towards Miley Cyrus)
- Evidence of a careful 'policing' of appearance by the girls
- Clear division of girls in one school into 'girly girls' and 'sporty girls'

### 4.2.2.1 Body Image and Appearance Primary

In the primary schools boys and girls seemed to care equally about their appearance (with a only few of them saying they didn't care) and also recognised this to be the case with each other. Perhaps because they were presented with an image of a young man putting hair gel on in front of the mirror, the boys were very comfortable about talking about how they take care of their appearance: *'I wear gel all the time. When my dad says "Come on we're going to a football match" and I say "Wait a minute I need to do my hair" he says, "OK"'* (9-10 year-old boy from school B). However there seemed to be clear parameters about the ways in which boys and girls can present themselves. There were two mentions of boys not conforming to gender norms and the potential difficulty with that: *'In my primary school there was a*

---

<sup>20</sup> Primary- 'Do you/girls/boys at this school think a lot about their appearances?' 'Do you/they do a lot about it? E.g. clothes? Make-up? Hair gel?' 'What are the influences on how young people your age look?'  
Secondary – 'Any of these pictures affect how boys/girls feel about themselves?' 'In what way?'

*kid and he had long hair and he looked like a girl and when a new teacher came into a class they thought that he was a girl' (11-12 year-old boy) and 'Sometimes my brother paints his nails but takes it off before school because people might tease him' (7-8 year-old girl).*

It was noticeable that two of the girls (School B) mentioned body weight and muscle definition in relation to women's bodies. One girl said *'I don't think she (Ennis) cares how she looks unless she's fat'* and another said *'I wouldn't want to have a six pack... I wouldn't myself like to have big muscles... I wouldn't want to be fat because people talk behind your back'*. Later confirming again *'Sometimes girls get upset because boys say they're fat'*. (9-10 year-old girl). These issues of body weight were even more apparent with the secondary students (see below).

When the primary students were asked what the influences were on people their age there was very little response to this question although this may have been because they were only shown two images of celebrities (Jessica Ennis and David Beckham). One 9-10 year-old boy shrugged *'I like the way I look. If he's famous I don't want to look like him (Beckham)'* and another in the same school (School C) thought that girls did get influenced by television *'Yes because girls like watching X Factor and stuff and boys like playing football on the street'*.

#### **4.2.2.2 Body image and appearance - Secondary**

As with the primary students, the secondary students made mention of body weight and muscle definition particularly in relation to girls' appearance. Although one 11-12 year-old boy mentioned that being a boy *'You have to lose weight'* to look after your appearance, it was mainly girls who referred to body weight. One of the secondary girls mentioned body size in a long list of reasons for popularity *'She's not fat or skinny'* (11-12 year-old at school E) and another said she thought some girls are influenced by the media *'because a lot of female celebrities are quite skinny'* (13-14 year-old at school D). These comments are reflected in the national picture identified in a recent survey:

*'Pressure to conform to an idealised body size starts early in girls' lives and increases as they progress through their teens. Overall, seven in ten 11- 21 year-olds say that they would like to lose weight (71%). Within this overall picture, an already high 66% of those aged 11 to 16 say this, rising to 75% of those aged 16 to 21.'* (Girlguiding, 2013)

Exercise for girls was linked to keeping *'body shape'* by one of the 11-12 year-old girls, and as with the primary students, some secondary students, in response to the picture of Jessica Ennis, talked about whether it was OK for girls to show muscles. One of the 11-12 year-old boys said *'(Girls) like to be strong but not show (their) six pack'* explaining *'Men go to the gym to work on their top halves and girls go on treadmills and work on their legs and stuff'* (boy, school E). When the secondary students were asked about what makes someone popular they also mentioned the importance of boys having muscles which they could obtain through doing sport (see below *'Popularity and Respect'*).

There was a much greater response from the secondary students when asked what the influences were on people their age. This may have been because they were presented with photographs of singers Miley Cyrus and Kanye West in addition to the pictures of Jessica Ennis and David Beckham. The picture of Miley Cyrus, in particular, provoked strong reactions in all three of the schools where she was forcefully condemned for being *'dirty'* and *'changing'* (from her image when she was playing the Disney character, Hannah Montana). This could be interpreted as a highly positive rejection of an increasingly sexualised pop video culture. However it needs to be born in mind that Cyrus is an extreme example of someone who is in the mainstream and had been discussed in the media disapprovingly a lot in the few months leading up to the interviews.<sup>21</sup> It would be interesting to see if the young people who reacted to the picture of Cyrus would see the same problem with other singers with less of a high profile. It is notable that one of the 11-12 year-old students at school F, in addition to saying, *'She's horrible now....She's gone dirty...She shows her body too much on music videos'* says *'She wanted to be a boy'*. Cyrus is perceived as not only exhibiting a *'bad femininity'* in the *'hierarchy of good and bad femininities'* (Paechter 2007 p. 145) but even crossing over into masculinity.

Two of the girls (with the third in agreement) at school E articulated at length exactly what kind of girls they saw themselves as and how they felt they should look:

*'I don't like how some women dress – like Miley Cyrus and Lady Gaga they like wear really horrible clothes and that makes me feel uncomfortable because it makes men think that we dress like that and **we don't** ... We like wearing make-up, **but not too much**. Some people like wearing dark eyeliner... The older girls like it but **we don't - it's too much**.. I like wearing foundation... You should wear that amount of make-up instead of **going over the top and looking like a tart** because when you put too much on people wouldn't be your friend.'* (12-13 year-old girl, school E)

*'We're not **girly girls**, we like it, but we don't, **we know what to wear and everything** but it's like what other people are wearing... But now this style thing is coming in where you have to wear your hair goes bushy and you're wearing tons of make-up... We like.. **just a bit of sparkle**...It's your choice... **She's** (the girl putting on make-up in the photo) **quite pretty, quite old, not***

---

<sup>21</sup> For example:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2343992/Miley-Cyrus-named-worst-celebrity-role-model-parents--beating-Lindsay-Lohan-Amanda-Bynes.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10267842/MTV-Video-Music-Awards-2013-Miley-Cyrus-and-that-performance-the-reasons-why-everybodys-talking-about-it.html>

***got too much make-up, not proper tanned or gone OTT on mascara.*** (12-13 year-old girl, school E)

This very careful monitoring, even policing, of their own and others' appearance, particularly the open use of the word 'tart' fits with previous research which has discussed the 'virgin/whore narratives which collectively police behaviour' (Paechter, 2007 p. 144). Girls still seem to be treading that thin line between being seen as frigid or too easy and many of them seem to spend a lot of energy ensuring that their appearance doesn't give the 'wrong' messages to boys. One of the Gender Respect Project teachers has followed this up by surveying the language used to describe girls and boys in her school and this has confirmed the prevalence of negative language towards girls such as 'slag'.

The 13-14 year-old students in school D who had been taught PSHE by one of the project teachers for nearly two years showed some awareness of how celebrities might influence young people and that this could have a negative influence on body image:

*'They might, like, make the women want to be like the people in the videos – which is kind of, like, impossible because it's all, like, fake – and they might try really hard but they can't do it'* (13-14 year-old boy)

*'I think some do because a lot of female celebrities are quite skinny. I don't know but I think some are influenced that they want to look like that, especially if they're younger and they think that's what they're supposed to look like... and if they're inspired by them'* (13-14 year-old girl)

### 4.2.3 Popularity and Respect (Secondary only)

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses the secondary students' responses to questions about popularity and respect. Using the same pictures as in 4.2.2 (photographs of boys and girls caring about their appearance, doing sport and studying) the secondary students were asked what made boys and girls popular and respected in their schools.

**Key findings:**

- Most boys thought that appearance and being sporty or strong would make them popular.
- None of the boys thought that being clever would make them popular
- Having 'attitude' was important for popularity of boys and girls in one of the schools
- Boys and girls thought that appearance was important for popularity for girls although the girls had a more nuanced understanding of how to gain popularity
- There were fewer responses about respect, indicating perhaps that this wasn't something that they had considered very much, or that it wasn't as important as popularity
- Girls and boys both said that studying hard could make you respected although being 'big-headed' would not
- Boys mentioned gaining respect of peers through winning fights and 'sticking up for your mates'

#### 4.2.3.1 Popularity

Most of the boys agreed that appearance and being sporty or strong would make boys popular and none of them chose the boys who were studying, one saying *'The clever ones wouldn't be popular. A lot of people would probably call them nerds or geeks'* (school E) and another pointing out *'When you're in secondary school you can't really choose your labels because if you like reading you might go to the library and people might call you stuff'* (school E). A boy in school F thought that you could be clever as long as you were popular but being clever didn't *make* you popular. The girls were largely in agreement with this although they actually chose the sporty boy (who they pointed out also looked good). Other factors that were mentioned by both boys and girls in one of the schools (D) in making boys popular was *'Having attitude'* i.e. standing up to teachers and making other students laugh.

*'Attitude'* was also mentioned as important for girls' popularity in school D although one of the boys said *'If you're attractive and had attitude then they might be popular'* but if they were unattractive and had attitude *'Then they'd just be naughty'* (school D). All the boys chose both the girl putting on make-up and the sporty girl as being most popular but one of the boys thought that being sporty would mean you were more *'chatty'* and therefore more popular because of that. However only one of the girls in the three schools chose the

sporty girl and that was because doing sport would make her more attractive: *'If you exercise you can keep your body shape'*. The other girls chose the one putting on make-up but some also had a more nuanced understanding of popularity, saying things such as *'It's not about getting more popular by looks, it's about making friends'* and *'They talk more to others, that's how they start getting popular. Other people feel comfortable with them', 'I don't think they're scared to say what they think', 'Get their point across'. 'I think it (looks mattering for popularity) does to a certain extent... When I was in primary I thought it was all about what you look like but now I'm older I realise it's not all to do with that'*. One of the boys also pointed out that looks alone don't gain girls popularity: *'If you just came into Y7<sup>22</sup> and you dressed like that you wouldn't just be popular... You need to make friends with the other girls and they might make you change your looks'*.

These findings correspond largely with what Jackson found out in the northern English schools that she studied in 2006 where 'popular femininities' required 'prettiness (which included being thin), wearing fashionable clothes and make-up, and having the latest mobile telephones. The equivalent boys were tall, athletic and good-looking' (Paechter, 2007).

#### **4.2.3.2 Respect**

When asked what makes boys and girls respected, there seemed to be agreement that appearance was not important for either girls or boys and both boys and girls who studied could get respect. Boys in the school E also mentioned that boys could earn respect by winning a fight and making others scared of them and *'Sticking up for your mates'* or being *'nicer'* (11-12 year old boy). Being a captain of a sports team was mentioned by one boy and a girl in the same school said of boys *'Football ...I think it's always about football or whatever sport it is'* (13-14 year-old girl, school D). One 13-14 year-old girl said *'I think some girls, if they're popular and big-headed, they're not as respected as other girls because they're just showing off'*. In a subsequent survey in school D this view was supported by boys who talked forcefully about how much they disliked *'big-headed'* girls. This might imply that it is OK for girls to study hard but not to let others know of their abilities. Generally the students in all three schools were less forthcoming with the question on respect giving the impression that this, as opposed to popularity, wasn't something they had thought about before very much.

---

<sup>22</sup> In English state schools Y7 is for 11-12 year-old students

#### 4.2.4 Expression of Emotions

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses the primary and secondary students' responses to two photographs of men crying and one of a woman being angry and the question 'Some people think it is not OK for men to cry or women to shout. What do you think?'

**Key findings:**

- The majority of students (girls and boys) thought it was OK for men to cry
- Some students thought that it wasn't normal to see men cry and that it could provoke teasing
- A few of the boys (primary and secondary) expressed disapproval about men crying
- There were few responses to women being angry and these were mixed

In response to the question there was a strong pattern of both boys and girls in the primary and secondary schools thinking men should be able to cry but with some recognition that it wasn't usual and could provoke teasing. 16 of 25 girls actually said it was OK for men to cry, slightly more than the boys (14 of 25). Girls in two of the primary schools pointed out that it wasn't normal to see men crying, *'My dad hasn't cried in years'* (7-8 year old girl, school A), *'Normally boys don't cry...but it's not illegal'* (9-10 year old girl, school C). Two of the secondary girls agreed *'Normally it's women that cry when something happens but when boys cry it shows they care about things'* (11-12 year-old girl, school F). *'When people say that men aren't supposed to cry but they can cry. People would laugh at them if they cry'* (13-14 year old girl, school D).

In primary schools B and C the 9-10 year old girls talked more about the danger of being teased if boys cry *'If they cry people think they're weak and like tease them'*, *'Boys don't really cry because they want to show people that they can be brave'* but another girl pointed out *'Sometimes you don't want to show them that you want to cry but you need to cry and not hold it in or it gets into your mind'*. However the 9-10 year-old boys in both of these schools were positive about men crying *'It would be weird to not cry with sad stuff'*, *'When I went to Thornbridge I was really sad and when I got off the phone I started crying'* (school C) *'It's nothing to be embarrassed about'* (school B). In two of the secondary schools (D and F) the boys thought it was important to be able to cry *'rather than keep it all inside'* (13-14 year-old boy, school D). One student suggested *'I don't think it's actually (other) men who don't think they (should) cry I think it's themselves. They're self-conscious. I think other people are OK with it. It's just themselves'* (13-14 year old boy, school D) and another student at the same school said *'I think it would be good if men could express feelings towards other men without being called gay or lesbian when it's not true'* (13-14 year-old boy). In one of the primary schools and one of the secondary schools, three of the boys were negative about men crying: *'Like they're a wimp'*, *'I think girls laugh because once I fell over and girls laughed at me'* (7-8 year-old boy, school A). One 11-12 year-old boy said *'If*

*you cry for no reason...not really manly is it?* (school E) and proceeded, while giggling, to give an account of a time when a boy started crying.

It would be unwise to draw conclusions from this study about which factors have influenced the different attitudes to expressing emotions in these schools but since at least one of the schools, where students found boys crying a problem (school A), actively teaches PSHE and has a strong equality values framework, it may be more to do with the locality and social background of the students or individual family differences. The more accepting attitude towards men crying may be related to the increase in work on emotional literacy in primary schools over the last decade (through such programmes as SEAL)<sup>23</sup>. This may be combined with a possible cultural shift about the acceptability of men showing vulnerability but this hasn't been researched for this study.

The students didn't respond very much to the question about women getting angry but the girls (3 of 25) who did respond said they thought it was OK. One boy thought it wasn't OK because women care for children and might upset them (this tied in with his later comments on women's role in the work place and home). One girl said that women might not *show* anger and one boy said that *men* get angry a lot. One of the boys thought that women should be able to be angry as '*All people have the right to be angry*' (13-14 year-old boy, School D) and another thought that the woman in the photograph might be angry because the man crying in the other photograph might have '*cheated on her*' (11-12 year-old boy, school F).

---

<sup>23</sup> Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1008>)

### 4.2.5 Occupations and Aspirations

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses the views of the students to non-stereotypical occupations and their responses to career choices. The primary and secondary students were given the same set of photographs of three women and three men in counter-stereotypical occupations. The primary students were asked to say which pictures they liked and disliked with reasons and the secondary students were asked if any of the pictures interested them and if they thought any of the pictures were unusual or made them feel uncomfortable. They were then asked whether they had any ideas of what kind of job they would like to do when they left school.

**Key findings:**

- Students at all three primary schools and one of the secondary schools said that it wasn't 'normal' for women to be builders or electricians and men to do childcare or sewing
- More girls than boys thought that it was positive to see women being builders or electricians and men doing childcare or sewing
- At two of the inner city primary schools most of the boys were very concerned for the safety of women (and one in suburban school in wealthy area) and many of the girls from all six schools thought women wouldn't be as capable as men or have the strength required for jobs such as builders or electricians
- Several boys gave counter-arguments from their own experiences of women showing strength or engaged in occupations such as piloting aeroplanes
- Students' future aspirations were very gender-stereotyped with only doctor and police officer mentioned by both boys and girls
- Only 9 girls compared to 14 boys chose occupations relating to STEM and of those 8 were in caring professions, whereas only three of the boys choices could be seen as involving caring roles

#### 4.2.5.1 Occupations

More than half the primary girls (8 of 12) and just under half of the primary boys (5 of 12) said they liked the pictures of the men doing childcare and none of them expressed dislike. Even where they saw it as unusual they thought it was a good thing for men to take care of children. The stronger reactions (of surprise or disapproval/approval) and more elaborated responses across all the primary schools were towards the pictures of the woman roofer and electrician. The boys' explanations for their disapproval in all three primary schools fitted in with the masculine/feminine binary of 'strong/weak' with several of them taking a protective attitude towards women:

*'He's doing work and women can't do the work as well because they might electrocute themselves but men are much stronger and they can do it'* (7-8 year-old boy, school A)

*'I think boys should do it. It's really dangerous, I'm not being mean but girls aren't as strong as boys and a girl might get an electric shock and have to go to the doctors and she might just fall down and she don't know where she is'* (9-10 year-old boy, school C)

*'Because how can a woman hold a heavy thing while climbing a ladder...cos she might fall off'* (9-10 year-old boy, school C)

*'I think men should do it because if ladies fell off they would hurt bad but if men fell off it wouldn't hurt them that bad'* (9-10 year-old boy, school B)

Perhaps of even more relevance for this study (because of the possible triggering for the girls of 'stereotype threat'<sup>24</sup>) was that several of the girls saw women as less knowledgeable or capable than men (binary of competent/incompetent or clever/stupid): *'Girls are not used to flying planes and everything and sometimes they might not know what they're doing and even if they've had training they might forget or something'* (9-10 year-old girl, School B) *'Normally men, they normally fix things and do quite difficult things but instead it's a woman doing it'* (7-8 year-old girl, School A).

<b>Reasons given why men and women do different jobs (number of students per reason)</b>	<b>Boy</b>	<b>Girl</b>
Dangerous for women/they get hurt	5	0
Men stronger	4	2
Women wear jewellery and could get robbed working outside	2	0
Men more fit	1	0
Women less capable/less knowledgeable	0	4
Women usually do child care	2	2
Women afraid of heights	0	1
Bosses are men so don't let women do jobs	0	1
Might be made fun of (woman)	1	0
Women mostly do housework	2	1

In all three primary schools many of the male students and some of the female students saw the lack of women in non-stereotyped roles as owing to their intrinsic ability (or lack of ability) with some boys and girls actually

---

<sup>24</sup> For an explanation of 'stereotype threat' see 'Gender Respect Project background paper, page 7: available as a link from: <http://genderrespect2013.wordpress.com/about-the-project/>

disapproving of women's involvement in building and electrical work. However, there were notable exceptions to this trend in two of the schools (B & C). One boy in school B consistently took a positive stance towards gender equality arguing with the others and giving thoughtful reasons and examples from his experiences from home and school:

*'That can't be true (that women aren't as strong as men) because ladies do cooking. They cook with all those big pots that are heavy and that helps them to become stronger...If you are a lady and you're working at a shop you have to pick up bottles and those big boxes of bicycles and put them on the shelf'* (9-10 year-old boy 2, school B)

He had earlier in the interview said *'Men have a right to do cooking and to drive a car and ladies have a right to do the same. If men play cricket then ladies can play cricket'* and made reference to Malala, Mandela and Martin Luther King over the course of the interview making a connection between gender and race equality:

*'They say that ladies are not allowed to go to school in Pakistan and Syria but if you fight for it like Malala you can ... He (Mandela) wanted freedom – white people had about that much (shows with hands) and black people about that much and they wanted to be equal ...When Nelson Mandela and people in America – Martin Luther King – They changed everything and made it equal'*

When asked how he knew about these people, he said that he'd learnt this in assemblies at school and this was confirmed by the project teacher at the school who said that one of the teachers gave very good assemblies on global issues. It may be that school had been able to have such an impact on his ideas because they were reinforced by direct experiences that challenged stereotypes outside of school. The contrast with, particularly the boys' responses, in school A (for example *'Men are much stronger and they can do it'*) where there were also regular assemblies about global equality issues, may have been because of the difference in age of the students (between 7-8 year-old and 9-10 year-old) or perhaps related to their home experiences (or, indeed other factors which this limited study has been unable to uncover).

Boys in school C also drew on their own experiences to counter the arguments of the others: *'I disagree with ... because some women do pilot jobs. Once I went to my country and saw women driving the aeroplanes, someone working as the pilot'*.

In two of the secondary schools there seemed to be a general understanding that, even if it might be unusual to see women builders and electricians and male child care workers, this was completely acceptable and that views to the contrary were *'stereotypical'* and *'came from the past'*. In these two schools the students either referred directly to PSHE lessons *'I learnt in PSHE that men can do any job and women can do any job but men get more money'* (11-12 year-old boy, school E) or used language which implied that they had developed an awareness of the issues in their PSHE lessons *'Because that idea comes from the past because men before used to be men and women used to be just objects. Some people have that backward thinking and it's really bad'* (13-14 year-old boy, school D). In the third school (F) there

seemed to be less evidence of the 11-12 year-old students having discussed this in lessons before but still their own views were that it is fine for men and women to do any jobs even though it is unusual to see women builders. They suggested that this might be because *'People say women are not strong enough', 'Mostly women clean houses and do the laundry' and 'If a girl says "I'm taking a course in building", people might make fun out of them'*. Three of the boys in this school had a slight disagreement about whether they had a male teacher in their nursery school as evidence that men worked in childcare and one of the girls said *'It doesn't seem really like weird to me because if my mum does some cooking I'll help her and my dad, if he's working in a lot of jobs sorting... and he does a lot of repairs to our house and I also like to help'* (11-12 year-old girl, school F). Many of the students' comments showed the importance of their own direct experiences in making sense of gender issues such as these.

In both of the schools B and C It was particularly noticeable that during the questions about occupations the actual process of discussing had an impact on the students' views. The process of articulating their own reasons and hearing others' reasons led in some cases to students changing their mind about their views. One 9-10 year-old boy who had previously said *'Girls aren't as strong as boys and a girl might get an electric shock.. and just fall down'* having listened to another student's explanation of why he didn't like the picture of woman builder *'because how can a woman hold a heavy thing while climbing a ladder ... cos she might fall off'*, argued *'It's not like a boy wouldn't fall off. I'm going upstairs and I'm like a man and a girl's coming upstairs with a heavy thing and she comes up and I fall down. It doesn't mean you've got super powers if you're a man'*. He later said that his wish was that *'everyone will get treated the same way'*. Incidentally, and of particular relevance to the Gender Respect Project (as this is a key teaching and learning approach on the project), the impact of Philosophy for Children seemed to be particularly apparent with the 9-10 year-old children (equally boys and girls) who were very happy to disagree with each other, give reasons for their comments and provide examples and counter-examples. These students had all participated in P4C for at least a year and it seems that the language and thinking scaffolding that P4C provides along with a willingness to question and wonder established a firm foundation for their engagement in discussion of gender issues. This was also evident to some extent with the 7-8 year-old students in school A (particularly the girls), although less apparent perhaps owing to their younger age.

#### 4.2.5.2 Aspirations

The students across all the schools were asked whether they had any idea about what kind of job they would like to do when they grew up (primary) or left school (secondary) and although this was a small sample it is interesting to see clear patterns in their choices.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Boy</b>	<b>Girl</b>
Police Officer	2	3
Doctor	1	4
Dentist	1	0
Midwife	0	1
Nurse	0	1
Vet	0	2
Engineer	3	0
Builder	3	0
Game Designer	2	0
Electronics	2	1 (computer fixer)
Inventor	1	0
Zoo keeper	1	0
Lawyer	0	1
Teacher	0	1
Nursery teacher	0	1
Journalist	0	1
Librarian	0	1
Football player	5	0
Wrestler	1	0
Hairdresser	0	1
Beautician	0	2
Chef	0	2
Farmer	0	1
Firefighter	1	0

Occupation	Boy	Girl
Flight attendant	1	0
Taxi driver	1	0
Actor	1	0
Artist	1	0
TV director	1	0
Ice cream man	1	0
Dancer	0	1
Millionaire	1	0

Doctor and police officer were the only two occupations mentioned by both girls and boys (at top of table).

Only nine girls compared to 14 boys chose occupations relating to STEM<sup>25</sup> (highlighted in dark grey in table). Of those relating to STEM, 8 of 9 girls chose occupations which could be said to be in the caring professions whereas only 3 of 14 boys chose occupations which could be said to be involved with caring (for people or animals). Other notable points are the large number of boys who said they wanted to be footballers (highlighted in light grey in table) and the fact that only girls mentioned the possibility of becoming beauticians or hairdressers and only boys mentioned builders and engineers. Some of the students gave reasons for their choices and, apart from more obvious reasons such as being good at something or liking to do it, several of the boys at schools B and C mentioned the importance of being able to earn enough money to be able to look after family in the UK and Pakistan which implies a traditional belief in the responsibility of men to be providers for their families.

The findings in this study fit a stereotypical pattern of career choices of young people post-16: 'Vocational choices, including apprenticeships, are heavily gendered and white males predominate in most training provision. Popular choices like construction and plumbing are more than 90 per cent male, with health and social care and hairdressing more than 90 per cent female' (Hutchinson et al, 2011 p.vi)<sup>26</sup>. An Ofsted study of girls' career aspirations also found similar patterns and that where girls did end up choosing non-stereotypical careers it was because of experiences of 'direct observation of a professional at work, through mentoring activities and through personal encounters and extended discussion with a professional about what their job

---

<sup>25</sup> STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths

<sup>26</sup> See also: Fuller, A and Unwin, L (2013) p.14

was actually like' (Ofsted, 2011). This has implications for the kind of careers education that should be made available to school students and the need to very proactively engage children and young people in considering non-stereotypical careers.

## 4.3 Relationships

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses students' attitudes towards friendships and romantic relationships between girls and boys and what they thought of same-sex relationships (secondary schools only). Images of a cartoon boy kissing a girl and a photograph of a teenage girl and boy being friends for primary and a range of photographs and cartoons showing friendships, opposite and same-sex relationships for secondary were used as stimuli for discussion.

### Key findings:

#### *Primary*

- Majority of girls in the primary schools mentioned teasing or negative behaviour by boys towards them, some talking at length about this
- Boys also mentioned it and even showed negative attitudes towards the girls in their class during the interviews
- Several primary children wished for better relationships
- Many mentioned difficulty of being just friends without being teased about being girlfriends or boyfriends.

#### *Secondary*

- Where same-sex relationships were discussed (secondary schools) there was a mixed response, with some students being very positive and others negative. This tended to cluster in different schools, but more investigations would need to be carried out to ascertain whether this was owing to school ethos / teaching or background of students

### 4.3.1 Relationships - primary

Two of the boys and three of the girls in primary schools said that there was a danger of being teased for having a girl/boy friend if you tried to just be friends with a girl or boy:

*'They do tease you. I get teased a little bit but my sister gets teased a lot because she's got a boyfriend and everyone teases her. Everyone says they're in love'* (7-8 year-old boy, school A),

*'Everyone says that my girlfriend is someone, I don't want to say (who it is)'* (7-8 year old boy, school A),

*'I don't have many friends who are boys because if I was playing with a boy then this other boy says you're in love with them but I'm not'* (7-8 year-old girl, school A),

*'This boy said he liked this girl and all the girls started chasing the boys'* (9-10 year-old girl, school C).

This was echoed by several of the secondary school students with one boy saying if you were friends with a girl *'it's a 100% chance you might marry them'* (11-12 year-old boy, school E) and two of the 13-14 year-old girls saying that this wasn't a problem any more but it was in primary school

*'my best friends in primary were all boys and I got a lot of people saying that I liked them all as if they were all my boyfriends but they were just friends'*,

*'in group work I used to sit with the boys and then everyone started talking'* (13-14 year-old girls, school D).

The set of questions about friendships gave the girls in all three primary schools another opportunity, in addition to comments about football above (page 14), to describe what they saw as the difficult behaviour of the boys:

*'Sometimes I play with them but normally they are playing a game where you have to run away from them and you get hurt because they push you towards the fence'* (7-8 year-old girl, school A),

*'Mostly the boys don't let girls play because they think that girls aren't interested...Boys just want to be mean to other people who are not like them'* (9-10 year-old girl, school C),

*'Most boys don't want to play with girls, and boys and girls don't like playing together... Boys in class they don't go anywhere near girls... They'll just ignore the girls'* (9-10 year-old girl, school C),

*'Sometimes boys are quite horrible to girls... Sometimes girls get upset because boys say they're fat'* (9-10 year-old girl, school B).

The boys in these schools confirmed these views about how they saw the girls:

*'I don't want to be friends with girls. I'm used to boys. I'm a boy and I've got different things to say than girls'* (9-10 year-old boy 1, school C),

*'I don't like none (photographs) because having girlfriends I don't like'* (9-10 year-old boy 3, school C),

*'They (the girls) always walk around ...they don't listen to us. They just keep on talking'* (9-10 year old boy, school B),

*'You can't have a girl and a boy as a friend'* (7-8 year-old boy, school A).

Several of the girls referred to their relationships with boys in their wishes<sup>27</sup>:

*'World peace – boys and girls don't argue and everyone has the same amount of respect'* (9-10 year-old girl, school C) and *'I think I would wish for to*

---

<sup>27</sup> The primary children were asked a final question 'If you had a magic wand and could make one wish to make it different in the way boys and girls are treated what would it be?'

*let boys let girls do whatever they want. Boys can't treat us like we're just anything but girls can do what we can do and I would wish ... that boys could be nice to girls and girls could be nice to boys to make it easier'* (9-10 year-old girl, school B).

#### **4.3.2 Relationships - secondary**

A few of the 11-12 year-old girls in the secondary schools also talked about how their relationships with boys were difficult as can be seen in the following conversation:

Girl 1: *'Quite hard because I was friends with quite a few boys and because if they do one thing wrong or talk to one of their friends they have a go at you and then they'll say "Get lost" and they start imitating you ...*

Girl 3: *Boys are always like, "I want a girlfriend. I want a girlfriend"*

Girl 4: *When you get one they're like I don't like her.*

Girl 1: *When they want a boyfriend it's harder because boys are like "Euhh you're ugly and all that" and girls are more nervous and boys are just like that (hand gesture)' (11-12 year-old girls school F)*

The boys at the same school thought it was quite easy to be friends with girls and didn't feel that there was any pressure to be a boyfriend *'Only if you kiss her'* (11-12 year-old boy, school F).

The students' responses to the pictures showing lesbian and gay relationships varied between the three secondary schools. At school E, the 11-12 year-old boys were unanimous in their dislike of the photograph of men kissing each other with one of them turning over the picture saying *'They must be drunk them'*. One of them explained *'It's not supposed to be. We're disturbed because we're men and we don't think that men should do that'*. One of the girls at this school was very clear *'I don't like that (men kissing). I don't like boys kissing'* but another of them said *'I'm very uncomfortable with that (women kissing) but it's up to the girls what they do with their lives... like that one – The boys can choose what they can do... People just take it right serious and go like "Oh you two are together" but when you try to stick up for yourself you get into a big fight'* (11-12 year-old girl, school E). Two of the five 11-12 year-old boys at school F said they were uncomfortable with these images with one being indifferent and one saying *'What's wrong with that? It's OK to be a girl lesbian'*. The girls at school F also gave mixed responses but with the majority feeling happy about lesbian and gay relationships. Only one of the girls expressed doubts *'I just wouldn't like to see them. If it's your family it's OK but if it's people I don't know I don't like it'*. Another of the girls argued in response to this *'You'd just carry on walking. You've done it before'* and said *'It's how you express yourself'*. One of the girls chose the picture of the women kissing as interesting *'because sometimes you can have a happy life with each other, like go somewhere'* and another one said *'They can both be together. It's not a law that you can't go out boyfriend and girlfriend and girlfriend and girlfriend'*. Since all these students were 11 or 12, age was not the determinant, so either the teaching or ethos at the school or the background of the students would seem to be the influencing factor here.

Further investigation into these schools would be necessary, however, before any conclusions could be drawn.

The 13-14 year-old students in school D (4 of 8 of those interviewed were from Muslim communities) were unanimously positive or indifferent about lesbian and gay relationships and this challenged the researchers' assumptions about attitudes towards LGBT in Muslim communities. One of the boys chose the photo of the women kissing as one that he found interesting *'If you're going to do it in public it takes a lot of courage to come out and say you're being a lesbian and you like girls'* and another said that he didn't find any of the pictures uncomfortable because *'anybody can express themselves freely'*. The girls were also all comfortable with the pictures *'They're all OK because that's how they are'*. The students at school D had also been positive about friendships between boys and girls *'It's easy if you get along with them...and you get to know them'* (13-14 year-old girl, school D), *'Quite easy (to be friends with a girl) unless people know that you like each other then it doesn't matter you can be friends with anyone'*<sup>28</sup> (13-14 year-old boy, school D). Their attitudes may have been affected by the fact that this was a top set group that the project teacher was teaching PSHE for the second year. The teaching and the school's equality policies could perhaps be seen to be having a positive effect. This possibility was reinforced in conversation with the project teacher who said that she too had found even the 11-12 year-old students to be very positive in relation to LGBT and that the school had a very big emphasis on this through assemblies.

The 13-14 year-old students were asked an additional question about how much they thought watching pornography and sexting<sup>29</sup> was happening 'round here'. The girls said they thought that just older boys (15-16 year-old) might watch pornography *'I don't think it goes on but if it did it would be the older kids and it would be the boys'* (13-14 year-old girl, school D). They shook their heads when asked if sexting was going on at all. The boys didn't make any comments about pornography but said that they thought there was one boy and girl who exchanged sexually explicit text messages but this was the 'odd exception'. A more extensive and detailed survey of the use of IT for sexting and pornography by 7-16 year-old students, which was carried out in Sheffield in 2013 and is in the process of being published, will give a fuller picture of these issues.

---

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that with school D further investigations by the project teacher into how girls and boys related to each other in the school, including another single sex group interview revealed more negative attitudes by the boys towards the girls which led the teacher to explore the concept of 'respect' with her students. (see <http://genderrespect2013.wordpress.com/teachers-blogs/rebecca-project-teacher-secondary/xxxxxxxxxxxx/> )

<sup>29</sup> Sending sexually explicit messages often containing photographs between mobile phones

## 4.4 Perceptions of fairness / unfairness

**Introduction:** This section describes and discusses the students' perceptions of unfairness.<sup>30</sup> The primary students were also given a final question which asked them to say what their one wish would be to 'make it different in the way boys and girls are treated'. Their responses to this mainly related to the other sections of this report and have been included where relevant. If their responses related to being treated differently because of their gender they are included below.

### Key findings:

#### *Primary*

- In all primary schools there was some mention of unfairness in the ways boys or girls are treated by adults in school
- They perceived that it is mostly boys who get into trouble and display bad behaviour
- Some girls didn't like that they were expected to be good
- A few boys wished that everyone was treated equally and felt that they were restricted by gender stereotyping
- A few of the girls wished that boys wouldn't get so much attention
- In one of the schools the boys gave several examples of how they were treated differently outside of school

#### *Secondary*

- Lack of fairness not perceived to be an issue in the two secondary schools where this question was asked directly
- In the third secondary school, mention was made by two of the girls about boys being treated differently owing to their reputation for bad behaviour

### 4.4.1 Perceptions of fairness/unfairness: Primary

#### 4.4.1.1 *Inside school*

This idea of boys being seen by teachers as silly or 'naughty' and girls as sensible was apparent in the comments of several of the primary students at

---

<sup>30</sup> Secondary: 'Do you think you are expected to behave in any particular way because you are a girl/boy? Why? Would you like this to be different? Why?'  
Primary: 'If you were a girl/boy would you be treated differently by adults in school? Outside of school? In what way? Why? How do your friends expect you to act? Why? Are there some things you'd like to do but can't because people say that it's only for boys/girls? If you had a magic wand and could make one wish to make it different in the way boys and girls are treated what would it be?'

all three schools. Both the boys and girls in school C talked about how boys got into trouble more than girls. All four girls at this school said that boys got into trouble more because *'boys like always to fight...normally boys shout really loud so boys get into more trouble. Normally girls don't get into trouble'* (9-10 year-old girl) and three of them saw it as a problem that boys get more attention from teachers because of this, one having the wish that *'No one should get extra attention. Sometimes teachers or parents give attention to boys because they're fighting'* (9-10 year-old girl).

There was some disagreement among the boys at this school. One of their comments paralleled the girls: *'The boys shout but girls they work. Boys get told off more'* (9-10 year-old boy, school C) but two of them gave examples where girls got into trouble and the boys didn't: *'Girls play lots of games and they get into trouble more easily because the boys don't bring things, only footballs'* and *'Last week it was raining and the girls came in and started running but the boys were walking so the girls got told off'*. The boys at school B were clearer about the difference they perceived in how they were treated with all of them agreeing that girls got more credits than boys and the teachers believed the girls more than the boys: *'Not like naughty girls only like right good girls'* (9-10 year-old boy, school B). The girls at this school didn't see any problems in school. The responses of one of the girls and one of the boys in school A (younger, 7-8 year-old students) reinforced the silly/sensible binary with the boy saying *'Girls are normally gooder than boys because boys are normally naughty'*. The girl felt it was unfair that she was expected to be good: *'Most boys are normally, people think they're quite naughty, so I think people would expect me to be good'* (7-8 year-old girl, school A). Another girl at this school felt this expectation at home:

*'My mum expects me to be good and not rough and like my sister who always does her hair and things. She expects me to be not like my brother who is always doing annoying and naughty things....but I don't think it's fair'*. (7-8 year-old girl, school A)

The perceptions of the students from the project schools seems to be consistent with previous research where it has been found that 'boys were perceived by their teachers as more likely to exhibit poor concentration in the fidgety sense, of not seeming to be able to sit still. They were believed to be more immature, to have poor behaviour and poor motivation' (Jones & Myhill, 2004) and that teachers' views are noticed by their students: 'certainly pupils' perceptions of teachers are that they have different expectations of boys and girls in terms of their behaviour, the quality of their written work, and the extent to which they punish and praise boys as against girls' (Warrington et al, 2003). It would, of course be interesting to look at this in more detail in these schools through observation and teacher interviews to see how closely the children's perceptions match the reality of teacher expectations/behaviour and student behaviour. However, for the purposes of this scoping study, it is significant that many of the primary students perceive that teachers (and other adults) have different expectations of boys and girls and treat them in different ways and that they see this as unfair. One of the boys in school C felt it was unfair that teachers seemed to develop friendlier relationships with the girls: *'A lot of girl teachers, they don't talk to boys but with girls they are talking all the*

*time*' (9-10 year-old boy, school C). This perception of unfairness and the apparently quite strong feelings associated with it, which is shared by both boys and girls might be a fertile area to explore with the students during the Gender Respect project.

#### **4.4.1.2 Outside of school**

In one of the primary schools (school B) the boys described quite a lot of examples where they felt that they were treated differently from girls outside of school and they perceived this as unfair:

*'In mosque sometimes they start calling me names like "lady" and then even if I act like a boy they still call it me but in school if I'm acting like a boy or act like a girl they still call me a boy'* (9-10 year-old boy 1, school B)

*'Sometimes if I ask if I can go (shopping) she (my mum) says "No" ... then later she took them (little and big sister) and I had to go to mosque and when I got back only my dad was at home'* (9-10 year-old boy 2, school B)

*'In my house, when my mum goes shopping on Saturdays and I ask her if I can come with her, she says "No" but my sister asks her and she says, "OK come"'* (9-10 year-old boy 3, school B)

*'My oldest cousin he always called me like girl names – we went to Pleasure Island one day and he told me to ride some right scary rides. I didn't moan so he started calling me ...(my own name)'* (9-10 year-old boy 4, school B).

Three of the boys also regretted the fact that as boys they felt weren't able to do baking, knitting and sewing.

The only comment about differences in treatment from the girls was in regard to how boys might be treated unfairly: *'Adults might not really like boys. They might like bullying them and they might pick on the boys and not be nice to them just because they're boys'* (9-10 year-old girl 3, school B).

It is interesting that the boys highlighted aspects of gender stereotyping that disadvantaged them and indicates the scope for involving boys in gender equality work where masculinities as well as femininities can be explored

#### **4.4.2 Perceptions of fairness/unfairness: secondary**

The students in the two secondary schools (D & E) where the question was asked directly didn't think there was any unfairness nowadays. All the other girls in school D agreed when one commented *'When you watch Shakespeare plays from a while ago and you think about how women were treated I think it's a lot better now. We're treated very similarly ... You have equal rights. Society doesn't really care. In Shakespeare's time it was the men who were the important ones'*. (13-14 year-old girl). The only comment from school E, was a girl observing that *'In Rugby Miss would say "I don't want to hear no one saying they're not doing it or don't like mud" I don't think they'd say that to the boys'* (11-12 year-old girl). Although these girls show a clear dislike of mud when they're playing rugby (see Sport / PE p.16 above) it is interesting that one of them identifies the expectation by the teacher that they will be bothered about that as unfair. This expectation may be a

contributing factor to the girls' dislike of rugby, bearing in mind the contrast in the girls' attitudes that was brought out earlier with school F where there is a very clear expectation that girls and boys will do everything in PE.

Although, owing to a lack of time, the fairness question was not asked directly of the students in school F, in response to another question, two of the girls said that they thought boys and girls were treated differently '*Because girls can get away with things but boys are usually, like, naughty*', '*Boys get done straight away and girls get two or three chances*' (11-12 year-old girls).

## **5. Recommendations for the Gender Respect Project**

As the sample was very small and responses may be particular to different localities it is not possible to make generalisations about other students from this study. However what the students had to say was interesting and significant in its own right. It would be revealing to see this study or similar ones replicated with other groups of students in other schools both in the UK and in other countries.

The following recommendations are for the schools involved in the Gender Respect project although they may also apply to schools beyond the project. Rather than merely pointing out areas where the findings indicate intervention is required, the recommendations make the assumption that gender equality and respect is something that schools have an impact upon and draw on the researchers' pedagogic knowledge and experience beyond the scoping study to make suggestions about appropriate and effective methods of intervening.

### **5.1 Gender Roles Recommendations**

#### **5.1.1 Sport and PE:**

- Actively intervene in the primary schools to ensure all children have equal access to all sports, particularly focusing on preventing girls from being excluded from football by boys
- In the primary schools, actively challenge gender stereotypes in sport through role models and discussion
- Explore the impact of whole-school policy and practice on PE and sport in secondary schools

#### **5.1.2 Body image and appearance:**

- Continue to be aware about the concern some children and young people, particularly girls, feel about body weight
- Continue to develop and use curriculum activities and materials which develop media literacy and a critical awareness of the influences of the media on perceptions of body image
- Give students the opportunity to discuss the historical and geographical contexts of how bodies are presented including notions of 'beauty'

- Continue to use and develop PSHE<sup>31</sup> activities and materials which support children and young people's self-esteem and help them to resist the pressure to conform to others' ideas of how they should look

### **5.1.3 Popularity and Respect**

- Engage students in critically reflecting on what constitutes popularity in their schools and how this restricts or supports their performance of gender identities and attitudes to learning
- Engage students in critically reflecting on the nature of respect and how it operates

### **5.1.4 Expression of Emotions**

- Continue work in PSHE and SEAL<sup>32</sup> in primary and secondary schools on emotional literacy, while ensuring that students know that all emotions are available to, and can be expressed by, both men and women

### **5.1.5 Occupations and Aspirations**

- Engage students in critically reflecting on gender stereotypes in relation to occupations
- Provide role models and examples of men and women in counter-stereotypical roles including direct experience of people in different professions and occupations
- Provide more careers education to ensure that all students are aware of the range of occupations that exist beyond their immediate experience

## **5.2 Relationships Recommendations**

- Find ways of improving the relationships between girls and boys in primary schools and continue this work into secondary
- Ensure guidance on LGBT<sup>33</sup> equality is proactively implemented in all primary and secondary schools and that students are given the

---

<sup>31</sup> Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=335> and <http://www.sealgd.org.uk/>

<sup>32</sup> Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=1008>

<sup>33</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans\*

opportunity to explore and challenge their assumptions, prejudices and beliefs

### **5.3 Perception of Fairness Recommendations**

- Investigate whether the primary students' perceptions of unequal treatment of boys and girls in school is grounded in reality in which case there needs to be an intervention in relation to this. If the students' perceptions are not grounded in reality then they need to be challenged
- Give all students the opportunity to engage in exploring the issue of fairness in relation to their experiences of gender roles and relationships

### **5.4 Recommendations stemming from the study taken as a whole**

The researchers were struck by the strong engagement of both girls and boys in discussing gender issues in their lives during the scoping study. The following recommendations stem from this experience:

- Give children and young people more opportunity to engage in dialogue about gender issues which they see as important and relevant
- Engage boys as well as girls in discussing gender equality and masculinities as well as femininities
- Use Philosophy for Children (P4C)<sup>34</sup> and other methods using dialogic learning approaches which are valuable for engaging children and young people in discussion and developing their skills and aptitudes to be able to tackle controversial issues

---

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.decsy.org.uk/p4c/introduction--2>

## Bibliography

Dweck, C. (2006) *Mindset: the New Psychology of Success*, New York: Ballantine Books

Fuller, A., & Unwin, L., (2013) *Gender Segregation and Apprenticeship and the Raising of the Participation Age in England: are Young Women at a Disadvantage?* Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies, Institute of Education, University of London

Girlguiding (2013) *What girls say about...Equality for girls*, Girls' Attitudes Survey 2013, London: Girlguiding

Hutchinson, J., Rolfe, H., Moore, N., Bysshe, S, and Bentley, K. (2011) *All things being equal? Equality and diversity in careers education, information, advice and guidance*, Equality and Human Rights Commission

Jones, S. and Myhill, D. (2004) 'Seeing things differently: teachers' constructions of underachievement', *Gender and Education* 16(4): 531-46

Ofsted, 2011 *Girls' Career Aspirations*, Report Summary, Ofsted  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/girls-career-aspirations> accessed July 2014

Paechter, P. (2007) *Being Boys Being Girls: Learning masculinities and femininities*, Maidenhead: Open University Press

Warrington, M., Younger, M. and McLellan, R. (2003) 'Under-achieving boys in English primary schools?', *The Curriculum Journal* 14(2): 139-56

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix 1. School Descriptions**

#### **School A**

A larger-than-average-sized primary school in a wealthy suburb. Very few students eligible for free school meals. Most are of White British heritage with very few speaking English as an additional language. The students interviewed were from a 7-8 year-old class and were aged 7-8 years. All four girls were White British; three of the boys were White British and one was Asian British (of Pakistani heritage).

#### **School B**

A much larger-than-average-sized primary school in one of the most deprived areas of the city.<sup>35</sup> Most pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The majority are of Asian or Asian British heritage, with Pakistani being the largest group represented in school. A very small but growing minority come from Gypsy Roma and Slovak backgrounds. About 75% of pupils do not have English as their home language. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is high compared to the national average. Out of the four boys interviewed, three were of Black British or dual heritage (African Caribbean/White) background and one was Asian British (Pakistani heritage); out of the four girls, two were Asian British (Pakistani), one was dual heritage African Caribbean/White and one was White British.

#### **School C**

A larger-than-average-sized primary school in one of the most deprived areas of the city, with an above average number of students eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a large proportion of pupils do not speak English as their first language. The largest proportion of pupils has a Pakistani background; however, recently a growing number of pupils are starting school with a Slovak/Roma heritage. All four of the boys and all four of girls interviewed were of Asian British (Pakistani) background.

#### **School D**

An average-sized secondary school in an averagely wealthy area of the city. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Eastern European heritages, is in line with the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. Out of the four boys interviewed, two were Asian British (Pakistani), one was African Caribbean and one was White British. Of the four girls, two were Asian British (Pakistani) and two were White British.

---

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/sheffield-profile/deprivation-statistics.html>

### **School E**

Much larger than most secondary schools, this school is located on the very edge of the city in an area slightly better than the city average in relation to deprivation measures. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Of the eight students interviewed only one (African Caribbean boy) was not White British.

### **School F**

This is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school located in one of the most deprived areas of the city. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above-average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above the national average. A significant number of students speak English as an additional language. Of the five boys interviewed four of them were Asian British and one was White British; of the five girls, one was Asian British and four were White British.

## Appendix 2. Interview schedules / picture descriptions

### Primary

Image Description	Question
<p><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p>	<p>We're researchers with a project called 'Gender Respect' which your school is part of and your teacher has given us permission to spend this time with you.</p> <p>We are really interested to know what it is like to be a boy or a girl here in South Yorkshire in 2014. We've got some photos here to get the conversation going, then some questions about how you see the influences on you and other boys and girls your age.</p> <p>Display first set of photos. Question 1 etc</p>
<p><b>1. SPORT / PE</b></p> <p>p Skipping: colour photograph showing school playground with girls and boys skipping with individual ropes</p>	<p>1.3 At games and PE are boys better at some things than girls? 1.4 Why? 1.5 Are girls better at some things in games and PE than boys? 1.6 Why?</p>
<p>q Women footballers: colour photograph showing women playing football in a stadium</p> <p>r Men footballers: colour photograph showing men playing football in a field (blurred background)</p>	<p>1.7 Which like? 1.8 Why?</p>
<p>f Girls playing basketball: colour drawing (commissioned) of two girls playing basketball with a boy watching with sad face</p> <p>g Boys playing basketball: colour drawing (commissioned) of two boys playing basketball with girl watching with sad face</p> <p>These two images are drawn to be identical except for the change from girls to boys.</p>	<p>1.9 What's going on in this picture? 1.10 What's he thinking?</p> <p>1.11 What's going on in this picture? 1.10 What's she thinking?</p>

<p><b>2. PLAY/NURTURING</b></p>	<p>OMIT PRIMARY (only used with the three-year-old children not included in this write-up)</p>
<p><b>3. BODY IMAGE</b></p> <p>u Girl make up: colour photograph of image of teenage girl in mirror putting on eye-liner</p> <p>v Boy hair gel: colour photograph (commissioned) of teenage boy in mirror putting on hair gel</p> <p>3. Jessica Ennis (Olympic athlete): colour photograph of Jessica Ennis wearing sports clothes, showing muscles, grinning with thumbs up</p> <p>4. David Beckham (footballer): colour photograph of David Beckham sat in an audience watching something, wearing t-shirt showing tattooed arms</p>	<p>3.1 Do you/girls at this school think a lot about their appearances?</p> <p>3.2 Do you/they do a lot about it? E.g. clothes? Make-up?</p> <p>3.3 Do you/boys at this school think a lot about their appearances? Do you/they do a lot about it? E.g. clothes? Hair gel?</p> <p>3.4 What are the influences on how young people your age look?</p>
<p><b>4. RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> <p>w Cartoon boy kissing girl: colour cartoon of teenage girl and boy sitting on a bench side by side. Boy is kissing girl on cheek with red lovehearts</p> <p>x Girl/boy friends: colour photograph of teenage boy and girl sitting with boy in front, both smiling</p>	<p>4.1 Which do you like?</p> <p>4.2 Why?</p> <p>4.3 Can you be just a friend with a boy/girl?</p>
<p><b>5. EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION</b></p> <p># Men crying: two full colour close up head/shoulders photographs of men crying (one White man and one Black man)</p> <p>* Woman shouting: full colour close up of woman with angry face, looking like she is shouting with fist raised</p>	<p>5.1 What do you think about these pictures? <i>Optional prompt</i></p> <p>5.2 Some people think it is not OK for men to cry or women to shout. What do you think?</p>

<p><b>6. OCCUPATIONS &amp; ASPIRATIONS</b> Six occupational images from 'Working Now' and 'Focus for Change' educational packs (now out of print):</p> <p>j Black and white photograph of Rastafarian man using a sewing machine in a factory</p> <p>k Black and white photograph of woman wearing hard hat fixing a roofing tile on a roof</p> <p>l Black and white photograph of woman pilot stood in front of an aeroplane</p> <p>m Black and white photography of man in a nursery sitting down holding a toddler's hand and smiling</p> <p>n Colour photograph of man in deckchair in garden feeding a toddler from a bowl</p> <p>o Black and white photograph of woman fixing a ceiling light with tool belt</p>	<p>6.1 Which picture do you like? 6.2 Why? 6.3 Which picture don't you like? 6.4 Why?</p> <p>6.5 Do you have ideas of what you would like to do when you grow up?</p>
<p><b>7. DIRECT QUESTIONS</b> Expectations and perceived unfairness</p>	<p>7.1 If you were a girl/boy would you be treated differently by adults in school? Outside of school? In what way? 7.2 Why do you think this is? 7.3 How do your friends expect you to act? Why? 7.4 Are there some things you'd like to do but can't because people say that it's only for boys/girls? 7.5 If you had a magic wand and could make one wish to make it different in the way boys and girls are treated what would it be?</p>
<p><b>8. THANKS AND CONFIDENTIALITY</b></p>	<p>Many thanks for sharing your ideas. You've been really helpful to the project in understanding what it is like to be a boy / girl at this time. The tape recording will be very useful to the research team so we are quite clear about what you said. We will ensure your name remains confidential (and double check they know what this means).</p>

## Secondary

Image Description	Question
<p><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p>	<p>We're researchers with a project called 'Gender Respect' which your school is part of and your teacher has given us permission to spend this time with you.</p> <p>We are really interested to know what it is like to be a young man or a young woman here in South Yorkshire in 2014. We've got some photos here to get the conversation going, then some questions about how you see the influences on you and other boys and girls your age.</p> <p>Display first set of photos. Question one etc</p>
<p><b>1. SPORT/ PE</b></p> <p>1 Women footballers: colour photograph showing women playing football in a stadium</p> <p>2 Men footballers: colour photograph showing men playing football in a field (blurred background)</p>	<p>1.1 Which like?                      1.2 Why?                      1.3 In sport and PE in school are boys and girls treated differently?                      1.4 In what way?                      1.5 Why do you think this is?                      1.6 What happens if you don't like sport?                      1.7 Why do some boys or girls hate PE?</p>
<p><b>2. PLAY /NURTURING</b></p>	<p>OMIT (only used with the three-year-old children not included in this write up)</p>
<p><b>3. BODY IMAGE</b></p> <p>3 Jessica Ennis (Olympic athlete): colour photograph of Jessica Ennis wearing sports clothes, showing muscles, grinning with thumbs up</p> <p>4 David Beckham (footballer): colour photograph of David Beckham sat in an audience watching something, wearing t-shirt showing tattooed arms</p> <p>5 Female pop musician: colour photograph of Miley Cyrus looking at camera, wearing black leather dress and jacket with jewellery, short hair and</p>	<p>3.1 Any of these pictures affect how boys/girls feel about themselves?                      3.2 In what way?                      3.3 We're interested to know what makes a boy/girl popular in this school?                      3.4 What makes a girl/boy respected</p>

<p>make-up, smiling slightly</p> <p>6 Male pop musician: colour photograph of Kanye West, looking at camera, wearing black leather top and gold chains around neck, not smiling</p> <p>7 Man in suit: colour photograph of man wearing a suit, smiling slightly (white background)</p> <p>8 Woman in suit: colour photograph of woman wearing a suit, smiling (white background)</p> <p>9 Girl with books: colour photograph of teenage girl wearing glasses reading a book and surrounded by piled up books</p> <p>10 Boy studying: colour photograph of teenage boy at desk writing in school</p> <p>11 Boy sport: colour photograph of smiling boy wearing rugby shirt, with rugby pitch in background</p> <p>12 Girl sport: colour photograph of smiling girl in sports vest top and track suit bottoms hands on hips, park blurred in background</p> <p>13 Girl make up: colour photograph of image of teenage girl in mirror putting on eye-liner</p> <p>14 Boy hair gel: colour photograph (commissioned) of teenage boy in mirror putting on hair gel</p>	
<p><b>4. RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> <p>15 Girl texting: colour photograph of girl in foreground looking at mobile, with blurred background</p> <p>16 Girls hugging: colour photograph of two girls hugging and smiling outside with buildings in background</p> <p>17 Boys hugging: colour photograph of two boys hugging, dark background</p>	<p>4.1 Which picture interests you?</p> <p>4.2 Why?</p> <p>4.3 Any make you feel uncomfortable?</p> <p>4.4 Why?</p> <p>4.5 How easy is it to have a friend of the opposite sex?</p> <p>4.6 Do you think there are pressures to have a boy or girl friend?</p>

<p>18 Women kissing: colour photograph of two young women kissing, eyes closed, outside during a demonstration</p> <p>19 Men kissing: colour photograph of two young men kissing, one looking at camera, other eyes closed, blurred background</p> <p>20 Man/woman kissing: colour cartoon showing 'romantic' image of man and woman about to kiss with eyes closed</p> <p>21 Boy/girl hugging: colour photograph of teenage girl with arms round teenage boy's shoulders, with boy kissing her on cheek - chosen as ambiguous whether friends or in a relationship</p>	<p>4.7 Where does this pressure come from?</p> <p>4.8 We hear about sexting and young people watching pornography. How much do you think this is happening round here? (only asked of 13-14 year-old students)</p>
<p><b>5. EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION</b></p> <p># Men crying: two full colour close up head/shoulders photographs of men crying (one White man and one Black man)</p> <p>* Woman shouting: full colour close up of woman with angry face, looking like she is shouting with fist raised</p>	<p>5.1 What do you think about these pictures?</p> <p><i>Optional prompt</i></p> <p>5.2 Some people think it is not OK for men to cry or women to shout. What do you think?</p>
<p><b>6. ASPIRATIONS</b></p> <p>Six occupational images from 'Working Now' and 'Focus for Change' educational packs (now out of print):</p> <p>j Black and white photograph of Rastafarian man using a sewing machine in a factory</p> <p>k Black and white photograph of White woman wearing hard hat fixing a roofing tile on a roof</p> <p>l Black and white photograph of White woman pilot stood in front of an aeroplane</p> <p>m Black and white photography of Black man in a nursery sitting down holding a toddler's hand and smiling</p> <p>n Colour photograph of white man in</p>	<p>6.1 Which picture interests you?</p> <p>6.2 Why?</p> <p>6.3 Any picture you think unusual or you feel uncomfortable about?</p> <p>6.4 Do you have ideas of what kind of job you would like when you leave school?</p>

<p>deckchair in garden feeding a toddler from a bowl</p> <p>o Black and white photograph of White woman fixing a ceiling light with tool belt</p>	
<p><b>7. DIRECT QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>Expectations and perceived unfairness</p>	<p>7.1 Do you think you are expected to behave in any particular way because you are a girl/boy?</p> <p>7.2 Why do you think this is?</p> <p>7.3 Would you like this to be different?</p> <p>7.4 If so, in what way?</p> <p>7.5 Is there anything else you would like to tell me about how it is to be a boy/girl at this time?</p>
<p><b>8. THANKS AND CONFIDENTIALITY</b></p>	<p>Many thanks for sharing your ideas. You've been really helpful to the project in understanding what it is like to be a boy/girl at this time.</p> <p>The tape recording will be very useful to the research team so we are quite clear about what you said. We will ensure your name remains confidential (and double check they know what this means).</p>