

Let Toys Be Toys submission to CAP consultation on gender in advertising

25 July 2018

1. Do you agree with CAP and BCAP's proposal to introduce a new rule and supporting guidance into the Advertising Codes? Please include relevant evidence to support your view, whether you agree or disagree with the proposals. *

Yes

Please include evidence for your proposals.

We agree with the need for a new rule. Gender stereotyping causes significant harm, particularly to children, who are actively seeking cues and guidance to learn what it means to be a boy or a girl. Repeated exposure to narrow stereotypes and templates in advertising can turn children away from their true interests and limit their chances to grow and develop, feeding directly into the inequalities we see in adult life. <http://lettoysbetoys.org.uk/what-do-toys-have-to-do-with-inequality/>

Please find attached our 2015 research report into TV toy ads, which includes detail on:

- evidence of the strongly stereotyped messages of TV toy ads, including statistical analysis and word clouds*
- why gender stereotyping in toy ads is a problem (outline and research review)*
- commentary from parents and children on the effect of stereotyped ads*

As evidence, we would also highlight the BBC2 documentary 'No More Boys and Girls', currently being repeated and available on iplayer:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09202jz>

This showed in a live setting, how reducing stereotyped messages, and directly challenging stereotypes has dramatic positive effects, particularly on girls' self-esteem, maths performance, and boys' behaviour.

2. Do you agree with the wording of the proposed new CAP and BCAP rules? If not please include suggestions for how the proposed rules could be improved to achieve the aims set out in this consultation. *

Yes

Please include your suggestions. *

3. Do you consider the draft guidance to be clear and practicable? If not, please include suggestions for how it could be improved to achieve the aims set out in this consultation. *

No

Please include suggested improvements. *

In our research into toy ads in 2015 we found that boys and girls were largely shown playing separately, with different kinds of toys, very different colour and sound palettes, language and levels of activity. (Please see report for detail.)

Similarly, our research into toy catalogues in 2016 and 2017 showed that the images of children portrayed children's play in an overwhelmingly stereotyped way. (Please see report for detail.)

However, little or none of this implicit stereotyping would be tackled by the guidance as currently proposed. We'd like the guiding principles to be reworded to acknowledge that implicit exclusion is also important and harmful, and should be avoided. Suggested text as follows, our addition in quotes.

*"Ads can be targeted at and feature a specific gender but should take care not to explicitly convey '**or strongly imply**' that a particular children's product, pursuit, activity, including choice of play or career, is inappropriate for one or another gender.*

To the first supporting example, we'd like to suggest adding:

- *...but care should be taken to avoid implicitly excluding boys or girls by only using such colours, language etc, or by including only girls or boys in a group of more than 3 or 4 children, without good reason.*

This would give grounds for complaint against a catalogue which included many pages of baby dolls without featuring a single image of a boy, for example, and would encourage the good practice of

assuming that any larger group should be mixed. This reflects the changes in practice that we're already starting to see. Eg all the Nerf ads we saw in 2015 featured only boys (or only girls playing with pink 'Rebelle' products), but this ad, dated 2018, features a mixed group: https://youtu.be/cxnLFh5_6lk We'd like to see more ads like this, which show boys and girls playing together as they do in real life: <https://youtu.be/usyrMhfZJlO> (Chad Valley soft toys)

The second supporting example looks at directly contrasting boys and girls. We would like to see stronger wording here. To take a specific example, shared in our facebook discussion by supporter Micha Luna – this (French) ad shows how implicit stereotyping can be very strong even within a single ad, with the 'imagination of children' limited to a stark contrast between the boy actively playing pirates outdoors and the girl passively playing princess in her pink bedroom: <https://youtu.be/cH-DwN2yk3Q>

We suggest removing the words in square brackets and replacing with those in quote marks.

- An ad that seeks to emphasise the contrast between a boy's stereotypical personality (e.g. daring) with a girl's stereotypical personality (e.g. caring) **'is likely to be problematic'** [needs to be handled with care]. [Explicit labelling of children that contrasts] **'Contrasting'** stereotypical characteristics in a way that reinforces perceptions of what children can or cannot be, because of their gender, is more likely to be problematic.

These changes would give grounds for complaint against the tired trope of directly contrasting boys and girls' behaviour eg where boys' mastery of toy weapons, tricks or remote control vehicles is contrasted with a girl needing to be rescued/being 'grossed out', or putting her appearance before action, or a boy is unable to do something creative or delicate. Again, this reflects the changes already underway, contrasting this Wild Pets ad from 2015 (https://youtu.be/_s11M5zxft0) and this Fingerlings Untamed Raptors spot from 2018 (https://youtu.be/_h7AoublyeQ), which includes a girl who is (literally) part of the team, dressed in the same sports kit as the boys, and in on the joke.

Attachments:

TV ads report

2017 catalogues report