

Bailey Review on the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood (Industry and Wider Stakeholder Version)

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 18 March
2011

Your comments must reach us by that date.

Department for
Education

Please select ONE box that best describes you as a respondent:

PLEASE NOTE, IF YOU ARE RESPONDING AS A PARENT, THERE IS A SEPARATE CALL FOR EVIDENCE. YOU CAN ACCESS THIS FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S e-CONSULTATION WEBSITE:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/>

<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturer	<input type="checkbox"/> Retailer	<input type="checkbox"/> Broadcaster
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet/Telecoms Provider	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertising/Marketing Company	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Regulator/Body
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional/Trade Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Children and Young People's Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Education Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Government Sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

Please Specify:

ATL, the education union, is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, head teachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent nurseries, schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom. AMiE is the leadership section of ATL representing leaders and managers in schools and colleges. We recognise the link between education policy and members' conditions of service.

ATL exists to help members, as their careers develop, through first rate research, advice, information and legal advice. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate locally and nationally.

ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). ATL is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

SECTION 1: FOR INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS ONLY

SECTION 2: FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

General

8 a) The following factors are sometimes said to put pressure on children to grow up too quickly. Which factors do you think have the most influence on children, if any? (tick all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual images (e.g. TV, films and advertising)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advertising and marketing aimed at children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer pressure
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seeing inappropriate things on the internet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The things that celebrities like pop stars and actors do	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> None of these		

Comments:

ATL believes that all of the above are not just pressures on children to grow up too quickly but that most of these also help to reassert historically unequal gender relations. We are most concerned about the sexualisation of girls and young women, which implies that a girl's or young woman's value comes primarily from her sexual appeal or behaviour and that expectations of sexual behaviour are frequently inappropriately imposed upon young girls, is both a result and cause of gender inequality. Increasing levels of sexual imagery in goods are aimed at children and include, for example, the printing of sexual slogans on girls' underwear, the marketing of Playboy bunny stationery to young girls and the growing trend for 'sexy toys'. ATL is concerned at the commodification of the female body in particular from an early age and about a model of female sexuality which is increasingly determined by pornography and the sex industry. The NSPCC has noted, for example, how the sexualisation of girls, including through the above factors, encourages paedophiles to attempt to justify their abuse of girls by questioning age and suggesting 'consent'.

Furthermore, the pressure group Object has documented how men's 'lifestyle' magazines and 'Lads mags', which are increasingly accessed by boys, do not merely objectify women, but also tend to trivialise trafficking, sex tourism and prostitution. In 2007, the Independent newspaper cited figures demonstrating a 50% increase of young British men using prostitutes to one in ten over a decade.

We would welcome a clearer exposition of the government's understanding of children 'growing up too quickly' as this is not necessarily about reaching maturity earlier but more crucially about both boys and girls taking up dominant and restrictive positions of masculinity and femininity from an earlier age. This is

accelerated and reinforced, in our view, by children's preoccupation with celebrities, as well as imagery and messages promulgated by music videos, advertising, teenage magazines and TV.

Gender

8 b) Do you think these pressures...

Affect boys and girls
equally?

Affect girls
more?

Affect boys
more?

None of these

Comments:

ATL believes that boys and girls are affected equally by these pressures, but that there are potentially gendered differences in their manifestations. For example, more than 9 out of 10 respondents to an ATL survey on sexual bullying (2009) identified girls being highly conscious of their body image and often suffering from physical or mental health issues, including eating disorders, as a result of this. Respondents also noted how peer pressure contributed to the 'adultification' of girls and young women who often emulate stereotyped adult roles and gender behaviours. More than 1 in 2 respondents to our survey felt that the sexualisation of girls and young women frequently resulted in low self-esteem, narrow ideas about femininity and a negative impact on sexual health.

Various studies have also commented on the powerful role of homophobia in male peer culture and in constructing and reinforcing stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a 'real' boy or man. Based on the assumption of heterosexuality, boys who define themselves as masculine subjects in conformity with this dominant masculinity tend to position themselves in opposition to girls/women, gay or bisexual and/or non-macho boys and men.

Although there are alternative forms of masculinity and femininity, including a range of gender identities, in our culture which often challenge the entrenched cultural stereotypes, these identities are frequently posited as 'deviant'. Being popular and 'fitting in', however, are extremely important for a majority of both boys and girls. Boys' and girls' gender identities are developed under constant pressure and surveillance between and within male and female peer groups.

Homophobic, transphobic, sexual and sexist bullying are thereby key means to assert and reassert gender stereotypes and status.

Narrow and stereotypical views of 'appropriate' masculine and feminine identities restrict all boys and girls. They restrict not only the victims of homophobic, transphobic and/or sexist bullying and abuse, who are disproportionately more likely to drop out of education without any qualifications and are at an increased risk to self-harm and/or commit suicide, but they also restrict those individuals who fear social isolation and bullying and thus feel under pressure to prove their worth, including by engaging in abusive or risk-taking behaviour.

Studies suggest that girls in particular are disproportionately likely to end up in violent or abusive relationships. A survey of teenage girls by Women's Aid in December 2008 revealed that nearly a quarter of 14 year-olds had been victims of sexual abuse or forced to have sex and that one in four 16 year-olds had been physically hurt by someone they were dating. This reinforced findings by the Home Affairs Select Committee (2007/8) of 'significant levels of violence between teenagers'. This report also noted a worryingly high level of acceptance among both young men and women of a man hitting a female partner in certain circumstances.

Corporate Social Responsibility

9 In general, do you think that businesses (e.g. retailers, manufacturers, broadcasters, advertisers, internet providers etc.) are responsive to and responsible with regard to the concerns of parents and children? Please give examples.

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

From an ATL membership survey on commercialisation and children's well-being in 2008, we know that 97.6% of respondents expressed concern over advertising which directly targets children and young people. Our members commented that this has led to an increasing pressure on children and young people to consume in an attempt to conform to certain expectations and appearances. Respondents noted that some goods are deliberately marketed as the "new, cool, must have accessory" to appeal to its audience.

Respondents also pointed out that the type of possessions sought by children and young people varied between affluent and poorer neighbourhoods. There was a perception among respondents that families who could least afford it often felt under pressure to provide their children with branded and usually

expensive goods, and that children from disadvantaged backgrounds were more inclined to tease others or make derogatory comments about 'cheap' logos, clothing and/or accessories.

We have expressed serious concerns over the growing objectification of children and young people in terms of their social or 'market' value which increasingly appears to determine the level of respect and dignity accorded to them on the basis of their possessions and consumer habits. ATL is generally not aware of any retailers, manufacturers, advertisers or internet providers responding specifically to these concerns as this is not an area that we tend to monitor.

Public Space - Physical Environment

10 Thinking about the public space (streets, public transport, shopping and leisure areas), do you think that children are exposed inappropriately to things of a too commercial or sexual nature? If you answered yes, please explain why giving specific examples where possible.

Yes

No

X Not Sure

Comments:

ATL believes that 'public space' should also make reference to schools, many of which are still working as community and state-maintained schools despite the Government's acceleration of the academies and free schools programme.

ATL members report that schools are increasingly making use of sponsored resources, including the provision of Information and Communication Technologies, sports and science equipment, healthy eating plans, energy awareness, music and PSHEE teaching materials, stationery, sign-posting around the school or college, and personal hygiene items, especially at a time of cuts to the education budget. Major supermarket chains have also been reported to have displayed posters in schools to advertise their sponsored equipment and corporate sponsors of school or college meals are said to be visibly present in and around canteens and dining halls.

Over a third of our respondents to the survey have encountered corporate advertising such as posters, flyers or promotional materials in their school or college. To ask whether this constitutes an 'inappropriate' exposure of children to items of a too commercial nature assumes that there can be 'appropriate' exposure as well as degrees of commercialism. In our members' experience, educational resources provided by private companies often implicitly seek to control learning and understanding. Energy awareness resources, for example, would not necessarily seek to challenge existing and effectively unsustainable consumption patterns. ATL fundamentally disagrees with the involvement of

private providers and companies in education and has long campaigned for adequate public funding of schools and colleges. We believe that schools and colleges should, amongst other things, be places where children and young people are given the opportunity to reflect critically upon the dominant institutions, practices and values of the society in which they live. This may be significantly limited by the increased presence of private sponsors and companies in education.

Public Space - Virtual Environment

11 Thinking about broadcasting and the internet, do you think that current measures to protect children from exposure to inappropriately commercialised or sexualised content and advertising are effective and sufficient? If no, please give specific examples of where you think there are weaknesses.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

68.8% of respondents to an ATL survey on the use of ICT in schools and colleges expressed concerns about pupils' or students' participation in social networking sites. 1 in 2 respondents said that pupils or students only had a moderate understanding of their online safety. Research shows that 60% of 13-year-olds now have a web presence, and that the average age for online activity is falling. ATL members working in primary education expressed particular concern over the risks for young children to be exposed to inappropriately commercialised or sexualised content on the internet.

ATL members also reported a lack of supervision of pupils participating in social networking sites and of pupils or students posting inappropriate pictures and uploading personal details and private information about their daily lives.

Clothing and Products

12 Thinking about the retail sector, do you think clothing and products for children are sufficiently age-appropriate and gender-appropriate (including non-gendered)? If not, please provide specific examples.

Yes

X No

Not Sure

Comments:

Respondents to the ATL survey on sexual bullying (2009) expressed serious concern over 'adult' clothing for young girls such as short skirts, cropped tops and shoes with heels. Clothing for girls tends to be strongly gendered with an emphasis on pink and lilac colours with aisles in shops being colour-coded to denote boys' or girls' clothing. Boys' clothing often tends to incorporate army patterns or depict 'action heroes' with emphasis on their strength, agility and combativeness.

Children as Consumers

13 Parents and children sometimes report that they feel under pressure to buy things they would prefer not to. Who do you think should be responsible for helping parents and children deal with such pressures? (tick as many as apply)

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturers | <input type="checkbox"/> Retailers | <input type="checkbox"/> Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regulators | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisers | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing Companies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Broadcasters | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet Providers | <input type="checkbox"/> Educators |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

Comments:

14 Companies use a range of marketing and advertising techniques when promoting products towards children. Are there any you think are inappropriate for children? If yes, please provide details.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Consumer Voice

15 Do you think that complaints processes for parents to raise concerns about inappropriately commercialised or sexualised products/images/material are sufficiently accessible? If no, please give details of what could be improved and by whom.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

General Comments

16 Is there anything else you want to say about the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood?

Comments:

ATL believes that the sexualisation of childhood must be seen in the context of gender stereotypes and gender inequality. Similarly, the considerations of the commercialisation of childhood must include an investigation of the nature and impact of the increasing commercialisation of education.

Please find attached copies of ATL's earlier consultation responses to a call for evidence on the impact of the commercial world on children's well-being and to a consultation on an integrated strategy to end violence against women and girls. We also attach a copy of our survey report on sexist and sexual bullying, domestic violence and the sexualisation of girls for your information and consideration.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

X Yes

No

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation

process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 738212 / email: donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 18 March 2011

Send by post to: Reg Bailey, Review of Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood, Department for Education, Ground Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: bailey.review@education.gsi.gov.uk