

What is a man – what is masculinity?

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and Keywords:



Physical self-esteem is a construct that has captured much interest in the realms of sport and exercise psychology, but it appears that the physical self plays an important role in developing self-esteem. It was James (1890) that envisaged the infant developing from one big blooming buzzing confusion to the eventual state of adult self-consciousness. It is this self-consciousness that leads to the individual developing an idea of who they are in society. Development of physical self-esteem in young children is perhaps the foundation point for enhancing and promoting positive self-esteem in later life. Body image is often seen as an issue that affects girls. However, boys do have body image concerns, and these should be addressed in order that boys hold a healthy perception of the physical self.

Keywords: masculinity, body image, males, media, roles, physical self perception

Similar topics:

Stereotypes



Materials:

- Gender and masculinity advertisements video clips
- Games
- Magazines



Duration:

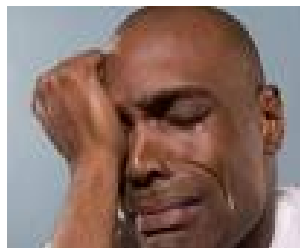
60 minutes

Number of participants:

20 boys

Age:

7 to 11 years old boys



Aims:

- to get boys to consider and understand the contextual nature of these terms
- what masculinity and 'ideal' body might mean in different times and cultures

(Short) Explanation:

This game enables to boys to think about the way in which masculinity is portrayed through the media, their peers and families. It enables boys to consider what a healthy

body image means and questions their preconceptions of physical self esteem in relation to their own body image.

Ask the boys to think about the men they know and the men they see portrayed on the television, in adverts, TV shows, magazines etc.

- Who do you think are the most masculine men?
- How do they look?
- Is it possible to be masculine and not look like this?
- Is it possible to look like this and not be masculine?
- Do men you know look like your ideal?
- Do you think they are masculine?

You can use magazines, photos or boys can design their own artwork, eg (collage, computer or clay) a 'perfect man'.

Once the boys have completed a picture or model of what they think is the 'perfect man' you can discuss their ideas further.

- What do masculine men do?
- What about a male nurse, ballet dancer?

This can be explored in many ways through the use of different media. For instance, from an array of different photos, nominate men of different professions; the athlete, doctor, nurse, cook.

Why did they choose each photo?

You can then ask the boys to explore the types of personalities that go with this image.

To conclude discuss with the boys how they might start to challenge the media's 'ideal man' and the way in which we construct masculinity in our culture.

Reflection:

- Had you thought about masculinity before this exercise?
- How do you feel about your own body?
- What does it really mean to be a man?
- What are the important things for you as you grow up?
- How might you challenge the stereotypes of what makes a man?

Variations (Continuation):

Put the boys in the 'shoes' of the opposite sex. What would they like to look like, do, who would they want to have as friends, idols, what would they like their boyfriend to look like, how should they act?

Ask the boys how they feel about these things.

How have they determined these ideas?

Do they feel constrained and would they like it to be different?

(Students could create and survey other boys and girls and use the actual data for discussion).

You could use the activity with girls to explore their ideas of masculinity.