Promoting diversity and inclusion in advertising: a UNICEF playbook.

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Contents.

Introduction:
Advertising and marketing as a force for positive change **4**

PART 1

Global principles and frameworks

PART 2

Towards a common language to address stereotypes and discrimination

PART 3

The playbook's transformative model

PART 4

Examples to inform and inspire diversity and inclusion in your products and content

ANNEXES

INTRODUCTION

Advertising and marketing as a force for positive change.

Engaging business to promote positive representation through the marketing and advertising of products designed for children is a vital part of achieving equality and inclusion – and inspiring more diverse and equal worlds of play.

Advertising and marketing have the power to influence individual and community beliefs, ways of thinking and behaviours. As children and families are constantly exposed to advertising and media, diversity and inclusion in marketing messages can have a significant positive impact on children and youth.

However, stereotyping in advertising and marketing – in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability, family structure and many other facets of identity – remains widespread and can be harmful, affecting children's confidence, aspirations and health, including mental health. Discriminatory stereotypes can also cause harm by restricting opportunities for all children to lead a life with dignity, especially marginalized and excluded children.

For girls, gender stereotypes may reduce their agency and limit educational achievement and economic opportunities. For boys, it may restrict their involvement in family life and increase a tendency to commit gender-based violence.

Other forms of negative stereotyping, such as regarding race, ethnicity or disability, also have negative effects on children and often intersect with other harms. For example, racial and ethnic discrimination have been linked to poverty, lower educational attainment and school completion, and higher school dropout rates – and those numbers are particularly high for girls with disabilities.

Engaging business to promote positive representation through the marketing and advertising of products and content designed for children is a vital part of achieving equality and inclusion. At UNICEF we work with companies to help identify the impact that stereotyping can have on children through the products and content companies develop, and we strive to provide inspiration for creating more diverse and equal worlds of play.

Synonym.com defines 'playbook' as "a scheme or set of strategies for conducting a business campaign," and that is a good way to describe this publication. UNICEF developed the playbook for an external business audience, primarily those involved with the development and marketing of products and content for children. Our focus is on sectors linked with children's products, including toys, gaming, publishing, film and TV, and children's clothing and accessories.

The playbook is designed to provide starting points for defining the different types of stereotyping that can have a harmful impact on a child's well-being and development, and it suggests a common language to help define the key issues. Here, your business can find tools to create guidelines and strategies, along with a multitude of examples from companies around the world that demonstrate diversity and inclusion in their creative content and products for children. We encourage all of you to dive in and take this exciting journey.

Global principles and frameworks.

Gender equality and a human rights-based approach have long been a priority for UNICEF, not only as core principles and practices but as essential to the realization of every child's human rights. Discrimination blocks the fulfilment of rights across every stage of life – starting before birth, through childhood and adolescence, and throughout adulthood. As the United Nations agency mandated to protect and promote the rights and opportunities of children and adolescents – a time of life when social norms are learned and solidified – UNICEF has a unique responsibility to ensure that equity is at the core of everything it does.

These commitments and responsibilities are rooted in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**[1] and the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**[2]. In addition, the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**[3] considers every aspect of the lives of children with disabilities and defines discrimination and stereotyping in articles 2 and 8, while the **Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**[4] looks to eliminate racial discrimination and prejudice, and to promote understanding and friendship among nations and racial groups.

These internationally recognized conventions – along with the principles described below – also serve as a baseline for companies as they strive to fulfil their responsibilities and uphold human rights.v

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

UNICEF has a unique responsibility to ensure that equity is at the core of everything it does. The internationally recognized conventions that guide our work also serve as a baseline for companies as they strive to fulfil their responsibilities and uphold human rights.

Leave no one behind.

To address continuing and, in some cases, the increasing disparities that are often faced disproportionately by children, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals[5] identify the principle of leaving no one behind as its central, transformative promise.

Leaving no one behind commits to increasing the focus on multiple and intersecting forms of discriminations and inequalities, and it prioritizes the world's most excluded and marginalized children. The process encourages analysis of different forms of deprivation and their root causes, development of targeted and tailored solutions, measuring and monitoring results, and advancing accountabilities to assess how groups that are 'left behind' are advancing.

Best interests of the child.

Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that the best interests of children be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them. The 'best interests' principle should be incorporated into all actions to develop, implement and assess policies that have a potential impact on children and young people. This includes being able to explain how children's best interests have been respected in decision-making and how their interests have been weighed against other considerations.

Children's Rights and Business Principles.

The Children's Rights and Business Principles[6] – developed by UNICEF, the United Nations Global Compact and Save the Children – are the first comprehensive set of principles to guide companies on the full range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children's rights.

Principle 5 calls for businesses to ensure that their products and services are safe, and seeks to support children's rights through businesses, including through their corporate responsibility to take all reasonable steps to eliminate discrimination against any child or group of children in the provision of products and services as well as their distribution.

Principle 6 calls for the business sector to use marketing and advertising techniques that respect and support children's rights, including by not reinforcing discrimination. It also asks companies to consider such factors as children's greater susceptibility to manipulation and the effects of using unrealistic or sexualized body images and stereotypes in marketing. The corporate commitment to support Principle 6 includes using marketing that raises awareness of and promotes children's rights, positive self-esteem, healthy lifestyles and non-violent values.

PART 2

Towards a common language to address stereotypes and discrimination.

There are four main areas of focus in this playbook: (1) gender; (2) race, ethnicity and culture; (3) disability; and (4) family and caregivers. Stereotypes around these areas have a profound impact on the lives of children everywhere and limit the possibilities for children to achieve their full potential. In choosing these areas of diversity, two key principles were taken into consideration: *universality and how children play and access play*.

While some children will also face discrimination because of additional factors – such as sexual orientation, language or religion – these have not been addressed as separate issues but are considered under the main issues. For example, parents' sexual orientation is relevant under family and caregivers; language and religion can be considered as part of race, ethnicity and culture.

The table below outlines the essential elements of the playbook's four focus areas.

MAIN AREAS OF FOCUS ON STEREOTYPING AND DISCRIMINATION

Gender	• Stereotyping around gender is pervasive and experienced by all children, even if their immediate family strives to be gender neutral. • Taking steps to avoid gender inequalities linked to stereotyping not only empowers and improves the well-being of girls and women, it also improves outcomes for all girls, boys, and their families and communities.
Race, ethnicity and culture	• All children are subject to a racial or ethnic identity defined by societies, cultures and communities, whether or not they are discriminated or privileged because of it. • All children have the right to live a life free of discrimination and prejudice based on colour, race, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
Disability	• Children with disabilities are among the most marginalized of all children. They are less likely to attend school, access medical services or have their voices heard. • The direct impacts on children with disabilities include restrictions on their right to play if toys and products are not adapted for them. When children with disabilities can participate in the full range of life activities, the whole of society benefits from their contributions.
Family and caregivers	• Family and caregivers are the most important group supporting the development and well-being of a child. • Family structures vary enormously, and a family's social class, economic power or composition can affect both their children's ability to access play and the forms of discrimination they might face.

While the playbook discusses four broad areas of focus, it is important to remember that in our daily lives all four areas interconnect – and that barriers are often worsened due to the intersection of these issues.

What does 'sexual orientation' mean?

Sexual orientation refers to a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people. Most people have a sexual orientation that is part of their identity.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics are each distinct but intersecting aspects of a person.

In this playbook, children's sexual orientation is not addressed as a separate topic – it is considered under the focus area 'family and caregivers' in relation to parents' sexual orientation.

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Multiple discriminations and intersectionality

While the playbook discusses four areas of focus separately for clarity, it is important to remember that in our daily lives all four areas interconnect – and that barriers are often worsened due to the intersection of these issues.

Multiple discrimination happens when a person is subject to separate forms of discrimination based on more than one ground, such as a woman with a disability – who may encounter discrimination both for being a woman and for having a disability.

Intersectional discrimination is when those grounds interact in such a way that the resulting discrimination is not just compound but is a whole new form of discrimination that is different from the sum of two or more forms. For example, a woman with a disability experiences a form of discrimination that is not experienced by women without disabilities or by men with disabilities. Thus, intersectionality needs to be considered and understood when discussing issues around diversity and inclusion. An animated video by Professor Peter Hopkins, New Castle University, explains this concept in 2.5 minutes[7].

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Gender

'Gender' refers to the social relationships between individuals that vary from one society to another and at different times in history. Gender differs from biological sex and sexual orientation. It includes 'gender expression' (appearances, speech, actions) and 'gender identity' (the psychological sense of self).

Gender identity reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's own being. Everyone has a gender identity, which is part of their overall identity and is often expressed through actions, words and appearance.

Gender norms are informal rules and shared beliefs that distinguish expected behaviour based on gender. *Gender roles* are the expected behaviours, activities and responsibilities traditionally associated with each sex group. *Gender relations* are a set of social relationships that refers to how girls and boys (or women and men) relate to each other at individual or institutional levels.

Gender socialization is the process, beginning at birth, by which individuals internalize gender norms and roles as they interact with others. Common gender-related stereotypes include:

- Boys don't cry!
- Boys and men are more likely to be breadwinners than girls or women.
- Girls and women are more natural caregivers than boys or men.
- Boys and men are better at sports than girls or women.
- STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects are not for girls.

Transgender: Some people do not feel that their sex assigned at birth (female or male) fits their gender identity and may describe themselves as transgender. Some people who are transgender may want to live their lives as boys, some as girls, others somewhere in between, and some as no gender at all. The right of people to live according to their chosen gender identity should always be respected.

Gender-equal representation matters for children's development, including because of the key reasons listed here:

- STEM gap – Stereotypes around girls' participation in STEM subjects during their early years results in a lifelong impact on career choices for women, a gender digital divide and large-scale economic impacts.
- Breadwinners vs. homemakers – Harmful stereotypes about women's role in the home and men's role as 'the breadwinner' perpetuate discriminatory gender norms around housework and childcare. This affects the potential of parenting roles, can have an impact on career and life choices, and can affect children's development.
- Low self-esteem, body confidence and mental health – Unrealistic beauty norms and pressure to be physically perfect can distort children's perceptions of self, which can lead to confidence issues, mental health problems and self-harm. An unrealistic body image can lead to unhealthy eating habits and disorders among both girls and boys.
- Toxic masculinities and men's health – Gender stereotypes around masculinities and male roles are harmful for boys and men, as boys are more likely to face pressure to enter employment at an early age and are more prone to risky health behaviours, such as substance and alcohol abuse, delinquency, and perpetuate gender-based violence, such as domestic and intimate partner violence.

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Race, ethnicity and culture

Race differs from ethnicity and culture. 'Race' is a powerful made-up social construct, an idea forged through oppression and a political tool that promotes the process of 'othering'. Though it is not based on any scientific finding, the idea of race is used to justify social inequalities as 'natural'.

Ethnicity denotes groups that share a common identity based on ancestry, language, clothing, religion and other characteristics. Ethnicity may be used to self-identify or applied to many different groups of people. Examples include the Kurdish people of Iran, Ashkenazi Jews and the Rohingya of Myanmar.

Culture, as defined in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, is "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or social group, and … it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."[8] Dominant culture is a cultural practice that prevails within a particular political, social or economic context in which different cultures are present. It may refer to a language, religion/ritual, social value and/or social custom. These features are often a norm for an entire society, country or region.

Racism can be understood as having three levels – institutionalized, personally mediated and internalized – and can be explained through storytelling, as described by Camara Jones. This three-level concept is illustrated in 'The Gardener', a short video that is available on YouTube.[9]

Race is an ideological system that assigns a certain group of people to a position of power, domination and control over other groups. The concept of race is used to determine who is viewed as human and who is not – that is, some groups are 'dehumanized'. Examples of common harmful stereotypes include those listed below.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Race-related terms

Colour-blind: The belief that racial/ethnic group membership is not or should not noticed or considered. Perhaps the most compelling critique of the colour-blind approach is the fact that people do respond to race when observing and interacting with others.

Minority: Applied to groups who hold few or no positions of power in a society, even if they are statistically a majority. Afro-Brazilians, for example, are described as a minority in Brazil but actually represent 56 per cent of the country's population.[11]

Discrimination: Includes discrimination by race, e.g., against Black women with natural hair or darker skin colour; by culture, e.g., preferred art, literature or music; and by ethnicity, e.g., clothing or religious beliefs. Forms of discrimination are intersecting and often difficult to disentangle. Wearing a hijab, for example, is related to religion, ethnicity and culture.

Cultural appropriation: Adoption of icons, rituals, aesthetic standards and behaviour from one culture by another. Culture is often appropriated by a dominant group from a minority or subordinate group in terms of social, political and/or economic status. In this process, significant artefacts and beliefs are used/exploited without understanding or respecting their original meaning.[12]

Cultural appreciation: Honouring and respecting another culture and its practices as a way to gain knowledge and understanding. Cultural appreciation can promote broadened perspectives and cross-cultural connections and exchanges.

FREQUENTLY USED HARMFUL STEREOTYPES

Racial stereotypes	Ethnic stereotypes	Cultural stereotypes
• Black children are especially good at sports and dance. • Asian children are excellent in STEM subjects. • Black boys are violent.	• Jewish people really understand finance. • Roma children are not teachable, they just don't want to learn. • Indigenous people do not like to wear clothes.	• British kids are good at writing in English. • Muslim girls are always oppressed. • Other people's culture is really just 'folklore'. • European accents are attractive and accents from other parts of the world are funny.

Racism matters for child development, including because of the key reasons listed here:

Lower self-esteem and mental health – By not viewing or playing with toys that look like them, children may feel that their identity is not valid and experience a decrease in their self-esteem and confidence.

Violence towards racial and ethnic groups normalized – Movies, TV shows, books, video games and other media featuring indigenous people as 'uncivilized' enemies or darker-skinned people as criminals are two examples of stereotypical roles that can have a negative impact on children in indigenous and other non-dominant groups and can lead to violence and/or bullying against them.

Barrier to education and choice of profession – Racial and ethnic discrimination against children in non-dominant groups has been linked to lower achievement in education, higher school drop-out rates, and reduced ability to surpass their parent's economic status, especially among girls of colour. In media, this effect may be prompted by discriminatory portrayals, for example, women and girls of colour shown mostly as servants, domestic workers or assistants.

Denies children the benefit of positive role models – Having role models who reflect a child's identity can inspire the child towards higher achievements. A study in the United States, for example, found that when Black students were randomly assigned at least one Black teacher in kindergarten through third grade, they were 13 per cent more likely to graduate high school and 19 per cent more likely to enrol in college compared to their peers in the same cohort and school.[10]

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Disability

Disability affects 1.3 billion people, including 10 per cent of all children in the world and 15 per cent of all adults. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Discrimination occurs when people with a disability interact with social practices or physical environments that do not take different levels of ability into account. Common stereotypes relating to disability include:

- People with disabilities are less than fully human.
- A successful person with a disability is regarded as a 'superhuman' hero.
- A person with a disability is a victim. The burden of disability is unending, and the life of a person with a disability is a constant sorrow.
- People with disabilities are evil, angry at their loss of power and at those who are not disabled. They are a threat to others, themselves or society.
- When a person has a disability, especially a cognitive impairment, she or he is an 'innocent' endowed with special grace.
- Disability is portrayed as a sickness, something to be fixed, or an abnormal condition to be corrected. Disabilities are 'tragic' when they cannot be 'cured'.

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STEREOTYPES

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Perceptions of and behaviour towards disability matter for child development, including because of the key reasons listed here:

Underrepresentation – Underrepresentation of children and youth with disabilities contributes to stigmatization and strengthens the notion of 'ableism', i.e., discrimination in favour of people who are able-bodied. It is vital that the world's 1.3 billion people who have a disability are adequately represented and heard.

People with disabilities are not a homogenous group. It is not enough to portray people with physical or sensory disabilities, such as wheelchair users or those who are blind. For example, girls with disabilities and children with 'unseen' disabilities (e.g., intellectual disabilities) also need representation.

Exclusion – In a social disability model of understanding exclusion, the barriers that society creates for children with disabilities cause them to encounter 'disabling situations' due to physical, attitudinal or institutional factors. Overused and outdated stereotypes of the pitiful, innocent or courageous child with a disability should be avoided. Instead, we should look to depict a normalized narrative around living with a disability that is complex and shows the child experiencing various emotions, interactions and experiences.

Inaccessibility and universal design – Products and services should benefit all. To ensure that they are disability inclusive, a universal design approach needs to be taken, adapting existing products to make them more accessible or accessible to more people with disabilities.

Limited capacity-building opportunities for facilitators and caregivers – Workshops for parents should include guidance for parents of children with disabilities. Facilitators' guides need to include options for adaptation (e.g., of games) to ensure all children can participate. Lack of empowerment and right to agency – Children and adolescents with disabilities should be able to enjoy the same access to role models, peer-to-peer support, leadership training, vocational training, and other assets and activities.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Family and caregivers

Parents and other family members who care for children need ongoing support, including through fair representation of all types of families in media, and positive caregiving role models for both men and women.

Family – via kinship, marriage, adoption or choice – is the most significant intimate group that is closely engaged in supporting the development and well-being of the child. A family may consist of parents, extended family members (siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents), foster parents or other types of caregivers. Different types of family structures include:

Extended family – Three generations (parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) all living under the same roof.

Single parent family – One parent and a child or children.

Blended family – A couple, the children they have had together, and their children from previous relationships.

Nuclear family – Two heterosexual married parents and their dependent children.

LGBTIQ+ families – A family in which parents are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary or queer.

Mixed race or multicultural families – When parents come from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

'Parenting' refers to the interactions, behaviours, emotions, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and practices associated with the provision of nurturing care. It is a process of promoting and supporting children's well-being and development through the physical, psychosocial and economic conditions in which they live, play, learn and thrive. A 'care setting' is any location (environment) where parenting is provided to children by caregivers.

Parents and other family members who care for children need ongoing support, including through fair representation of all types of families in media, and positive caregiving role models for both men and women. In this regard, it is especially important to avoid discrimination and harmful typecasting. Common stereotypes relating to families include:

- Happy families have stay-at-home mothers. When a mother works for pay the children suffer.
- The stability of a family is a measure of its success – and marriage is necessary for a stable family.
- Family harmony is the rule, not the exception. People feel safe in their family home.
- Parents control their children's fate.
- The 'nuclear family' is a universal phenomenon. The 'normal' family is racially, ethnically and culturally homogenous.
- Families live in detached houses with easy access to gardens.

Representations of family diversity matter for child development, including because of the key reasons listed here:

Families are not all the same – Positive representation of many different types of families and caregivers enables children to see their own realities reflected. This helps them to understand that not all families have the same structure, and that caregiving comes from all kinds of parents, other family members and friends of the family.

Stereotypes around parenting roles and family structures – Harmful stereotypes around parenting roles can mean father-child bonding is limited and children are deprived of positive role models for shared family responsibilities. Children also have a right to a safe and healthy childhood, free from discrimination based on stereotypical family structures.

Access to resources – Socio-economic background can have an impact on children reaching their full potential. Allowing children to see and access routes to social mobilization is important. Many children grow up in difficult environments. Thus, families and caregivers may need opportunities to become equipped with skills and resources to help children navigate problems and fully develop their potential.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

PART 3

The playbook's transformative model.

The 'transformative model' was developed by UNICEF for our work with companies to support them in avoiding stereotyping in the design and marketing of content and products for children. This model can be used to assess content and marketing around three categories: discriminatory, aware and transformative. Through this process, we can identify products and/or marketing that:

- Discriminate against some groups or may be seen as discriminatory;
- Demonstrate some awareness of the issues; or
- Are truly transformative in dismantling stereotype and driving diversity, equity and inclusion.

DISCRIMINATORY
Favours a particular group or ignores an issue, perpetuating the status quo or potentially worsening inequalities.

- Favours either boys/men or girls/women depending on gender inequalities, ignores gender issues, perpetuating the status quo or worsening inequalities.
- Products presenting only majority children in advertisements, marketing and communications.
- People with disabilities not present or not represented in a dignified way.
- Showing only nuclear, heterosexual families.

AWARE
Acknowledges and is sensitive to issues, but does not address the issue in a robust way.

- Acknowledges gender inequalities, but does not robustly address them.
- Tokenistic examples of one marketing or communications piece that does not dialogue with the other products.
- People with disabilities represented, but not all types (mostly 'visible' disabilities), and portrayals do not show equal access to services and agency.
- Acknowledgement of different family models, e.g., single mother, grandparent's involvement.

TRANSFORMATIVE
Identifies and addresses different needs promoting equal outcomes for all, or explicitly seeks to redress inequalities, remove barriers and empower all.

- Identifies and addresses the different needs of girls and boys to promote equal outcomes or explicitly seeks to redress gender inequality and empower the disadvantaged population.
- Children from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds are represented as capable, intelligent and independent in all advertisements, marketing and communications.
- Showing people with different disabilities with agency, having access to all services just as those without disabilities, meaningful engagement in every aspect of life, and recognizing the non-homogenous nature of disability.
- Consistently varied portrayal of family types, including extended and blended as well as racially and economically diverse families and LGBTIQ+ families.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Diverse and inclusive marketing strategies and outputs are difficult to sustain if teams do not value diversity or strive to include a full range of voices and perspectives. This requires commitment in terms of a diverse company structure as well as corporate guidelines and procedures to e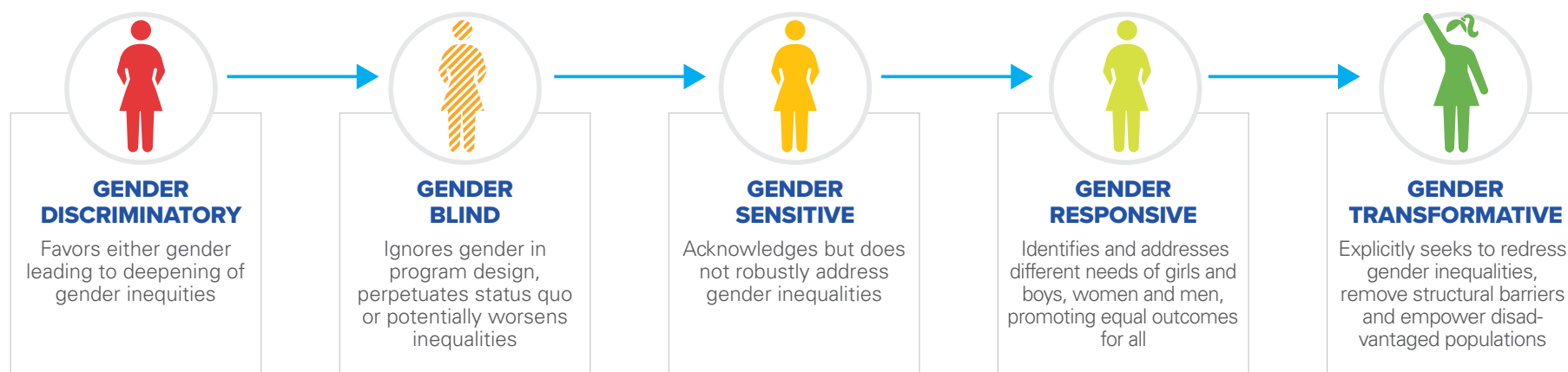nsure that creative teams are inclusive, as well as developing and marketing content and products that promote positive and empowering images.

The next three subsections apply the model across three fundamental elements of business: strategy and structure; the creative process; and product marketing and brand communication.

UNICEF's 'Gender Continuum' diagnostic tool

The transformative framework in this playbook is based on a model used by UNICEF to define gender-transformative programming[13] and help mainstream gender equality into our programmes worldwide.

UNICEF uses the Gender Continuum diagnostic tool to evaluate the effectiveness of a development or humanitarian intervention in addressing gender inequalities in programme design, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation. The original continuum has five steps (as shown in the graphic below). For the playbook, we have adapted the continuum as a three-step model that focuses on the categories of discriminatory, aware and transformative.

GENDER DISCRIMINATORY	GENDER BLIND	GENDER SENSITIVE	GENDER RESPONSIVE	GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE
Favors either gender leading to deepening of gender inequities	Ignores gender in program design, perpetuates status quo or potentially worsens inequalities	Acknowledges but does not robustly address gender inequalities	Identifies and addresses different needs of girls and boys, women and men, promoting equal outcomes for all	Explicitly seeks to redress gender inequalities, remove structural barriers and empower disadvantaged populations

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STEREOTYPES

Using business strategy and structure to address harmful stereotypes

Diversity, equity and inclusion need to be integrated across a company to avoid stereotyping in advertising and marketing. It is not enough to have one line of diverse products, or to have an outward image and reputation of being diverse while perpetuating exclusion in other parts of the company. Ensuring commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the broadest sense, horizontally and vertically, is required to make a lasting impact for children.

Setting key performance indicators to monitor performance in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion – and specifically on avoiding negative stereotypes – shows commitment and allows companies to measure progress. Here, we suggest ways that a company's structure can be examined in terms of the workforce and internal corporate communications. These indicators are provided to help establish, monitor and assess progress.

Indicators on the corporate structure:
- The company's strategic plans and recruitment policies include diversity, equity and inclusion as core principles, rather than a separate set of objectives or a siloed diversity office.
- Senior management cascades commitment throughout the workforce.

Ensuring a company's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the broadest sense – horizontally and vertically – is required to make a lasting impact for children.

- Responsibility for implementing diversity and inclusion targets is clearly assigned.
- Separate budget lines are allocated to ensure sufficient resources and are integrated into performance metrics.
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators across the company – including across divisions/teams and levels – are explicitly monitored using clear timelines and targets. *Quantitative indicators may include the percentage of women or people of colour employed across all divisions and levels. Qualitative metrics might include employee satisfaction feedback via interviews and group discussions, rather than solely by quantitative surveys or content analysis of corporate communications.*
- Diversity, equity and inclusion statistics on employees (including level of seniority and type of division) and commitment to progress are publicly shared, while taking care to ensure that policies in terms of legal obligations around sensitive data and security are respected. *For example, race and ethnicity are protected characteristics in most European Union jurisdictions. Self-reported survey data may also be used.*

- Company exit/attrition is tracked as a measure of bias.
- Internal and/or external advisory boards are established to monitor progress. If the company does not have internal expertise, it should hire externally. *For example, external advisory boards drawn from expert advisors in the areas of ensuring recruitment policies and procedures that respect diversity and inclusion best practices could be commissioned for a limited period. Employee-led networks where staff can exchange experiences, ask for advice and advocate for change can also help drive internal diversity.*

Examples of how structural issues may be relevant across the transformative model categories are outlined below.

👤 DISCRIMINATORY	🎯 AWARE	🔀 TRANSFORMATIVE
• Low and slow-moving employee diversity numbers • High turnover of staff, particularly among women and minorities • Staff surveys show management unwilling to listen to criticism or new voices • Recruitment processes opaque and culture fit prioritized for new hires • Children not acknowledged as stakeholders, but only as end users	• Acknowledges and sensitive to staff diversity issues, but not addressing in a robust way • Some public commitment to increasing diversity, but no clear targets or results • Invites external diverse voices to speak on occasional basis • Some commitment to encouraging women and minorities, but no concrete programmes • Seeks to include voices of children from diverse backgrounds	• Identifies and addresses different needs promoting equal outcomes for all, or explicitly seeks to redress inequalities and remove barriers • Honest discussions about challenges and barriers faced throughout the journey • Publicly shares and reflects on diversity metrics in staff as well as in content • Has effective programmes in place to recruit and promote women and minorities • The views of diverse child stakeholders are integrated systematically

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Promoting diversity and inclusion through the creative process

To eliminate harmful stereotypes, companies need to start at the beginning of the creative value supply chain. Ensuring that bias is tackled at every step is the best way to create end products that are free of stereotypes.

Progressive advertising can yield positive business results, including boosting impact and driving brand distinctiveness.[14] Businesses benefits not only from sharing positive messages through marketing, but also from reflecting those images in their wider corporate practices.

In most companies, diversity, equity and inclusion need to be discussed and addressed intentionally. Different factors – from international expansion to cultural pressures – may drive this need if stereotyping and exclusion issues were not first confronted when a company was established.

For truly representative content and products, it is essential to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are an intrinsic part of the development and design process, including during product development. Below are suggested indicators to help ensure diversity and inclusion in the creative process around developing content and products for children.

Progressive advertising can yield positive business results. Businesses benefit not only from sharing positive messages through marketing, but also from reflecting those images in their wider corporate practices.

Indicators for the creative process:

- Clear and specific commitments are made by senior management to work against stereotyping in content and product design.
- Steps are put in place to ensure diversity in product testing – for teams, partners, experts and participants – and team composition is monitored.
- Checks are implemented in procurement processes to ensure diversity and inclusion in hiring when commissioning creative work. Teams with no diversity may find it difficult to produce un-stereotyped content or products.
- Regular analysis is carried out on the impact of hiring practices and workplace culture on creative teams.
- Long-term strategic plans and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion are developed specifically for creative teams.
- Internal strategy/checklists are created to address diversity, equity and inclusion in content and product development and marketing.
- Existing content and products are reviewed to ensure they do not portray harmful stereotypes. Steps are put in place to add advisories to content and products that contain stereotypes.
- The transformative model is used to conduct audits on current portfolios and incorporated in concept testing.

- Internal workshops, webinars and training sessions are conducted on a regular basis to raise awareness about unconscious bias and how the issue of diversity, equity and inclusion can impact content and product development and marketing.
- Steps are put in place to constantly assess whether creative processes take into account cultural shifts, trends and expectations.
- All partners are committed to working against stereotyping

and its impacts in marketing. Even a product or content designed to be inclusive may be marketed in ways that do not promote positive and diverse portrayals for children.
- Children from diverse backgrounds and a child-focused lens are systematically and meaningfully included in creative development and as part of ongoing research and insight programmes (with appropriate safeguards in place).

DISCRIMINATORY	AWARE	TRANSFORMATIVE
• Ad teams dominated by majority employees • No discussion of diversity, equity and inclusion issues in the company • No guidelines about ensuring representation in teams or among partners • No adjustments considered for accessibility • Products developed with colour-blind approach. e.g., imagining white children's perspectives only • Assumptions made that diversity and inclusion are not valued by children • Children not included in the development process, given appropriate safeguards	• Tokenistic efforts to include some diverse voices • Looks to increase representation on some flagship products • The company has some creative procurement guidelines, but they are rarely adhered to in practice • Some minor adjustments made for disability • A single product line created to reflect or celebrate a particular race, ethnicity or culture • Some acknowledgement of impacts of stereotyping on children • New product lines validated by children	• Champions inclusive bidding across all product lines • Staff aware and empowered on diversity, equity and inclusion issues in design • An integrated process to check for diversity, equity and inclusion issues from design to launch • Content is accessible to as many people as possible (universal design) • Product lines celebrate different identities of all children, and develop lines that centre on diverse people and cultures • Honest and difficult discussions on issues held • Children fully included in co-creation of products

© Charli-Clem / Lauren-Nykor

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Tracking progress in product marketing and brand communication

Toys, books and games help children learn through play from a very early age and are an important source of entertainment, education and communication. The marketing and advertising of products and content to children – whether through branded content and commercials on TV or by 'unboxing' toys with YouTubers – influences children's views of themselves, of family members and of the outside world.

Along with traditional ads, branded content is an increasingly important way for companies to advertise to children. TV shows, films, magazines and apps are created to build brands and keep child consumers loyal and engaged. It is important to ensure that branded content, as well as traditional advertising, promotes positive portrayals of diversity.

When children's product and content choices lack diversity and inclusion, this has a strong impact on how children see the choices available to them and others – and it worsens existing social divisions. Companies marketing to children should strive to avoid imposing predefined and stereotyped categories on children. The following indicators are provided as a foundation; this list is not exhaustive.

Indicators on product marketing and brand communication:

- Regular impact analyses of the company's current marketing strategy are conducted, and key areas to address are identified – including evidence of the impact of positive un-stereotyped advertising and marketing on revenues, customer base and brand loyalty.
- Advertising scripts and copy are tested for bias, with ads tested with a diverse audience of children.
- Metrics are put in place to measure progressive ads in regular tracking.
- Regular checks for stereotyping in concept, language, colour coding, images and videos are implemented.
- Regular checks are conducted to monitor how children are portrayed in catalogue photography and videos. Are different children in diverse settings and activities portrayed, or are stereotypes upheld?

© UNICEF/UNI207831/Katragadda

- Impact assessments are conducted with diverse child stakeholders to understand how marketing can impact their perceptions of themselves and others, and the impact that such output has on children.
- Programmes are put in place to work with caregivers to raise awareness of issues and to sensitize children on how girls and boys of different backgrounds can be portrayed.
- Regular contact with industry bodies/governments is maintained to ensure minimum standards regarding the stereotyping of children.

Examples of how the tracking process might be affected across the transformative model categories are outlined below.

DISCRIMINATORY	AWARE	TRANSFORMATIVE
• Blind or stereotyped approach to testing and targeting, e.g., girls vs. boys, only dominant racial or ethnic groups	• One or a small proportion of diversity products, but overall advertising is discriminatory	• Inclusion fully integrated, celebrating all children as capable, intelligent, worthy and successful
• Segregation of toys or colour coding, e.g., gender colour coding or toy aisles	• Token representations of stereotypes, e.g., tomboys, dads babysitting	• Girls and women as lead characters rather than bystanders; boys and men as capable caregivers
• Girls are always shown as thin and light-skinned, while boys are muscular and sporty; women and girls are the 'go to' caretakers	• Children with disabilities included in communications as a matter of course	• Focuses on the positive and empowering rather than negative and patronizing
• Portraying a person with a disability as superhuman	• Focus on similarities	• Uses people-first terminology, e.g., focuses on the individual rather than the disability
• Focus on difference	• Avoiding discriminatory and exclusionary language	• Shows families in different economic circumstances and housing, thus reflecting diversity
• Using terms that lead to exclusion	• Acknowledgement that different families have access to different levels of resources	• Shows a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds taking part in activities
• Eurocentric approaches to the world, e.g., in architecture	• Acknowledgement that families may be diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, disability, etc.	
• Only families with access to resources are shown		
• Only traditional family structures are shown		

© UNICEF/UN0425171/Thaulow

Translating the concepts into practical action

Taking this model into the real world does not need to be daunting. Here we offer step-by-step ideas on how to apply it.

Company X has been in operation for decades and has grown across markets and sectors to become a household name with a line of toys, television programmes and clothing. Its products have always been designed to maximize profit while providing children and their parents with fun experiences.

Recently, negative publicity around one character along with a change in senior management have prompted a review of the products to meet consumer calls for increased diversity. The company wants to identify areas for improvement. How can it use the transformative model to help this assessment?

Step 1:
Internal policy, guidance and tools

Conduct a gap assessment of current policies and guidelines. Positive actions in the areas of product development, marketing and brand communication are not sufficient to generate systemic change. Diversity needs to be valued in the workplace. People with a range of perspectives need to have an equal voice and hiring practices should reflect and act on children's rights, and the principles of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Organizational reform creates sustainable and long-term change so that the company's practices are aligned with the positive messages that it intends to convey through marketing. This typically requires taking action to:

- Look at the extent to which diversity, equity, and inclusion in relationship to children is present in the company's overall vision and strategy.
- Examine specific marketing and advertising policies related to marketing to children, in addition to any procurement and recruitment policies around diversity.
- Check for programmes to promote positive socialization among children and avoid stereotyping.
- Assess if products are developed, designed, and marketed with diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in mind.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Step 2:
Transformative product audit

Use the model to look at the company's structure and the creative process as well as product marketing and brand communication. In Part 4, the playbook highlights examples of how the model might apply to different elements of the creative process, past and current product lines, and brand communication. These examples can be used to support the creation of a checklist on principles and indicators for future developments. In addition, it will be important to:

- Use the transformative model and the accompanying definitions, indicators and examples to assess where products might currently fit. Remember that different products, content and characters might fit different parts of the model. Be honest with the assessment.
- Issues highlighted in the 'discriminatory' box should be addressed immediately because these are areas that promote harmful stereotypes.
- Items in 'aware' can be further assessed to see how they could be more transformative. To what extent do they reflect current or historic norms? Or are they looking to redress inequality through positive change? Are they meeting minimum expected standards, or expanding and leading industry norms?
- Companies may find that various elements in their product line fit in different categories. For example, many companies have a product that could be described as 'transformative' but still maintain other lines that fit better in the 'discriminatory' box.

Step 3:
Research and evidence

Strengthen research and evidence to monitor and assess progress. Build the company's research and evidence base, ensuring that diverse voices – including local as well as global perspectives – are included in market research and assessment, and that stereotypes are actively avoided.

- Understand the impact of children's products and content, and how the associated marketing and advertising influence the ways children perceive their world, particularly how they see themselves and others reflected and portrayed.
- Ensure diverse samples in your concept testing and research.
- Monitor and assess your own progress in producing progressive advertising.

Step 4:
External advocacy and thought leadership

Drive change and raise standards across the industry by working with allies to raise awareness of the impact of stereotyping on children and influence private sector policies and procedures. *Be a champion for children*.

Step 5:
Check regularly

Discovering and applying issues and insights around diversity, equity and inclusion is a journey rather than a destination. Use the model as a springboard for discussion, analysis and reflection for becoming a transformative player for children.

Be sure to review these items consistently and frequently:

Internal policy, guidances and tools

Transformative product and content auditing

Research and evidence

External advocacy and thought leadership

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

PART 4

Examples to inform and inspire diversity and inclusion in your products and content.

Many of today's companies are featuring positive portrayals of children in their products and marketing. And some businesses are consciously committed to providing children with options for toys, games, content and clothing that aim to dismantle harmful stereotypes and reflect the diversity of the world's children.

UNICEF does not endorse any of the products or companies highlighted here. These examples are shared to indicate best practices, offer interesting ideas, and inspire companies that are starting or continuing on the pathway to promoting the diversity and equity that can enable every child to see her or his full potential. While choosing these examples, we focused on companies that:

- Create content or products for children;
- Are active in more than one country; and
- Have successfully integrated at least one element of diversity, equity and inclusion in their marketing, advertising, content and/or products.

It is also important to acknowledge that while a company may be delivering on best practices in one area, exclusion or stereotyping might still be reflected in other products or practices. Achieving true diversity and inclusion requires commitment across corporate departments and divisions, from all levels of management and staff, and on to suppliers throughout the value chain.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

# NETFLIX: linking diversity in programming to staff diversity

Children's TV programming is a powerful agent of socialization – and providing positive content that is diverse, respectful and empowering of all types of identities is of great benefit to children. Sharing current metrics and targets around diversity and inclusion helps to highlight the issue, emphasizing the link between having a diverse staff and providing diversity in content output.

In 2020, Netflix published research by Dr. Stacy Smith and the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative research team showing metrics around diversity and inclusion.
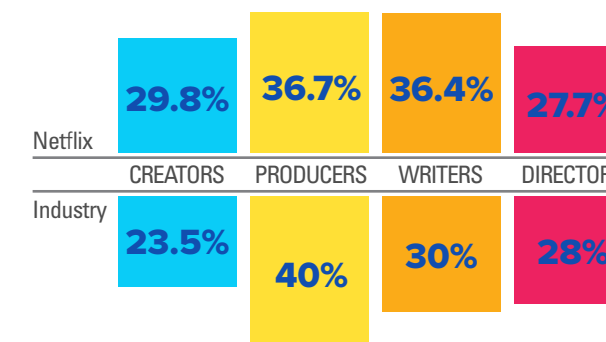
The study analysed the makeup of Netflix's on-screen talent (based on gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTIQ+ or disability identity) and storylines – as well as its creators, producers, writers and directors for 126 films and 180 series released during 2018–2019. This analysis compared Netflix's representation to that shown in the year's 100 top-grossing films or episodic content.[15]

Netflix has committed to hiring more inclusively, creating more access for emerging talent, and building diverse networks to improve diversity in staff.[16]

Women in key creative positions working across Netflix and top-grossing films, 2018-19

	DIRECTORS	WRITERS	PRODUCERS
Netflix films	23.1%	25.2%	29%
Top-Grossing films	7.6%	16.7%	19%
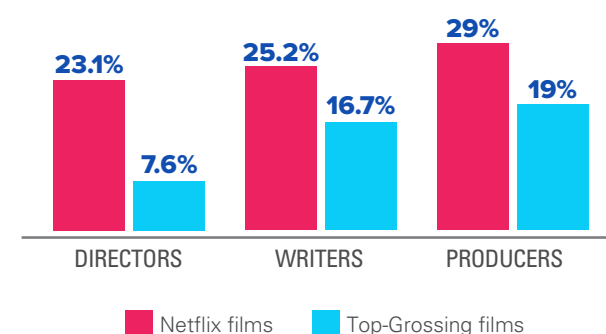
Women in key creative positions working across Netflix and all series, 2018-19

	CREATORS	PRODUCERS	WRITERS	DIRECTORS
Netflix	29.8%	36.7%	36.4%	27.7%
Industry	23.5%	40%	30%	28%

Women of color directors of Netflix and industry films & series, 2018-19

FILM

Netflix	Top films
6.2%	2.2%

SERIES

Netflix	Industry-wide
5.9%	7.1%
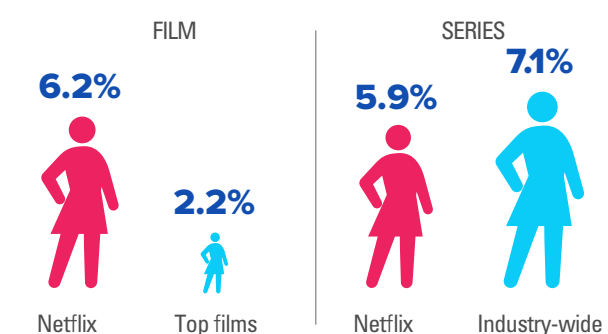
© Pixar Animation Studios

Pixar: fostering inclusive storytelling via employee empowerment

As part of everyday life, children from all backgrounds want to see themselves represented on-screen as capable, intelligent and 'normal'. Streaming services such as Disney+, which hosts Pixar, are increasingly the main way children watch content.

According to Women in Animation,[17] only 20 per cent of all creative jobs in the field of animation – producers, directors, writers, animators, and art and design – are currently held by women. In response to this type of inequity, Pixar is taking steps to ensure that diverse voices are heard in films, giving creative teams the opportunity to tell their own stories and hosting annual employee events to raise awareness about issues around diversity and inclusion.

To engage employees from all parts of the company in the work of addressing bias and other barriers to full inclusion for all, Pixar holds an annual 'Inclusion Summit' and other learning experiences. Their SparkShorts programme features an equal number of male and female directors, and offers a platform whereby staff have six months to create short films based on personal experiences with a limited budget.

Pixar's film Soul incorporates a diverse ensemble of voices by including a range of Black consultants, including Pixar employees in addition to artists and performers.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

TOCA BOCA: no kid should ever feel excluded

Diversity and Inclusion are key elements of the game studio and digital toy company Toca Boca's approach. Founded in 2011, Toca Boca is based in Sweden and creates digital toys for children aged 6–11 with the mission to let all children experience the positive power of play. Moreover, the company has stated that no child should ever feel excluded within the realm of Toca Boca. To ensure inclusion throughout each app, Toca Boca adheres to three main principles when designing new products.

© Toca Boca

#1 Define diversity in your products:

Toca Boca has defined seven areas of diversity that they feel are most relevant for their target audience. The basic principle of each area is to try to avoid stereotypes and instead find norm-creative solutions.

- *physical characteristics* (race, ethnicity including skin tone, hair colour, hair type, eye colour)
- *cultural characteristics* (respectfully representing culture and aiming to avoid cultural appropriation)
- *functional diversity* (presenting a variety of ability and disability among characters without making a disability a character's only trait)
- *body shape* (showing all kinds of bodies such as tall, short, wide and thin)
- *gender* (no gender choice given, instead children themselves define the characters they play with)
- *family structure* (representing different kinds of families, e.g., single parent, multicultural, grandparent family)
- *age* (showing that people of all ages are important with characters of old age still having jobs and being active, and young kids being bold and having their own style and personality).

#2 Pay experts to cover your knowledge gaps:

In order to secure qualitative feedback on both products and marketing materials, Toca Boca has assigned a Diversity Advisory Board, which staff members are encouraged to use as a sounding board during product development.

#3 Create a positive team culture:

Toca Boca acknowledges that diversity and inclusion are not something that can be accomplished overnight. It is also important to acknowledge the constant evolution regarding how people look at gender, culture and race/ethnicity. The company encourages each staff member to always assume the good intentions of others, especially in a multicultural context, rather than fostering an environment in which people are afraid of getting it wrong.

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH THE CREATIVE PROCESS

LOTTIE DOLLS: traditional dolls with a modern approach to representation

Introduced in 2012, Lottie Dolls wanted to bring inclusivity, gender neutrality and representation into the toy industry. Eighteen months of research working with childr parents, retailers, industry experts, child psychologists and child nutrition experts was invested in advance of launching.

The doll's body shape is based on the body of a nine-year-old rather than the adult bodies used by many fashion figures. Lottie and her friends emphasize non-stereotypic activities and costumes, with different types of hair and skin tones; the range includes dolls with a cochlear implant and another representing children with autism. Lottie dolls do not mention the differences on the packaging instead allowing the child to discover the differences and read up on what they are from the literature provided inside the box.

The Lottie & Finn dolls offer children an opportunity to play with dolls that look like and show children the diversity possible among playmates in terms of gender, race/eth and disability, giving non-stereotyped ideas to foster imagination and develop empathy towards differences through play. The company also allows children to co-create their toys, giving them a voice in defining their world of play. Since her debut, Lottie has wo numerous international toy awards and is sold in 35 countries worldwide.

© Arklu Ltd.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION THROUGH
THE CREATIVE PROCESS

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

© Rebel Girls, Inc.

GOOD NIGHT STORIES FOR REBEL GIRLS: demonstrating that real-life heroines have mass appeal

Male characters are still twice as likely to take leading roles in children's storybooks. Creating books showing female leads allows girls and boys to see that gender should not be a barrier to achieving goals, and that women are successful in a range of very different areas. 'Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls' is a collection with a new set of characters designed to inspire today's young girls and boys to become their own champions. This series looks to reinvent the fairy story with real-life heroines, detailing stories of extraordinary women and girls across time, cultures and abilities.

Now, Rebel Girls Inc.[18] is a global, multi-platform entertainment brand that has sold 7 million books, with translations in 51 languages, and whose podcasts have been downloaded 14 million times. The books have also sparked inspiration for similar books for boys, celebrating different ways of being brave.

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH THE CREATIVE PROCESS

© Zileej Toys

SALAM SISTERS: representative toys to inspire confidence and encourage children

Salam Sisters is a one of the few companies representing Muslim girls. The collection of five culturally diverse Muslim dolls, each with unique personalities, stories and passions – such as design, photojournalism, history and science – bring inspiration and empowerment to children.
The Salam Sisters – Maryam, Layla, Karima, Nura and Yasmina – have been designed to represent contemporary Muslim girls with diverse influences and interests.

Each doll comes with an undercap, a pre-styled scarf, and a scarf that allows the child to create a unique style, thus helping girls to know the concept of wearing a hijab in a fun way. The dolls also represent different facial features and skin colour from various ethnic backgrounds, so that children can embrace differences. Peter Gould (cofounder of Zileej, the company that makes the dolls), says the idea was inspired by his own daughters: "As a Muslim parent and speaking with other Muslim parents, I hoped for a toy that would be more representative and inclusive, at the same time super cool and fun."[19]

PROMOTING DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION THROUGH
THE CREATIVE PROCESS

© Crayola LLC.

CRAYOLA: allowing kids to draw their 'true selfie'

Crayola created its first 'flesh' crayon in 1903, and more than a century later the company has introduced an extensive range of colours representing over 40 skin tones across the world. Rather than using stereotyped and inaccurate colour descriptions (such as black and white), skin shades have such names as Golden, Almond and Rose. Launched in 2020, the new products represent an important step in making it possible for children of all colours to represent themselves more accurately and to see the wide range of skin colours in the world – thus allowing them to draw their 'true selfie'.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION THROUGH
THE CREATIVE PROCESS

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES
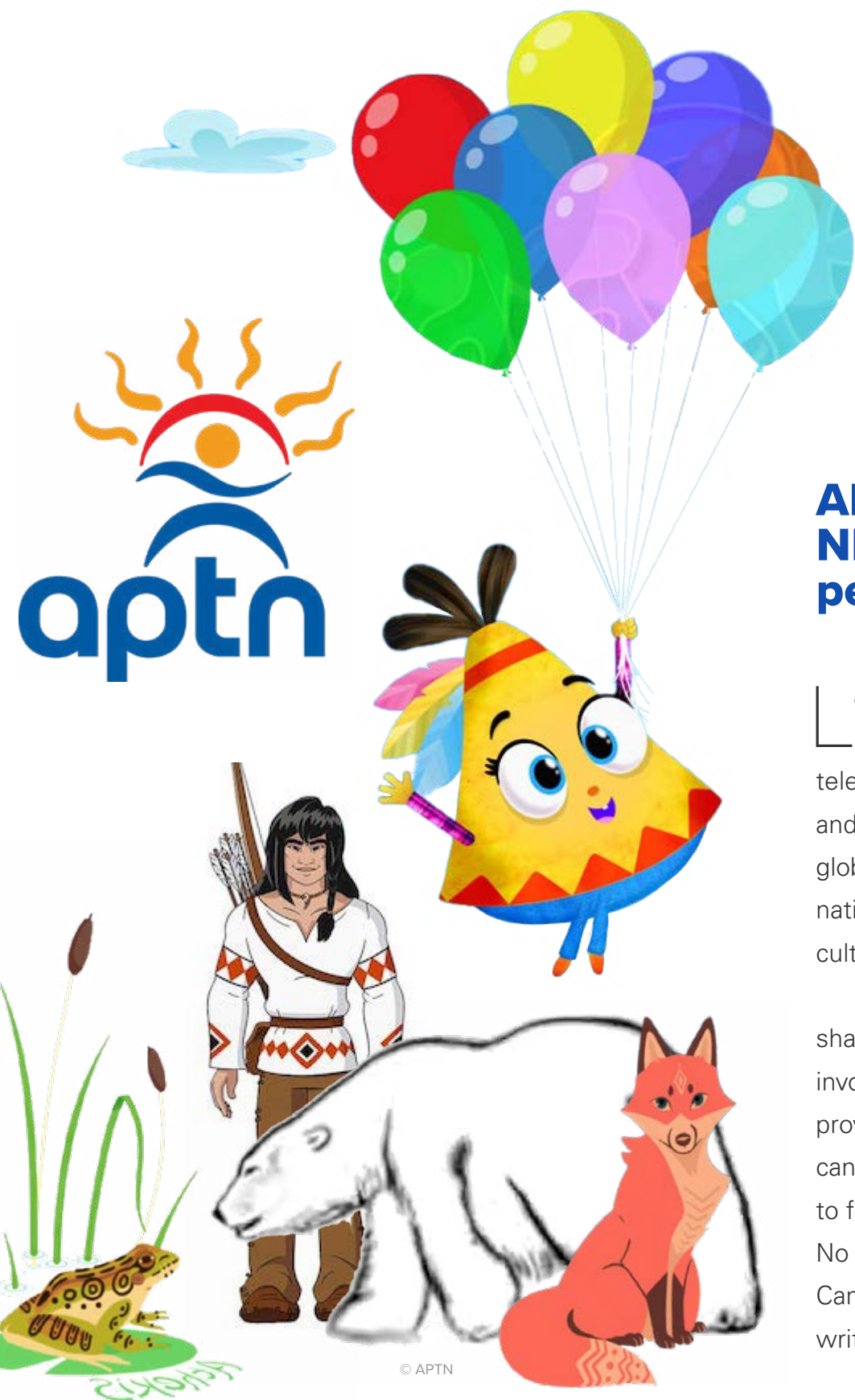
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES TELEVISION NETWORK (APTN): sharing indigenous people's stories with the world

Launched in September 1999, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) was the world's first national Indigenous television service. APTN promotes the diverse histories, cultures and languages of indigenous peoples in Canada and around the globe, providing programming across various genres, including national news, children's animation, youth programmes, and cultural and traditional programming.

APTN is commercial-free, indigenous children's programming, sharing linguistic traditions with new generations who are involved with ancestral voices, songs and legends. APTN has provided a long-needed platform from which indigenous peoples can tell their stories and perspectives, and it provides a foundation to focus on the positive aspects of indigenous communities. No less than 70 per cent of APTN programming is developed in Canada, offering various professional opportunities to indigenous writers, directors, producers, actors and news anchors.

The network also broadcasts a small portion of indigenous programming from different parts of the world, including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Central and South America.

Today, APTN is broadcast to over 10 million households and businesses through various platforms. The rich linguistic traditions of indigenous peoples are a vital part of APTN's diverse programming: 56 per cent of all programming is broadcast in English and 16 per cent in French, with a notable 28 per cent broadcast in various indigenous languages.

© APTN

34

MICROSOFT ADAPTIVE CONTROLLER: supporting kids with disabilities to take control

As part of its commitment to accessibility in product design, Microsoft provided data on employees with disabilities for the first time in 2020 and continues to raise awareness of product design for children with disabilities. The company's Xbox Adaptive Controller, for example, demonstrates the aim to engage meaningfully around disability issues. Designed primarily to meet the needs of gamers with limited mobility, the product is a unified hub for devices that helps make gaming more accessible.

The Xbox Adaptive Controller was built from the ground up through strong partnerships with the Able Gamers Charity, the Cerebral Palsy Foundation, Special Effect, Warfighter Engaged and many community members, all of whom helped shape its design, functionality and packaging. After developing the controller, Microsoft invested in advertising the app during the US Superbowl 2019, sharing children's stories and raising awareness about the issue with tens of millions of viewers.

© Microsoft Corporation

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT
MARKETING AND BRAND
COMMUNICATION

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

© Flamingo Rampant

FLAMINGO RAMPANT:
celebrating all kinds of families

Often faced with a heteronormative family situation in media and literature, children of LGBTIQ+ families can be left feeling discriminated against and invisible. LGBTIQ+ literature provides a framework for introducing themes about tolerance, acceptance and celebration of our differences. Allowing children to see family situations similar to their own can comfort them and promote their self-esteem.

Studies have found that, in 2018 there were more children's books featuring animals and other non-human characters (27 per cent) than all types of visible minorities combined (23 per cent) – and half of all the children's books that were reviewed featured white children.[20] When narratives in traditional publishing were mainly difficult stories

of harassment or bullying, with a weak message that gay parents are not necessarily bad, Flamingo Rampant set out to show LGBTIQ+ children, families and communities that are full of fun, celebration, adventure and love.

Flamingo Rampant produces books containing values such as racial justice, disability pride, children taking action, and loving, positive LGBTIQ+ families and communities. The company has produced stories in which children independently problem-solve, go on adventures, think critically, make jokes, and are silly, rambunctious, quiet, nuanced – and not *exhaustingly discriminated* against due to their identities. To date, 16 books have being published, including the first book about a Two Spirit child and the first queer Muslim picture book.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT
MARKETING AND BRAND
COMMUNICATION

ALFABANTU: teaching africa history to children around the world

Alfabantu is an initiative founded by a Brazilian educator to assist children in their literacy process through digital games and storytelling in the African Bantu/Kimbundu language. The initiative offers a free app with games, illustrations, vocabulary pronunciation and cartoons that promote a fun and interactive way to teach about African history and its connections to Brazil, challenging negative stereotypes regarding the African continent. In 2020 the company launched a YouTube channel with interviews with caregivers, teachers, and experts on diversity and inclusion issues, including Afro-Brazilian religions, depression among children and consumerism.

Worldwide, the app has been downloaded more than 10,000 times, and has become a success in several African and European countries. The initiative organizes an annual festival on diversity and inclusion training for teachers, focusing on African and Afro-Brazilian history and literature. Alfabantu also offers free storytelling workshops for children in schools and public libraries throughout Brazil. In 2020, it launched a bilingual (Portuguese and Kimbundu) book about an Afro-Brazilian girl who discovers stories of her African ancestry.

© Alfabantu

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT MARKETING AND BRAND COMMUNICATION

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

Mass success examples

While there is a belief that stories of indigenous and other non-dominant groups characters are not of interest to majority groups, there are examples of mass success that prove this is not the case. All children react in a positive way to compelling characters and relationships that show care, love and humanization.

© Nickelodeon

DORA THE EXPLORER

Dora is a seven-year-old Latina cartoon character known for her goal-oriented excursions, with help from her friends Boots the Monkey, Backpack, Map and others. Dora made her debut in 1999 on the Nickelodeon cable network, and in 2000 the network made the show a regular in its daily line-up. Since then, the show has become a worldwide education and marketing hit that has been translated into 22 languages. Dora is the first Latina character to have the leading role on a children's series. The show has been commercial television's top-rated preschool programme for most of the decade and is one of the most popular consumer brands in the world.

The show includes linguistic and cultural elements, such as the diverse music of Latino culture and the inclusion of Spanish vocabulary in the dialogue to teach basic phrases and terminology. In the United States, where an average of 2 million children watch each half-hour episode Monday through Friday, Dora talks to viewers in Spanish and English.

Dora's authorized image has also been seen widely in television and radio public service spots as part of the US Census Bureau's 'Children Count Too' campaign to remind caregivers they should include babies and young children on their census forms. Nickelodeon markets Dora dolls, games, bed linens and children's clothing to a wide range of consumers. Sales of Dora merchandise have totalled $11 billion since being introduced in 2002.

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT MARKETING AND BRAND COMMUNICATION

AVOIDING STEREOTYPES

DOC McSTUFFINS:
showing children engaged
with compelling characters
of all backgrounds

© The Walt Disney Company

Doc McStuffins is the first US preschool show to feature a Black girl as the lead character. It is considered a Disney legacy project, and has many notable fans including Michelle Obama and other important public figures. The award-winning Disney Junior show features six-year-old Doc, her doctor mom, and her stay-at-home-dad, and has been endorsed by organizations such as the Artemis Medical Society, which supports women physicians of colour.

The Doc McStuffins doll line, based on the animated character, has crossed over into the general toy market, becoming the best-selling toy line based on a Black character. Doc McStuffins generated more than $500 million in 2014 alone. Nancy Kanter, formerly general manger of Disney Junior Worldwide (the developer of the 'Doc McStuffins' cartoon), suggested that the character be Black. "If you look at the numbers on the toy sales," she explained, "it's pretty obvious that this isn't just African-American families buying these toys. It's the broadest demographics possible."[21]

Notably, Doc McStuffins inspired the founding members of a diverse medical society, the Artemis Medical Society, and its 'We Are Doc McStuffins' movement. With more than 4,700 women physicians of colour from around the world, Artemis helps build the foundation to create a diverse physician workforce through mentoring, networking and advocacy.

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT
MARKETING AND BRAND
COMMUNICATION

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

© Mattel, Inc.

BARBIE:
refreshing a classic

Barbie is an example of a company that reinvented itself to remain relevant. Once one of the world's top-selling dolls, Barbie struggled to stay relevant in the early 2000s as other toy companies began manufacturing dolls that showed more diversity, and as caregivers steered their children away from a doll that had become an emblem of unrealistic and Eurocentric beauty.

In 2016, Mattel launched the 'Fashionista Barbie' line, which included curvier body types and different skin tones, facial features and hair textures. One doll is bald, another has a prosthetic limb. One has curly dark hair that is swept away from her face to show she has vitiligo (a skin condition that causes pigment loss), another is in a wheelchair.

More than half of all dolls sold by the company now come from a diverse set of backgrounds. In 2019, the top-selling doll almost every week was a curvy black Barbie with an Afro.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT
MARKETING AND BRAND
COMMUNICATION

NIKE: levelling the playing field for black women and girls

Nike is a champion on several diversity and inclusion initiatives. The company takes positions on delicate political issues, such as supporting the NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who controversially kneeled during the US national anthem. Nike also supports the championing of women and girls in sport, acknowledging the barriers faced, especially by young women of colour.

According to the 2019 Nike report, globally, girls tend to be less active than boys. Research by the Women's Sports Foundation[22] shows that only one in three girls between the ages of 6 and 12 participate in sports on a regular basis; 40 per cent of teen girls do not participate in sports; and boys get 1.13 million more sports opportunities than girls every year. Importantly, active girls are more confident, do better in school, and are better at setting goals – and these benefits continue into their adult lives.

Nike is focused on getting and keeping more children active by removing barriers to play and sports, particularly for girls, training more youth coaches, and supporting environments that promote physical activity. The company has a 'Made to Play' target for 2025 to drive sustained community impact by getting children moving in key cities and backyards, with 50 per cent participation of girls. It will also focus on investing in girls' participation, training coaches and intersectionality.[23]

Nike supports girls with products so they can play with confidence, and they invest in gender-inclusive training models and an enhanced curriculum that are widely available. By collaborating with PLAY International, Nike is reaching 3,000 children in 20 primary schools in Paris through 'Playdagogy' – a methodology that uses games to discuss ideas about gender-based representations with children.

In 2021, Nike released an ad celebrating Black women athletes for International Women's Day. Narrated by playwright and actress Dominque Fishback, the ad features Black soccer players, skateboarders, dancers and the professional tennis star Serena Williams. The theme is 'We Play Real: Level the playing field for Black women'. The ad also features a black-and-white video with Shirley Chisolm, Cheryl Miller, Black astronauts and members of the Houston Comets, the Women's National Basketball Association team that won the league's first title in 1996.

© Nike, Inc.

PROGRESSIVE PRODUCT
MARKETING AND BRAND
COMMUNICATION

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

International and country-specific codes

Over the past years, there have been a number of efforts to ensure that advertising and marketing respect human rights and avoid discrimination and stereotyping. Many of these initiatives are aimed at advertising generally, rather than focusing on advertising and marketing specifically intended to reach children. Nonetheless, because children are exposed to a great deal of marketing and advertising daily, it impacts children even when not intentionally directed to them.

international chamber of commerce.

The advertising and marketing code states that "marketing communications should respect human dignity and should not incite or condone any form of discrimination, including that based upon ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation." While the code does not specify stereotyping, it does lay out general principles for marketing to children, including the need to take children's inexperience and credulity into account, avoiding harm and respecting social values.

International Council for Ad Self-Regulation.

In many countries, advertising standards and practices on non-discrimination are in place. The ICAS 2020 report notes that in all but one of its markets (the United States), self-regulatory advertising standards include the principle of non-discrimination. A summary of the forms of discrimination that each country addresses is outlined in this report.[24]

CONAR – Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulation Council.

is a civil society organization founded by entities in the Brazilian advertising market to regulate advertising in the country, and is maintained with resources from entities and companies in the market itself. CONAR is not a state body: its supporters do so voluntarily. Nonetheless, in most cases the CONAR recommendations are accepted by all parties involved, including advertising agencies, media outlets and advertisers.

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

is the UK's independent regulator of advertising across all media. The authority applies the Advertising Codes, which are written by the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP). In June 2019, CAP introduced new rules on gender stereotyping in advertising, following a review and research of the issue. The ASA finds advertisements likely to be problematic if they suggest that people with stereotypical characteristics or undertaking stereotypical roles are:
- always uniquely associated with one gender
- the only options available to one gender
- never carried out or displayed by another gender.

The code also lays out guidelines on avoiding stereotyping in race, culture, religion/belief, gender and sexual orientation.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Industry initiatives and associations.

Across the advertising and marketing industry, useful guides and models have been developed to help marketers produce less stereotyped marketing. While most of these focus on advertising and marketing for adults, they provide a useful starting point for companies communicating to or about children.

THE UNSTEREOTYPE ALLIANCE is an industry-led initiative convened by UN Women to unite leaders across business, media and creative industries to tackle the widespread prevalence of stereotypes that are often perpetuated through advertising and content. Companies include Unilever, Safaricom and IPG, and members cover a wide range of global companies across a range of sectors. The Unstereotype Alliance has developed a metric to "help companies create and track advertising content that is free of gender stereotypes, and to push for progressive portrayals of all people."

THE WORLD FEDERATION OF ADVERTISERS (WFA), membership includes the world's largest brand owners and national advertiser associations in more than 60 markets. The Federation's Diversity and Inclusion hub provides case studies, research and webinars on race and ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender identity and age on a a regular basis and is open to all.

Civil society groups and networks.

LET TOYS BE TOYS is a UK-based lobby group to halt the promotion of some toys and books as only suitable for girls and others only for boys. The group asks retailers to organize toys by theme and function rather than by gender, and it requests that manufacturers package and market their products in a way that includes all children. The group also celebrates retailers that dismantle stereotypes and promote positive marketing to children through their Toymark Award for good practice.

COFACE FAMILIES EUROPE is a network of civil society organizations representing the interests of all families and promoting the well-being, health and security of its members. While its focus is primarily on policy and legislation, COFACE advocates for policies of non-discrimination and equal opportunity.
The network's Toys & Diversity campaign highlights gender, disability and racial/ethnical stereotypes in toy production, catalogues and shops – and raises awareness among producers, advertisers, retailers and consumers about the need for, and principles to advance, toy diversity.

THE GEENA DAVIS INSTITUTE ON GENDER IN MEDIA (GDI) has amassed the largest body of research on gender prevalence in family entertainment, spanning more than 28 years. GDI examines intersectional onscreen representation of six identities – gender, race, LGBTQ+, disability, age and body size – and has conducted research on film, TV and advertising. In April 2021, UNICEF and GDI jointly published an analysis of the 1,000 most viewed ads in India in 2019.
The analysis shows that while female characters in ads are prominent, they are highly stereotyped, less likely to be shown in public spaces and in paid employment, more likely to be selling domestic products and food to other women, and are presented as responsible for childcare and shopping. There was also a high degree of colourism and stereotyping about body types found in the advertisements.

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Annex I:
Summary of indicators.

By setting key performance indicators, companies show commitment to achieving diversity, equity and inclusion – and avoiding negative stereotypes – in the development, marketing and advertising of products designed for children.

Annex I brings all of the playbook's suggested indicators together as a tool for creating more diverse and equal worlds of play.

Business strategy and structure

- The company's strategic plans include diversity, equity and inclusion as core principles, rather than a separate set of objectives or a siloed diversity office.
- Senior management is committed to a cascade approach throughout the workforce.
- A separate diversity, equity and inclusion budget line ensures sufficient resources are allocated.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion indicators across the company, including across divisions/teams and levels, are explicitly monitored using clear qualitative and quantitative indicators, timelines and targets.
- Responsibility for the implementation of diversity and inclusion targets is clearly assigned.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion statistics on employee diversity, including level of seniority and type of division, and commit to progress are publicly shared.
- Company exit/attrition is tracked as a measure of bias.
- External talent is identified to support diverse voices on the team.
- Internal and/or external advisory board(s) and focus groups are created, or are hired externally if the company does not have internal expertise.

The creative process

- Clear and specific commitments are made by senior management to work against stereotyping.
- Steps are put in place to ensure diversity in product testing – for teams, partners, experts and participants – and team composition is monitored.
- Checks are implemented in procurement processes to ensure balance in hiring when commissioning creative work, as unbalanced teams find it difficult to produce complex non-stereotyped products.
- Regular analysis of the impact of hiring practices and the workplace culture on creative teams is carried out.
- Long-term strategic plans and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion are developed for creative teams.
- Internal strategy/checklists are created to address diversity, equity and inclusion in product development and marketing.
- The transformative model is used to conduct audits on current portfolios.
- Internal workshops/webinars are conducted to raise the issue of how diversity, equity and inclusion can influence product development and marketing.
- Steps are put in place to continually assess and ensure that creative processes take into account cultural shifts, trends and expectations.
- All partners are committed to working against stereotyping and its impact on marketing, recognizing that a product designed to be inclusive may be marketed in ways that do not promote positive portrayals for children.

Product marketing and brand communication

- Regular impact analyses of current marketing strategy are conducted, and key areas are identified to address, including evidence of the impact of positive non-stereotyped advertising and marketing on revenues, customer base and brand loyalty.
- Advertising scripts and copy are tested for bias, with ads tested with a diverse audience of children.
- Metrics are put in place to measure progressive ads in regular tracking.
- Regular checks for stereotyping in concept, language, colour coding, images and videos are implemented.
- Regular checks are conducted to monitor how children are portrayed in catalogue photography and videos. Are different children in diverse settings and activities portrayed, or are stereotypes upheld?
- Impact assessments are conducted with diverse child stakeholders to understand how marketing can influence their perceptions of themselves and others.
- Programmes are put in place to work with caregivers to raise awareness of issues and to sensitize children on how girls and boys of different backgrounds can be portrayed.
- Regular contact with industry bodies/governments is maintained to ensure minimum standards around stereotyping children.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion are championed internally and externally by sharing best practices and lessons learned, and by partnering with leading agencies and companies to showcase these best practices.

45

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

Annex II:
Resources and links.

- **UNICEF 'A Diverse and Inclusive Workforce is Part of UNICEF's DNA' –** This robust web page describes how UNICEF always strives to be a gender-equal, diverse and inclusive workplace for all. It offers lots of information on establishing a diverse global workforce, along with core values, graphics and videos.
www.unicef.org/careers/equity-inclusion-and-diversity-unicef

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) –** In 1989, world leaders made a historic commitment to all children by adopting the CRC, which has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. Because it is a legally binding treaty, ratifying governments are responsible to uphold the commitments it outlines and submit regular reports on their progress to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Find out more about the CRC and how it can apply to business by checking out the full text in Arabic, Chinese, English, French or Spanish.
www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention

- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities –** Adopted in 2006 after decades of work, this convention "takes to a new height the movement from viewing persons with disabilities as 'objects' of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as 'subjects' with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society." A full-text PDF is available in nearly 30 different languages, from Albanian to Turkish.
www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

- **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination –** Entered into force in January 1969, parties to this Convention commit to ending racial discrimination and to promote understanding among all peoples. Available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx

- **Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBPs) –** Published by UNICEF, the United Nations Global Compact and Save the Children in 2012, these principles are based on the CRC and have become a world wide 'gold standard' for corporate responsibility to children. The CRBPs outline actions for all businesses – throughout their activities and business relationships – to respect and support the rights of every child in the workplace, marketplace, community and environment. Read the PDF in Chinese, English, French, Russian or Spanish.
http://childrenandbusiness.org

- **International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Advertising and Marketing Code –** This 10th revision, published in 2018, aims to maintain the ICC Marketing Code as a global reference point for self-regulation 'fit for the digital world'. Updates include enhanced guidance on distinguishing marketing communications content from editorial and user-generated content, and clarified rules – with new definitions – on advertising to children and teens.
https://iccwbo.org/publication/icc-advertising-and-marketing-communications-code

- **International Council for Advertising Self-Regulation (ICAS) Advertising Standards and Practices on Non-Discrimination –** This report issued in August 2020 describes member survey results and is available for download in 11 languages. Among the key findings, self-regulatory advertising standards include the principle of non-discrimination in the 'vast majority' of ICAS markets. The United States market was the only one without self-regulatory standards on gender representation and/or non-discrimination in advertising.
https://icas.global/icas-report-on-advertising-standards-and-practices-on-non-discrimination

- **Advertising Standards Authority and Committee of Advertising Practice (ASA-CAP), 'Offence: Use of stereotypes' –** This 'Advice Online', issued by the United Kingdom-based ASA-CAP in June 2019, highlights Code rule 4.1: "Particular care must be taken to avoid offence on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age. Marketers should be particularly aware of their depictions of these characteristics, and ensure that their ads do not contain anything which may be likely to cause serious or widespread offence on any grounds." Find out more about the standards on race, culture, religion and belief, gender and sexual orientation, disability or illness, and age at the following web page.
www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/offence-use-of-stereotypes.html

Annex II:
Resources and links.

- **World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) 'Diversity & Inclusion Hub'** – The WFA hub offers easily accessible case studies, along with other resources that can be accessed by creating an account – including the 'Guide to Potential Areas for Bias in the Creative Process' launched in March 2021.
  https://wfanet.org/knowledge/diversity-and-inclusion/wfa-diversity-and-inclusion-hub

- **Unstereotype Alliance –** The alliance is a 'thought and action platform' that aims to end harmful gender-based stereotypes in all media and advertising. Convened by UN Women and industry-led, it brings partners together to collectively use the advertising industry as "a force for good to drive positive change all over the world." Resources at this website include articles, videos and the newest 'State of the Industry' report (June 2021), which evaluates progress in diversity, equity and inclusion across the global advertising industry.
  www.unstereotypealliance.org/en

- **Let Toys Be Toys –** With the tag line 'Challenging gender stereotypes in childhood', Let Toys Be Toys believes that "play is an intrinsic part of child development and can help shape long-term attitudes and ambitions." At this site you can find blog posts, tips and resources, research – and the annual Silliness Awards, which highlight the worst examples of gendered marketing.
  www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk

- **COFACE Families Europe, #ToysandDiversity –** Principle 1 of this campaign is "Let children decide what they want to play with: No more division into boys and girls sections." Find out more at the link below.
  www.coface-eu.org/campaigns-2/toysanddiversity

- **Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDI) –** Founded in 2004 by Academy Award-winning actor Geena Davis, GDI is the only research-based organization working collaboratively within the entertainment industry to create gender balance, foster inclusion and reduce negative stereotyping in family entertainment media. "The stories that we choose to tell in entertainment media send a specific message about who matters most in our culture. In order to bring about a global culture change, it is especially important that children see diverse, intersectional representations of characters in media to reflect the population of the world … Doing good is also good for business!" Discover more about their data-led research at the following link.
  https://seejane.org/about-us

AVOIDING
STEREOTYPES

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Promoting diversity and inclusion in advertising: a UNICEF playbook.

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