

EXPOSING GENDER BIAS IN THE MEDIA

- ✓ 1. For learners to recognise photographs as **socially constructed**.
- ✓ 2. For learners to understand literal and associated meanings of images.
- ✓ 3. To identify how this contributes to the representation of women in society.

★ Photo Sets A, B, C or D (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Choose a set of pictures to work with from those provided (set A, B, C or D). Use both pictures in a set (e.g. photo A1 and A2). Don't mix and match.

Put Photo 1 on the board.

Working in pairs, learners should describe the **woman** in the image. For example, they should comment on what she's wearing, what she's holding, what she's doing and what her expression is like. Then learners should answer the following questions:

- a. Do you think the woman is a nurse/construction worker? (give reasons for your answer)
- b. What features in the photograph emphasise the woman's competence?
- c. What features in the photograph emphasise the woman's attractiveness?
- d. What might you expect, that is missing from the photograph?
- e. Overall, what do you think of the woman in the photograph? Why?

- 2 Then put Photo 2 on the board. Working in pairs, learners should describe the **woman** in the image. For example, they should comment on what she's wearing, what she's holding, what she's doing and what her expression is like. Then learners should answer the following questions:

- a. Do you think the woman is a nurse/construction worker? (give reasons for your answer)
- b. What features in the photograph emphasise the woman's competence?
- c. What features in the photograph emphasise the woman's attractiveness?
- d. What might you expect, that is missing from the photograph?
- e. Overall, what do you think of the woman in the photo? Why?

- 3 Now that learners have studied Photo 2, let them go back to their answers about Photo 1. Tell them to make any additions or changes they wish, since now they have a photo to compare and contrast with Photo 1. Tell them to discuss with their partners which photo they like better and why.

- 4 Explain the relevance of the activity and that the image that they first saw was based on a gendered stereotype of that profession perpetuated by the media. Understanding how stereotypes are perpetuated is an important skill. Now you can identify stereotypical images in the popular media. Being aware of images which counter those stereotypes is also important, so that you (and others) know that stereotypes are not accurate reflections of individuals or groups of people.

- 5 Ask learners to practice their skills by finding (in magazines or on the internet) or making (by drawing or photographing) their own pictures of **women**, where one image shows a woman in stereotypical fashion, while the other counters that stereotype. Ask them to:

a. Display their pictures side-by-side.

b. Write a caption for each picture where they analyse the photo in the same way they did in the class activity. For the stereotypical image, they should explain what the stereotype is and how the picture perpetuates that stereotype. For the second image, they should explain how the stereotype is countered.

- 6 Learners should think about their own experiences, and write a short paragraph about gender stereotyping. These questions may help them:

- In your school, household or community do you see stereotypes of **women** and girls? For example, do most people assume that teachers are women or that a particular sports program is for boys?
- Were you aware of gender assumptions and biases before you did this activity?
- Are you aware of someone who does not conform to a gender stereotype - (is anti-stereotype)?



TEACHER TIPS



General

This exercise is quite long, and asking learners to find or make their own images will require access to the internet, magazines, or a camera. It is probably best to ask learners to complete parts ⑤ and ⑥ individually as homework.

Alternatively, you could do parts ⑤ and ⑥ in the next lesson, where you ask learners to bring two appropriate images with them.



Making the Link with Gender & Violence

Learners should consider how women may be portrayed in the media as sex objects, and how, by playing down other aspects of their competency and value, women are demeaned. In this way, women become objects for men's use, and thus become easier to perpetrate violence against.

They should also be alerted to how the constant seeing, hearing and internalising that **women** are only sex objects, meant to be attractive, have little value or only have value if they are pretty or young, might impact on young women's self-image.

You might make the comparison between this process and the way that women in abusive relationships internalise the views and ideas of the abuser, that they are worthless, stupid and only useful for sex and so on.



Assessment Ideas

Part ⑥ of this activity is a particularly good exercise for assessment as it does not require additional resources and learners can complete the task as homework. It is also a good indication of whether learners have understood the activity, and of their ability to take learned concepts and skills from the classroom into their own lives.



Variation

- 1 If your learners typically do not have internet access at home, but do have internet access at school, complete part ⑤ in the next lesson. Allocate an appropriate amount of time for internet access to find images.

If this is not possible, you could have a class discussion instead. Ask them in class to give you examples of **stereotypes**, or ask them to look in magazines. Discuss why these stereotypes are not true reflections of the person(s) depicted.

Learners should then still continue to Part ⑥. Being able to apply what they have learned to their wider society is an important outcome of this exercise.

2

Instead of putting one set of photos up on the board, you could print copies of each set of four photographs and ask learners to break into four groups. Give each group one photograph (not one set), and ask them to answer the following questions:

- a. Do you think the woman is a nurse or a construction worker? (give reasons for your answer)
- b. What features in the photograph emphasise the woman's competence?
- c. What features in the photograph emphasise the woman's attractiveness?
- d. What might you expect, that is missing from the photograph?
- e. Overall, what do you think of the woman in the photo? Why?

Then, group by group, ask them to share their answers with the class. Consider:

- How the answers compare for groups given the same set of photos.
- If their views change after hearing the views of the group who has the other image from the set.
- The different answers for different professions. For example, were learners more convinced that 1 and 2 in the nurse set were real, and 1 & 2 in the construction worker set were not real? Is this because nursing is seen as a profession for women? Continue on by following the procedure from part ④.



GENDER STEREOTYPES

Choose a set of pictures to work with.

PHOTO SET A

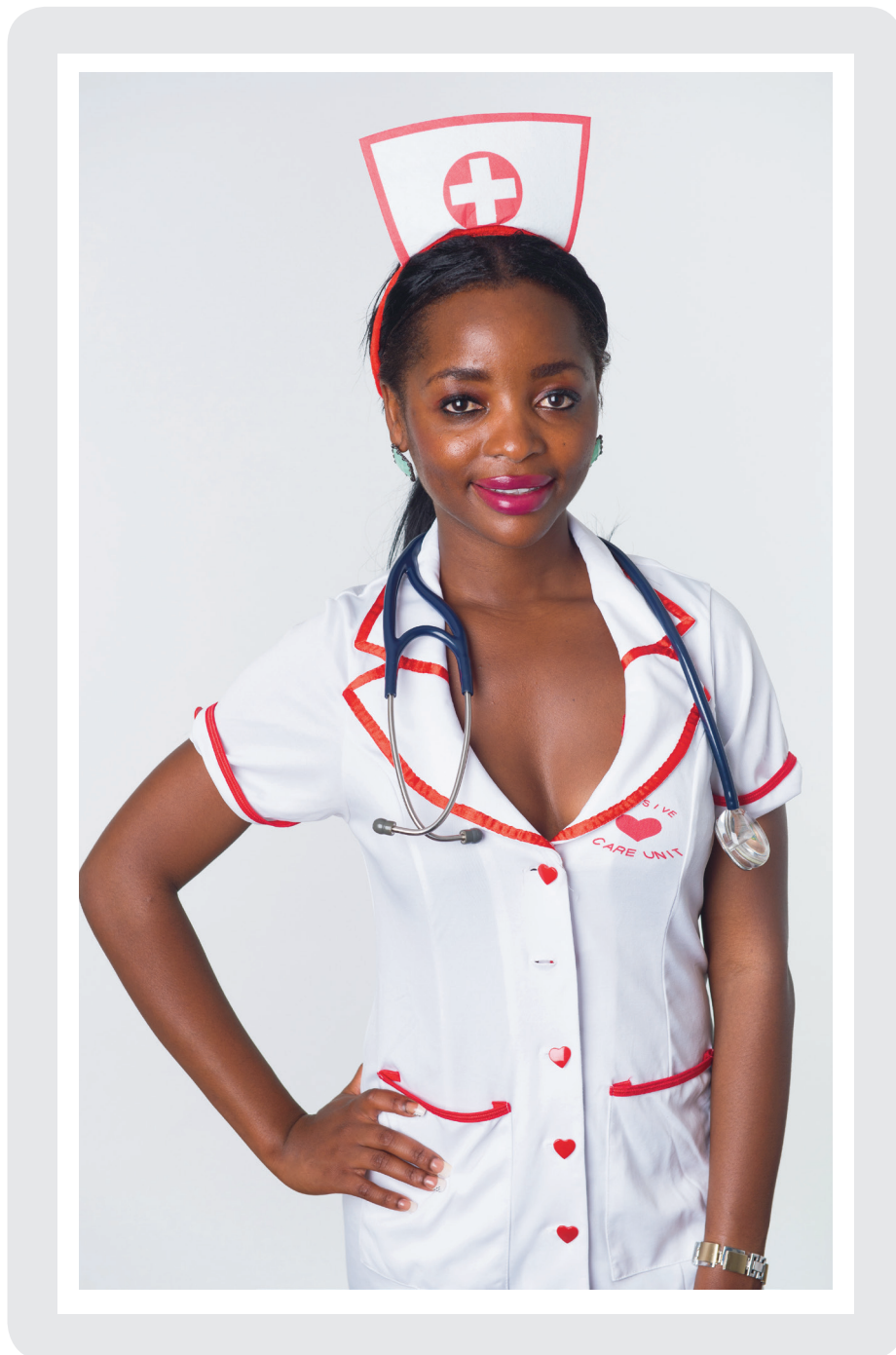


PHOTO A1

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET A

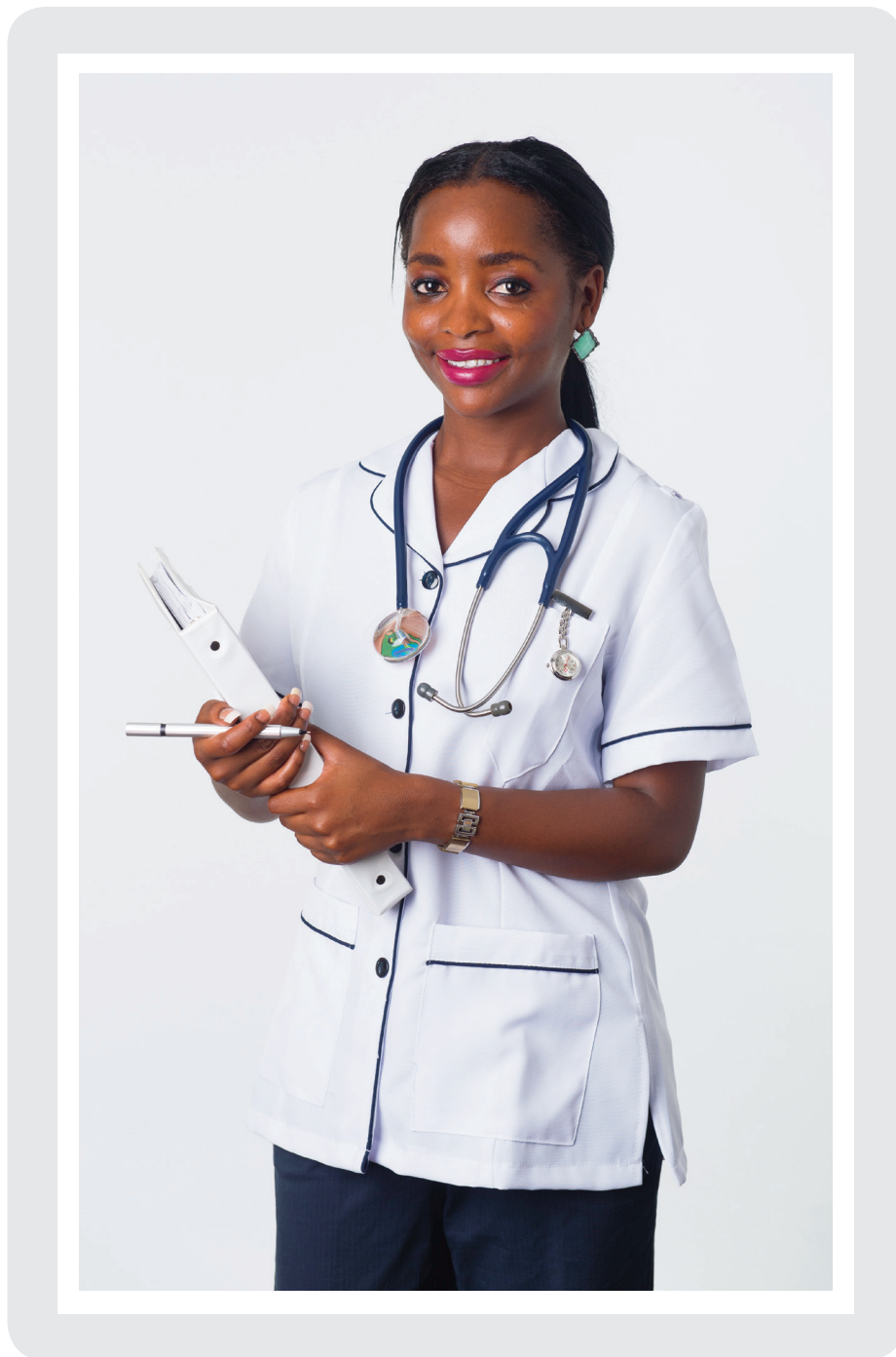


PHOTO A2

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET B



PHOTO B1

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET B



PHOTO B2

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET C

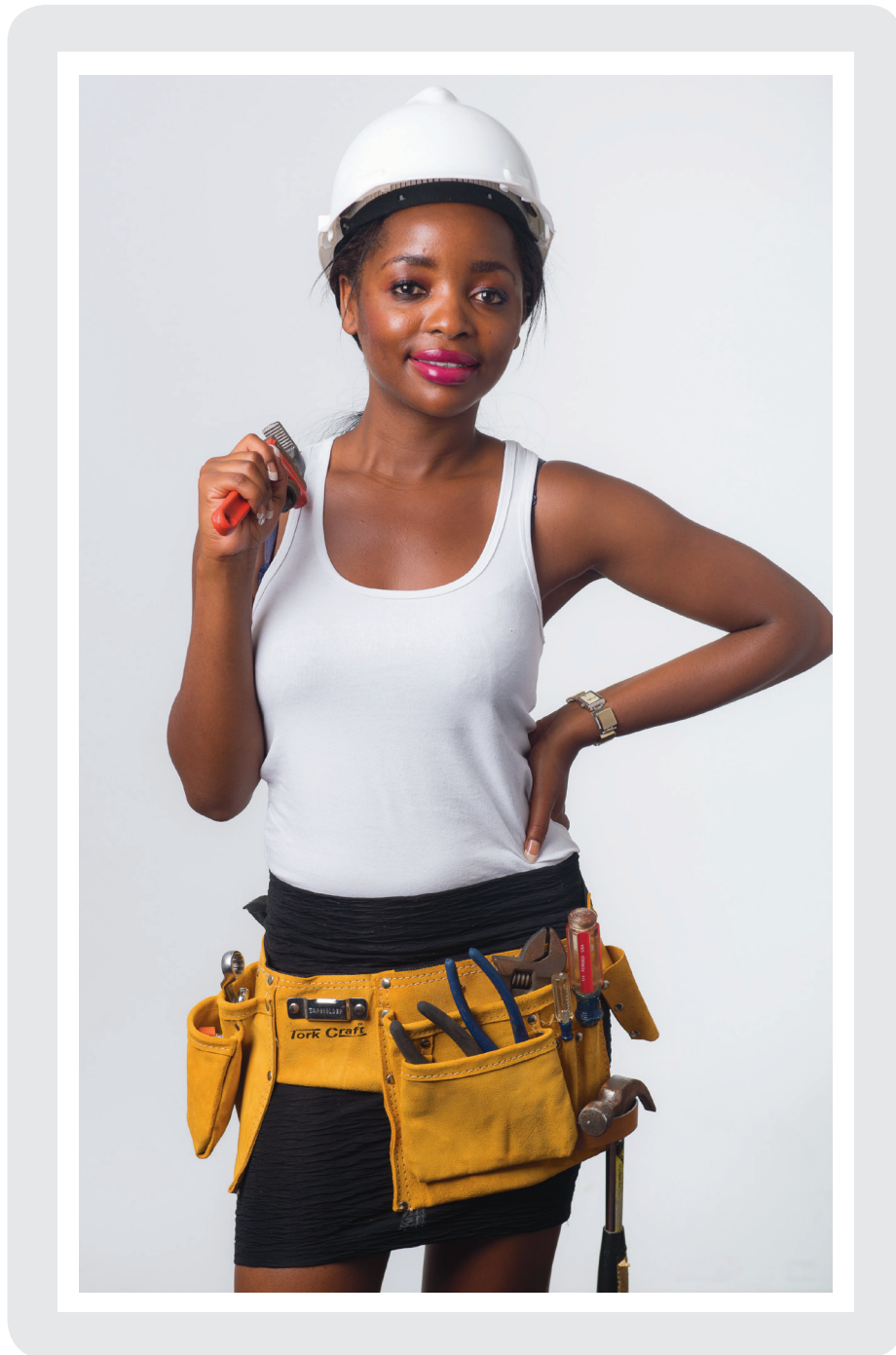


PHOTO C1

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET C

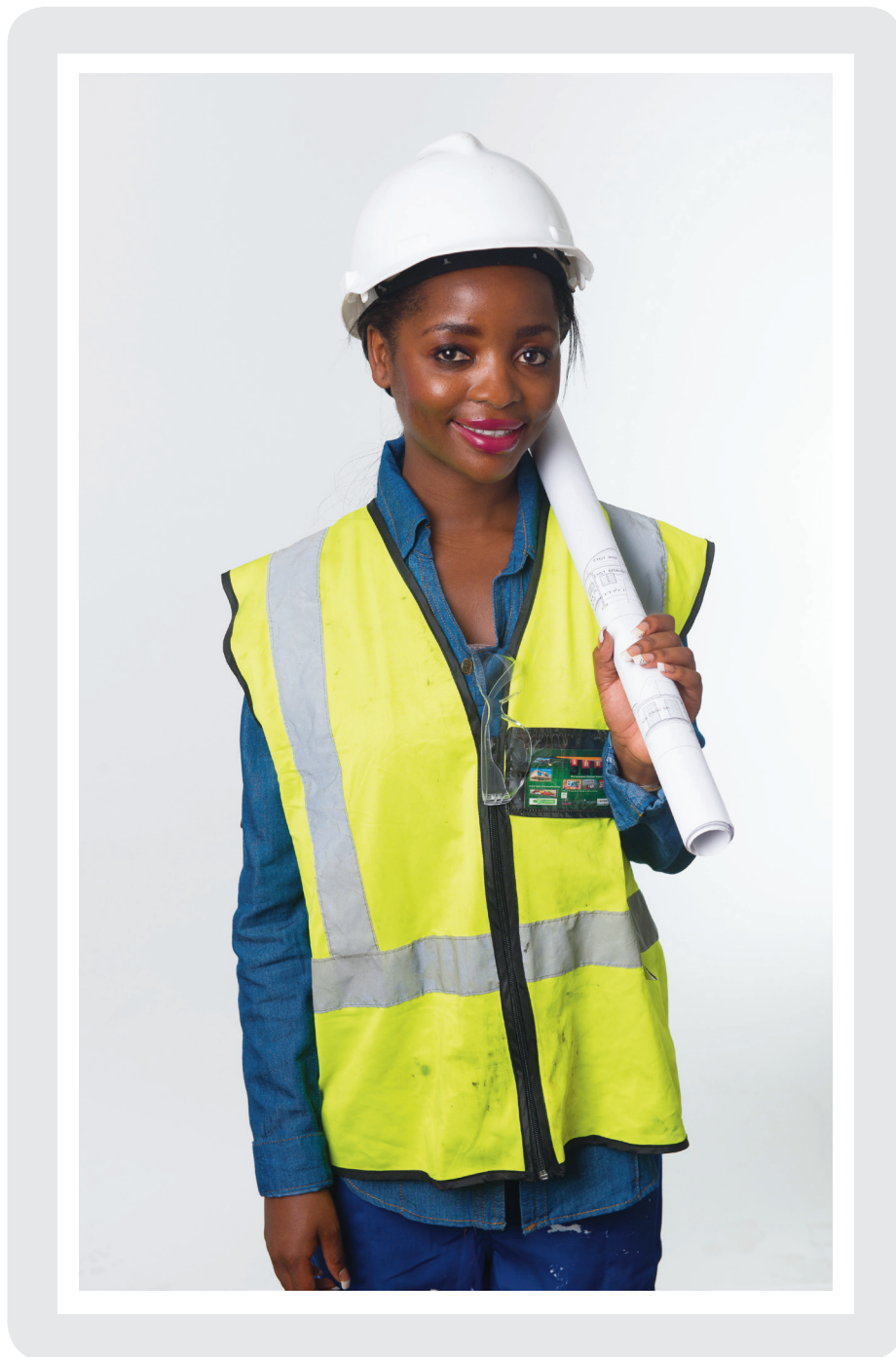


PHOTO C2

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET D

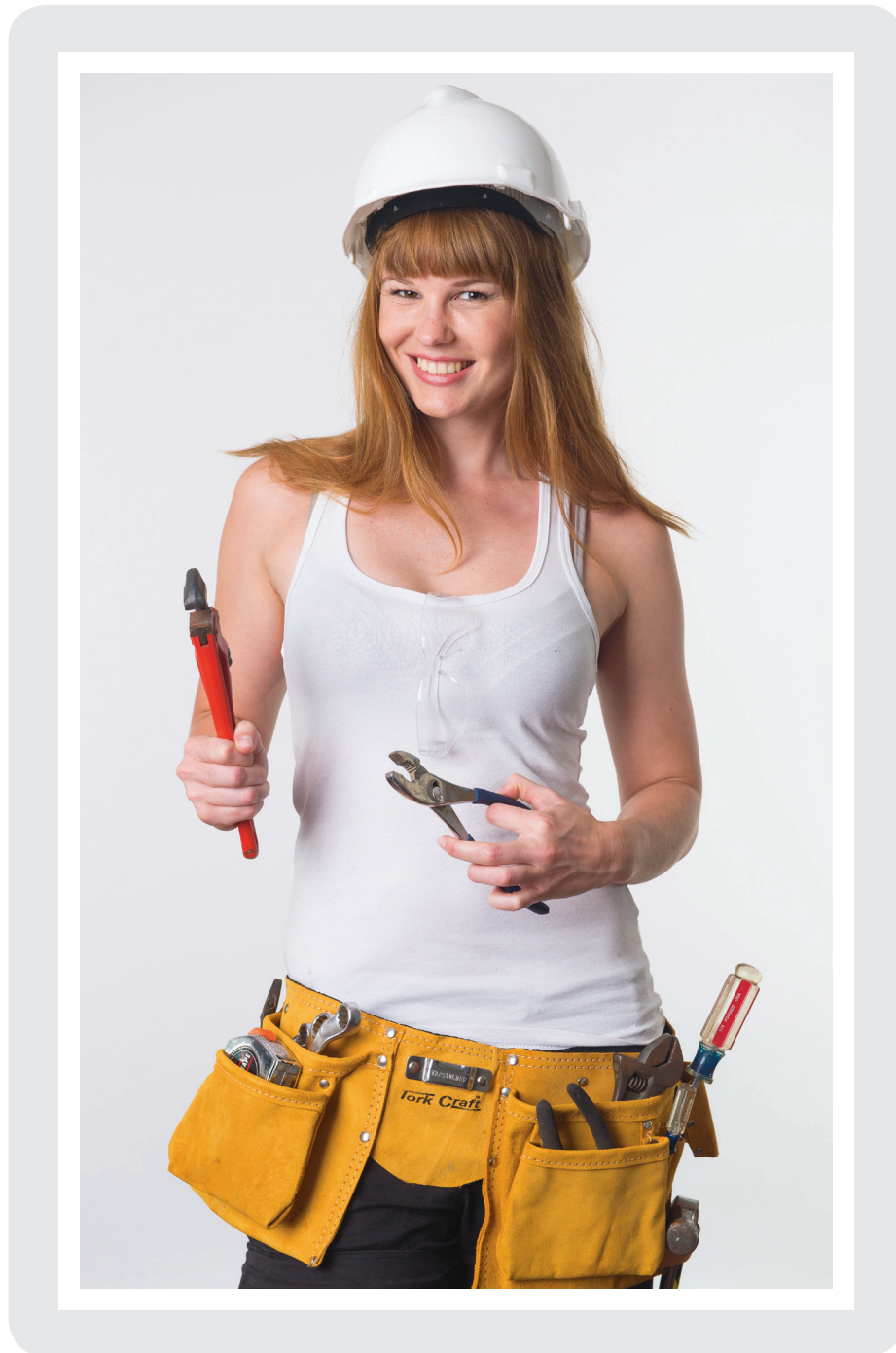


PHOTO D1

GENDER STEREOTYPES

PHOTO SET D



PHOTO D2