

Dear Dr Gersbner,

Enclosed are the Ques Re-cast
TV curriculum. ~~also~~ will
forward the 'ques and smoking'
proposal when it is
ready.

Best regards

Amy Petch

**girls
inc.**

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Girls Re-Cast TV

*An Educational
Program in
Media Literacy
for Girls,
Ages 11-14*

**girls
inc.**

Girls Incorporated

**A project of
Girls Incorporated**
*in collaboration with the
Center for Media Literacy*

**Print curriculum
and videotape**

Written by Barbara Osborn

Edited by Janet Greenberg, Ph.D.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Session 1: Mirror, Mirror on the Screen	7
Part 1: Is TV a Window on the World?.....	7
Activity 1: Introductions.....	8
Activity 2: Playing Your Favorite Role	9
Activity 3: Counting Heads	10
Part 2: Designing Strong, Smart and Bold Characters.....	13
Activity 1: Analyzing Some Girl Characters on TV.....	13
Activity 2: Conceiving Your Own TV Character	14
Handout: <i>Star of Your Show</i>	15
Session 2: Getting Beyond Stereotypes	17
Part 1: Sex, Lies and Videotapes.....	17
Activity 1: What is Stereotyping and How Does It Work?.....	18
Activity 2: Name that Stereotype.....	19
Part 2: Deconstruction/Reconstruction	20
Activity 1: Reading and Viewing <i>Living Single</i>	20
Activity 2: Rewriting <i>Living Single</i>	21
Handout: <i>A Scene from Living Single</i>	23
Session 3: The Medium is the Message	25
Part 1: What's TV Telling Us?.....	25
Activity 1: Taking a Look at MTV	26
Activity 2: A Taste of TV Advertising	27
Part 2: Learning to Use Storyboards.....	29
Activity 1: Identifying Camera Shots	30
Activity 2: Creating Your Own MTV Storyboard	30
Handout: <i>Storyboard</i>	33

Session 4: Taking Action	35
Part 1: What Influence Can Girls Have on Programs & Ratings?	35
Activity 1: Who Decides What Goes on and Stays on the Air?	35
Activity 2: Ratings on the Girls Incorporated TV Network	37
Part 2: Girls Re-Cast TV	38
Activity 1: Imagining a New Kind of TV Show About Girls Who are Strong, Smart and Bold.....	38
Activity 2: Developing a Treatment for Your Own TV Series	39
Activity 3: Reflecting on Today's Project and This Media Literacy Program in General.....	40
Handout: <i>Treatment</i>	41
Glossary of Key Terms	43
Five Key Concepts of Media Literacy	45
Videotape Contents	47

Introduction

Why Media Literacy for Girls Now?

Women and girls comprise over 50 percent of the population of the United States. Yet women comprise only one-third of the characters on prime time television and only one-quarter of all characters on Saturday morning cartoons are female. Many of those characters are not smart, strong or bold. Teenage girl characters in particular are often stereotyped as preoccupied with their looks and when their sexuality is depicted, it is focused uniquely on boys. Older female characters “age” faster than males, and women’s career opportunities in TV are still limited by a narrow and racist standard of American beauty: white, tall, thin, big-busted and blonde. People of color, older people, people with disabilities and people from lower socioeconomic classes fare no better.

More than ever before, girls need opportunities to identify and challenge these dominant and stereotypical images that do not suggest the diversity of the world around them or the roles they should reasonably expect to play in a full and complex life. Research has demonstrated the broad impact of TV programming on the way children and adults think about themselves in the context of their lived environments. Americans spend one-third of their leisure time watching TV. Most children spend more time watching TV than they do in school in any year. Most of the stories young people hear today about people, life and values are told to them through the medium of television, not by their parents or teachers. These stories come not from the range of historical or lived experience in community, but are brought to you by a commercial sponsor. Moreover, people who watch a lot of television are more likely to hold conventional attitudes about male and female roles in all aspects of life, and to have more fear of violence in their environments, than those who do not watch much TV*.

Media literacy skills are critical tools for analyzing the abundance of information and images to which girls are exposed constantly. Being literate about TV is a fundamental aspect of being literate these days, since more information comes to us through TV than by any other mass-mediated source, either print or electronic. Developed for girls ages 11-14, this program is meant to strengthen their steps from information toward action, and from analysis toward production, as literate members of an increasingly complex, mediated environment.

Girls Re-Cast TV is a gender equity-based media literacy program designed to build on the considerable knowledge that most girls already have about TV and the mass media. It is not a media-bashing program, but an opportunity to help girls critically evaluate the world of television. Our goal is not to leave girls feeling oppressed by a monolithic system which they cannot decode. Instead, our purpose is to empower girls by opening doors and making connections—between watching TV and thinking about it carefully, between information and community action, between analysis and creative production, and between life planning and career preparation. *Girls Re-Cast TV* encourages girls to generate their own ideas about what strong, smart and bold female characters might be like. This deeper understanding should enable them to advocate effectively for positive images of women and girls, and to exercise the right to develop their creative and critical abilities to the fullest extent.

Format of This Program Guide and Time Allotted for Each Session

This curriculum is organized as an eight-hour program, divided into four main *sessions*, with eight discreet *parts*. Each part is estimated to take between 45 minutes and 1:15 minutes to complete. The parts are divided into separate but related *activities*, which can be shortened or expanded at the discretion of the facilitator. By reading the entire program in advance, and viewing the accompanying videotape, adult facilitators should be able to gauge the approximate time needed to conduct each activity within a part, and each part within a session. Every effort has been made to design the program in flexible modules: There should be plenty to do and talk about for more than eight hours; it should be possible, however, to explore important concepts and representative samples of the main activities in slightly less time, or within a different time frame than the one suggested.

Each session moves from analysis to production and back again. The focus is always on the basic tool and skill building that will enhance the girls' awareness of how TV—the most important mass medium—is constructed, and why it's interesting, fun and important to deconstruct it. Overall the program moves from consciousness raising and analytical thinking to action, setting the stage for community projects focused on or in the media, creative production, and learning more about career opportunities and realities.

In each unit girls have opportunities to develop basic media production skills and to focus their creative imagination on alternatives to dominant TV models. The videotape that accompanies this booklet contains provocative examples of popular sitcoms, animated cartoons, MTV artists, soap operas and commercials. It is meant only to suggest the range of the most popular shows on network TV and the proportions of major population groups actually represented. It provides a jumping off point, not the main focus, for the activities.

The girls in your program will have many suggestions about other shows to include. You may wish to add activities based on shows the girls want to watch as a group. The most important thing is to cast an analytical eye on *all* the TV you choose to watch in the sessions.

Tips on Preparation for Adult Facilitators

Watch TV! Before leading these sessions, adults should become familiar with the TV programs popular among the girls you work with. Program directors should watch at least one and preferably more episodes of several of these series. Select them by asking the girls which shows they like best. You may be surprised at the range of what girls watch, and even more surprised by what's on TV, if you haven't been watching much lately.

Read this booklet and review the videotape before beginning the program: As you watch, think about the questions asked in the sessions. Consider how you would answer them. Be careful not to lose sight of why you're viewing. It's awfully easy to get swept along by the entertaining tide of TV show

Review the activities and materials needed for them closely before each session. Plan preparation time to compile the materials before each meeting of the group. Although the lists are comprised of easily accessible items, planning time may be significant.

Note that the MTV clip (Session 3) contains sexually explicit material. Determine in advance whether this is appropriate to air in your environment.

Check out the reference tools: In addition, program directors should become comfortable with the *Five Principles of Media Literacy* and the terms in the *Glossary* found at the end of this text. Consider easy ways to introduce the concepts and terms over the course of the program. They should provide a critical framework for you and the girls, and will help everyone articulate questions and formulate ideas.

Remember that these sessions are meant to be flexible modules: Feel free to choose from among the parts and activities after reviewing all of the material, thinking about the girls you'll be working with and considering how many hours of programming time are available to you. Decide in advance which activities you intend to cover each day and in what depth. Consider extending the program or scheduling a second series if excitement is keen and there are still lots of ideas and activities to explore.

* Data and overview are drawn from the recent study, "Women and Minorities in Television: A study in casting and fate," a report to the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and The American Federation of Radio and TV Artists (AFTRA), June 1993, by George Gerbner, The Annenberg School for Communications, University of Pennsylvania.

Mirror, Mirror on the Screen

Purpose:

To explore how the world of TV differs from the real world and relates to it.

PART 1:

Is TV a Window on the World?

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- VCR
- Monitor
- *Girls Re-Cast TV* videotape cued to beginning of tape
- Strips of colored paper large enough for writing questions for individual girls
- Newsprint tablet
- Three large sheets of newsprint, labeled respectively as **STRONG**, **SMART** and **BOLD** with space for lots of writing on each sheet, posted around the room
- Markers
- Colored (or plain) index cards or square sheets of paper
- Pencil and paper for each girl

Videotape Contents:

This segment of the tape lasts approximately 18 minutes and contains clips from ten programs. Each clip lasts approximately two minutes. The programs, in order, are:

- *Seinfeld*
- *My So-Called Life*



- *All-American Girl*
- *Full House*
- *Roseanne*
- *Living Single*
- *Models, Inc.*
- *Spiderman* (animated cartoon)
- *M.A.N.T.I.S.*
- *Guiding Light*

Activity 1: Introductions

If the girls know one another already, explain that you'd like them to reintroduce themselves in order to set the stage for this new program. These will be special introductions in the best Girls Incorporated style.

1. Ask the girls to walk around to the three sheets labeled **STRONG**, **SMART** and **BOLD**, and write an adjective or term (or ability or action) they associate with each. Let the list get as long as necessary for each participant to write at least one word on each sheet. There are many synonyms and definitions of these words.
2. Ask three different girls to read aloud the lists produced under each word.
3. Ask all the girls to choose the list each most identifies with and then go and stand in front of the i
4. Then, group by group, ask each girl to introduce herself to everyone by saying her name, naming one adjective listed that describes her, and giving one example or reason why that adjective applies to her.
5. When all are introduced, take a final look at the lists as a group:
 - Is there a range of adjectives used to define strong, smart and bold? Discuss briefly the diverse definitions that appeared under each term.
 - Is it possible for a girl to have many of these traits at the same time? At different times in a single day? At different times during a year?
 - How might the range of actions and traits that could be considered strong, smart or bold differ depending on the situation? Ask the girls for a few examples from their own experience.

[Note: Consider keeping the sheets on STRONG, SMART and BOLD on the walls during the next sessions of the program.]

Activity 2: Playing Your Favorite Role

1. Ask the girls to focus on teenage girls on TV. Start by brainstorming a list of teenage girl or young women characters on TV shows that they watch. As each girl identifies a character, give her a colored index card and ask her to write the name of the character she would like to focus on.
2. Allow girls to be inclusive. Chances are many of the female characters they watch on TV are in their twenties. If necessary prompt them with show titles from major networks such as *Blossom*, *Married With Children*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, *On Our Own*, *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Living Single*, *Sister Sister*, *My So-Called Life*, *All-American Girl* and *Roseanne*.
3. When the girls have come up with all the names they can, collect the cards. Select half as many cards as you have girls. Choose the ones that the girls seem most familiar with as well as some of the names that provoked the loudest groans.
4. Ask the girls to pair up with a partner. Then give each pair one index card and tell them not to show it to anyone else. When each pair of girls has a card, ask them to close their eyes.
5. Speak softly. Pretend to hypnotize them. Tell them their eyelids are getting heavy. Their breathing is getting slower.
6. Tell them they are becoming the TV character written on their card. Ask them to say the character's name silently several times to themselves.
7. Give them a moment to sit in silence.
8. Ask them to stay in character and answer this question silently: "If I could do or have anything in life, I'd do or have....." One partner should focus on "do," the other should focus on "have."
9. Give the girls another moment. Ask them to imagine: Where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with?
10. Then, still speaking softly, tell them that at the snap of your fingers they will open their eyes and remember everything that's happened.
11. Snap your fingers.
12. Ask the girls to exchange ideas with their partner. Then ask for brief reports from each pair.

Try to help them summarize their responses in ways that generalize an understanding of the character. Write summary statements up on newsprint around the room. For instance, if they say, "Donna [the TV character] would have a big house and a rich husband and a fancy sports car," you might ask "What are some of the things that seem important to her? What is her environment like?"

13. What are the differences between the characters imagined by each pair of girls? (Some are defined by what they have—their possessions or physical traits; others are defined by what they do—their actions and abilities.) What are some similarities?
14. Ask the girls about differences between themselves and the characters. Discuss some of these.

Activity 3: Counting Heads

1. On as many strips of paper as you have girls, write the questions outlined below on strips of colored paper. Fold each one in half so the question is not showing. (If you have more strips of paper than questions, repeat the questions.)
 - How many women can you count?
 - How many men can you count?
 - How many girls can you count?
 - How many boys can you count?
 - How many European-Americans/whites can you count?
 - How many African-Americans/blacks can you count?
 - How many Asian-Americans can you count?
 - How many Latinas/Latinos or Hispanics can you count?
 - How many people with disabilities can you count?
 - How many people who look or act old can you count?
 - How many poor people can you count?
 - How many rich people can you count?
2. Make a fan of the slips of paper you have prepared. Approach each girl and ask her to pick one. Pass out pencils and paper to everyone.
3. Ask each girl to read the question written on her paper silently and not show it to anyone else. Then ask the girls to answer the question written on the paper by watching the following videotape. Suggest that they may wish to make notes of numbers on paper.
4. Play Session 1 of the *Girls Re-Cast TV* videotape.
5. Stop the video and ask for the girls' findings. Be prepared to replay the tape if the girls ask. On a newsprint tablet, write down their results. Try graphing the findings on a separate sheet of newsprint.

6. Then open a discussion of the numbers with the goal of generalizing their findings and relating them to the girls' own experience.
 - Which numbers jump out at you? High numbers? Low numbers?
 - Which groups of people appear a lot on television?
 - Which groups appear seldom on television?
 - How do these numbers compare with the people who inhabit the world you live in?
 - Do you know these particular shows?
 - Does this overall picture of who's on TV look similar to or different from the shows you watch? In what ways?

Statistics of interest that you might share with the girls

[Data is drawn from "Women and Minorities on Television: A study in casting and fate," a report to the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and The American Federation of Radio and Television Artists (AFTRA), June 1993, by George Gerbner, The Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania.]

- * Although Latinas/Latinos represent ten percent of the nation's population, only 1 in every 100 prime time characters on TV are Latina or Latino.
- * Although African-Americans represent 14 percent of the population, they comprise only ten percent of the prime time TV characters.
- * Although people of color are the vast majority of humankind and will comprise 50+ percent of all Americans by the year 2000, they are represented by only 13 percent of actors and characters on major network prime time shows, and by less than five percent of children's program casts.
- * Americans of Asian/Pacific origin, who are more than three percent of the U.S. population, and Native Americans, who are more than one percent, are virtually invisible on TV.
- * Although women and girls make up 52 percent of the national population, they make up only one in three prime time TV characters and one in five TV characters on Saturday morning cartoons.
- * Although 15 percent of the U.S. population is poor (economically impoverished), only one percent of the prime time TV population is poor.
- * Although older people (senior citizens) make up over 12 percent of the population, elderly characters comprise only 2.5 percent.

Thus, even though TV looks real, in many ways it isn't realistic.

7. Can you think of other ways in which TV isn't like real life?

(Some examples to get started might include the idea that conflicts always get resolved in time for the end of the show, that difficult tasks seem effortless, that mayhem and violent acts in cartoons seem painless, or that characters are always really funny.)

8. A discussion about the characters and contexts could follow. (Be prepared to replay the tape or sections of it. You might select one or two clips the girls choose.)

- Of the characters we viewed, which are strong, smart and bold?
- What makes you think so? Their actions? The way they relate to other characters in the environment?
- Which of these characters would you want to be like? Why?
- Which of these characters would you *not* want to be like? Why not?
- Do you think these characters have an impact on you or girls your age? What sort of impact?
- Do you think they have an impact on boys your age? What sort of impact?

Background Information You Might Like to Share During This Session

Why did we show a videotape like this in our first session and what is the goal of this program?

The shows on this tape were selected to give you a sense of the proportions of different groups of people you would see on an average day of watching several hours of major network TV. Americans spend about one-third of their leisure time watching TV (or with it on in their immediate environment). Most children watch TV for more hours than they go to school during any year. So the stories that shows tell, individuals and as a group, and the images conveyed on screen have a tremendous impact on the way we imagine the world around us and see ourselves in it. Even though these shows may not be the ones you watch most, they are typical of what's on mainstream TV. What's important is to begin thinking consciously about how those shows are constructed, what stories they're telling us, and why and how we react the way we do to them. *These are the elements of media literacy that we'll be exploring in this program.*

Designing Strong, Smart and Bold Characters

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- Newsprint tablet
- Pre-cut butcher paper (at least three feet wide and preferable wider) into six-foot lengths
- Markers
- Tape
- Copy of the two-sided handout, *Star of Your Show* (included in this booklet), for each girl

Activity 1: Analyzing Some Girl Characters on TV

1. Ask the girls to name a few of their favorite female characters on TV.
2. Write the characters' names on separate sheets of newsprint and leave space around the name to write additional words.
3. Hang the sheets around the room.

[Note: Try to keep the sheets hung up throughout the next sessions of the program.]

4. Proceeding character by character, ask the girls to discuss what's strong, smart and bold about each of them in a carousel brainstorming activity.
5. Ask them to move around the room in groups, writing key words close to each character's name.
6. In addition to key words, take time to talk about the girls' impressions of:
 - The character – How does she carry herself? How does she dress? What does she spend her time doing? What's important to her?
 - Her context – What are her important relationships? Family? Friends? Community? How does she treat other people? What does she value?
 - What do you think about how strong, smart and bold the character is?

Activity 2: Conceiving Your Own TV Character

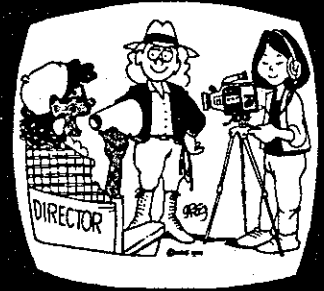
1. Divide the girls into groups of three and give each group a *Star of Your Show* handout. Explain that the central element of every TV show is the characters. TV writers spend many weeks developing characters for shows, more than they spend on other elements.
2. For the next few minutes, the girls will become TV writers. Their job is to develop their own strong, smart and bold TV character. Explain that in a later session, they will use this character as the basis for a TV series.
3. Review the sheet (front and back). Take a few minutes to talk through the questions on the first side.
4. While the girls are discussing their character, pass out the sheets of butcher paper and several markers to each group.
5. As each group completes its discussion, explain that the girls are going to make life-size drawings their character. Briefly explain to them how they will make the drawings and review the written instructions on the back of the handout.
6. Then ask them to begin drawing and annotating the drawing with key words that describe the character or important parts of her environment.
7. When the girls are done, hang the drawings in your meeting room. Ask one person from each group to stand next to their drawing and introduce the other girls to their character.
8. Some questions to ask:
 - How is your character strong, smart and bold? In what ways? Why?
 - Are there similarities among the characters the groups have conceived? Are there differences?
 - How are the characters like or different from you? Who conceived them?
 - How are their environments and relationships similar to or different from yours? Who created them?
 - Are there similar characters on the programs you watch on TV? Can you name a few?
 - What was it like to do this activity?

Star of Your Show

You're about to begin creating a TV character—one who is strong, smart and bold. You'll have to make certain decisions about her. Start by giving her a name.

Then decide:

- How old is she?
- Where does she live?
- What are her interests? What are her best subjects in school? What are her favorite after-school activities?
- What does she hope for or dream about for the future?
- What does she think about?
- What's **strong** about her?
- What's **smart** about her?
- What's **bold** about her?
- What kinds of people are in her community? (friends, family, adults, children, girls, boys, etc.)
- What does she do with her friends?
- Are her friends male or female or both?
- Are her relationships with boys the same as or different from her friendships with girls?
- What kinds of objects does she have around her (books, radios, pens, computers, etc.)?
- How does she dress? What does she look like?



**Girls
Re-Cast TV**

*Session 1
Part 2*

HANDOUT

Star Of Your Show

1. Now make a picture of your character. Start by asking one member of your group to strike a pose that shows the others how strong, smart and bold the character is. Let the others give suggestions.
2. Once you have a pose that the group likes, ask the person to lie down on a large sheet of paper using the same strong, smart and bold pose.
3. Let other members of your group trace her outline. Allow your model to get up and begin to draw clothing and other objects.
4. When you are done, write your character's name on the drawing.
5. Add key words (adjectives) that describe what your character is like. Add words or drawings that tell important things about her or show things that you like about her.

Getting Beyond Stereotypes



Purpose:

To learn to identify stereotypes, analyze their limitations and explore fuller character depictions.

PART 1:

Sex, Lies and Videotapes

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- VCR
- Monitor
- *Girls Re-Cast TV* videotape cued to the beginning of Session 2
- Newsprint tablet
- Markers
- Tape
- Paper and pencil for each girl (to be used in groups)

Videotape Contents:

This session's tape runs a total of seven minutes. It contains clips, of about one minute each, from seven shows. There are six sitcoms and one animated cartoon. Note that the clip from *Living Single* that you viewed in Session 1 is also included. The shows, in order, are:

- *Married with Children*
- *Blossom*
- *Models, Inc.*
- *New York Undercover*

- *All American Girl*
- *Conan* (animated cartoon)
- *Living Single*

Activity 1: What is Stereotyping and How Does It Work?

Defining the Terms

Remind the girls that in the previous session they talked about how some female TV characters are very concerned with their appearance but that doesn't mean that all TV characters or all girls are like that.

Tell the girls that when someone makes an assumption about a group on the basis of a few examples, it is called a stereotype. Stereotyping is an elementary form of prejudice. The most typical stereotypes involve judging people on the basis of characteristics attributed to their sex or sexuality, race, ethnic group, nationality, age or religion. Stereotypes can also be based on a person's visible physical traits such as height, weight or hair color, or on their abilities or disabilities.

1. Ask a girl to write STEREOTYPE up on a tablet.
2. Open the discussion by talking about the girls' own experience with stereotyping:
 - Have you ever been the target of stereotyping? Examples you've seen around them? Example you can name? Why were the judgments unfair?
 - What's wrong with assuming that all members of a group are like just a few?
3. Ask the girls to be imaginary TV viewers. Present the following scenario to them:
 - On Monday night, you watch a TV show about a young woman who goes on a starvation diet and her boyfriend doesn't break up with her.
 - On Tuesday night, you watch a TV show about a teenage girl who dumps her best friend so she can date the friend's boyfriend.
 - On Wednesday night, you watch a TV show about a girl who is incredibly upset because she doesn't have a date to the school dance.
4. Ask them: By Thursday night, what would you think about teenage girls and what's important to them if this were your only base of information?

[Note: An important element in stereotyping is the repetition, over and over, of the same limited view of groups and individuals.]

- What seems important to these girls?
- Would your conclusions constitute a stereotypical view of teenage girls?

- What important things do you know about teenage girls (like yourselves or your friends) that would balance out this picture?

Activity 2: Name that Stereotype

1. Now break the girls into three teams. Begin the game. Introduce yourself as the host of *Name That Stereotype* and prepare to play the tape for Session 2.
2. Everyone should view all seven clips together.
3. In a general discussion, ask the girls to name some characters or situations they think are stereotypical. You might ask questions like:
 - What interactions between characters do you remember? Between husbands and wives? Between girlfriends and boyfriends? Between men and women who don't know each other? Between male adventurers? Among members of an extended family?
 - Why do they think these are stereotyped interactions? What ideas about the characters do they reinforce for you?
4. Each team should then select one show to talk about briefly among themselves. Ask each to consider how they would expand the character or change the situation so that the stereotypical elements would be exploded. How might they change the interaction between characters?
5. Ask each group to share their ideas about their clip. Discuss why they chose as they did and what difference it might make to the viewer.

Deconstruction/Reconstruction

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- VCR
- Monitor
- *Girls Re-Cast TV* videotape, cued to *Living Single* (Note that the video clip from *Living Single* is the last segment of Session 2; rewind the tape to show this clip again)
- Copies of the *Getting Beyond Stereotypes* script for all girls (in this booklet)
- Paper and pencils for everyone

Activity 1: Reading and Viewing Living Single

1. Give each participant a copy of the *Getting Beyond Stereotypes* script.
2. Explain that this is the script of a real scene from the TV show, *Living Single*. The girls will rewrite it in small groups and act out their new versions. (TV scriptwriters typically work in such groups.)
3. Take a few moments to read the script aloud together.
4. Then play the video of the scene they have just read.
5. Discuss with the girls their reactions to this scene. Some questions you might ask to begin:
 - How did you feel reading the scene as opposed to seeing it on TV?
 - Were there differences in your response between viewing it and reading it? What differences?
 - Is it a funny scene? Why? Why not? Was it funny on TV? In the script? (You might mention that although stereotypes contribute to making a show funny, there are drawbacks to relying on them.)

6. As a group, analyze the components of the scene. (Alternately, if you prefer to work in smaller groups, write up the questions below on newsprint so that several small groups could discuss them.)
 - Who are the characters? What do you know about them?
 - Who are the actors? What do you know about them? (Queen Latifah is in this segment.)
 - How does this information affect your reaction to the scene?
 - What is the setting? What information do you get about the doctor, about the patient, about the patient's friend?
 - How do the characters' race and ethnicity, their age, apparent class, and the setting influence your thinking about this scene?
7. Discuss the stereotypical elements represented in the interactions and by the characters.
 - Why does Regine care so much about her breasts?
 - Is her reaction exaggerated? How would you feel in the same situation?
 - As a friend of Regine's, how would you respond?
 - What about the doctor? What impression do you get of her? Is she like any doctor you have ever interacted with?

Activity 2: Rewriting Living Single

1. Divide the girls into groups of three, with paper and pencil or with newsprint and markers.
2. Ask the girls to reconceive the scene in a way that doesn't rely on stereotypes but is true to the distress of someone who has just gone through surgery.

Requirements for these scriptwriters: They must open the scene with the same situation and the same characters. Khadijah has come to check in on Regine. Regine is feeling insecure about her operation. The doctor stops in to see how Regine is doing.

3. Give them a few minutes to discuss their vision and ideas. They should come to a general agreement among the group about the focus of the new scene.
4. *If time is short*, ask them to practice their new scene in small groups, based on their shared vision of how it should go. Then ask each team to act their scene out for the group.

If time permits, have them write up their scene before acting it out for the general group.

5. Discuss the activity in a large group:

- Why did you rewrite the scene as you did? What message or goal did you have in mind? What point did you want to get across?
- What was different between your versions and the original?
- Did you enjoy this process? What parts did you like most? Least?

6. Discuss careers in the media for a moment. A focus on professionals in the TV industry provides interesting contrast to characters on TV. You might ask the group questions like:

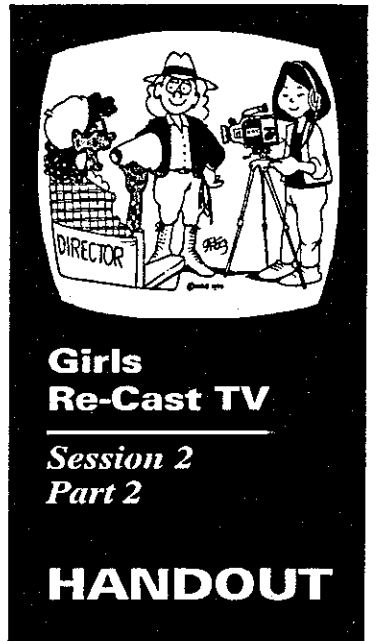
- Did you realize that each part of the production of a TV show—both in front of and behind the camera—is the task of professionals in the TV and movie industry? Typically, dozens of people would be involved in making this single scene happen, each with different skills and responsibilities.
- What *tasks* did you just perform as a group? (You were media critics, scriptwriters, editors, directors, producers and, of course, actors.)
- What are some of the *skills* that might be needed for each of these jobs?
- What sorts of professionals would be needed to *produce* this single scene of one minute? (A partial list would include scriptwriter, editor, director, producer, actors, camera people, costume designers and set designers.)

HANDOUT:

A Scene from *Living Single*

This scene is from *Living Single*.

(Hospital room. Khadijah stands over Regine's bed. Regine has just had a breast reduction because of constant back pain.)



Khadijah

Hey, she's back. How are you feeling?

Regine

Okay I guess.

(She puts her hands under the covers.)

Oh My God!

(The Doctor enters the room.)

Doctor

How are you feeling?

Regine

Flat as a board thanks to you.

Doctor

Regine, your surgery went extremely well.

You're just bandaged quite tightly.

I can assure you we left you with substantial
breast-shaped structures.

Regine

Breast-shaped structures?

What am I a muffin pan? I want cleave.

REVERSE SIDE OF HANDOUT:

A Scene from Living Single

Doctor

Trust me, as someone who's performed this procedure many many times you still have an impressive set of hooters.

Khadijah

I guess you get this a lot with your patients.

Doctor

No, she's my worst case.

Regine

I want cleave. I want cleave.

(to the doctor)

Get out!

The Medium is the Message



Purpose:

To identify and analyze the messages embedded in music television (MTV) programs and to design a program that reflects girls' own ideas about how girls and women should be represented.

PART 1:

What's TV Telling Us?

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- VCR
- Monitor
- Paper and pencils for each girl
- *Girls Re-Cast TV* videotape cued to the beginning of Session 3

Videotape Contents:

The session 3 videotape is approximately 11 minutes long. Two music video clips are between three and six minutes each; three ads are 30 seconds each. The clips, in order, are:

- John Bon Jovi, *Always*
- Crystal Water, *100% Pure Love*
- Three ads from Interactor, Braun and Microsoft

Warning: This videotape contains a sexually explicit clip from John Bon Jovi's *Always*. Be sure to view it in advance to decide if it is appropriate for viewing in your environment. It is included because it is representative of standard fare aired on MTV 24 hours each day. If you choose not to use it in the program, you might consider taping segments of other MTV shows or asking the girls to tape some of their favorites for this activity.

Activity 1: Taking a Look at MTV

1. Begin with a discussion of “messages” and how we understand them in our daily lives.
 - What does it mean to “get the message”?
 - Can you give an example of the last time you “got a message” from a friend or from your parents? How did you know you got the “right” message? What signals from people or the environment did you “read” to understand the message?
 - Can you give an example of a situation in which you’re not sure you “got the message”?
 - Can you give an example of a time when you “got a mixed message”? In what way was the message “mixed” or conflicting? How did you respond to the mixed message you got?
2. Explain that the group will be viewing the MTV clips twice. The first time, you’ll be watching in a special way—with the sound off!
3. Play the first MTV clip (John Bon Jovi) from the beginning of the Session 3 videotape. Turn the volume off.
4. Before showing the clip(s), ask the girls to focus on “the messages” they get from the visual “story” (with no sound). Explain that all media, including music videos, carry messages about who’s important, what’s important, who’s attractive and what represents appropriate behavior. Our challenge is to try to read and understand the many messages they convey.
5. After viewing the video with no sound, ask questions like:
 - What is the story in the video? What happens?
 - What words would you use to describe the women in the video? What seems important to them? Make a list together of adjectives and descriptors and write words up on newsprint.
 - How did you get that information? Describe what gave you that message. (Be prepared to replay the video.)
 - What words would you use to describe the men in the video? What seems important to them? Make a list on a sheet of newsprint.
 - How would you describe the relationships or interactions between the women and men shown on the video? How are the interactions like or unlike your own experiences?
 - Choose a character in the video (female or male): Imagine, from that character’s point of view, what messages are being conveyed by the story told? About beauty? About sex? About relationships? About music?

- From your point of view (as a viewer and a young woman), what messages did you receive from this tape? Are they straightforward or clear? Are they mixed?
 - Do you relate to any of the characters in the video? How?
 - Would you like to be any of these characters? Which ones? Why? Why not?
 - Is this the first time you are seeing a John Bon Jovi video or did you know him already? How does this affect your impressions of the video and the messages you got?
6. Rewind the Bon Jovi clip and replay it, this time with the sound up.
 7. Discuss how the messages conveyed to the girls changed by adding the lyrics.
 - Can you compare your reaction to the tape with sound to your reaction with no sound?
 - What changed for you by adding the sound?
 - Does the sound “explain” the visual images? Do the lyrics enhance the visual story or not? Do the lyrics complicate the story? Change your understanding? How?
 8. Why might viewing MTV without sound be an especially weird thing to do?
 9. Why might it be an interesting thing to do?
 10. Did you enjoy this activity? Why? Why not?
 11. Conduct the same process (steps 2-8) on the second clip on this tape or on any other MTV clip that the girls bring in. Discussion could expand to include questions like:
 - How does the depiction of men and women in this video differ from that in the previous video?
 - How do their interactions differ? How are they similar to the previous video?

Activity 2: A Taste of TV Advertising

1. Divide the girls into three groups before watching the three brief ads at the end of the tape. Ask each group to focus on either ad #1, ad #2 or ad #3. Each is 30 seconds long.
2. Ask everyone to concentrate on the general message about the product. You might write a few questions up on different sheets of newsprint so that groups could discuss one or more of them after viewing the clips. Review the questions with the girls *before* airing the tape.
 - What is the main “message” you got from the ad?
 - What visual and aural techniques are being used to sell us on this product?

- Can you remember specific images from the ad?
 - How are the actors or computer images helping convey the message?
 - Are there particular messages being conveyed about the women in the ads? About other groups of people?
 - Were you sold on this product from this ad? Why? Why not?
3. Show the video clip once and ask if they'd like to review it.
 4. Give the groups a few minutes to discuss the ads within their group.
 5. Ask each group to report on their conversation using some of the questions posted on the wall.
 6. Open up discussion to include ads that the girls like most or know best.
 - What are examples of TV commercials that you like or have watched many times?
 - Can you describe a couple of commercials (or ads) mentioned? Are these well-known among the group? Why?
 - What happens in these commercials? What are the slogans that you remember? Are certain actors important? Why? Certain settings or attitudes?
 - Can you describe why you like the ad or why you remember it so well?
 - Is there a connection between your attraction to the commercial and your purchase or use of the product? What is the connection?
 - What are the advertisers trying to touch in you or other people with this ad? Give an example what you mean.

Planning for the next session

Before concluding this session, and in order to prepare for the next one, save five minutes of planning time with the girls. For the activity in Part 2 of Session 3, ask the girls to decide on one popular song that they like. Then ask for volunteers who will write out the lyrics (with repetition) in clear, photocopiable form. The song should be copied for all participants before the beginning of the next session. If you would also like to play the song for the group, arrange for one girl to bring a cassette (or other recording) of it to the next meeting.

PART 2:

Learning to Use Storyboards

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- Functioning TV (not just a monitor)
- One *Storyboard* handout per girl (one page, in this booklet)
- Blank sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" paper, enough to provide several sheets for each girl
- Newsprint tablet
- Markers
- Colored pencils for each group of girls
- Written lyrics of a single song popular among the girls, photocopied for each to work with (see instructions at the end of Part 1 of this session above)
- One index card, prepared as viewfinder, for each girl (cut a hole approximately 1"x1" square in each card or piece of paper)
- Audio tape or CD player and a copy of the song the girls have selected (optional)
- VCR (optional)
- *Girls Re-Cast TV* videotape (optional)

The VCR and tape are for your reference; although the tape is not required in this activity, you may choose to replay a segment if girls ask.

Activity 1: Identifying Camera Shots

1. Prepare to watch network TV and to change channels several times within a few minutes.

The purpose here is to become comfortable identifying the different camera shots that, together, make up any TV show. Camera shots are the technical basics of TV production. Explain to the girls that every time the picture changes in a TV show, they are seeing a new shot.

2. Turn on the TV set to any channel to begin. Ask the girls to call out “new shot” every time they see a change in the picture. Change the channel after they have identified a few new shots from a single show. Try to catch five or six different shows, so you see how the pacing of shots changes depending on whether it is MTV, commercials, game show or soap opera. Once everyone seems confident about identifying shots, turn off the TV.
3. Discuss briefly the differences in camera use on the different kinds of shows you watched.
 - What kinds of shows were just watched? (MTV, commercials, soap opera, talk show)
 - What differences in camera use did you notice? Between a “show” and a “commercial”?
 - Did the difference in the pace of camera shots make a difference in your response to the program or commercial? What kind of difference?

Activity 2: Creating Your Own MTV Storyboard

1. Pass out copies of the *Storyboard* handout (in this booklet). Ask everyone to look at the three basic types of shots shown. Refer to the *Glossary* in this booklet for definitions of these terms.
 - closeups or close shots
 - medium shots
 - long shots
2. Pass out the index card viewfinders and ask the girls to frame up close shots, medium shots, and long shots for themselves.

In this session the girls will learn to use storyboards, just as MTV and TV directors do. Directors use storyboards to plan how their video will look before it gets produced.

3. Hand out the sheets of 8 1/2”x11” paper to each girl. Explain that directors use storyboards like comic strips. One frame in the storyboard represents one shot in the video. Each sheet of paper should represent one frame on their storyboard.
4. Divide the girls into pairs and give out copies of the lyrics for the song the group chose to use for this exercise. Explain that each pair of girls will produce a storyboard for two lines of the song.

5. As a large group, read aloud the lyrics of the song (or play them if you have a tape player). Discuss the song briefly. Remind the girls to put the mental picture of the video out of their minds.
 - What is the song about?
 - What story does it tell?
 - Why do you like it? Why don't you like it?
 - What images come to mind when you think about this song—the music and the lyrics? The atmosphere evoked? The setting? The voices?
 - What stereotypes are used?
6. Assign two lines of the song to each pair of girls. Suggest that they write the words of the song underneath the picture frames on the sample storyboard handout. Note that stick figures are used by the most sophisticated storyboard developers!
7. Suggest a way for the girls to proceed:
 - First, each pair might talk about the images that are evoked when hearing the song played. Then, think of specific images evoked by the music or lyrics in the two lines each pair is working with.
 - Then, each team should try drawing a few panels to illustrate each line. If the two girls want to work separately, suggest they take one line each. If the girls get into this activity, at least 20 minutes might be needed to develop their storyboards. Remind them to write the lyrics underneath the panels. Aim for between one and three panels (or sheets) per line.
8. When everyone is done, mount the storyboards in sequence on the wall and take time for everyone to walk around and look at the group's music video storyboard.
9. Discuss with the group how they "read" the storyboard and whether it changes their impression of the song they know so well. Questions might include:
 - How do the pictures change your sense of the song?
 - What can you tell about the characters or actors being depicted?
 - Are the characters presented as strong, smart and bold?
 - How are the relationships in the song depicted in the drawings?
 - What sense of the atmosphere is evoked by the pictures?
 - Would you like to view this MTV video?

HANDOUT:

Storyboard

Sample of shots used




Closeup



Medium Shot



Long Shot



**Girls
Re-Cast TV**

*Session 3
Part 2*

HANDOUT

REVERSE SIDE OF HANDOUT:

Storyboard

The storyboard consists of a 3x4 grid of 12 empty rectangular frames. The frames are arranged in three rows and four columns. The first and third columns have larger, rounded rectangular frames, while the second and fourth columns have smaller, narrower rectangular frames. The entire grid is set against a dark, textured background.

Taking Action



Purpose:

To explore how the TV ratings system works and how it influences programming; to consider the power girls have to influence the system; and to experiment with developing new strong, smart and bold shows.

PART 1:

What Influence Can Girls Have on Programs and Ratings?

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- Index cards or equivalent pieces of paper (five to eight for each girl)
- Eight mailing envelopes
- Newsprint tablet
- Tape
- Markers
- Pencil and paper for each girl

Activity 1: Who Decides What Goes on and Stays on the Air?

1. Begin the session by asking the girls: Who decides which TV shows go on the air or stay there? Ask the girls to raise their hands if they think:
 - the public decides
 - the people who work at the TV stations and networks decide
 - the advertisers decide

After votes have been cast, explain that *all* the girls were right. All three—the public, the TV stations and the advertisers—decide.

2. Explain briefly how the ratings system works: People watch shows. Depending on how many people watch, the TV stations decide whether a show is a success or not. Determining how many people watch is done by a process called *ratings* and ratings are basically a popularity contest.

Advertisers are concerned about how many people are watching but they are also concerned about *who* is watching. The major rating systems break down “the public” into many groups—by sex, age, race and ethnicity, geographic location, economic income, social class, and many other factors. By placing devices in a few thousand homes to monitor how many hours and on which channels the TV is watched, they estimate (extrapolate) “the public’s” viewing patterns in fine detail.

3. Discuss which public we are talking about. For example, ratings companies are able to estimate how many boys and how many girls between the ages of 11-14 watch specific shows that are targeted toward young people. The public is a big term that always needs refining. Consider these questions:

- Which parts of the TV viewing public are represented in the room? (Consider the many ways that rating companies can break down groups of the public.)
- Most shows on TV are geared toward viewers between the ages of 18-49. Do you know why that is? (Because this age group is estimated to have the most money to spend on products advertised.)
- Very few shows, proportionately (although a few more each year), are targeted toward *girls*, although many shows are targeted toward “children,” “boys,” or “teens.” Given the system we’ve just discussed, does this seem strange? Why? Why not?

4. As a group, using newsprint on the wall, make a list of the products advertised on TV (or in the newspaper) that the girls have purchased this week. Make another list of the products their parents or sisters and brothers have purchased in the last month. Make a third list of products their parents have purchased for the girls. Make a fourth list of products purchased by girls or families in the last year.

- Are these long lists?
- Are certain kinds of products purchased by many of the girls? By many of the families?
- Can you group the products in any way? (Clothes? What kinds? Food? What kinds?)

5. Reconsider the list of three groups who, together, decide what goes on TV. What is the relationship between you, as members of the public, and the two other key groups that decide? Do the following as a large group or in small ones:

- On a piece of newsprint, diagram the relationship among the three—the public, the TV network or stations, and the advertisers. (Begin by positioning the three groups as points on a triangle.)

- How many connections in different directions can you make (by drawing lines or arrows)?
- Can you explain the relationships you've just drawn?
- How might you consider making your voice(s) heard?

Activity 2: Ratings on the Girls Incorporated TV Network

1. Tell the girls that they will now be asked to decide which shows will stay on the air on the Girls Incorporated TV Network.
2. Make up the roster of shows currently airing on the network by asking the girls to call out names of several shows they like a lot, several they like a little, and several they really don't like at all. List (or ask volunteers to list) examples from three categories on newsprint taped up around the room. Then ask the group to select two to three shows from each list.
3. Using one piece of newsprint per show, write the title at the top of the page and post it on the wall. Also write the name of each show on a mailing envelope taped on the wall near each piece of newsprint.
4. Give each girl enough index cards to cast a vote for each show.
5. Now explain the rules of the game to the girls:
 - Everyone may vote for all shows, ranking each from 1 to __. The number 1 should go to your top choice. Number 2 should go to your second highest ranked show, etc.
 - The criteria for ranking each show are the Girls Incorporated standards that support the health and well-being of STRONG, SMART and BOLD girls. The degree to which you think a show meets these standards in a fun way should determine the ranking you give it compared to the others.
6. Give the girls time to consider how they want to vote, write numbers on individual cards and walk around the room to cast their votes in the envelopes on the wall.
7. Ask several girls to total the numbers cast for each of the shows and to write up the total number on the newsprint.
8. Look together at the totals: the lowest total number indicates the most popular show, the second lowest total indicates the second most popular show, etc. Ask girls to note the rating the group has given each show in a different colored marker on each sheet.
9. Open a discussion about why the girls voted as they did.
 - What are the elements of the most highly rated show that influenced your vote? Why is that show high on your strong, smart and bold list?

- What about one of the shows that got a middle-level rating? What parts of it influenced your vote? What are its “problems” according to the strong, smart and bold criteria? Is it a mixed bag? Does it give you mixed signals? Can you describe them?
 - Discuss one of the least popular shows. How would you change it in order to meet your strong smart and bold criteria?
10. Look at the Community Action/Visibility Activities sheet in your Girls Incorporated Week Kit to develop a plan for publicising your ratings. Use the ratings in the same way you would use the “picks and pans” list described there.

PART 2:

Girls Re-Cast TV

Length:

- 45-75 minutes

Materials:

- Copies of the *Treatment* handout (in this booklet) for everyone
- Paper and pencil for everyone
- Newsprint and markers for each group

Defining the Terms

Explain to the girls that TV producers develop brief statements about the shows they want to produce. These brief statements are called *treatments* and are the first steps toward developing the idea for any new show. In the last segment of this program the girls will develop a treatment for their own TV series. In the best Girls Incorporated spirit, their shows should be directed toward an under-served population—strong, smart and bold girls.

Activity 1: Imagining a New Kind of TV Show About Girls Who are Strong, Smart and Bold

Before asking the girls to begin work on the treatment, focus their creative energies by discussing what kinds of TV shows would address things they really care about.

- Can you give examples of shows that exist (or used to exist) that you really like? Can you analyze why you like those shows? What do you like about the characters? What are the story lines? What action takes place? What relationships are formed or developed? Are the shows animated cartoons, sitcoms, science fiction, dramas, soap operas, MTV series, sports, documentaries, game shows or something else?

- Can you imagine a new show that would talk about characters, stories and conflicts that you really care about? What would be some of the elements of such a show?
- Do you remember the character you created in the first session of this program? Do you think she might fit into your new show? Why or why not?

Activity 2: Developing a Treatment for Your Own TV Series

1. Distribute copies of the *Treatment* handout (in this booklet). Then break the girls into groups of three or four.
2. Review the handout together. Explain that a treatment is a one- or two-page proposal used by a producer to “shop” a new idea to networks or “backers” (funders).
3. To begin thinking about the treatment for their own TV series, you might suggest that the girls start with the character(s) they developed in Session 1 for inspiration.
4. Give the girls 20+ minutes to work on the treatment.
5. If the group seems up to it, and time permits, you might add an extra *writing* step in the preparation of the treatment: After talking through the key elements of the treatment, each group could outline their presentation on one or two pieces of newsprint. The summary could be hung on the wall and used to support the presentation of the volunteer.
6. Role-playing by the audience during each presentation: Ask the girls which roles they would like to play as potential supporters who have come to hear the presentations. Some roles might be:
 - potential backers who are interested in profiting from their investment of money (regardless of show content)
 - actual girls who are being polled to see if they like the idea and would watch the show
 - actual boys who are being polled for the same reason
 - network executives concerned about ratings
 - advertisers trying to figure out whether it would appeal to their market
 - potential investors with progressive politics, motivated by their wish to encourage imaginative new programming for and about girls on TV.
7. Ask a volunteer (or two) from each group to give a brief presentation (two or three minutes) explaining their idea to everyone.

8. After each presentation, make time for questions from the other girls, who have assumed new characters for the occasion.
9. Read the Community Action/Visibility Activities sheet in your Girls Incorporated Week Kit for ways to use your treatment to generate public attention to media images of girls and Girls Re-Cast TV.

Activity 3: Reflecting on Today's Project and This Media Literacy Program in General

Take five to ten minutes to ask the girls to reflect on the last activity and the program overall. Please make notes of their responses.

Possible questions:

- Did you enjoy the project today? Which parts did you like most?
- Do you think that you now watch TV differently than you did before? How can you tell if you do? If you don't, why don't you?
- Which parts of the program overall did you like the best?
- Which parts did you like the least?
- What does the term media literacy mean to you?
- Do you have ideas for ways to pursue some of the activities you were most interested in?

HANDOUT:

Treatment

Try your hand at developing an idea for a TV show. Make your characters people that you would like to watch.

The first step in developing a TV series is called a *treatment*. In the treatment, producers decide who the characters are and what kinds of problems they will face.

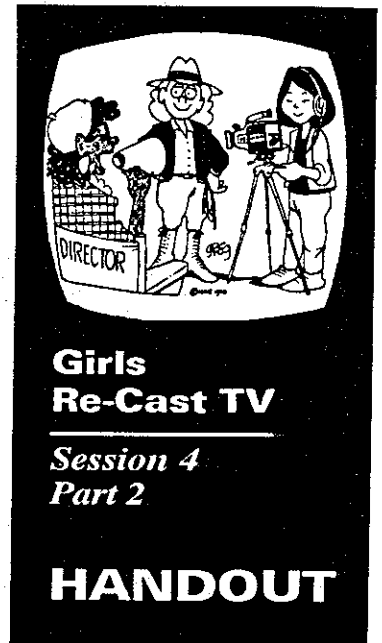
In order to develop your show, you'll have to make decisions about the following things:

Creative decisions:

- What is the title of your show?
- Who are the characters?
 - How old are they?
 - Do they reflect diverse cultural backgrounds?
 - Where do your characters live?
 - What kinds of problems do they face?
 - What do your characters care about?

Business Decisions:

- Who will watch your show?
- What kinds of advertisers might be interested in reaching the people who will watch your show?



(over)

Treatment

Key Questions to Answer to Prepare Your Pitch:

- Why do you think this show will be successful?
- Can you summarize its plot in a couple of phrases?

[Hint: Consider beginning your presentation with these last points.]

DID YOU KNOW?

More and more women are entering the television business. Today, several women producers are behind some of TV's most successful programs including Marcy Carsey (*Grace Under Fire, The Cosby Show, Roseanne, and A Different World*), Diane Englis (*Murphy Brown and Love and War*), and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason (*Designing Women, Evening Shade and Hearts Afire.*)

Glossary of Key Terms



Here are some basic terms that are introduced throughout the program. You might choose to select a few to discuss briefly as they come up in each discussion. You might also consider handing out this sheet to the girls. The goal is to introduce some key technical and critical words and to support their integration into the girls' vocabulary during the course of this program.

Comfortable use of these terms is an important step toward becoming media literate!

Analysis – the process of separating something into its constituent elements in order to study its nature or determine its essential features and their relations.

Animated Cartoon – a motion picture consisting of a sequence of drawings (by hand or on computer), each so slightly different from the preceding one that, when filmed and run through a projector, the figures seem to move.

Character – a person represented in a TV show, movie, play or story.

Closeup or Close Shot – a camera shot taken at a very short distance from the subject, to permit a close and detailed view of an object or action.

Director – the person responsible for the interpretative aspects of a stage, film or TV production, and who supervises the integration of all the elements, such as acting, staging and lighting, required to realize the writer's conception.

Edit – the moment between two different shots in a TV show or movie.

Long Shot – a camera shot that, taken at a relatively great distance from the subject, permits a broad view of a scene.

Media or Mass Media – the means of communication, such as radio, TV, newspapers and magazines, that reach or influence very large numbers of people.

Media Literacy – the ability to communicate competently in all media—print and electronic—as well as to understand, analyze and evaluate the powerful images, words and sounds that make up our contemporary mass media culture.

Medium Shot – a camera shot in which the subject is in the middle distance, permitting some of the background to be seen.

Message – the point, moral or meaning of a gesture, story, TV show, movie or play. “Getting the message” implies that we understand or infer the meaning of something from the context in which we experience it. There can be multiple or conflicting messages conveyed in real-life situations, TV shows, movies, plays and stories.

Producer – the person who exercises general supervision of a TV, film, stage or radio production and responsible for raising money, hiring technicians and artists, and pulling the whole thing together.

Ratings – a system that measures how many viewers are watching (or listening to) a particular TV (or radio) program. (The Nielsen ratings are the most influential ratings for TV.)

Shot – what one sees through the camera viewfinder.

Sitcom – short for situation comedy, a type of TV series, typically half an hour long, made up of discrete episodes about the same group of characters, such as a members of a family or a small community.

Stereotype – a narrow and usually negative depiction of a group or a person belonging to that group. Too often, stereotypes are rooted in historical racism, sexism and other forms of bigotry stemming from a lack of awareness of or exposure to others who may be different. *[From “Monitoring the Media: What We Can Do about Media Stereotypes,” a pamphlet published by Screen Actors Guild (SAG) and The American Federation of Radio and Television Artists (AFTRA), June 1993.]*

Storyboard – a comic book-like series of drawings that illustrates how a director plans to shoot a TV program or video.

Treatment – a brief overview of a new TV program or movie.

Five Key Concepts of Media Literacy



Girls Re-Cast TV builds on the key concepts of media literacy established by researchers and educators in the field. Adult facilitators should review these points and become comfortable with them in order to share these concepts with the girls during the program.

1. All media are constructions.

Media are carefully manufactured cultural products. They create an emotional experience that *looks* like reality, but of course is not—because it is all made up by one person—or many people—who select this picture and edit out those words or include this scene while another 20 versions land on the cutting room floor. Media are not “real” but they affect people in real ways because we take and make meaning for ourselves out of what we see, hear and read.

2. Media have unique “languages”.

Media language is unique to each form of communication—whether newspapers, TV game shows or horror movies. The language works because it is used over and over as a shorthand for conveying intended meanings: scary music heightens fear, camera angles convey relationships, headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor system of media language heightens our appreciation and enjoyment of media experiences, as well as helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

The best way to understand how media is put together is to do just that. Media production and media analysis are the two sides of the media literacy coin.

3. Audiences negotiate “meaning”.

No two people see the same movie or hear the same song on the radio; even parents and children do not see the same TV! Each reader or viewer uses prior knowledge and experience in the process of reading, watching or listening. Skillful readers and viewers examine different stylistic features of a media product and pay careful attention to the context in which the message occurs.

This concept turns the tables on the idea of TV viewers as just passive “couch potatoes”. We may not be conscious of it but we are constantly trying to make sense of what we see, hear or read. The fundamental skills of media literacy allow us to be conscious and deliberate about what we experience, and, more important, about how we interpret media experiences in our lives.

4. Media have commercial interests.

Media are ad-driven businesses. Newspapers lay out ads on their pages first. The space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, TV programs don't exist simply to entertain us. They are there to ensure that a certain number of viewers will be watching when a commercial comes on. Corporate sponsors pay TV stations based on the number of people they expect to be watching. But not just anybody will do. Advertisers want to attract specific kinds of viewers who have the ability to spend their money, or can influence others to spend money, on the advertisers' products. TV programs are designed so that the right people will watch when the commercials come on.

Maybe it's not the way it ought to be—but, in truth, most media are provided to us, as researcher George Gerbner says, by private corporations with something to *sell* rather than by the family, church or school with something to *tell*.

5. Media have embedded values and points of view.

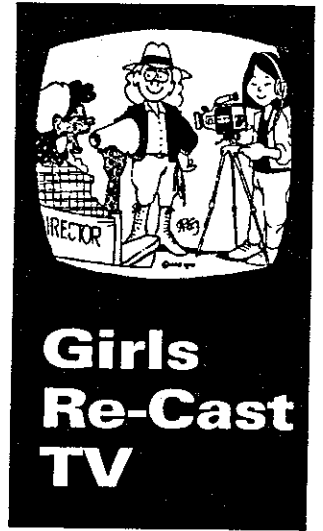
Media, by their very nature *being* constructed, carry a subtext of who and what is important—at least to the person or persons doing the constructing. There are no value-free media and never will be. This presents a challenge for all of us to learn to “read” the media critically in order to uncover the value-laden messages that are embedded in them. Only then can we judge whether to accept or reject these messages as we negotiate our way each day through our mediated environment.

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For additional background resources or information on the media literacy movement in the United States, please contact the

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Videotape Contents



Sessions 1, 2 and 3 of the curriculum are accompanied by clips of television shows aired in late 1994 on major broadcast and cable networks. Each session is composed of multiple clips. There is no videotape segment for Session 4. The complete tape is approximately 36 minutes long. Following are the titles of the shows and brief descriptions of their themes.

Session 1

Approximately 18 minutes total; individual clips are between one and three minutes.

- *Seinfeld* is a sitcom that revolves around the lives and ethics of four main characters (three men and one woman), all white European Americans, middle- to upper middle-class, who live in New York City.
- *My So-Called Life* is a prime time drama that tackles the teenage experience from the point of view of an introspective young white girl attending public school in Pittsburgh.
- *All-American Girl* is a sitcom which portrays members of three generations of a middle-class Korean American family living under the same roof.
- *Full House* is a sitcom that depicts a divorced father and his two best male friends, all white European Americans, who share household and parental responsibilities for his three daughters.
- *Roseanne* is a sitcom that confronts tough issues facing a white, European American, working-class family and community in the Midwest.
- *Living Single* is a sitcom that focuses on four African American women, all unmarried, funny and financially independent, who share a house together.
- *Models, Inc.* is a prime time drama that presents a slew of twentysomething characters, all white except for one African American woman, who work in different capacities in the modeling industry.
- *Spiderman* is an animated cartoon based on the comic book and cartoon strip character by Stan Lee. It tells the tale of a scientist who contracts supernatural powers from a spider bite and uses those powers to combat supervillians and monsters.
- *M.A.N.T.I.S.* is a science fiction-based action show which features a paraplegic biophysicist who, by means of a mechanical exoskeleton he invented, fights crime on the West Coast.
- *Guiding Light* is a daytime soap opera and is one of the oldest soap operas still being produced on TV.

Session 2

Approximately seven minutes total; individual clips are one minute each.

- *Married with Children* is a sitcom that uses extreme familial stereotypes (i.e., nagging wife, sloth husband, sexy daughter and hormone-driven brother) to satirize a white, European American, working-class family in Chicago.
- *Blossom* is a sitcom that tells a coming-of-age story about a competent, outgoing, European American teenage girl who lives with her older and younger brothers and father.
- *Models, Inc.* (see description above)
- *New York Undercover* is a police action drama that features two police detectives, one African American and the other Puerto Rican, who work in New York City.
- *All-American Girl* (see description above)
- *Conan* is an animated cartoon based on Conan the Barbarian, a fantastic action hero whose world is magical and whose main asset is his physical strength.
- *Living Single* (see description above)

Session 3

Approximately 11 minutes total; music video clips are between three and six minutes; ads are 30 seconds each.

- John Bon Jovi, *Always*
- Crystal Waters, *100% Pure Love*
- Three ads from Interactor, Braun and Microsoft

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