4c

Media Stereotypes: How Differences Divide

Respect and harmony in a multicultural society depend on people's ability to understand and recognize the difference between a generalization (a flexible observation) and a stereotype (a rigid conclusion). The goal of this activity is for students to recognize the role media play in creating and perpetuating stereotypes. Using gender as the subject of inquiry, students collect and analyze pictures of females and males from magazines and then write a generalization and a stereotype for each image. By creating their own generalizations and stereotypes students sharpen their awareness of the difference between the two and become more sensitive to the values and points of view implicit in media portrayals.

Objectives: Students will be able to…
1. Understand the difference between generalizations and stereotypes.
2. Compare and contrast gender representations.
3. Critically analyze media for gender stereotypes.

Correlation With McRel National Standards:
Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks
 ➢ Grades 6-8: (S19/B4)
 ➢ Grades 9-12: (S9/B5), (S10/B10)

Materials/Preparation:
1. Enough magazines for every student to be able to cut up part of one. If possible, it is best for students to bring in magazines from their homes so that the images reflect their own media environment.
2. Poster paper and tape or glue.

Teaching Strategies:

I. Generalization vs. Stereotype

 ➢ Explain to students the differences between a *generalization* and a *stereotype*. Both are ways of organizing information with truths and falsities, but they differ in their form and use.
   • Generalizations are flexible descriptions about *some* or *many* that can help to begin an inquiry and expand possibilities.
   • Stereotypes are rigid conclusions about *all* or *most* that tend to end inquiry and limit possibilities.
   • For example: "Some white people have no rhythm" is a generalization but "White people can't dance" is a stereotype.
 ➢ Create generalizations through discussing differences between boys and girls.
   ? How do they dress differently?
   ? What do they do differently?
   ? How are they treated differently?
   ? What things does each group tend to like and/or dislike?
 ➢ Have students take some of the ideas mentioned and practice saying or writing them as generalizations and then changing them into stereotypes.

II. Creating Collages

- ➤ Pass out magazines to every student and have them cut out pictures of males and females from the magazines and separate into two piles.

- ➤ Have students create two class collages by gluing or taping all their pictures of males on one piece of poster paper and the images of females on another

III. Uncovering Differences

- ➤ Compare the two collages and create a Venn diagram to analyze the differences and similarities in the portrayals. Discuss what values and lifestyles students see most often represented.

- ➤ In teams, have students write sentences about men and women based on the collages and Venn diagram. For each idea they should write two sentences: a generalization and a stereotype.

- ➤ Share their sentences and question the values communicated in both generalizations and stereotypes.

- ➤ Discuss the role media play in creating and/or perpetuating stereotypes.
    - ❓ When are media "simply entertaining" and when are they "teaching"?
    - ❓ When do media images become stereotypes?
    - ❓ Do media create new stereotypes or just repeat stereotypes already common in society?
    - ❓ Should media try to end using stereotypes that may be harmful?

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Teaching Tip: Understanding Gender Differences

It is important for students to understand that males and females act, dress and think differently in different cultures because the majority of our gender identity is *learned*. For example, research has proven that boys are not naturally more aggressive and girls are not biologically more nurturing; these are all learned behaviors. Where do we learn these behaviors? Although media images are not the primary source of learned behaviors (parents and family have a much stronger influence) have students consider what role media may play in shaping our desires, ideas and identities.