

LESSON: Stereotyping and Rating the Ads

Overview

LGBTQ youth have told us that they can experience serious repercussions when some of their teachers decide to focus specifically on material about LGBTQ issues in discussions with their entire class. From the experiences they discussed, these materials can bring on a barrage of taunts, name-calling and other forms of harassment including bullying that can take place outside of class or outside of school.

In this lesson, LGBTQ issues are raised within the broader context of other media stereotypes with which students may be familiar. In this lesson, stereotyping itself is intended to become the focus, whether it's based on stereotypes involving issues such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression/identity or religion.

Objectives:

- Identify images conveying stereotypes in advertising
- Discuss possible effects of stereotypes in advertising on individuals and the broader society
- Explore the use of an ad rating system to help recognize both positive and negative messages conveyed in ads

Level: High School

Time: 1 class period (can be easily extended)

Preparation and Materials:

- Access to Internet (for at least a few students)
- Handout: Ad Rating Scale

Procedures

There are those who believe that the media images we see all around us shape the way we feel and ultimately the way we behave toward members of the group represented. Let's look at some ads that might be of concern to those who have expressed this point of view.

Make certain you address other examples of stereotyping and all its ramifications before addressing LGBTQ stereotypes.

Below are some possible examples you may want to consider for initiating a discussion about stereotyping:

- Check out a few ad examples featuring females in the gallery of offenders on the About Face website and discuss
- Watch this excellent video clip from Independent Lens about stereotyping of Native Americans.
- Discuss some of the stereotypes you see mentioned in this ad: THE MOST RACIST COMMERCIAL EVER!!!!!!!!!!
- Watch this video and then discuss how it might relate to some of the media portrayals of African American males
- Discuss this video that focuses on stereotyping of people from the Middle East; note also the comments about Latinos here

After discussing the ways in which media target some other groups, turn to LGBTQ representations in media:

- Watch this Pepsi Max Commercial.
- Why do you think the Commercial Closet, a website that rates ads targeting LGBTQ individuals gave this their AdRespect score of 100? Why might this group find it important to rate the ads that are out there in the mainstream media? (i. e. consider some of the ways that LGBTQ individuals are sometimes portrayed?)
- Also it's important to note that a particular individual may represent more than one group stereotyped by the media. Consider that there are African American Moslems, Gay Native Americans, etc. You may wish to explore this issue when discussing other stereotyped groups as well.

Activity

Randomly assign students to work on 1 of 4 teams.

Have the teams choose the group they will target for this assignment by randomly selecting a slip of paper with the group's name on it from a cup or box.

- Each team will focus their attention on one group. (One team will focus on LGTBQ. The other three teams will focus on three groups of your choice (e.g. females, African American males, people of Middle Eastern descent, Hispanic individuals, etc.)
- Then provide the entire class with a copy of the AdRespect Rating System from the Commercial Closet website.
- The assignment for the LGBTQ group is to find examples online of ads that the site Commercial Closet should consider and rate these examples using the AdRespect rating system already provided them.
- For the other three groups, the assignment is to design a rating scale for their group using the AdRespect scale as a model. Then if they have time, they are to try using the scale they have designed to rate an ad they find online.

Close the session by having students discuss the scales they have designed and having the LGBTQ group discuss their use of the AdRespect scale to rate sample ads they found online.

Assessment

Write a short essay about their observations and conclusions based on the attempt by their group to design and/or implement an AdRespect scale. Ask the students to discuss in their essays how some of their conclusions might apply to the groups considered by the other class teams (i.e. LGBTQ, African American, etc.)