

Critiquing Girl World

Objectives:

- To identify the pressures girls feel to be a certain kind of girl
- To question why some feelings, thoughts and behaviors are unacceptable
- To examine the ways in which gender boundaries limit girls
- To consider ways to expand the boundaries that limit girls

Time: 40 minutes

Directions:

On a piece of newsprint draw a large box.

Ask the girls to brainstorm the characteristics and behaviors that are considered acceptable or expected for girls in their school and community. Write these ideas inside the box.

Next ask girls to consider the characteristics and behaviors that are not okay or acceptable for girls in their school or community. Write these ideas outside the box.

Identify slurs or names girls are called if they don't fit in the box. Write these names on arrows pointing at the box. Discuss how these names control girls' behavior and looks so that girls usually try to stay within the box's boundaries.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does it feel to be boxed in?
2. How do peers, parents and teachers react if a girl's traits and actions fall within the box? How do these same people react if a girl's traits or actions fall outside the box?
3. Is there any risk for a girl if her actions or traits fall outside the box? In what ways do negative slurs and names control girls' behavior?
4. What problems might girls face if they don't move out of the box? In what ways might this limit what girls do and how they act?
5. What would need to change (at school, at home, on TV, etc.) in order to include more traits and behaviors in the box?

Facilitator Tip:

Names that girls call each other when they don't fit in the box can be graphic and sometimes painful. Depending on the age of the group and your comfort level, you might want to suggest girls discuss the words without saying them out loud.

