

Appendix 15R

Brainstorm Guidelines for Assessing Ageism and Adultism in the Media

Explain that the media is a major socializing institution that reinforces ageist and adultist stereotypes and creates a culture where the subordination of the old and young is normalized. Share the following points that serve to illustrate ways that the media helps to normalize the subordination of young people and elders. Use examples from your own observations for each of these points.

- Young people are portrayed as self-absorbed, interested only in their own fun, gullible, and easily led astray. Young people of color are particularly shown as prone to crime, drug use, and teen pregnancy.
- News about younger people, especially young people of color, usually presents them as causing trouble.
- Elders are stereotyped as frail, weak, unattractive, useless, sinister, evil, incompetent, irrelevant, undesirable and/or comical, as side props to main characters, or not portrayed at all.
- Older women are even less likely to be seen on television. Older people of color and older gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender people are largely non-existent.
- News about older people usually presents them as having a serious problem or need, reinforcing the concept of the elderly as frail and a burden on society.

Ask participants to develop two guidelines for assessing the portrayal of elders and young people in the media. After two minutes, ask each participant to share one guideline

and write it on newsprint. After all have shared, add any additional suggestions. Review the list and delete any items that are not consistent with the definitions of oppression discussed earlier. Some examples of guidelines for assessing ageism or adultism in the media include:

1. Does the image legitimize limiting the power of young people or elders?
2. Does the image belittle young people or elders?
3. Does the image make humor at the expense of the dignity of young people or elders?
4. Does the image suggest that violence against young people or elders is acceptable or tolerable?
5. Is the image respectful toward young people and elders?
6. Does the image legitimize a one-down power relationship between young people, elders, and others?
7. Does the image legitimize lack of participation by elders or young people in decision making about things that affect their lives and actions?