Media Stereotypes

- Stereotyped characters can negatively influence the way we view real people in society. Television tends to depict racial groups, as well as genders, in the same manner. More often than not these groups are stereotyped in a negative way by television.

- People who watch large amounts of television begin to view these people negatively in real life. They base their opinions on how they see these groups on television. Positive stereotypes can also be found by viewing television. However, there are far fewer positive stereotypes then negative ones.

Stereotypes are understood to be different things to different people:
- Durkin (1995) describes them as being based on extreme characteristics attributed to the group with usually negative values attached to that group.
- Sprafkin and Liebert (1988) added that a stereotype is applied, whenever a group is depicted or portrayed in such a way that all its members appear to have the same characteristics, attitudes or life conditions.

Racial Stereotypes
Although racial stereotypes have not received the attention which gender stereotypes have, studies have shown that many racial stereotypes have been conveyed through television.

Some of these stereotypes include:
- Italians were generally depicted on television as Mafia hoodlums.
- Asian people are perceived as invaders or karate experts.
- Mexican people as comics, “banditos,” or gang members.
- Aboriginal people as savages, victims, cowards, or medicine men.
- People from the Middle East are seen as terrorists or oil sheiks.
- Homosexuals as being effeminate.
- Black people as being lazy or gang members
- White people as racist

Positive stereotypes:
- All Blacks are great basketball players
- All Asians are smart
- All Latinos dance well
- White males are successful

Gender Stereotypes
Gender stereotypes are dangerous because they might create unequal or unfair treatments to a certain person who chooses to defy people’s assumptions about his/her gender. (See next page for common gender stereotypes).
Most Common Gender Stereotypes

There are four basic examples of gender stereotypes:

1. **Personality Traits:** Women are supposed to be shy, passive and submissive. Women are organized and clean. Men are expected to be tough, aggressive, dominant and self-confident. Men are considered lazy and messy.

2. **Domestic Behaviours:** Women are supposed to cook and do housework. Women are better at raising children. Stay-at-home mothers are better than working mothers. On the other hand, men are better at household repairs. Men cannot cook, sew, or care for their children. Men always tell their wives what to do.

3. **Occupations:** Women are supposed to have “clean” jobs such as teachers, nurses, secretaries, and librarians. Women are not good at math. Women are supposed to make less money than men. Women are not politicians. Women cannot be presidential candidates. On the other hand, Men are supposed to have “dirty jobs” like mechanics, construction workers, plumbers, and engineers. Men are good at math. Men are better doctors. Men are supposed to be in charge at work and should make more money than women. Men are better politicians.

4. **Physical Appearance:** Generally speaking, women are expected to be short and slender, small and delicate, while men are supposed to be tall with broad shoulders. However, physical appearance gender stereotyping varies from culture to culture. In cultures where men are small in size, masculinity is determined by acting macho. Acting macho for men would mean getting involved in fights, drinking alcohol, and getting into fights. For women who act “macho” in some cultures or smoke, drink, and swear often are considered “masculine”.

**Female gender stereotypes** play on the notion of women’s inequality to men. Women are portrayed as more emotional, sensitive, dependent, weaker, family oriented, less competitive. Women are typically younger than men on television and usually disappear between the ages of 35 and 50. Ironically, women are five times more likely to be blond.

**Male gender stereotypes** pressed on the facts that men were more tolerant and they expressed their feelings differently from women. Men should act in an assertive, “manly” way.
Media Stereotypes

After the class discussion and viewing the TEDtalk participate in the following activity: Find video clips from children's or teen's programs/movies or other examples from children's literature that encourage gender stereotypes. Make brief notes.

While watching, make notes on the characters. Look at:

- Appearances:

- Behaviours:

- Attitudes:

Reflection:

- Are there any stereotypes noticeable in the video clip?

- Which of these characteristics are positive? Negative? How?

- Is there anything we should be concerned with?

- Do any of these characteristics accurately reflect qualities of real girls and boys?

- What might happen if most children’s programs portrayed boys and girls in a stereotypical manner?