









Rebranding Tween Girls' Media and Tech Camps Through a Rhetorical Lens

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	jade CMYK: 65 13 38 0 HEX: #59ada6
	melon CMYK: 0 61 53 0 HEX: #f4826e
	seafoam CMYK: 27 0 27 0 HEX: #bae0c6
	rose CMYK: 9 73 22 0 HEX: #df698d
	sage CMYK: 9 73 22 0 HEX: #df698d
	light gray CMYK: 9 73 22 0 HEX: #df698d



Abstract:

Girls interested in tech, media, and the arts have increasing options for summer camps. Although many camps are either more STEM-focused tech camps or more creative arts-focused media camps, there is precedent for camps that bring both worlds of tech and media together. Research on these technofeminist camps has largely focused on curriculum and mentorship. I add to these conversations another consideration: visual rhetoric and branding of camps. For a girls' camp, the ways we communicate messages need to be multifaceted in order to be accessible, affordable, and inclusive. Successful

branding should be fun and colorful without relying on gendered tropes of pink or appearing childish. It's important for branding to be an example of how to be interesting and professional, so that girls have a model for their own media projects.

According to U.S. Labor Bureau employment statistics from 2018, women made up only 27 percent of the computing workforce that year. Witnessing little representation and lack of diversity of women in technology and media fields, young girls receive messages that they are more vulnerable and less powerful in online and digital spaces than their male counterparts. This is particularly detrimental to tween girls (ages 11-14), who often feel fearful, frustrated, and/or disengaged in media and technologies as they get older. As a result, many girls never gain the confidence or skills needed to pursue media and technology-related careers or hobbies.

To address this issue, tech and media camps for girls have become popular across the United States. While having a range of opportunities is a sign of progress, many of these camps create a divide between STEM-focused tech camps and creative arts-focused media camps. These divided camps tend to be pricey; for example, Alexa Cafe and Digital Media Academy camps cost \$500-1,000+ per week ("Availability"). Thus, catering to girls from families with higher incomes and excluding girls from less affluent backgrounds.

All types of girls interested in tech, media, and the arts should be able to learn about them in a camp that brings them together in an affordable, accessible, and inclusive way. Girls shouldn't have to sacrifice having it one way or the other. I am interested in adding to these conversations another consideration: visual rhetoric and branding of girls' tech and media camps.

There is precedent for these types of camps and a foundation to be built upon. I have developed, with the oversight of my mentor Jen England, Girlmade Media, a tech and media camp for tween girls that continues the legacy of building truly accessible and technofeminist camps, with even more attention to detail¹. I am interested in adding to these conversations with another consideration: visual rhetoric and branding of girls' tech and media camps.

¹ England had previously reimagined the Girlhood Remixed Technology Camp in 2016 for a new iteration of campers with her mentor Jen Almjud, who had worked with Kris Blair to develop the Digital Mirror camp.

Research has demonstrated the need for these camps to positively impact young girls (Blair, Dietel-McLaughlin & Graupner Hurley, 2010; Mazzarella 2010) and provide models for camp curriculum (Almjeld & England, 2015) and feminist mentorship within the camps (Gilligan, 1982; Haas, Tulley, & Blair, 2002). Through my education in digital media arts and professional writing, I understood that the rhetoric of the project is crucial to how you approach everything, from a logo to a letterhead. Knowing your audience determines how you best communicate the messages you have for them. With the girlhood camps, we must appeal to the girls themselves, their parents/guardians, and donors who provide us with grants to fund the camps. Each of these audiences may receive the same content, but will best consume it in various ways.

For a girls' camp, the ways we communicate messages must be multifaceted in order to be successful. The materials and branding we use need to be fun and professional so



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parents and guardians want to send their girls to Girlmade Media. The professionalism and excitement help communicate our mission and vision to donors and the larger community. Traditionally feminine designs, such as the original Girlhood remixed marketing materials, can be modernized to reach a broader audience. The visual rhetoric of a project (the colors, imagery, fonts, etc.) must be taken into account and updated, otherwise the brand and camp overall are doing a disservice to girls. The purpose of a girl's tech and media camp is to teach our future teachers, scientists, artists, and leaders that they belong in tech and media spaces.

For Girlmade Media, I chose colors that represent a wider range than what have been historically reserved for girls. Girlmade Media's color palette includes: a jade green/blue, melon orange, seafoam green, medium rose pink, lighter sage green, and a light gray. I wanted to pick a large color palette that gave marketing and camp materials room for creativity, something we want to instill and reinforce in our future campers. The varied color palette helps communicate what the camp is about and provides multiple options for other materials within camp curriculum, such as the logo. By keeping within our palette, the colors are consistent and cohesive with our branding, further establishing recognition and brand awareness for the camp.

When exploring other camps' branding, I've seen one use a logo with an owl as the graphic, but of course it had to have a bow on the top of its head so that we know it's a girl and for girls. While this can be an attractive design to a young girl or her parents, it's reaffirming the stereotype of femininity and pink being only for girls. If a designer wants to use an animal for a girls' camp branding, then they can find more creative ways to make effective design than using pink or bows.

In contrast, some camps lean heavily into the tech world, with logos that include robotic parts and pieces. Girlhood Remixed even adopted this style for a summer. While this certainly makes me immediately think of technology, it's showcasing a limited perspective of what technology means. Both of these stylistic choices exclude groups of girls who don't find pink or lots of heavy science and engineering technology appealing. A camp's branding needs balance, especially since Girlmade Media is about both technology *and* media.

For Girlmade Media, a hexagon shape is used as one of the main graphic elements, including the logo. The hexagon itself represents different aspects of the tech and media world, as it can be seen as representative of science, technology, and nature—it's everywhere from honeycombs to atomic structures. It also can be used within a design to create patterns. Its job is to balance our branding by representing how multifaceted our campers and their interests are with how our camp caters to and builds up those interests. Our logo includes most of our color palette, with orange as the main color. Orange acts as a gender neutral, but still colorful option to appeal to our wide range of prospective campers.



Once initial branding is set up, it's just as important to put that rhetorical thought process and attention into creating all camp materials. Handouts and application materials are given to parents/guardians before camp even begins. While these materials have slightly different audiences, a cohesive brand needs to recognize the slight differences in communication styles. However, the handouts and application should be written and designed in a way that is simple, easy to understand, and brings excitement for the camp's activities.

This web design handout I made for Girlmade Media helps girls stay familiar with digital interfaces. We can't assume that every girl coming to camp will be versed in computer

use, especially the Apple computers commonly used in these camps, and what navigating a range of computer programs looks like. Using rhetorical awareness, this handout is inclusive of girls' differing levels of knowledge and ability with tech. Furthermore, the style shows the connection between physical and digital found in media and technology industries. While our camp does involve digital processes and learning, it's also about the physical experiences we have with media. It's especially important to highlight tactile media in today's hyper-connected digital world. Because our camp involves both digital and physical technology and media, our materials need to demonstrate to our girls they can have interests and impacts no matter the medium. The handouts also take in mind usability and accessibility. By breaking up large pieces of text into more digestible pieces, our document becomes more user-friendly for campers. .

With Girlmade Media, I envision a camp where girls of all abilities, identities, and backgrounds are able to pursue the technology and media they want to, without hesitation or fear. This courage and emboldment comes from the camp content and curriculum but, just as importantly, from the branding of the camp itself. The choices and considerations we make when representing camps must become more rhetorically-informed. In the era of fake news, it's important for tween girls to understand the choices that go into every piece of media they consume and produce. Girlmade media can equip all girls with the skills and education they need to stay interested in tech and media as they grow past tweenhood. It's a camp that is rhetorically-informed but also informs girls about rhetoric. Ultimately, Girlmade Media is a space for future campers to feel represented, welcomed, and valued.

The next steps in this project are for my mentor England and I to solidify the details of our camp and apply for grants to fund it; we can't do it alone! England has run the camp on a tight budget when she was involved with Girlhood Remixed, but we would want to be able to give girls the tools to continue their education and interests even after the camp ends. This is especially important for girls from lower-income backgrounds, including those in our very own Hamline-Midway neighborhood of St. Paul, MN. These types of girls are crucial to reach with an accessible camp that continues being approachable even after camp is over. This would involve funding the purchase of items like Google Chromebooks and flash drives that campers can take home and keep. We also hope to encourage girls to return annually, and eventually become mentors to girls who once stood in their shoes to truly embody feminist mentorship. There are so many exciting possibilities for Girlmade Media, and I can't wait to explore them with my mentor.

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