

# The Girls' House Share

*The Girls' House Share: A Month Without Parents* (ZDF, Germany) is a reality-TV series for preteens about what happens when five 13- and 14-year-old girls have the chance to live for a month without parents. In this episode, the girls wake each other up with pots and pans (cf. screenshot 1), and Fili reveals to the girls that her period has not stopped for three weeks, and that she needs to see a gynecologist (cf. screenshot 2). Fili's friend and fellow cast mate My comes along for support (cf. screenshot 3). Back at the house the other girls paint the chicken coop, thinking of their friend (cf. screenshot 4). Fili and My take the chance to ask the gynecologist some candid questions about sex, birth control, and the set-up of the examination room. Fili is then examined by the doctor (cf. screenshot 5) and given the birth control pill as medicine, sparking a whole conversation over lunch with the girls about pros and cons regarding "the pill". They head out, splitting up in two groups to get hair and nails done, all while continuing the conversation. After their beauty appointments they meet and admire each other's new look (cf. screenshot 6). They open the mail to find professionally shot pictures from a photo shoot in a previous episode and declare that they do not like their pictures. Housemate Alina then explains that sometimes girls pretend they don't like their own pictures as a way of fishing for compliments (cf. screenshot 7). Their final dinner involves a candid discussion of sex, first love, and what they expect out of a loving relationship (cf. screenshot 8).

*The Girls' House Share* was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 finalists in the 12-15 Fiction & Non-Fiction category.

## International experts' opinions

International experts shared their opinions about this episode of *The Girls' House Share* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012. Experts across all sessions commented on the casting of the program, noting that all girls portrayed were stereotypically feminine, which they felt took away from some potential diversity in the portrayal of girls.

"They were the same kind of girls. There was no one who wanted to sit and read and didn't want to go to the hairdresser. I think it would be more interesting if you had one or two who were not stereotypical girls." (female expert, USA)

"And of course, girls like that do exist, no question about it. But, do we want this to be a model?" (male expert, Germany)

The international experts remarked on the candid nature of the girls in the show, some noting that the girls were very open with their thoughts, and others remarking that at times the girls seemed to be very cognizant of the cameras.

"They had like multiple discussions about different complex topics. Like, about going to the gynecologist, it wasn't just the one conversation. They had multiple conversations about it." (female expert, USA)

"I had a strange feeling with this session when they're having dinner and they were talking about having sex, I felt that they were thinking about the cameraman was sitting there." (male expert, Israel)



Ill. 1: Alina and Hilla scare the other girls in the morning to help them wake up



Ill. 2: Fili reveals to the girls that she needs to see a gynecologist

The gynecologist in the episode was also discussed by the experts; most notably in reference to his demeanor, and the ethics of prescribing the birth control pill to a 13-year-old girl.

“About the checking. Yeah. He told them that, ‘ I’ll put my finger there.’ – I was shocked.” (male expert, Afghanistan)

“I wish that it then might have discussed a little more if it’s okay to give the pill to a 13-year-old girl.” (female expert, Norway)

“In a normal world, she probably would have her mother on the side.” (female expert, Sweden)

Experts noted similar shows in their home countries, e.g. in Ghana: “We have a similar program. They apply via cell phone and the telecom companies involve the whole country in voting... They do different activities in the house.” (female expert, Ghana)

Target Audience 7.73	Idea 6.83	Script 6.60	Realization 7.00
Average Score per Category by experts’ voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012			

### Opinions from teenagers in 7 countries

The PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 included the votes of an international youth jury, which was organized in co-operation with broadcasters worldwide. Teens between 12 and 15 in 7 countries discussed and judged 12 programs in the category 12 to 15. Here is a summary of their discussions on *The Girls’ House Share: A Month Without Parents*.

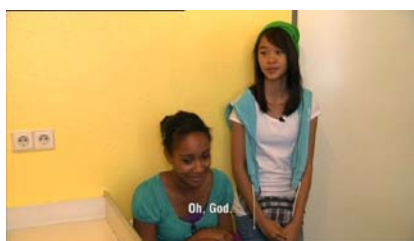
The youth jury in **Australia** liked that younger girls were featured in a reality-TV format, as opposed to a shows they are exposed to featuring “30-year-old housewives in Manhattan”. Most of them felt that the program could be utilized to serve a greater educational need and promote girls’ issues. A girl mentioned: “I don’t think it should be so stereotyped with the girls being so, ‘girlie’. We don’t all just talk about periods and boys and I don’t know why they should be here. It’s almost giving a bad name to girls.” Others mentioned they would have liked to see more conflict among the girls: “They were just doing things. There were no problems.”

The **Cuban** youth jury enjoyed the independence exhibited by the girls in the program. “We see adolescents open because they are at their own or with friends.” They commented on the positive aspects of a show that is able to demonstrate that girls can take care of themselves. They also remarked that this program could be of benefit to boys, showing how teenage girls think. A girl mentioned: “I wish they did more programs like this one to help adolescents.”

The **Egyptian** youth jury found the program to be very interesting to watch. They enjoyed seeing young girls savor the freedom they have living in the house without parents for a month, but felt that the concept would not take off in Egypt as “parents do not trust our girls, they only trust the boys.”

In **Macedonia** the youth jury enjoyed the casting of the show, as it showed girls of different ethnic backgrounds coming together, “teaching non-discrimination from a young age.” One boy commented that for him the most interesting part of the show was the chicken coop, another boy demanded: “They have to put boys in the show.”

In **Nigeria**, the youth jury had mixed opinions: Some felt that the show was too mature for anybody under 15 (the top age limit of the PRIX JEUNESSE



Ill. 3: Fili and My nervously wait for the doctor to arrive



Ill. 4: The other girls paint the chicken coop, thinking about Fili



Ill. 5: The gynecologist examines Fili to make sure her organs are fine



Ill. 6: The girls reunite after visiting the nail salon and the hairdresser

Screenshots from *The Girls’ House Share: A Month Without Parents* © ZDF, Germany

category), and cited prominent cultural differences, “In our culture we don’t believe in talking about things like that.” Other boys and girl enjoyed seeing adventurous and independent young women on TV and claimed: “the girls in the movie were very responsible, especially the girl who thought there was something wrong with her that she had had her period for three weeks.”

The youth jury from the **Philippines** found the program to be very uncomfortable to watch and pointed out cultural differences: “In other countries, they can talk about sensitive items freely... If that program was done here in the Philippines it would have been deemed vulgar.” They found the topics addressed in the episode were nonsense, and mentioned that their religious beliefs would not align with the girls’ discussions. Some girls mentioned finding the girls’ situation uncomfortable: “there were situations where we expect the mother to be around yet she was not.”

In the **USA** the youth jury found the content of the program to be awkward, although one girl found: “The conversations were interesting.” The majority of boys in the jury pointed to the cultural differences between the USA and Europe, “There are a lot more taboos here in the U.S. about what can be shown on television.” Another youth jury member enjoyed the racially diverse casting of the girls, because “that way it could appeal to more types of people.”



Ill. 7: The girls receive photos from a photo shoot from a previous episode



Ill. 8: Over dinner, the girls have a discussion about sex and relationships

*Kristen McGregor (Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, USA)*

Youth Jury 2012	Score	Rank
Australia	5.1	10
Cuba	9.1	2
Egypt	5.8	6
Macedonia	7.7	4
Nigeria	5.8	5
Philippines	7.2	10
United States	5.4	6