

SOCIAL INFLUENCES

Lesson 1

GRADE
7

LEARNER OUTCOME¹ W-7.12:

Identify the effects of social influences on sexuality and gender roles and equity; e.g., media, culture.



MATERIALS:

1. **HANDOUT: Mixed Messages**
2. **HANDOUT: Sex in Advertising**
3. **HANDOUT: Me vs. TV**



INTRODUCTION:

Our society is becoming increasingly complex. Students are presented with messages about sexuality from a number of sources. It is important to help students identify and decipher these messages, determine which ones to listen to, and learn how to filter out the negative messages.



This lesson requires extra preparation time to find ads to use in *Activity C Exploring Media Influences Using Advertisements*. Use ads from magazines, or the Internet. The idea is to find highly sexualized ads. This approach is used by many companies to sell: clothing, cosmetics, cars, footwear, jeans, etc. If there is a recent ad or current event that has caused some controversy, it may also be helpful to include this as an example.



APPROACHES/STRATEGIES:

A. GROUND RULES (5-10 min)

Ensure ground rules are established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.

B. MIXED MESSAGES (20-30 min)

Students identify where messages about sexuality come from, and how these messages influence one's sexuality and decisions about sexuality.

1. Distribute the handout **Mixed Messages**.
2. Ask students to fill in as many boxes as possible with different sources of information about sexuality. Examples may include family, friends, advertising, internet, music, culture, religion, etc.
3. Have students share the sources they have identified. As they do, write each one on an index card. Encourage students who had empty boxes to fill these in during the discussion.
4. In each box, ask students to write a “message” about sexuality sent by the source indicated in the box.
5. Referring to the index cards of all the sources, have students share the messages they receive from each source.
6. Have students draw a line from each of the sources to the box labelled “me”. The line can be thin or thick depending on the amount of influence that source has on personal thought and behaviour regarding sexuality.
7. Have students place a check-mark, “X”, or “?” in each box indicating whether they agree with, disagree with or are unsure about the message they receive from each source.
8. Draw a continuum on the blackboard as shown below:
Not Helpful-----Somewhat Helpful-----Very Helpful
9. Distribute the index cards with the sources of information about sexuality to student volunteers.
10. Ask the volunteers to come forward and place their cards on the continuum where they think they belong in terms of helpfulness in promoting sexual health.
11. Discuss card placements as a group, and make changes in placement if they are suggested by the group. Explain these cards could be placed differently by different people for various reasons. It is not necessary to reach consensus.
12. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
 - What is it like to have so many different messages coming from so many different sources?
 - Which sources seem to have the biggest influence on you?
 - Which sources seem to be the most helpful for promoting sexual health?
 - How could the least helpful sources become more helpful?
 - If our society wanted to establish a consistent set of sexual messages for youth, what would you want those messages to include? Why?
 - What can you do to cope with society’s confusing messages and take charge of your sexual health in a positive way?

C. EXPLORING MEDIA INFLUENCE USING ADVERTISEMENTS (20- 25 MIN)

Students increase awareness of the sexual messages presented in advertising and identify the effects of media influence on sexuality.

1. Introduce this activity using the following discussion questions:

How can we define “media”?

“Media” is a term for the industrial forms of mass communication. “Media literacy” is the ability to use critical thinking skills to analyze media messages—from music videos and Web environments to product placement in movies and virtual displays on NHL hockey boards. It’s the instinct to question what lies behind media productions—the motives, the money, the values and the ownership—and to be aware of how these factors influence content².

What are the different media industries that try to reach an adolescent audience?

Write down the different industries identified by the students. Examples may include:

- Advertising
- Television
- Movie
- Music
- News
- Internet

Which of these industries presents messages about sexuality?

They all present messages about sexuality.



For more media and Internet education resources including lesson plans and activities visit the Media Awareness Network.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm>

What kind of message does each of these industries send?

Discuss each industry, looking for similarities between industries.

2. Divide the class into small groups.
3. Explain that the class is going to examine the advertising industry and study the messages about sexuality that this industry sends to adolescents.
4. Distribute the handout **Sex in Advertising** to each group.
5. Encourage each group to choose an advertisement to analyze. These can be chosen from current magazines, or by using the ads you found through an internet search.
6. Give groups time to analyze their advertisement based on the handout.



It is also interesting to discuss the inclusion or exclusion of diverse groups in these ads.

7. Ask each group to present their advertisement analysis to the class.
8. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
 - In the ads we examined, what are the main messages about sexuality being sent to adolescents by the advertising industry?
 - Are these messages positive or negative?
 - Do the advertisements we have looked at send messages that reflect your values?
 - If the messages about sexuality given by the advertising industry are contrary to our values, what choices do we have?
 - Encourage the producers to change the message.
 - Discuss various ways to do so such as writing letters, speaking to people in industry, etc.
 - Stop buying the products.

D. ME VS. TV (5 min today, 30 min homework, 5 min next class)

Students can increase awareness of the sexual messages presented on television and identify the effects of media influence on sexuality.

1. Distribute the **Me vs.TV** handout for students to complete as a homework assignment.
2. Explain that students are encouraged to share this activity with a parent or supportive adult.
3. Dedicate time to debrief this activity during the next lesson.



QUESTION BOX (10 min)

Have students fill out questions and address them next class.



TAKE IT HOME

Complete the **Me vs. TV** handout.



Keep in mind that all students do not live in a “traditional” family nor do they have equal opportunities for open discussion within their “family”. Although it is best for students to complete this assignment with a supportive parent or guardian, it may not be possible. Be sensitive to the needs of your students.



SELF REFLECTION

During the lesson, were:

- Ground rules being followed?
- Good practices established regarding group work and discussion?

What will you change for future classes with this group?

What will you change for future use of this lesson?



STUDENT ASSESSMENT

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge:

- Identify different sources of messages about sexuality?
- Become more aware of the appropriateness of the sexual messages sent by the media to adolescents?

Skills:

- Participate in class discussion and exemplify listening and appropriate speaking skills?
- Decipher different messages about sexuality?

Attitudes:

- Determine which messages about sexuality are positive and which are negative?
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1. Alberta Education. (2002). *Health and life skills guide to implementation: Kindergarten to grade 9*. Retrieved from <http://education.alberta.ca/media/352993/pos.pdf>
2. Tallim, J. (2010). *What is media literacy?* Retrieved from http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm

MIXED MESSAGES

There are many messages we receive from different sources every day. Try to see how many places you get messages from each day.

Instructions: Follow the example given to complete the steps below.

1. In each box, write a different source of information about sexuality.
2. In each box, write a message about sexuality you get from that source.
3. Draw a line from each source to the box labelled "me." Make the line thin or thick depending on the importance of that source for your own thoughts and behaviours regarding sexuality.
4. Put a **✓** in the box if you agree with the message, a **✗** in the box if you disagree with the message, or a **?** in the box if you are unsure about the message.

Source: TV

Message: *It's ok to cheat on your partner.*

X

Source:

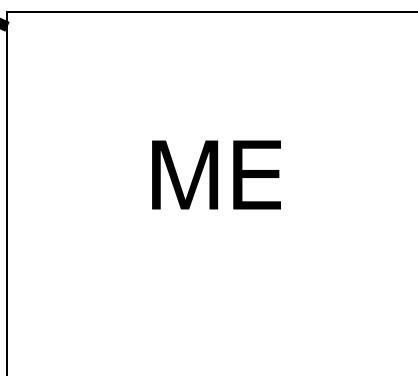
Message:

Source:

Message:

Source:

Message:



Source:

Message:

Source:

Message:

Source:

Message:

Source:

Message:

Name: _____

SEX IN ADVERTISING

When sexuality is used in advertising, certain values and attitudes towards sex are being “sold” to consumers along with the products. The overriding question that must be asked when examining any advertisement is, “What underlying message is being sold by this ad?”

Step 1

Choose an advertisement to analyze.

Step 2

Use these questions to discuss the ad you are analyzing. Use the space after each question to jot down a few notes.

- 1. What product or service is the ad selling?**
- 2. Who is the target audience for this ad? (Include age range, culture, gender, race, socio-economic level.)**
- 3. What can the product or service actually do (vs. what it promises to do)?**
- 4. What does the ad suggest or imply that the product can do in addition to this?**
- 5. What underlying message or value is being sold by the ad? Is it obvious or subliminal?**
- 6. Do you agree/disagree with this message?**
- 7. What do people in the ad look like?**
- 8. What message does the ad give about sexuality?**
- 9. Is this a positive or negative message about sexuality?**

Step 3

Present your advertisement to the class.

Student Name: _____

Parent/Adult Support: _____

ME vs. TV

How much time do you spend watching TV each week? When you add up the total, you might be surprised! So, what does television have to say to you? Comparing your life to that of characters shown on TV can be an interesting exercise. Choose a TV show of your choice. It can be a sitcom, a drama, or a segment of videos. Use the following chart to compare your life to the life of the characters represented by the TV show.

ME	VS.	TV
My real life:	TV life:	
My after-school life:	TV after-school life:	
My friends:	TV friends:	
My parents or my friends' parents:	TV parents:	
My _____:	TV _____:	

Share this activity with a parent or supportive adult, and discuss the following questions:

- How different is real life from the life portrayed on TV?
- Do you agree with the messages about sexuality sent by TV? What messages about sexuality would you like me to have?

Adapted from: Media Smarts *Kids' lives/TV lives*. Retrieved from <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/find-lesson>