

# SOCIAL INFLUENCES

## Lesson 1

7  
G  
R  
A  
D  
E

### LEARNER OUTCOME<sup>1</sup> 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. MATERIALS: advertisements from magazines or from an internet search
4. 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 will require some extra preparation time to find advertisements to use in activity **C. Exploring Media Influences Using Advertisements**. You can either find advertisements in magazines, or do a search on the internet. The idea is to find highly sexualized ads. Many products that use this approach include: clothing, beauty/ cosmetics, alcohol, perfume, jeans. It may be helpful to keep these products in mind when looking for ads to use. 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:

#### NOTES:

##### A. Ground Rules

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.

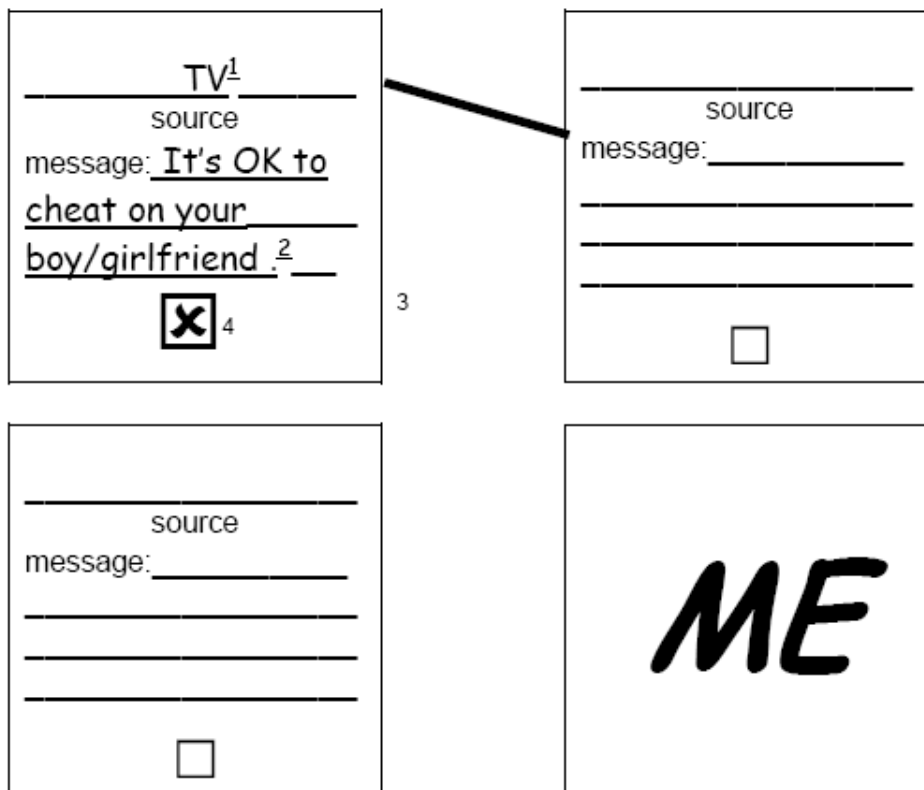
(5-15 min)

##### B. Mixed Messages

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

(20 min)

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, 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 each source 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 labeled “me.” The line can be thin or thick depending on the amount of influence that source has on personal thought and behavior 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 ads and discuss 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 an attempt to make each of us more comfortable, more critical, and more conversant in various methods of communication.<sup>2</sup>

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

- Write down the different industries identified by the students.



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

Examples may include:

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

**Which of these industries presents messages about sexuality?**

- They all present messages about sexuality.

**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.
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

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

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

**(5 min today, 30 min homework, 5 min next class)**



### QUESTION BOX:

**(10 min)**

If time permits, address student questions.



### TAKE IT HOME:

Complete the handout Me vs. TV



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?

---

<sup>1</sup>Alberta Learning. (2002). Kindergarten to grade 9 health and life skills: Guide to implementation. Retrieved July 4, 2007, from:

[http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/K\\_12/curriculum/bysubject/healthpls/healthgi.asp](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/K_12/curriculum/bysubject/healthpls/healthgi.asp)

<sup>2</sup>Walsh, Bill. (2002). Expanding the definition of media literacy. Retrieved July 23, 2007 from:

[http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/teaching\\_backgrounders/media\\_literacy/expanding\\_definition.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/teaching_backgrounders/media_literacy/expanding_definition.cfm)