Grade 7
Gender, Body Image & Social Influences

Learner Outcomes

**W-7.12** Identify the effects of social influences on sexuality and gender roles and equity; e.g., media, culture

**W-7.4** Analyze the message and approaches used by the media to promote certain body images and lifestyle choices

This lesson addresses all of the specific outcomes listed above. Instruction in human sexuality (bolded and italicized outcomes) requires schools to provide notice to parents about the learning outcomes, topics and resources.

How To Use

This lesson plan contains several activities to achieve the learner outcomes above. You may choose to do some or all of the activities, based on the needs of your students and the time available. Some of the activities build on the ones that come before them, but all can be used individually.

For a quick lesson, combine activities A, B, F, and G.

Classroom Activities & Timing

A. Ground Rules (5-10 minutes)
B. Me vs. TV (15-20 minutes)
C. Exploring Media Influence Using Advertisements (20-45 minutes)
D. Gender Roles, Equity and Stereotyping (15-20 minutes)
E. Body Image Introduction (5-10 minutes)
F. Body Image and Media (30-45 minutes)
G. Question Box (5-10 minutes)

Required Materials

HANDOUT: Sex in Advertising
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HANDOUT: Me vs. TV
HANDOUTS: Gender Stereotypes Scenarios 1-6
Selection of sexualized advertisements from magazines or printed from online sources
Magazines for cutting, scissors and glue, newsprint or poster paper, markers, masking tape

Background Information for Teachers

Our society is becoming increasingly complex, and 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.

Social influences on gender roles and equity need to be examined to ensure students develop skills to balance the messages received against the values they hold.

Body image and self-esteem are closely related. Body image has two components: the mental picture you have of your body, and the way you feel about how your body looks. A healthy body image means accepting how you look, and not trying to change your body to fit an external ideal. A healthy body image contributes to feeling capable, confident and respecting yourself, all parts of a healthy self-esteem. Increasing student awareness of the influence various sources can have on body image and behaviour helps students to cope with the pressures society imposes, and be kinder to others.

Inclusive Language

Language is complex, evolving, and powerful. In these lessons, gender-neutral language is used to be inclusive of all students, including those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This includes the use of ‘they’ as a singular gender-neutral pronoun. The lesson plans use the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ when referring to biological sex (sex assigned at birth), such as when discussing reproductive anatomy. A person’s reproductive system can be male, female or intersex (not clearly defined as either male or female).

People are assigned a sex at birth based on their reproductive anatomy. Sex assigned at birth is independent of gender identity. Gender identity is a person’s internal sense of identity as female, male, both or neither, regardless of their biological sex assigned at birth.
For many people, their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). Others may identify as being transgender or gender diverse if their gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. A person’s gender identity can be girl, woman, boy, man, transgender, gender fluid, gender queer, agender or others. The intention in this material is to use language that reflects these many possibilities.

**Advertising Methods**

For Activity C, you may wish to bring up some of these common advertising strategies.

- Bandwagon: everyone is doing it/buying it/using it.
- Testimonial: a famous person claims to use the product or recommends it.
- Association: a product is associated with certain people, activities, or places. The message implies an association with wealth, attractiveness, enjoyment, adventure, etc to evoke an emotional response in the target audience.
- Omission: certain facts about the product are left out.
- Repetition: saying a message over and over.
- Scale: making a product bigger or smaller than it actually is.
- Name-calling: making the product seem better by criticizing the competition.
- Weasel: a promise implied by using words like ‘fights’, ‘helps’, ‘usually’, ‘chances are’ and ‘virtually’.
- Promotions: encouraging purchase by using coupons, games with prizes, or gifts with purchase.
- Magic ingredients: the suggestion that some special discovery or ingredient makes the product exceptionally effective or better than the competitor’s product.
- Avant garde: the suggestion that using this product makes the consumer a leader or ahead of the times.
- Compliments: the ad compliments the customer, e.g. cosmetic ads that say ‘Because you’re worth it!’
- Plain folk: appeals to the desire to fit in, by showing that regular people use the product.
- Facts and statistics: using numbers, real examples and statistics to make claims about the products e.g. ‘Three out of four dentists agree’.
A. Ground Rules

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

B. Me vs. TV

Students are introduced to the idea of media literacy and begin to identify the messages sent by the media they consume.

1. Introduce the idea of media literacy by asking the following questions. Solicit answers from the class and share any elements they do not come up with from the answers below.

How can we define ‘media’?

Media is a term for the industrial forms of mass communication. This includes TV, movies, magazines, internet etc.

What is media literacy?

Media literacy is the ability to use critical thinking skills to analyze media messages- from music videos and internet 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 content.

What are the different media industries that try to reach kids and teens?

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

- Advertising
- TV/Streaming services/YouTube
- Movie
- Music
- News
- Internet
- Magazines

2. Explain that you are going to consider some of the messages that TV shows send them.

3. Distribute the Me vs TV handout for students to complete. You may wish to let them discuss their answers in small groups as they write. Encourage them to view ‘TV’ as including Netflix, YouTube videos,
movies etc. as well as traditional TV content.

4. Debrief by having a class discussion with the following questions:
   - What were some of the major differences between your lives and the lives portrayed on TV? Similarities?
   - Do the messages about sexuality sent by TV match your values? Why or why not?
   - If you could create a show that would reflect your life, what would it look like?

C. Exploring Media Influence Using Advertisements

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

1. Before class, collect a selection of highly sexualized advertisements from magazines or printed from the internet. Try to have about one per student. If you can, try to find ads that are directed at teens, not just adults.

2. If you did not complete the Me vs. TV activity, introduce the concepts of media and media literacy (see Activity B above).

3. Ask the students to name any sources of information about sexuality or sexual activity in their lives. Answers may include:
   - Parents, other family members
   - Teachers
   - TV/movies
   - Internet
   - Friends
   - Advertising
   - Books, magazines, comics

4. Explain that the class is going to examine the advertising industry and study the messages about sexuality that this industry sends to kids and teens.

5. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students.

6. Distribute the handout *Sex in Advertising* to each group.

7. Provide the class with the selection of printed advertisements and have each group choose one advertisement to analyze.

8. Give groups time to analyze their advertisement based on the handout.
9. Ask each group to present their advertisement analysis to the class.

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

D. Gender Roles, Equity and Stereotyping

Students examine the concepts of equity and stereotypes and begin to consider their impact.

1. Divide the class into two large groups randomly (not by height, gender, or any clearly observable characteristics).

2. Ask each group to count up how many students in the group are wearing jeans, and form themselves into a visual representation of that number.

3. Give a prize to the group with the highest number.

4. Discuss the outcome with the class. Ask them how it felt that one group ‘won’ even though both groups completed the task, and the winner was decided on something that was beyond their control. This demonstrates inequity.

5. Discuss the difference between equity and equality. Equality tries to treat everyone exactly the same, regardless of the differences between them. Equity is giving everyone what they need in order to be successful. This may mean that some people are treated differently, which can feel unfair if we confuse fairness and equality.

6. Ask the class to answer the following questions:

   How can we define stereotype?
   - A stereotype is a belief that can be held by anybody about specific types of people or certain ways of doing things that may
or may not accurately reflect reality. More often than not stereotypes are negative.

- A gender stereotype is something that people think is true about how others look, act, think, talk or feel because they belong to a certain gender. There are specific meanings associated with acting like a male and acting like a female.

What does it feel like to be stereotyped? Why?
- Usually negative.
- You aren’t being seen the way you really are.
- You are being judged by what someone else thinks.

7. Divide the class into small groups. Distribute one Gender Stereotypes scenario to each group.

8. Ask each group to discuss the questions on their scenario and write down their answers.

9. Ask each group to assign a spokesperson who can read the scenario to the class and briefly share the group’s discussion.

10. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
- What do you think the main differences will be between how we react to situations today versus how people might react in 20 years?
- How can we explain the different ways people react to the same situations over time?
- Are gender roles and our understanding of gender changing?
- What can we do to change stereotypes?

E. Body Image Introduction

A fun and simple introduction to the idea of body image.

1. Ask each student to take a blank piece of paper and a pen, and place them on the desk.

2. Have students place the pen in the centre of the paper, look up and close their eyes. The remainder of this exercise should be completed with eyes closed.

3. Instruct students that they will need to listen to your instructions while you walk them through a self-portrait.

4. Follow this script:
- Draw your head toward the top of the page.
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- Underneath this, draw your neck and body.
- Now, attach arms and hands to both sides of your body.
- Next, come the legs. Don’t forget feet!
- Going back up to your head, draw your hair.
- Finally, add your eyes, mouth, ears and nose.
- To complete this picture, draw your navel (bellybutton).
- Open your eyes, and see what you’ve drawn.

5. Encourage students to share their self-portraits with neighbouring classmates.

6. Debrief this activity using the following questions:
   - Do your self-portraits look anything like your mirror image?
   - Do you think your mental image of yourself is an accurate reflection of what you look like?
   - What influences the way we see ourselves?

F. Body Image and Media

*Students increase awareness of the media influences on self-image and behaviour.*

1. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5. Give each group a large piece of poster paper.

2. Ask each group to write the title ‘Images of Beauty’ on a piece of paper.

3. Ask each group to find pictures of people the group agrees are attractive. The pictures can be found in magazines or online. Have each group make a collage of these pictures underneath the title.

4. Ask groups to add words or phrases that describe an attractive person.

5. When groups are finished, have them post their collages on the board or wall.

6. Have students walk around the room looking at the collages.

7. Discuss the following questions:
Based on the images presented in the collages, what are some standards that are set by the media regarding beauty?

Is the media’s ideal image of beauty realistic for most people? Why or why not?

What are some attractive qualities people can have that are not based on appearance? Are these qualities reflected in the collages?

What images of beauty are difficult to find?

Do all kinds of people see themselves reflected in media images of beauty?

Why do you think people might have a self-image that is more critical than reality?

How do media influence the image we have of ourselves?

Family? Friends?

What are some ways we can combat negative perceptions we have of ourselves?

8. Share the following ideas for encouraging a healthy body image, if they were not already brought up in the discussion.

- Treat your body with respect by keeping it strong and healthy.

- Eat well-balanced meals and exercise to feel strong and able, not to change your body’s size or shape to fit someone else’s ideal.

- Dress in clothes that fit the body you have and make you feel good about yourself.

- Spend time with friends and family who are positive and like you for who you are as a person.

- Write a list of the positive benefits of a body part or feature that you don’t like. Focus on what your body can do.

- Write a short message that helps you feel good about yourself. Post it around your house or room, make it your screensaver or wallpaper on a device, or ask a friend to text you the message regularly.

- Be aware of how you talk about bodies with other people. Try to focus on positive attributes that aren’t related to physical appearance.

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- Be mindful of the media you consume and the messages sent by media about body image.
- Remember that everyone has challenges with their body image at times. Use positive self-talk when you find yourself being critical or judging yourself.

G. Question Box

Answer any questions from the question box in the previous lesson. Have students submit any new questions and address them next class. Addressing the questions at the next class allows you time to review the questions and prepare responses.

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?
- define gender stereotypes?
- identify common gender stereotypes?
- recall healthy body image messages?
- examine the effects of media on self-image and behaviour?

Skills:
- participate in class discussion and exhibit appropriate listening and speaking skills?
- decipher different messages about sexuality?
- describe how gender roles change over time?
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- examine how gender roles affect the ways people deal with themselves and others?
- develop strategies to react to situations that reinforce gender stereotypes?
- challenge negative influences regarding body image?
- create a positive, realistic picture of themselves?

**Attitudes:**

- accept responsibility for challenging and changing negative gender stereotypes?
- begin to articulate self-acceptance?
Sex in Advertising

When sexuality is used in advertising, certain values and attitudes towards sexuality and sexual activity are being ‘sold’ to consumers along with the products. To analyze an ad, ask yourself “What underlying message is being sold by this ad?”

1. Choose an advertisement to analyze.

2. Use these questions to discuss the ad you are analyzing.
   - What product or service is the ad selling?
   - Who is the target audience for this ad? (Include age range, culture, gender, race, socio-economic level)
   - What can the product or service actually do vs. what does it promise to do?
   - What does the ad suggest or imply that the product can do?
   - What underlying message or value is being sold by the ad? Is it obvious or subliminal?
   - Do you agree/disagree with this message?
   - What do people in the ad look like?
   - What message does the ad give about sexuality?
   - Is this a positive or negative message about sexuality?

3. Present your advertisement to the class and share your thoughts about the underlying messages in the ad.
Me vs. TV

How much time do you spend watching TV (including Netflix, YouTube and movies) each week? When you add up the total, you might be surprised! Comparing your life to that of characters shown on TV can be an interesting exercise. Choose a show from TV, Netflix, YouTube, etc. Use the following chart to compare your life to the life of the characters represented by the show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ME</th>
<th>vs. TV_______________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My day at school:</td>
<td>TV day at school:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My after-school life:</td>
<td>TV after-school life:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends:</td>
<td>TV friends:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents or other family members:</td>
<td>TV parents or other family members:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My _____________:</td>
<td>TV _____________:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is one important part of your life that is not shown on most of the shows/movies you watch?
Gender Stereotypes 1

Mike is about to ask Lennon out for the first time. He plans to go out for pizza and then go to a movie. Mike is not sure if he should offer to pay Lennon’s way on their date, or if he should just assume they’ll split the costs between them.

Discuss these questions:

- What should Mike do?
- How do you think people will react to this situation 20 years from now?
Gender Stereotypes 2

Tshepo is babysitting a little boy named Ramone, age 6. Ramone has decided that a Barbie doll that a visiting cousin left behind is his favourite toy. Tshepo is a little concerned about Ramone’s choice of toys.

Discuss these questions:

- What should Tshepo do?
- How do you think people will react to this situation 20 years from now?
Gender Stereotypes 3

Jaya has been interested in Cameron for the last few months. She thinks Cameron might like her, but seems too shy to ask her out. Jaya thought about inviting Cameron to go to the hockey game Saturday night, but she’s afraid of being pushy. She really wants to go out with Cameron.

Discuss these questions:

- What should Jaya do?
- How do you think people will react to this situation 20 years from now?
Your 9-year old cousin Dave knows she is a girl on the inside. Dave has a penis and everyone thinks she is a boy. Dave wants to be called Danae, wear girl’s clothes, and use she/her pronouns.

Discuss these questions:

- How would you react to this situation now?
- How do you think people will react to this situation 20 years from now?
Your best friend, Alex, wants to get married and start having kids as soon as they graduate from high school.

Discuss these questions:

- How would you react to this situation now?
- How do you think people will react 20 years from now?
Your friend Harper loves to play soccer and has played with you and your friends for years. Harper is a transgender girl, and wants to play on the girls’ school team. Harper isn’t sure if the school will let her play on the girls’ team.

Discuss the following two questions:

- What do you think the school should do?
- How do you think people will react to this situation 20 years from now?