

Elementary 6: Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

Lesson# 2: Sexuality, Stereotypes, and Social Norms

Aim/Rationale

Students will learn how to better understand the influence of societal norms on their understanding of sexuality as well as gain knowledge and respect for sexual diversity and difference through recognizing their role in social equality.

Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) Outlining the various impacts of stereotypes
 - a. social/gender norms
 - b. sexism and homophobia
- 2) Discussing the role you can play in respecting sexual diversity and difference
 - a. Denouncing injustice/inequality
 - b. Equality as social value

Cross-Curricular Competencies

- 1) To exercise critical judgement
- 2) To construct their identity
- 3) To cooperate with others
- 4) To communicate appropriately

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to instill in youth both the confidence and the appropriate language to discuss sexual identity, develop critical intelligence with regard to culturally inherited stereotypes, as well as to better understand how to establish harmonious relationships by preventing discrimination related to sexual diversity.

Youth at this age level are likely beginning to become more aware of their sexual identity, therefore it is important to ensure that students have the correct language and resources to better explore

their sexual identity, as well as to reduce harm by addressing bullying which targets students based on their sexuality.

Relevant to:

- Being aware of the sexualization of public space
- Respecting sexual diversity
- Promoting egalitarian relationships

Lesson

Note: This lesson plan works best if it follows Lesson 1: Introducing Gender Identity, though it can be adapted to work on its own.

Materials

- Projector
- Love is Love: Free to Be Me video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXtsiWoMsxs>
- Scenario handout (1 per student)
- Heart shape handout (1 per student)
- Sexuality Match Game handout (1 per student)

Essential Questions

- What is sexual orientation?
- What are some of the different sexual identities?
- How do sexuality-related stereotypes influence the way we go about our daily lives?
- How can we actively avoid and prevent harmful behaviours related to sexuality?

Using Gender Inclusive Language

When discussing topics such as sexual identity with youth it is important to use accessible and inclusive language which does not reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is normal and expected or that there are only two genders. Heterosexual and cisgender (non-transgender) identities are often considered normal and the only identities valued in our society. Because of this, people are prone to using words that assume everyone is heterosexual and cisgender. An example of this would be assuming that female students will have a boyfriend while male students will have a girlfriend. A more inclusive approach would be to instead use the term “partner”, which does not assume the gender or sexual orientation of students or the people they date. This is something that is crucial when teaching as many sexual and gender minority youth face challenges throughout their life because of these harmful social norms. For more information about teaching inclusively, see: <http://sexted.org/inclusive-sex-ed-language/>

Terms

- Sexual Identity
- Homophobia

Development/Teaching Methods [45 min]

1. Begin the lesson by establishing ground rules conducive to a safer space. If the class already has these rules in place, re-emphasize them now to ensure that students feel comfortable sharing things that are of a more sensitive nature. Due to the sensitive nature of these topics, remind students to avoid speaking about the experiences of their fellow classmates. Consider letting students suggest rules or limits of their own for the class to be mindful of throughout the discussion. Having students keep themselves accountable is a plus!
2. Show Love is Love: Free to Be Me to the class.
3. Following the video, ask students to try to define some of the terms that were used. Emphasize that there are many other sexualities that exist, but that these are some of the more common ones. Start with these definitions:
 - a. Lesbian (women attracted to women)
 - b. Gay (men attracted to men)
 - c. Bisexual (attracted to both men and women)
 - d. Transgender (gender identity is different than sex given at birth. This is not a sexual orientation!)
 - e. Pansexual (attracted to all genders)
 - f. Asexual (attracted to nobody)
 - g. Homophobia (any violence or discrimination towards a person based on their sexuality)

Ask students to reflect on the gender portion of the lesson and how gender can be thought of as a spectrum. If needed, bring up the “Every Body” tool that was used in lesson one. Explain that sexuality is similar and is neither predictable nor linked to gender identity. While it is often assumed that boys like girls and girls like boys, these assumptions are harmful and exclude individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. Emphasize that different people identify with different terms emphasize that is okay and should be respected!

4. After this discussion, ask students to brainstorm and write down some stereotypes related to sexuality. Encourage them to come up with at least 3. (ex. girls with short hair are lesbians, if my friend tells me they are gay it means they like me, boys who are feminine are gay, bisexuality doesn't exist, etc.)
5. Have students share some of their stereotypes with the class. As the stereotypes are shared, encourage students to reflect on the negative feelings that the people in the video expressed experiencing, and ask them to think about the role stereotypes play in creating these feelings.
6. Divide the class into smaller groups. Hand out one of the provided scenarios to each group. Ask the students to discuss their respective scenarios in groups and come up with a possible solution. Leave about 10 minutes for this brainstorm, then have each group assign a member to read their scenario aloud to the class and another member to share their solution.
7. Once every group has shared their solution, reiterate the following messages:
 - a. Homophobia and other forms of discrimination keep happening when they are not challenged.
 - b. Challenging things together is easier and makes more of a difference.
 - c. Small challenges can make a big difference in the long term if everyone participates.

- d. Make sure you have an adult in your life with whom you can feel safe disclosing these feelings. A guidance counsellor, a teacher, a coach, or another family member, for example.
- e. Make students are aware of the resources available for them in your city, for instance, phone or text helplines, educational websites, drop in centres, etc. Resources for Montréal can be found here: <http://sexedtoolkit.com/resources/lgbtq/>

Culmination [15 min]

Hand out a paper heart to each student and ask them to write down ways in which they could challenge homophobia when they come across it. Emphasise that it could just be a small action that they feel they would be able to do in their everyday lives. Examples might be:

- Thinking before using homophobic language
- Challenging a friend if they call something ‘gay’
- Not laughing at homophobic jokes
- Attending a pride rally
- Being an ally to someone who identifies as LGBT by showing support and acceptance like others did in the video

Have each student cut out and decorate their heart as they wish, then put them up in the classroom somewhere that is visible.

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and describe characteristics of sexual discrimination in our society
- Identify and understand different sexualities beyond heterosexuality
- Identify the ways stereotypes about sexual orientation influence our day to day lives
- Identify the ways stereotypes can be harmful
- Recognize their place in establishing social equality

Assessment Ideas

1. Have the students complete the “Match Game” handout and successfully identify the various definitions learned in class.
2. Have students do a biography of or research on a prominent LGBT figure in contemporary history. It could be an activist, musician, or anyone who is in the media and identifies within the LGBT community. Some examples of figures that could be researched are: Harvey Milk, Ellen DeGeneres, Laverne Cox, Jason Collins, Ellen Page, Todrick Hall etc. Tell students to be creative with their project and stress that they choose someone who they can look up to, regardless of their own sexuality.

Resources

LGBT Youth Animation. YouTube / LGBT Youth Animation. MiNDTV35, 26 July 2011. Web.



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