

ANALYZING INFLUENCES ON HUMAN SEXUALITY



LESSON INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to learn how external influences impact and contribute to attitudes and behaviors around sexuality and identity formation.



OBJECTIVES:

By the end of 8th grade students will be able to...

- Analyze external influences that impact attitudes and behavior around human sexuality.
- Articulate the difference between sex and sexuality.
- Define sexuality as including biological sex, gender (gender identity, gender expression, gender roles) and sexual orientation, transgender/transsexual.
- Treat others with respect.



VOCABULARY

- Biological sex
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Gender roles/stereotypes
- Sexual orientation
- Sex
- Sexuality



STANDARDS:

Wisconsin Standard for Health Education

- Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behavior.

National Sexuality Education Standards

- **ID.8.CC.1** Differentiate between gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.
- **ID.8.CC.2** Explain the range of gender roles.
- **ID.8.INF.1** Analyze external influences that have an impact on one's attitudes about gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

GRADE: Middle School

LENGTH OF LESSON: 60 min

SEQUENCE: 2



ACTIVITIES:

2.1 Vocabulary

2.2 Cultural Observations

2.3 Assessment/Homework



MATERIALS/TECHNOLOGY:

- Board/Smart Board/butcher paper for brainstorming
- Cultural artifacts (can be photos) 3-4 items per group x number of groups if classroom is broken into groups of 3
- Human Sexuality Diagram
- Worksheet: "Observations of Planet Earth"
- Assessment rubric



Revisit classroom ground rules and the Anonymous Question Box

(5 minutes)

Take a moment to check in on the ground rules. Ask if there are any questions or observations from **Lesson 1**. Remind students of the anonymous question box. If there were questions in the box, answer them. Remind students that the box will be available throughout the entire Human Growth and Development unit.



Activity 2.1: Vocabulary (20 minutes)

Tell students that they will be learning about the meaning of some words they have probably heard before. Write the word **Sex** and the word **Sexuality** on flip chart paper. Hold a large group discussion with students and jot down answers to the following questions:

- Do you think these two words mean the same thing? If not, how do they differ?

Clarify for students that “sex” and “sexuality” are two different concepts. Use the definitions below to explain the differences.

Sex, or biological sex, refers to whether a person is biologically male or female, with male or female anatomy, chromosomes, and reproductive parts. Many students may have noticed on different forms they have completed for school or at the doctor’s office that there is often a question on the form called “sex.” People are required to check either male or female. Sex is also commonly used as an abbreviation to refer to sexual activity generally, and sexual intercourse specifically.

Sexuality refers to the total expression of who people are as human beings, including gender identity, gender role, sexual orientation, biological sex, intimacy, relationships, love and affection. Sexuality begins at birth and ends at death. A person’s sexuality includes a person’s anatomy, attitudes, values, knowledge and behaviors. How people express their sexuality is influenced by their families, culture, society, faith and beliefs.

- Where do we learn the associations we have for these two words? Ask students to give specific examples.
- How do these associations affect how we feel about sex and sexuality?

To illustrate the concepts of biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, gender roles, sexual orientation, transgender/transsexual, sex, and sexuality post the **Human Sexuality Diagram** on the board/screen.

My Sexual Health: My Future

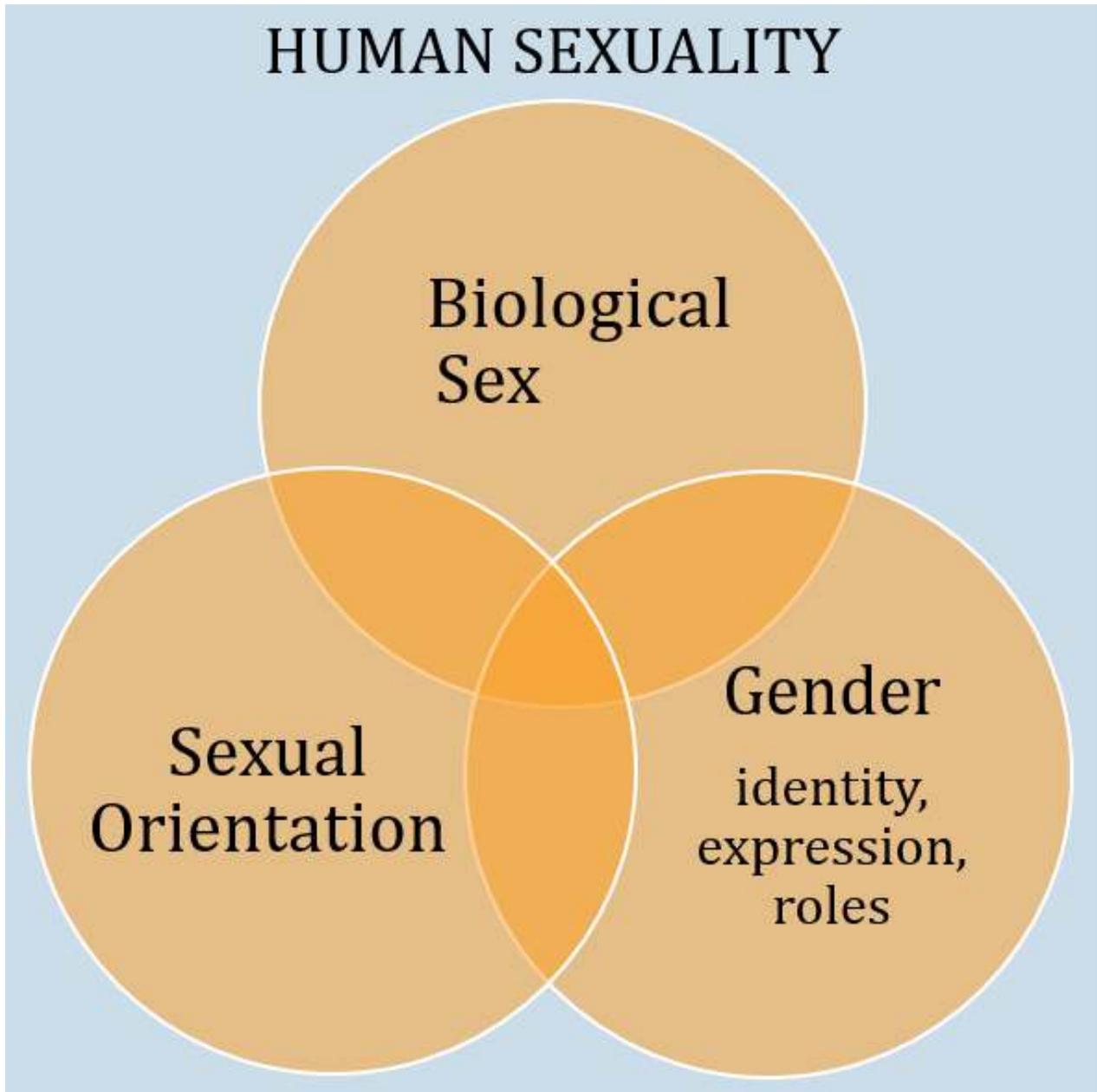
Gender Identity: An individual's innermost sense of self as male or female, as lying somewhere between these two genders, or as lying somewhere outside gender lines altogether

Gender Expression: The ways in which an individual communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics; not an indication of sexual orientation; behaviors and traits used publicly to express gender identity—as masculine or feminine or something else; also called gender presentation

Gender Roles: Culturally or socially determined sets of attitudes and behaviors that are expected of an individual based on biological sex

Sexual Orientation: A feeling of attraction to others, based on biological sex and gender expression; different from sexual behavior; romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction to others, categorized by the sex or gender of the person to whom one is attracted—such as: heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex); homosexual (attracted to the same sex); or bisexual (attracted to individuals irrespective of their sex)

Indicate that the class will explore the various aspects of gender together in the next activity.

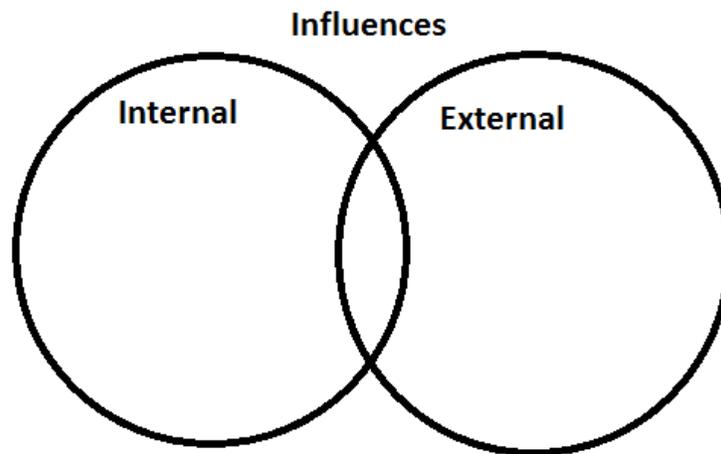




Activity 2.2: Cultural Observations

(30 minutes)

Draw two intersecting circles on the board. Be sure to clarify for students that this two-circle diagram is different than the previous three-circle diagram. The concepts are not intended to mirror each other. Label one “internal” and one “external.”



The term internal means it comes from inside you. The term external means it comes from outside you. Review with students what kinds of influences on health and behavior are “internal” and what kinds are “external.”

Some possible answers include:

Internal	External
Knowledge	Environment
Personal attitudes, beliefs, core values	Social expectations
Perceptions of norms	Laws, policies and regulations
Personality/disposition	Media, pop culture and technology
Biology	Friends, family and culture
Self-esteem	School
Emotions	Community

Remind students that the space between the two circles depicts how one circle can influence the other. Ask for some examples of ways they influence each other; e.g., having supportive friends (external) can boost one’s self-esteem (internal).

My Sexual Health: My Future

Explain that human sexuality, including gender, can work the same way; gender roles and expression are also influenced by the same types of internal and external factors. Examples include things like their perceptions of norms (internal) and social expectations (external). These perceptions and expectations are formed by broader influences like school, their community, media and technology.

Ask students to discuss as a class the relevance to their own lives of understanding internal and external influences on gender roles and expression, building off the influences listed in the table above. The goal here is to help students develop the skill of analyzing influences to make healthy decisions, and treating themselves and others with respect.

Let them know that for today, they are going to be scientific observers and will analyze some of the external influences on gender role and expression that exist in culture. Read the example from Left Hand of Darkness. This is the observation of a scientist that has landed on planet Gethen only to discover that gender is very different than on planet Earth.

Read this short introductory excerpt from the novel Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula LeGuin to students:

From field notes of Ong Tot Oppong, Investigator, of the first Ekumenical landing party of planet Gethen/Winter, Cycle 93 E.Y.1448

Our entire pattern of socio-sexual interaction is non-existent here. The Gethenians do not see one another as men or women. This is almost impossible for our imaginations to accept. After all, what is the first question we ask about a newborn baby?

Yet you cannot think of a Gethenian as "it". They are not neuters. They are potentials; during each sexual cycle they may develop in either direction for the duration of that cycle. No physiological habit is established, and the mother of several children may be the father of several more.

There is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protected/protective. One is respected and judged only as a human being. You cannot cast a Gethenian in the role of Man or Woman, while adopting towards "him" a corresponding role dependent on your expectations of the interactions between persons of the same or opposite sex. It is an appalling experience for a Terran/Earthling.

My Sexual Health: My Future

Check for understanding:

- What are some of the things that do not exist on Planet Gethen that do exist on Earth?
 - (possible answer: standard gender roles; people with immutable reproductive systems)
- Why is it impossible to have expectations of behavior of a Gethenian, according to this observer?
 - (possible answer: because gender roles don't exist in Gethen like they do on Earth)
- Why does the observer think this is uncomfortable for Earthlings?
 - (possible answer: On earth, gender roles often dictate how we act and how we regard others, whether as a man or a woman, and on Gethen we can't relate to Gethenians in this way)
- How would you feel if you were suddenly in a place where gender was something that constantly changed in everyone you interacted with?
 - (answer: students answer based on their feelings)

Let students know that now they will have the chance to be scientific observers on Earth. Divide students into groups of three to four. Give each group cultural artifacts. Try and mix items that would be categorized as "male," "female," or "both." Sample artifacts could include: greeting card, pictures of a toy aisle at a store, hairbrush, pictures from magazines, eyelash curler, toy car, doll, gym sock, pantyhose, lip balm, bar of soap, loofa, backpack, purse, Legos/blocks, zoo animal figurines, GI Joe doll, water bottle, lunch box, tissues, etc. (note: teacher may use pictures of all these items instead of actual objects).

Ask the groups to act as visitors to Earth, from the planet Gethen where there is no such thing as gender. Using the artifacts given to each group, group members should write down their group's observation of each "artifact" they have been given using the **Observations of Planet Earth** worksheet. Specifically, they should categorize objects as either male or female.

Pass out the worksheet **Observations of Planet Earth** one per group.

My Sexual Health: My Future

After the groups have had a chance to record their observations, initiate a large group discussion. Encourage students to utilize their artifacts and observations in the discussion.

- What did you notice about how your group interpreted the artifacts by way of understanding gender? Were there any themes from the interpretations that occurred repeatedly?
- Thinking back to the intersecting circles of internal and external influence, where do your group's ideas about the artifacts your fit in the circles?
- How do the interpretations of the artifacts compare with your own experience of how gender is expressed in this community (at school, in town, etc.)?
- How might people be treated that go outside of society's expectations of gender expression and roles? Are some more accepted than others?



Activity 2.2: Observations of Planet Earth

Notes from the Landing Party: Present Day

Item 1:

Describe the object what does it look like?

Does this item evoke a feeling, or do you think it is meant to? What feeling?

Does this item convey ways of being gendered in Earth society? What are the messages? Is there a factual basis for these messages? If so, what are those facts?

Item 2:

Describe the object what does it look like?

Does this item evoke a feeling, or do you think it is meant to? What feeling?

Does this item convey ways of being gendered in Earth society? What are the messages? Is there a factual basis for these messages? If so, what are those facts?

Item 3:

Describe the object what does it look like?

Does this item evoke a feeling, or do you think it is meant to? What feeling?

Does this item convey ways of being gendered in Earth society? What are the messages? Is there a factual basis for these messages? If so, what are those facts?



Activity 2.3: Assessment/Homework

(5 minutes)

Choose one or give students a choice

1. Have students write a short story set on Earth or in their own home, school or community imagining what it would be like if there were no set gender roles, nor internal or external influences to shape our thinking regarding gender. Encourage students to share their stories with members of their family and get their perspective on internal and external influences on gender and sexuality.

2. Provide movie suggestions for students to watch at home and write their observations of gender expression, role and sexual orientation based on internal versus external influences. Encourage students to watch the movies with members of their family and share their observations with each other. Movies might include:

- La Vie en Rose (Rated PG-13)
- Bend it Like Beckham (Rated PG-13)
- Billy Elliott (Rated R)

3. Have students select a Disney movie. Have them first summarize the original plot of the movie, and then rewrite the plot to reflect gender roles and expression that are different from the gender roles originally depicted in the film. Encourage students to share their re-written stories with members of their family and community.

4. Share the titles of children's books that highlight expanded gender roles. Have students write about the internal and external influences that enable the characters to step outside of expected gender roles. Encourage students to share their analysis in a discussion with a family or community member.

Examples include:

- [Princess Smarty Pants](#) by Babette Cole
- [The Paper Bag Princess](#) by Robert Munsch
- [The Sissy Duckling](#) by Harvey Fierstein



Activity 2.3: Assessment Rubric

Student name:			
Objective	Not Present	Developing	On target
Define sexuality as including biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, gender roles and sexual orientation	Student participation and work demonstrates no understanding of the objective	Student participation and work demonstrates understanding of some elements of the objective	Student participation and work demonstrates a thorough understanding of the objective
Articulate the difference between sex and sexuality	Student participation and work demonstrates no understanding of the objective	Student participation and work demonstrates understanding of some elements of the objective	Student participation and work demonstrates a thorough understanding of the objective
Analyze external influences that impact attitude and behavior around human sexuality	Student participation and work demonstrates no understanding of the objective	Student participation and work demonstrates understanding of some elements of the objective	Student participation and work demonstrates a thorough understanding of the objective
Teacher comments:			