

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Grades 9-12, Lesson 4

Summary

Students differentiate between assigned sex, sexual orientation, sexual behavior and gender identity by matching definition strips to terms on papers hung around the room. Next, they view a short video that illustrates the ways society places expectations on people to be heterosexual. The teacher leads a class discussion to follow up, covering the ways that these expectations and pressures can be harmful to all people. Finally, students analyze a fictional advice column and apply the content they have covered in class by analyzing the response and offering their own advice.

Student Learning Objectives

The student will be able to ...

1. Differentiate between assigned sex, sexual orientation and gender identity.
2. Summarize ways that society places expectations on people to be heterosexual, cisgender, and to conform to gender norms.
3. Summarize ways to show courtesy and respect for others whose aspects of sexuality are different from one's own.

Lesson Timing

Warm up	Bell work + 2 minutes
Purpose of lesson and tone	1 minute
Definitions activity	15 minutes
Video and discussion	15 minutes
Advice column	15 minutes
Assign homework	
Exit ticket	2 minutes
Total	50 minutes

Key Concepts

Everyone has a sexual orientation and a gender identity.

A person knows their sexual orientation because of who they feel attracted to, not because of who they have sex with.

A person knows their gender identity because they feel like a boy, a girl, both, neither or somewhere in between, not because of their body parts.

People of all sexual orientations and gender identities need to know how to prevent pregnancy and STDs, either for themselves or to help a friend.

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Materials Needed

Student Materials

- *Definition Strips*
- *Advice Column Handout*
- *Individual Homework: Advice Column*
- *Family Homework: Talking About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*, available in multiple languages on the FLASH website
- *Lesson 4 Exit Ticket*

Classroom Materials

- *Lesson 4 Warm Up*
- *Assigned Sex Visual*
- *Gender Identity Visual*
- *Sexual Orientation Visual*
- *Sexual Behavior Visual*
- *Discussion Questions Visual*

Teacher Preparation

1. Preview the 4-minute video "LGBT Discrimination" from Sex, etc., which imagines a world where heterosexuals are the minority. <http://sexetc.org/videos/lgbtq-discrimination/>
2. Make and hang 4 signs with the following terms around the room:
 - Assigned Sex
 - Gender Identity
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Sexual Behavior
3. Copy and cut apart the *Definition Strips*.

Activities

1. Warm up

Display warm up as bell work. Do not ask students to share their responses to the bell work and do not discuss it as a class. The purpose of this warm up is to set a favorable tone for the rest of the lesson. It is not intended to be used as a debate.

Question: Polls show that young people today are more accepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people than ever before. Why do you think that is?

2. Introduce the lesson and review the importance of ground rules

Today we'll be talking about sexual orientation and gender identity, that is, what it means to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or straight and what it means to be transgender or cisgender. From now on, I'll use the acronym LGBTQ to stand for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer." We'll begin with understanding those words and a few other terms.

Like the other issues we'll address in this unit, this one has personal meaning to many members of this class. In any school, there are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender students. There are also students who have close family members or friends who are LGBTQ. It's going to be important that we remember our ground rules and be respectful today.

3. Conduct definitions activity

Point out the signs around the room:

- Assigned Sex
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Sexual Behavior

Pass out the *Definition Strips* and ask students to work in pairs to tape them on the sign with the term they belong with. After students complete the activity, debrief each term one at a time, using the visuals with definitions. Debrief terms in the order they are listed in the lesson. Have students read the bullets aloud and answer any questions that arise. After explaining the terms, ask students to volunteer a definition for assigned sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, to check for understanding and reinforce learning.

(*Note:* If you need to review more background information about LGBTQ terminology for yourself, visit the Human Rights Campaign website at:

<http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>.)

Assigned Sex

- When a baby is born, the doctor usually says the baby is male or female, depending on the appearance of the baby's genitals. This is the baby's *assigned sex*.
- *Assigned sex* can be based on a person's genitals, reproductive organs, chromosomes and hormones.
- The *assigned sex* of people with XX chromosomes is usually female.

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- The *assigned sex* of people with XY chromosomes is usually male.
- The *assigned sex* of people with XO, XYY or other chromosomes is male or female depending on the appearance of their genitals. This is called intersex.

Gender Identity

- *Gender identity* is a deep feeling people have about whether they are a guy, a girl, both, neither or somewhere in between.
- People often know their *gender identity* when they are very little, before they start kindergarten, although everyone is different and some people will know when they are younger or older.
- When a person's *gender identity* is the same as their assigned sex, it is usually called cisgender.
- When a person's *gender identity* is not the same as their assigned sex, it is often called transgender. People may also identify as gender queer, gender fluid or some other *gender identity*.

Sexual Orientation

- *Sexual orientation* describes who a person is attracted to - the same gender, another gender, or all genders.
- Some examples of *sexual orientation* are gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, queer, etc.
- *Sexual orientation* is based on who people are romantically, sexually or emotionally attracted to, not necessarily who they have sex with or make out with.

Sexual Behavior

- *Sexual behavior* describes what someone does sexually - oral, anal or vaginal sex, making out, etc.
- Sometimes *sexual behavior* matches a person's sexual orientation, and sometimes it does not. For example, a person who identifies as straight might have had sex or made out with someone of the same gender.

4. Show video

Show the video "LGBTQ Discrimination" (<http://sexetc.org/videos/lgbtq-discrimination/>)

We are going to watch a short video and then answer some questions about it. Watch closely so you can provide examples from the video when we are discussing it.

Have students work in groups of 2 or 3 to answer the following questions. Project the Discussion Questions visual for students to reference as they work in their groups. Assign the first 2 questions to one half of the class and the remaining 2 questions to the other half of the class.

Allow 3–5 minutes for students to discuss the questions in their groups before debriefing as a large group.

- In his dream, how does the main character know he's in a world where being straight is the minority?
- The main character was bullied and teased for being straight. How could that negatively impact him?

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- In our society, how are people given the message that being straight is the "right" or "normal" way to be?
- How can these messages harm or limit people? (including straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and cisgender people)

Then lead a class discussion about the ways society places expectations on people to be heterosexual and gender conforming.

In his dream, how does the main character know he's in a world where being straight is the minority?

- Sees same sex couples holding hands.
- People tease him about the photo on his phone.
- Friends ask him to explain his sexual orientation.
- Friends think he should try a different sexual orientation.

The main character was bullied and teased for being straight. How could that negatively impact him?

- Could make him feel like an outsider.
- Could make him feel pressured to change or hide who he is.
- Could make him feel bad about himself or ashamed.
- Could make him feel afraid to come to school.
- Could make him depressed or even suicidal.

In our society, how are people given the message that being straight is the "right" or "normal" way to be?

- Marriage between people of the same gender is still controversial.
- Media shows mostly heterosexual people.
- Young people are asked by parents and others if they have a boyfriend or girlfriend (presumed heterosexuality).
- Have to "come out" if you are gay, lesbian or bisexual, but not if you are straight.
- Threats, violence or discrimination directed towards LGBTQ people.

How can these messages harm or limit people (including straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and cisgender people)?

- Straight people might feel like they have to stay away from LGBTQ people so they don't get labeled as gay.
- Makes it hard for people to be themselves.
- Harder for people to pursue their interests, especially if the interest is stereotypically associated with the other gender (for example, a boy who likes to sing, a girl who wants to be a truck driver).
- Makes people feel ashamed of who they are, especially if they are LGBTQ.
- Harder for people to wear the clothes they like or listen to music they like, especially if others think it is not the right choice for their gender.

5. Conduct advice column activity

Distribute the *Advice Column Handout* and have two volunteers read the entry from "Lonely" and the response from the advice columnist. After they've read the answer, ask the class if they think the advice given was good. Then, have students work in groups of 2 or 3 to

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answer the advice column questions to give better advice. When discussing Lonely, be careful to say "Lonely" or "they." It's important that you not assign a gender to Lonely, even if the students do. Sample responses are provided in the script.

This wasn't very good advice! Let's take a few minutes to answer these questions and see if we can do better.

Do we know Lonely's gender identity or sexual orientation? Does the advice columnist make some assumptions about Lonely's gender identity and sexual orientation?

- *No, we don't know. The columnist assumes Lonely is a straight girl, but we don't know. Lonely could be a cisgender guy or girl, or a transgender person of any gender. Lonely could also be gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight.*

How does the advice columnist send the message that being straight is the preferred way to be?

- *The advice columnist assumes Lonely is a straight girl, and assumes that Lonely will be dating boys. For example, when the advice columnist says, "There are lots of boys who are interested in girls who like reading and the outdoors" it makes it seem like being straight is the only way to be.*
- *The advice columnist doesn't say anything to let Lonely know that it is OK to date someone other than boys.*

How does the advice columnist send the message that Lonely should act more feminine?

- *The advice columnist tells Lonely not to "lose touch with her feminine side."*
- *The advice columnist says that Lonely should find a way to like doing hair and makeup and talking about boys.*

What is one piece of advice you would give Lonely? Be careful not to make any assumptions about Lonely's gender identity or sexual orientation, and not to pressure Lonely to conform to gender expectations or a specific sexual orientation.

- *Be true to yourself!*
- *It's OK to find friends that have similar interests. You shouldn't feel pressured to do the things your friends are doing if you don't want to.*
- *When your friends say no one will want to date you, they are being mean.*
- *If you decide you want to go on dates, it's important to be who you are, and not pretend to like things you don't. It is hard to find people you really like if you are pretending.*
- *If you decide you want to go on dates with guys or with girls, it's best if you have things in common with them too.*
- *Sometimes people think there are certain ways guys are supposed to act and girls are supposed to act. That's not really true.*

6. Assign homework

Allow students to choose between the individual or family homework and explain the assignments as needed.

Individual Homework: Advice Column

Family Homework: Talking About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, available in multiple languages on the FLASH website

7. Exit ticket

Hand out the *Lesson 4 Exit Ticket*.

Prompt: Write 1-2 sentences explaining why it is wrong to tease or bully people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Possible answers:

- Could make them feel like an outsider.
- Could make them feel pressured to change or hide who they are.
- Could make them feel bad or ashamed about themselves.
- Could make them feel afraid to come to school.
- Could make them depressed or even suicidal.
- Because it is disrespectful and rude.