

The Sex Educator

19

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A MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS

WHO CONDUCT SEX EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

WITH HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS

Produced by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
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YOUTH AND SEXISM: FROM INEQUALITY TO INDIFFERENCE

THE SEXEDUCATOR IS MORE THAN A MAGAZINE: IT'S ALSO A COMMUNITY!
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At a party at a friend's house, Laïla, who is 14, has dressed sexy in the hope that 15-year-old Gabriel, with whom she is secretly in love, will notice her. During the evening, some people play a game of "Truth or Consequences". As part of the challenge, Laïla kisses her friend Ludovic, and Gabriel does the same with another girl. Later in the evening, Laïla and Gabriel are alone together. They take the opportunity to talk and get to know each other and, after a while, they kiss.

The following Monday at school, Laïla notices that people are talking about her, calling her "loose" and a "slut" because she kissed two boys on the mouth during the same evening, and because she had dressed provocatively. Laïla is shaken and doesn't know what to do. As for Gabriel, the few people who are talking about him are describing him as the school's "new Casanova". Although his friends envy him when they give him what they perceive to be a compliment, Gabriel is uncomfortable.

What do you think about this situation? Why are Laïla and Gabriel treated differently by their peers? As a teacher or professional, how do you react to a story like that? How can you help young people think about sexism and its manifestations?

Québec society has evolved greatly over the past decades when it comes to issues of sexism; yet it still exists. However, due to many pieces of legislation adopted to foster equal rights between men and women, sexism seems to be more subtle than before. The Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine (MFAF, 2006) has admitted that, in fact, equality between men and women, between boys and girls has not yet been attained and that a number of inequalities persist in daily life. During adolescence, sexism is all the more important since young people are in the midst of their search for personal identities (Stassen Berger, 2000). They are seeking to affirm their identities as boys and girls, which sometimes means going through a stage of adhering to sexual and sexist stereotypes (Bouchard, St-Amant and Tondreau, 1996; Roussiau, 2008). For example, boys might sometimes brag about their sexual or amorous conquests to fit a sexual stereotype of men as great seducers. Similarly, some girls rely only on their physical appearance, thus adhering to the sexual stereotype whereby a woman seduces only by physical attraction. Moreover, the current social context, tinged with the phenomena of hypersexualization, seems to strengthen adhesion to the above stereotypes (Bouchard and

Bouchard, 2007; Duquet and Quéniart, 2009). Indeed, this phenomenon tends to situate girls in more passive roles, where the focus is on physical appearance (Bouchard and Bouchard, 2007), whereas for boys, the emphasis is being "hungry for sex" (Duquet and Quéniart, 2009). This issue of *The SexEducator* aims to look at the most recent knowledge about sexism during adolescence and to provide a starting point for reflection about ways to address the issue with young people.



EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES: A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN IN QUÉBEC

Over the past few decades, women and men in Québec have worked together to demand equality between the sexes. Although women in Québec obtained the right to vote in 1940, it was only in 1975, when the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms was adopted, that sexual discrimination became prohibited in the province (MFACF, 2006). Since then, successive efforts have been made both socially and politically to rectify differences in how men and women are treated in the legal system, to promote education for girls, and to encourage women to work. Equal rights are now enshrined in Québec; yet, transition to true equality has yet to happen (MFACF, 2006, p. 19). It is on the basis of this statement that in 2006 a government policy entitled *Pour que l'égalité de droit devienne une égalité de fait* (from legal to actual equality) was developed to socialize adolescents in a manner that is free of stereotypes. This means that it is important to make adolescents aware of prevailing sexual stereotypes by fostering critical thinking as

well as to promote non-sexist relations between boys and girls (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2010; MFACF, 2006). According to this policy, sex education is the best way to succeed, especially since the goal... of the policy conforms to the school's mission of socializing students. In other words, as a society, we are concerned with gender equality and we aspire to having young people grow up with this belief and act accordingly.

WHAT IS SEXISM, EXACTLY?

Sexism can be defined as a “discriminatory process through which personal characteristics and specific social roles are arbitrarily, inflexibly, restrictively and repeatedly associated with one sex and not the other” [translation] (UQAM, 2007). Sexism tends to divide men and women into two distinct categories based on certain sexual stereotypes conveyed by society. This limits an individual's development in all areas: personal, emotional, professional and social. Moreover, while sexism often disadvantages girls, it also creates feelings of alienation in individuals of both sexes (MEQ, 1993). **In short, sexism is the process through which inflexible characteristics are assigned to men and women, the effect of which is to fix them firmly into simplistic, discriminatory roles.** For instance, in the scenario presented at the beginning, Laïla and Gabriel are treated differently by their peers even though both of them engaged in the same behaviour: kissing two different people during a single evening. Although Laïla and Gabriel were quickly labelled with simplistic gender-based qualifiers (Laïla is deemed to be “loose” and a “slut” whereas Gabriel is thought of as the school's “new Casanova”), the terms used for Laïla are much more pejorative because she is a girl.

WHAT ABOUT SEXUAL STEREOTYPES?

Sexual stereotypes are simplified and distorted judgements, feelings, opinions or images (MEQ, 1993) that refer to a person's behaviour, based on sex (Crooks and Baur, 2003). The effect of this simplistic approach is to eliminate nuances (MEQ, 1993), amplify differences between boys and girls (Amaral Madureira, 2009), and assign one overall image to everyone of the same sex (MEQ, 1993). If we look at Laïla and Gabriel again, the sexual stereotypes that underlie the terms attributed to each of them lead us to believe the following: sexuality is less attractive for girls than it is for boys (Murnen, 1998) and, as a result, girls who express an interest in sexuality that equals or exceeds that expressed by boys “deserve” to be treated with contempt. In addition, these terms indicate that “real” boys can seduce any girl (Murnen, 1998). Gabriel, who kissed two girls in one evening, is not treated with contempt since his behaviour corresponds with a “seducer” stereotype, often valued by boys. The following table groups together definitions of sexism and sexual stereotypes that should be kept in mind throughout the activities on sexism conducted with the adolescents.

TABLE 1
DEFINITIONS OF SEXISM AND SEXUAL STEREOTYPES

SEXISM	SEXUAL STEREOTYPES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminatory process through which personal characteristics and specific social roles are arbitrarily, inflexibly, restrictively and repeatedly associated with one sex and not the other (UQAM, 2007). • Based on sexual stereotypes (MEQ, 1993). • Often restricts an individual's development on all levels: personal, emotional, professional and social (MEQ, 1993). • Frequently disadvantages girls, but also creates feelings of alienation or constraint in individuals of both sexes (MEQ, 1993). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified and distorted representations (judgements, feelings, opinions, images) of a person's behaviour, based on sex (Crooks and Baur, 2003). • Effects of their simplistic nature include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > eliminate nuances (MEQ, 1993); > amplify differences between boys and girls (Amaral Madureira, 2009); > attribute a single overall gender-based image

Sexism can be defined as a “discriminatory process through which personal characteristics and specific social roles are arbitrarily, inflexibly, restrictively and repeatedly associated with one sex and not the other

Sexual stereotypes are not completely disconnected from reality. We can, for instance, have the impression that boys are more interested in sexuality than girls. It is valid to ask oneself if this is not partly the result of the influence of the sexual stereotype conveyed by society which suggests that boys are extremely interested in sexuality. It is also very likely that some of a person's characteristics correspond with sexual stereotypes associated with his or her sex that are not necessarily negative; as we will see later, stereotypes can be useful, especially for young people. In return, the fact of not synchronizing one's behaviour with sexual stereotypes can be stressful and cause a person to feel less like a 'man' or a 'woman', in addition to becoming an object of scorn. Since sexual stereotypes are the basis of sexism (Amaral Madureira, 2009), it is important to get youth to recognize sexual stereotypes and to be critical of them. In this perspective, Table 2 presents sexual stereotypes frequently conveyed by society.



TABLE 2
SEXUAL STEREOTYPES FREQUENTLY CONVEYED BY SOCIETY

STEREOTYPES ASSOCIATED WITH BOYS	STEREOTYPES ASSOCIATED WITH GIRLS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They are enormously interested in sexuality (Duquet et Quéniart, 2009; Murnen, 1998). 2. They can seduce any girl (Murnen, 1998). 3. They never express their emotions (Levant et Fisher, 1998). 4. They are aggressive (Levant et Fisher, 1998). 5. They are independent (Auster et Ohm, 2000; Levant et Fisher, 1998). 6. They like sports (Prentice et Carranza, 2002). 7. They use their leadership skills and business sense to succeed in life (Prentice et Carranza, 2002). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They are less interested than boys in sexuality (Murnen, 1998). 2. They have to make themselves desirable to boys by being beautiful and sexy (Murnen, 1998). 3. They are emotional (Prentice et Carranza, 2002). 4. They are not aggressive; they're soft (Auster et Ohm, 2000). 5. They need boys in their lives (Murnen, 1998). 6. They love fashion and the arts (Prentice et Carranza, 2002). 7. They use their appearance and sexuality to succeed in life (Murnen, 1998).

A SOCIAL CONTEXT CONDUCTIVE TO SEXISM AMONG YOUTH

For a few years now, a number of study authors and researchers have been looking at the issues of hypersexualization and early sexualization of adolescents. Some assert that companies exploit the fact that young adolescents are in search of identities by conveying sexual stereotypes that are attractive to them (Bouchard and Bouchard, 2007). For instance, magazines for girls tend to include items in which physical appearance is very important, which sends a stereotyped message to young readers that a woman's "value" lies in her physical appearance. For boys, qualities recognized as positive and linked with power, social success or independence have traditionally been associated with men (Levant and Fischer, 1998); but they also include references that question the masculinity of boys who go against these stereotypes (Roussiau, 2008). Both girls and boys find themselves wrestling with social representations tinged with sexual stereotypes that encourage sexism.

Sexual stereotypes are also very present in audiovisual media that interest young people (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2008). In the United States, the 25 television shows most watched by adolescents include an average of 15.5 references to sexual stereotypes an hour (Kim et al., 2007). Reality TV expresses the attitudes that "women are sex objects" about 6 times an hour and that "men are sex-driven" 3 to 4 times an hour (Ferris et al., 2007). In video clips—television productions that are highly valued by young people (Astra Media, 2009)—about 28% of images represent the body as object (Morency, 2004). Sexual stereotypes in the media lead adolescents to endorse some of these notions (Rivadeneyra and Lebo, 2008; Tolman et al., 2007; Ward and Friedman, 2006). One study has demonstrated that, for girls and boys, the fact of viewing television programs in which women are presented as sex objects is associated with greater acceptance of this stereotype (Ward and Friedman, 2006).

Similarly, some authors assert that "we are in an era of perpetual erotic provocation, of permanent sexual solicitation" [translation] (Poulin and Laprade, 2006). They even refer to "pornographization" of society, given the pornographic code often found in the media: erotic imagery and sexual practices. One problem with this pervading pornographic code resides in the gender stereotypes conveyed (Poulin and Laprade, 2006; Poulin, 2008). Young people are thus immersed in a society where they are confronted with sexual stereotypes very early in life and tend to conform to such stereotypes. A recent study demonstrated that youths' perceptions tend to confirm that phenomena linked to hypersexualization and early sexualization are part of their daily lives (Duquet and Quéniart, 2009). Yet, these phenomena encourage adoption of sexual stereotypes associated with one's own sex as well as with the other (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2010): boys are depicted as sex-driven seducers and girls are encouraged to value themselves through the gaze of others.

THE ROLE OF SEXUAL STEREOTYPES DURING ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, sexual stereotypes meet young people's need to fit the norm. Stereotypes allow youth to recognize characteristics specifically associated with men or women, and then to establish clear distinctions between the sexes (Leyens, 1983, in Alilate, 1999). Adhering to sexual stereotypes enables youth to develop perceptions of their environment that are more structured, controllable and explainable (Alilate, 2009).

In their search for identity, young people tend to discover who they are not only as individuals but also as men and women (Stassen Berger, 2003). Some authors claim that "young people's adherence to certain sexual stereotypes is a product of the gender identity development process and is formed through socialization" [translation] (Bouchard et al., 1996, p. 10), thereby offering them a sense of security. Therefore, it is normal to see young people cling to certain stereotypes, especially sexual ones, and to repeat them. That being said, adolescents must also learn to go beyond imitating models and stereotypes so as to acquire identities of their own (Ribstein, 1995). In the absence of critical thinking regarding sexual stereotypes, adherence to the latter could interfere with an adolescent acquiring his or her own true identity and personality, as well as foster unequal gender relations.

Reality TV expresses the attitudes that "women are sex objects" about 6 times an hour and that "men are sex-driven" 3 to 4 times an hour [...]. Young people are thus immersed in a society where they are confronted with sexual stereotypes very early in life and tend to conform to such stereotypes.

HOW IS SEXISM MANIFESTED IN ADOLESCENTS?

Currently, sexism in young people manifests in three main ways, all linked to one another:

- Adherence to **sexual stereotypes** and **making sexist remarks**
- Adoption of **double standards** in regard to sexuality
- Experiences of **sexist harassment**



1. ADHERENCE TO SEXIST STEREOTYPES AND MAKING SEXIST REMARKS

Young people tend to adhere to sexist stereotypes and to make sexist remarks to their peers. Various studies have shown that representations of masculinity and of femininity in adolescents are stereotyped: notions of violence, virility and pronounced interest in sexuality are generally attributed to boys (Bouchard et al., 1996; Duquet and Quéniart, 2009; Murnen, 1998; Roussiau, 2008); vulnerability, physical appearance, gentleness and romanticism are used to describe girls (Duquet and Quéniart, 2009; Roussiau, 2008).

Boys have the reputation of turning to sexual, sexist and heterosexual stereotypes such as referring to women as sexual objects, especially by using degrading terms (e.g. “bitch”, “cunt”, “whore”) or making comments about women’s bodies (Bouchard, St-Amant and Tondreau, 1996). They may view the ideal man in terms of sexual stereotypes associated with virility—whether a man is a film star, “because he’s strong” or an athlete, especially “motocross racers” (Bouchard, St-Amant and Tondreau, 1996, p. 122).

2. ADOPTION OF DOUBLE STANDARDS IN REGARD TO SEXUALITY

Adolescents usually judge girls much more severely than they do boys. Some girls’ sexy clothing make other young people react strongly, especially other girls, who are quick to move from descriptions of the clothing item to value judgements (Duquet and Quéniart, 2009, p. 51), and then to refer to these girls as “teases”, “easy”, “sluts” or other such terms. A girl who wears sexy clothes may be criticized by her peers, but a boy who wears this type of clothing may be well thought of because these same peers consider that he is well-dressed and classy. This double standard is obvious in how young people perceive the sexual behaviours of girls and boys: girls who are open and assertive about being sexually active are often judged negatively, while boys are judged much less harshly (Duquet and Quéniart, 2009).

3. EXPERIENCES OF SEXIST HARASSMENT

Adolescents and young adults experience sexist harassment—also called sexist attack—quite frequently (Leaper and Brown, 2008; Garceau, 2003). The following table lists the main behaviours associated with sexist harassment.

TABLE 3
SOME BEHAVIOURS CONSIDERED TO BE SEXIST HARASSMENT

STEREOTYPES ASSOCIATED WITH BOYS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undressing someone with your eyes. • Looking at someone aggressively or inappropriately. • Making negative comments about someone's appearance. • Making sexist remarks or having sexist behaviours (sexual jokes or teasing).

Source: Marie-Luce GARCEAU (2003), "Quand le harcèlement se mêle au travail ou aux études...", *Reflets, Revue ontarioise d'intervention sociale et communautaire*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall, p. 61.

One of the main problems with sexist harassment is that young people often take it very lightly: "sexist harassment is perceived [...] as 'teasing', a way of relating to the other person" [translation] (Roussiau, 2008, p. 105). Moreover, sexist harassment of girls committed by boys is considered as more serious than that of girls toward boys (Roussiau, 2008); in fact, both are equally unacceptable.

CONSEQUENCES OF SEXISM AND SEXUAL STEREOTYPES

We should note that in addition to curbing an individual's development on all levels—personal, emotional, professional and social—sexism also causes feelings of alienation in people of both sexes (MEQ, 1993). Since it takes root in sexual stereotypes, sexism divides roles, skills, interests, and behaviours along gender lines; it thus limits boys' and girls' options, which impedes their development as individuals. As for stereotypes themselves, they are harmful in the sense that they can result in individuals feeling they do not 'fit in' if they do not identify with stereotypical concepts. For example, there is the sexual stereotype of boys not expressing their feelings. By being constantly conveyed by society, it becomes, in a way, a criteria for masculinity even though boys are, in fact, emotional. Consequently, a boy may feel that he is different or less masculine if he expresses his emotions, and others may be more likely to stigmatize him for these reasons.

TABLE 4
EXAMPLES OF CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL STEREOTYPES FOR BOYS

STEREOTYPES ASSOCIATED WITH BOYS	CONSEQUENCES
1. They are enormously interested in sexuality (Duquet et Quéniart, 2009; Murnen, 1998).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys who are not very or not at all interested in sexuality can feel less masculine and others may have a poor opinion of them. • They can try to conform to this stereotype, even if it doesn't correspond with their values. • They can be categorized the same as those who are very interested in sexuality simply because they are boys. • They can feel pressured into feeling that they should know everything about sexuality and should speak publicly about their private lives.
2. They can seduce any girl (Murnen, 1998).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys who find it difficult to approach girls can feel less masculine and others may have a poor opinion of them. • They can try to conform to this stereotype, even if it doesn't correspond with their values. • They can question themselves about their capacity to seduce. • They can fear being labelled as gay if their behaviours don't correspond with stereotypes. • Boys who know they are gay can feel like they have to hide their sexual orientation.

A person whose peers consider him or her only from stereotypical viewpoints can see his or her behaviours interpreted from this angle only, to the detriment of more personal characteristics, and end up adopting behaviours that conform to the stereotype in question even though it goes against this person's true personality (Steel and Aronson, 1995). Now let's take the example of an adolescent boy with a passion for dance. His friends, family and teachers, or items in the media will one day probably force him to deal with the sexual stereotype that indicates "real men" practice "real" sports like hockey, football or soccer, but not dance. This boy could then feel the weight

of the stereotype to the point where he will question his desire to dance and finally give it up, not because he is no longer interested by rather to stop being mocked. This principle, called "stereotype threat" (Steel and Aronson, 1995), refers to the feeling of non-conformity mentioned previously. Tables 4 and 5 provide examples of consequences associated with some stereotypes assigned to boys and girls (see Table 2).

TABLE 5
EXAMPLES OF CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL STEREOTYPES FOR GIRLS

STEREOTYPES ASSOCIATED WITH GIRLS	CONSEQUENCES
1. They are less interested than boys in sexuality (Murnen, 1998).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Girls who show an interest in sexuality can feel less feminine and be perceived negatively by others.• They can try to conform to this stereotype, even if it doesn't correspond to their values.• They can quickly be called degrading names ("easy", "slut")• Whether or not they are interested in sexuality, they can be confused and ask themselves if they should adopt behaviours that conform with this stereotype or try to imitate girls who are popular in the media and who supposedly assert their sexuality.
2. They have to make themselves desirable to boys by being beautiful and sexy (Murnen, 1998).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Girls who do not want to be sexy or who want to attract others through something other than appearance might feel less feminine.• They can try to conform to this stereotype, even if it doesn't correspond to what they really want or to their values.• Girls who want to be sexy might pay excessive attention to their physical appearance and their attitudes so they can seduce boys in ways that go against their personality.• They can be unsure of when it is not appropriate to be sexy and seductive.• They also risk being called degrading names.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND INTERVENTION

Teachers and facilitators are particularly well positioned to pay attention to manifestations of sexism among adolescents. Still, what can you do when you witness such an occurrence? It is especially important not to ignore it. Some adolescents are relatively unaware of the repercussions their own words can have and often don't even realize they are being sexist. You will have to explain to a youth with sexist behaviours or attitudes why these are sexist. Concurrently, you can encourage this

person to think about the basis for the behaviour or attitude by asking why he or she has behaved in this manner and making the links with these underlying sexual stereotypes. It is also important to encourage a young person to understand the issues associated with his or her sexist behaviour or attitude.



Learning activities

Learning activities are suggested to help you raise the topic of sexism with adolescents. The information you need to lead these activities is in the current issue of *The SexEducator*. The content elements to which you can refer are indicated at the beginning of the description of each activity, the goal of which is to raise young people's awareness of the existence of sexism in their lives and environments, and to help them exercise critical judgement with regard to sexual stereotypes. They are designed for youth in Secondary 2 and 3, that is, adolescents aged 13 to 15 years. They are presented in a specific order that ideally should be followed. The activities can be organized in schools or in community organizations. The information below provides

educators with suggestions on how the activities can be integrated into existing programs. Professionals in complementary educational services—especially psychologists, sexologists, nurses and social workers—are valuable allies. Therefore, it is important to inform them of the activities you will be doing in class.

Possible associations with the Québec Education Program

GOALS OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAM

- Construction of identity
- Construction of a world view
- Action-oriented empowerment

BROAD AREAS OF LEARNING

Health and Well-Being

Ensure that students develop a sense of responsibility for adopting good living habits with respect to health, safety and sexuality.

Focuses of development

Self-awareness and awareness of his or her basic needs

Awareness of the impact of personal choices on health and well-being

Awareness of the principles of balanced sexuality

Media Literacy

To enable students to exercise critical, ethical and aesthetic judgment with respect to the media and produce media documents that respect individual and collective rights.

Focuses of development

Awareness of the place and influence of the different media in his/her daily life and in society

Awareness of the influence of media messages on one's world-view and everyday environment

Understanding of media representations of reality

Recognition of the positive and negative impacts of media messages

Citizenship and Community Life

Enable students to take part in the democratic life of the class or school and develop attitudes of openness to the world and of respect for diversity.

Focus of development

Adoption of a culture of peace

Application of the principle of equal rights

Understanding of negative consequences of stereotypes and other forms of discrimination or exclusion

CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCY

Exercise critical judgement.

Possible associations with Complementary Educational Services Programs

PROMOTION AND PREVENTION SERVICES PROGRAM

Aim to provide students with an environment conducive to the development of healthy lifestyles and of skills that are beneficial to their health and well-being.

PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Designed to help students throughout their studies, with their academic and career choices and with any difficulties they encounter.

ACTIVITY 1

OH, GIRLS!
OH, BOYS!

DURATION	PEDAGOGICAL GOALS	CONTENT
75 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define sexual stereotypes. Identify sexual stereotypes in various scenarios. Challenge the sexual stereotypes identified as reality. Recognize the main sexual stereotypes conveyed by society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table 1: Definitions of sexism and sexual stereotypes (p. 4) Table 2: Sexual stereotypes conveyed by society (p. 5)

PREPARING
THE ACTIVITY

1

Write on a piece of paper the title of each scenario (eight in all) that teams will improvise. Put the pieces of paper in a container until it is time for each team to draw one at random.

Titles of scenarios to perform

1. Girls out shopping.
2. Boys out shopping.
3. Boys getting ready to go to a party.
4. Girls getting ready to go to a party.
5. Boys talking about girls,
6. Girls talking about boys,
7. Girls watching sports on TV.
8. Boys going to see a musical.

DOING
THE ACTIVITY

2

Introduction

Ask the young people to define sexual stereotype. As adolescents list them, write on the board the elements that correspond to the definition; correct inaccuracies and complete the answers, as needed (see Table 1).

Improvisation

Ask the youth to form single-gender teams of three or four (maximum of eight teams). Give them the following instructions: each team will present a two-minute improvised creation on a randomly-picked topic; team members will have two minutes to discuss how they will present the situation. Proceed with picking the topics.

Presentation of each team's improvisation

One after another, each team presents its improvisation. Beforehand, tell the youth who are watching that they will first have to determine if team members are playing the roles of boys or girls and then identify the gestures, attitudes or words spoken that enable them to confirm their assumptions. Ask them to pay attention to the sexual stereotypes introduced in the improvisation presented.

3

Going over the scenarios

After each improvisation, engage the youth in a short discussion by asking the following questions:

- In your opinion, were team members playing the roles of girls or boys? What gestures, attitudes or words enable you to state this?
- What sexual stereotypes did you identify in this scenario?

When the scenario involved girls:

- Girls, did you recognize yourselves in this scenario?
- How did the situation correspond, or not, to girls' reality?
- What affected you in this scenario?
- Does this correspond to the reality of all girls?
- How can the sexual stereotypes highlighted here affect you?

When the scenario involved boys:

- Did you recognize yourselves in this scenario?
- How did the situation correspond, or not, to boys' reality?
- What affected you in this scenario?
- Does this correspond to the reality of all boys?
- How can the sexual stereotypes highlighted here affect you?



INTEGRATING THE ACTIVITY

4

Plenary session

After all improvisations have been presented, ask the whole group the following questions:

- Where do you think stereotypes come from? What is their purpose?
- How can sexual stereotypes be negative? Positive?
- Why do some people adhere to the stereotypes and others don't?

CONCLUSION

Ask the young people what they have learnt from the activity. Ask them also if they were surprised by some of the elements and if they are aware of any other sexual stereotypes. If need be, complete the students' answers, with the help of Table 2. Then, let them know that stereotypes are simplistic and attribute a general image to all people of the same gender without taking into account an individual's personality. Also add that sexual stereotypes do not define what a boy or a girl is, and that boys and girls can have characteristics that, according to sexual stereotypes, are associated with the other gender. Conclude the activity by noting that these individuals should not be treated abusively.

ACTIVITY 2

CRITIQUING A MEDIA PRODUCTION

DURATION	PEDAGOGICAL GOALS	CONTENT
3 WEEKS to prepare the critique + 75 MINUTES for the oral presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize sexual stereotypes in media productions. Critique these sexual stereotypes, indicating why they are sexist. Suggest non-sexist ways of presenting the contents of a media production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table 1: Definitions of sexism and sexual stereotypes (p. 4) Table 2: Sexual stereotypes conveyed by society (p. 5) A social context conducive to sexism among youth (p. 6)

PREPARING THE ACTIVITY

1

Introducing the topic

First, make a short presentation on sexism and sexual stereotypes (see Tables 1 and 2, p. 4 and 5, and the section entitled A social context conducive to sexism among youth, p. 6). Then, make a link between sexism and stereotypes using, for instance, the example of Laïla and Gabriel (see the sections *What is sexism exactly?* and *What about sexual stereotypes?*, p. 4) before identifying the consequences.

2

Explaining the project

Present the project to the adolescents and explain that they will be choosing a media production (e.g. a video clip, a clip from a reality TV show, a magazine article or an ad) and will critique it on the basis of the sexual stereotypes it contains. To do this assignment, they can refer to the consequences of sexism and sexual stereotypes they were introduced to earlier. Indicate that they will have five minutes to present their oral critique in front of the class, excluding the time needed for the audio or video clip.

Criteria to follow

- Form teams of two or three.
- Choose a media production that contains at least two sexual stereotypes.
- Show the media production to the group¹.
- If it is an audio or video clip, make sure it does not last longer than two minutes.
- If there is an age limit for viewing or listening to the production, which is usually the case for films or TV programs, ensure that it is not for viewers 13 years or over.

1. If author's royalties mean this is not possible, the team will make an oral presentation on the production.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

3

Preparing critiques in teams

The contents of the critique should answer the following questions:

- What are the sexual stereotypes presented? When do they occur?
- Does each of these sexual stereotypes represent reality or not?
- What makes these sexual stereotypes sexist?
- How could you have presented contents similar to that in the media production without conveying a sexist message?

Moreover, the critique should present links among the stereotypes in the media production and sexism.

4

Oral presentation of critiques

Ask the young people to pay attention during oral presentations since they will be asked for their points of view concerning sexual stereotypes in the media productions presented.

INTEGRATING THE ACTIVITY

Conclusion

Once the oral presentations are over, ask the young people what elements stood out in the other presentations and what they learnt from them. Also ask them if they were aware of all the sexual stereotypes contained in the any of media productions they may have been familiar with among the ones that the different teams presented. Conclude the activity by mentioning that the media often conveys sexual stereotypes that encourage sexism and that it is important to be critical of these stereotypes since they do not correspond to reality. Finally, invite the youth to continue looking for sexual stereotypes in films, TV shows, video clips, magazines and ads they see and in music they listen to.





ACTIVITY 3

SEXISM STILL EXISTS!

DURATION	PEDAGOGICAL GOALS	CONTENT
75 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define sexism.• Recognize how sexism manifests itself in various case histories.• Determine the potential consequences of these manifestations of sexism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Table 1 (sexism section): Definitions of sexism and sexual stereotypes (p. 4)• What are some forms of sexism manifested by adolescents? (p. 7)• Consequences of sexism and sexual stereotypes (p. 8)

PREPARING THE ACTIVITY



Introducing the topic

Prepare two copies of the cases presented below, both followed by three questions that the youth will have to answer as part of their analysis. Each case will be analyzed at the same time by a team of girls and one of boys.

CASE 1

During a party at a friend's house, Laïla, 14, and Gabriel, 15, played "Truth or Consequences" with some friends. Both kissed two different people on the mouth, when challenged to do so. The following Monday at school, Laïla notices people are talking about her, calling her "loose" because she kissed two boys during the evening. Laïla is shaken and doesn't know what to do. As for Gabriel, the few people who are talking about him are describing him as the school's "new Casanova". Although his friends envy him when they give him what they perceive to be a compliment, Gabriel is uncomfortable with the notoriety.

CASE 2

Nicolas has heard several times that boys think only about sex. He's heard girls talk like this but he's also heard this kind of talk from his family. Nicolas has always told himself that he was interested in sex; yet, he wouldn't go so far as to say that this is all he thinks about. For him, love is more important. Last week, he went to see a film with Emma, a girl he really likes. While they were watching the film, Nicolas put his arm around Emma's neck to get closer to her. Emma pulled away abruptly before telling him that he just thinks about sex like all the other boys, but he shouldn't get any ideas. It was out of the question that she have sex with him. Nicolas doesn't understand and wonders if he did something wrong.

ACTIVITY 3 (CONTINUED)

SEXISM STILL EXISTS!

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1

Questions to analyze for each case

- What do you think of the attitude or behaviour of each character?
- In your opinion, how is sexism manifested in each case? Explain.
- In your opinion, what are some possible consequences of the manifested forms of sexism for each character?

2

Preliminary discussion

Ask the youth to say if they have ever witnessed sexism and to give examples of what they have seen or heard. If possible, jot down key words from the examples given by the students. Ask them why they think these events are sexist. Based on these examples, ask them to define sexism. On the board, write down the elements that correspond to the definition as students list them. Correct inaccuracies and complete their answers as needed, taking care to remind them what a sexual stereotype is (see p. 4).

3

Case analyses

Ask the youth to form six teams composed of boys or girls. Hand out the case histories (make sure that a team of girls and a team of boys get the same one). Ask them to analyze the case they have been given by answering the questions.

4

Plenary session

Tell the youth that a representative of each team will read out the case history to the whole group. For each case, the boys' team will present what they have discussed, followed by the girls' team. Note any disagreements that arise between the boys and the girls, and ask each team to defend their point of view. Then invite the other adolescents to share their points of view and thoughts. Correct inaccuracies by providing appropriate information. Bring the discussion of each case to an end by adding to the answers given by the young people, using the information about manifestations of sexism in each situation and their possible consequences (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
CONSEQUENCES OF SEXISM IN EACH OF THE CASES

CONSEQUENCES, CASE 1	CONSEQUENCES, CASE 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laïla is labelled with degrading terms. • Laïla might be afraid of kissing a boy in the future. • Gabriel feels uncomfortable. • Gabriel might feel pressure because of his new “seducer” status. • Other boys at school could have the impression that they have to seduce several girls to be appreciated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicolas sees that he has become a “guy that thinks only about sex”, as per the sexual stereotype, even though he doesn't consider himself that way. • Nicolas is unsure whether he acted inappropriately or not and wonders how he can get close to a girl without her thinking that all he wants is to have sex with her. • Emma stops herself from enjoying a boy's company because she has the wrong idea about boys in general.

INTEGRATING THE ACTIVITY

Conclusion

Ask the young people what they have learnt from the activity. Ask them also how they would have reacted if they had experienced or witnessed situations like those presented in the cases. Would they have known that sexism was involved? Finally, ask the youth if they have any other examples of sexism. Tell them that there are many examples of sexism in everyday life and that it is not limited to the cases analyzed in class. Conclude the activity by saying that although sexism sometimes goes unnoticed, its consequences are nonetheless very real. Encourage the youth to be mindful about what they say, and about their attitudes and behaviours to make sure they don't encourage sexism.

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