

## Sexuality in Two Societies – Examples of Bias

**Rationale:** This activity is designed to create awareness about diversity of sexual norms. It sensitizes participants to the impact of cultures and social conditions upon sexuality. It encourages critical thinking about how professionals describe cultures and social conditions. It also helps to build comfort with discussing sexuality issues.

**Materials Needed:**

“Two Societies” Handout (copies to be given out and read the day before)

**Time Required:** 25 Minutes

**Objectives: Participants will:**

- Appreciate the diversity of sexual expression in different cultural and social contexts
  - Understand how expression of sexuality is impacted by cultures and social conditions
  - Be able to identify cultural assets that have the potential to support healthy sexuality
1. Distribute the handout, plus a blank sheet of paper, to each participant. Remind them they should have read handout last night.
  2. Allow a few minutes for people to review the 2 descriptions again.
  3. Explain that each description has been written with a bias. Ask for suggestions about what the bias may be [“sexuality = problems”].
  4. If the group has not realized it, explain that the bias is about problems and liabilities associated with sex. Public health – and health education in schools – often approach sexuality as a collection of problems to be solved, prevented, or treated. Where is our ability to identify assets and to build on cultural assets that support healthy sexuality? Liabilities weaken communities, but assets build them.
  5. Now pair the participants and ask them to brainstorm the positive assets in one of the descriptions (assign ‘Conifer’ to some pairs, and ‘Geologic’ to other pairs) that potentially safeguard healthy sexuality. Someone in each pair should write the list of assets on a blank sheet.
  6. When they are done, ask volunteers to report-back to the large group.
  7. Process by asking what it is like to re-frame problems in terms of assets? Is this done in their schools?

*Optional:* In situations where there is more time, try having pairs re-write their description *only* in terms of assets. Permit them to add information that is not necessarily in the original description, if they are inspired to do so. When processing, be sure to ask *why* they added such information if they did (i.e. what was their rationale for guessing or inventing additional ‘facts’?).

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### The Conifer Confederation

Premarital sex here is treated with complete denial. The separation between the sexes is extreme. Conifer women may not drive, and when in public they must never allow their hair or other areas of their body to be exposed. They are spirited around the city in cars with tinted windows, attend girls-only schools and university departments, and eat in special “family” sections of cafes and restaurants, which are carefully partitioned from the sections used by single male diners. Religious police enforce the norms and can arrest violators. Youth are taught to fear sex.

Teen girls unquestioningly obey such limits. They regard the idea of having a conversation with a man before their wedding engagements with very real horror.

One man said he expected to see his new wife for the first time after their wedding ceremony — which would also be segregated by sex — when they are photographed as husband and wife.

“If you want to know what your wife looks like, look at her brother,” he said.

Conifer girls are kept so ignorant of the male world that some actually resort to disguise, as males, in order to venture into it.

For males, getting caught with an unrelated female can mean arrest, a possible flogging, and dishonor -- the worst penalty of all in a society where preserving a family's reputation depends on faithful adherence to a strict code of separation between the sexes. Family honor is an obsession for Conifers.

Marriage is arranged by families, who select a suitable woman for a man and then impose a marriage contract. Until the wedding, the pair are not allowed to see each other or communicate. Divorce is viewed cynically: women are powerless to divorce unless they and a 3<sup>rd</sup>-party witness can prove abuse, but men enjoy instant divorce rights, at their whim.

Homosexual activity is repressed as a crime punishable by imprisonment and even death. Heterosexuality is compulsory and family planning propaganda pushes women to have as many babies as possible. Large families are a fetish.

### The Geologic Republic

In the G.R., sex saturates the media, and dominates the conversations of teens and adults regardless of marital status. Children are immersed in sexually-explicit material starting with sex education in their schools, where homosexuality, abortion, and masturbation are taught as “options”. The media constantly depict wanton sexuality without showing the emotionally damaging consequences of sex outside the context of marriage. Even the clergy go along with this sexually permissive moral relativism, and say only “do what is ethical.”

Men's and women's unique attributes are treated with complete denial here. Geolite boys and girls are forced to share bathrooms, see one another undressed, and dance together as teens. As adults, men and women are forced to ride public transit together, serve in the military together, attend the same university classes, and even share the same waiting rooms in medical clinics.

One G.R. woman said she met her bisexual boyfriend through a gay male acquaintance who had “dumped” the man because he was too interested in the opposite sex. “So he told me, ‘you're a woman, maybe you can do something with him!’ And guess what, he was right! We hit it off so well that we're going to move in together next month, maybe even have a baby one day.”

For males, getting caught with pornography can be embarrassing because it suggests that he is not “getting any” and thus has to resort to masturbation. Although males and females universally view masturbation is a common source of pleasure for both sexes, they still joke about it because it suggests that only the sexually under-experienced person would have to substitute a porn video for a real live sex partner.

Youth are taught to fear commitment. Marriage is viewed cynically in the G.R. – Geolites lavish money on the commercial wedding industry, but divorce rates are nearly 50%; many young people postpone marriage or do not marry at all. The gay and lesbian agenda has hijacked marriage and devalued its meaning in society. Condoms and contraception are pushed on young people as if they were candy.