



Kinsey & Heteronormativity

Changing Understandings of Human Sexuality

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Subject: History

Topic: Integrated; Post-WWII America

Grade Levels: High School; 11

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about 20th century biologist Alfred Kinsey and his famed research on human sexuality that resulted in the creation of the Kinsey Scale. Students will be introduced to the concept of heteronormativity and discuss its relation to Kinsey's work. Students will then complete a primary source analysis project, examining newspaper archives to shed light on social attitudes regarding gender and sexual orientation in the 1940s/50s United States.

Time: 30 mins

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand the Kinsey Reports as products of their primary researcher and time period
- Familiarize themselves with the findings and outcomes of the Kinsey Reports, including the Kinsey Scale
- Examine heteronormativity in our contemporary society

Essential Questions:

Who was Alfred Kinsey and what did he contribute to the study of sexuality?

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Kinsey Reports and the Kinsey Scale?

What is heteronormativity and how does it manifest?

Standards:

History Framework, Chapter 16, 11th Grade, p. 421: Students also examine the emergence of a movement for LGBT rights, starting in the 1950s with California-based groups like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis...and consider figures such as Alfred Kinsey...

History 11.8. Students analyze the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II America.

History CST 9-12.2. Students analyze how change happens at different rates at different times; understand that some aspects can change while others remain the same; and understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.

History HI 9-12.3. Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Vocabulary:

The Kinsey Scale: a seven-point scale developed by biologist Alfred Kinsey in 1948 to categorize people based on their sexual history, whether their sexual encounters had frequently been heterosexual, homosexual, or mixed, with 0 signifying exclusively heterosexual and 6 signifying exclusively homosexual

Heteronormativity: the presentation of heterosexuality as the only “normal” or “natural” form of sexuality in a society

Sexual Orientation: a person’s sexual identity in regards to the gender(s) to which they are sexually attracted

Teacher Background:

The teacher should be familiar with the Kinsey Reports and Kinsey Scale, as well as the sociopolitical climate of Post-WWII US. The teacher should also be familiar with heteronormativity and have a basic understanding of contemporary LGBTQ issues and the related vocabulary.

Materials:

- Internet-connected computer
- Projector
- Popular recent magazines (ask students to bring a few days before)

Instruction:

1. Introduction (5 mins)
 - a. Ask students if they’ve heard of the Kinsey Scale. Introduce the lesson topic, explaining the class will explore how it was created, who created it, when it was created, and what is its legacy.
2. Slideshow (25 mins)
 - a. Show the [slideshow](#)

- b. The slideshow will provide background information on the topic, as well as some discussion questions.
3. Heteronormativity activity (20 mins)
 - a. Using the magazines students and the teacher have brought in, have students find an advertisement or article that represents a manifestation of heteronormativity.
 - b. After all students have found an example, have students show their example to the class and articulate how it shows heteronormativity and how it could be changed to not be heteronormative.
4. Closing discussion (5 mins)
 - a. What did students learn today? What will they take away?
 - b. What would they like to learn more about?

Assessment Idea:

Have students find an article from an American publication written in the 1940s or 1950s that focuses on topics of gender or sexuality. Some archives to search include:

1. California Digital Newspaper Collection: <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=p&p=home&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----> (sort by decade)
2. Elephind: <https://elephind.com/> (sort by country: United States and decade)
3. Library of Congress Chronicling America: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (enter year range)

Example search terms include: homosexuality, gender, women, gay, lesbian, Kinsey

Students should find the following information for their article:

1. The article title
2. The exact date
1. The publication (what city was it based in, what audience was it marketed towards)
2. The author (if listed- any information they include about themselves: their gender, race, sexual orientation, occupation, etc.)
3. The topic/content (what events inspired the article)
4. The argument/position (does the author feel positively, neutrally, or negatively about the topic they're discussing)
5. The context (What do other articles in that day's newspaper talk about? What was the social-political-economic landscape for this time and place?)
6. Any accompanying media (a picture, graph, table, etc.; what is it and why was it included?)

Students will summarize the article they found. Are there big differences between pre-Kinsey Report (before 1948) articles and post-Kinsey Report articles? If yes, what are they? If not, why do you think there aren't?

Relevant Resources:

Brathwaite, Les Fabian. "Less Than 50% of Teens Identify as Straight, Says New Study." *OUT*, Out Magazine, 11 Mar. 2016, www.out.com/news-opinion/2016/3/11/less-50-teens-identify-straight-says-new-study.

Bullough, Vern L. "Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report: Historical Overview and Lasting Contributions." *Journal of Sex Research*, 35, 2, 1998, p.127-131.

Cochrane, Kristen. "Why Heteronormativity Is a Bad Thing." *Teen Vogue*, Condé Nast, 25 May 2017, www.teenvogue.com/story/heteronormativity-gender-identity-sexual-orientation.

"Historical report: Diversity of Sexual Orientation." *Kinsey Institute*, Indiana University, (1955) 2017, www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/historical-report-diversity-of-sexual-orientation.php

Kinsey, Alfred C, et al. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. W. B. Saunders Company, 1948.

Kinsey, Alfred C, et al. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. W. B. Saunders Company, 1953.

"The Kinsey Scale." *Kinsey Institute*, Indiana University, 2017, www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/kinsey-scale.php.

Palmore, Erdman. "Published Reactions to the Kinsey Report." *Social Forces*, 31, 2, 1952, p.165-172.

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