



Teenage Boys: Perspectives on the Adolescent Male's Development in an Urban Setting

Curriculum Unit 81.03.05
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Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Identity—Self Image
- III. Moral Dilemmas—Decision Making
- IV. Adolescent Sexuality
- V. Teenage Fatherhood
- VI. Footnotes
- VII. Sample Lessons
 - A. Lesson One: Adolescent Sexual Conflict
Are We Still Going To The Movies?
 - B. Lesson Two: Adolescent Pregnancy
Teenage Father
 - C. Lesson Three: Early Adolescent Sexual Development
Am I Normal ?
- VIII. Annotated Bibliography for Teachers
- IX. Annotated Bibliography for Students

Preliminary Assignment Before presenting concepts or using the individual strategies or lessons in this unit, you may wish to ask your students to begin collecting images of teenage boys in urban settings. These images may be collected from magazines, posters, newspapers and advertisements. *The Family of Children*, a Ridge Press Book published by Grosset and Dunlap, is an excellent source of images, especially pages 184-85, Identity and self image; 176-77, Moral dilemmas and decision making; 187, adolescent sexuality) and p. 41, teenage fatherhood.

I. INTRODUCTION

Perspectives on the Adolescent Male's Development in an Urban Setting

Excerpts from some conversations among girls talking about boys—their brothers, their boy friends, their 'just friends', the fathers of their own or their friends' babies:

Boys. They have one track minds. So immature.

Adolescent boys—they always think about going to bed; they don't think about afterwards.

They wanna be grown but don't know how to act that way.

Girls, girls, girls—that's all they think about.

My brother—he's fourteen. I don't know what he's doing. All he does is be playing outside. He comes in late—eats all by himself. He hangs around with a bunch of boys—thinks he knows everything. Thinks he's grown. He's always gotta be with th style—those fancy running shoes, fashion jeans—\$40 jeans he has! Four girls in my family and only one boy. We girls never had stuff like that. My mother can't control him. The school's always calling her. Him and his friends—first one gets suspended, then the next. They think it's funny. I told him I think he just be being bad so he can go to that other school instead of regular high school—he's got friends at that special school. People think that's a school for dumb kids—but it ain't. Boy! He just used to get some good grades—like in the fifth grade—all A's. If my father was here, he'd make him act right. My brother, he's smart though. He just gave the school our mother's phone number. My father, boy, if he was here, he'd make him act right.

And girls, now I know he been messin' with them girls. I told him he better not get some girl pregnant—told him he better use some type of protection. He won't listen to me. He won't listen to nobody.

And now summer's here. I told him to get a (CETA) application. He didn't. He could do something good too, like teach them little kids music. He used to play the drums. And he can play some hoop, boy! He used to be on the team—got a great big trophy and everything. Now he's not doing nothing. He's on one of them modified schedules—just gets math, English, science and social studies. Then he's supposed to go home.

Boy, he sure like those school parties they have though. You know, they have 'em every friday night—keep the kids busy. Yeah, he sure likes them parties.

As this conversation indicates, the urban environment in which the young adolescent male functions is a complex one; within it he has many roles which require a range of disparate behaviors.

At home, he has a mother who no longer functions as an authority figure or as a person to seek to please by excelling at school or doing chores at home, and a sister he no longer cares to talk to, relax or eat meals with and, whose advice he'd just as soon not hear. And they are convinced at home that they not only have no control, but that the only person who might help is the absent father. ("If he knew, he'd help"—yet, neither school nor family contact father to tell him.)

At school, he has teachers, principal and coach whose expectations for him are dimming. They are keeping him in school but, unable to control his behavior, they deny him music and basketball as punishment. So now he'd rather be suspended, or expelled altogether. The cycle is in full swing—"I'm a failure, let me fail. School's a meaningless place to be. Who needs it."

At the Boy's Club, well, he used to be somebody there when he was a basketball player but he isn't on a team anymore. That big trophy is getting smaller and smaller. (His sister may appear to remember it better than he can right now.)

The school parties—now here's a place he seems to be enjoying. He must be feeling pretty good about who he is here: some talent for music, dancing, dressed well, popular with girls. You have to work hard to hold on here—the right jeans, the right tape deck—but you can make it here, and so it's worth the effort. It's especially worth the effort when your life in the male peer group depends heavily on your success with girls.

The adolescent boys alluded to in this conversation clearly do not and are not meant to represent all teenage boys in a lower socio-economic environment. (Admittedly, they do invite our attention because they are the early adolescents we are worried about!) If this vignette was shared with a high school class, would the class be capable of comparing and contrasting this boy's development with other males in their school or neighborhood? Our students need insights which may help them understand behaviors of school peers; as family members and as future parents, they need to learn about adolescent development to optimize their functioning in those roles.

The informal profile presented prompts our consideration more broadly of the biological, the psychological and social factors which characterize the adolescent males' behavior and development. All boys experience some degree of anxiety over the physical changes they are experiencing, all boys are struggling at one point or another with their changing roles in their families and with same and opposite sex peers, all boys are influenced by the social environment in which they are raised.

I have chosen to use vignettes and photographic images to guide the introduction to this unit on adolescent males in an urban setting. These I hope will capture some reality of today's urban adolescent world, some highlights of his development, and provide a point of departure for examining their multi-faceted environment. Each section includes a suggested strategy for incorporating the written and visual images into classroom activities.

Communication between adults and adolescents is not always easy, nor is communication between the adolescents themselves. While this unit can not answer all the questions, it will hopefully provide a guide to the sensitive presentation of information which might heighten the adolescent male's self awareness and enhance the adolescent female's understanding of her brother, friend or mate.

II. Identity – Self image

Darryl (a sixteen year old, 5'10" Black teen) is playing ball with a group of boys on the basketball court near his home. His friend, Carla, is walking by with a couple of her friends. She seems to be calling over to him. He sees her—but doesn't walk over to say hello, even though they are 'close' friends.

Photographic image: A Boy on a Basketball Court

The outlets for an inner city male to prove his masculinity are few; demonstrating athletic prowess is one outlet. The fantasy of becoming the big time pro is important and vital to the self image of this young man. If he is gifted or good, he may be picked by the big guys for their team. But more than likely, he won't be chosen. How does he deal with this disappointment?

All males during early adolescence need a healthy body image. They need knowledge about puberty and what all these changes will mean for their adulthood. The question which arises most often is, "Am I normal?" Will I be like my father or older brothers? Will my penis be the right size? Will I be strong? Will I make the team when I get to high school? Will I be able to father a child?

The physiological changes which occur will be accompanied by both psychological and social changes. The first changes will occur internally with the increase of sex specific hormones; these affect not only the onset of secondary sex characteristics but also behavior. He may experience mood swings, become more egocentric, appear depressed and desire more privacy.

At this time the early adolescent often goes through a period of low self esteem because he is in a never-never land, not an adult and not a kid. He is in transition. Unsure of the future, he wonders: will I be tall or short, will these blemishes go away, and most importantly, will I be attractive to the opposite sex?

If he demonstrates athletic prowess and is accepted as part of the team, he has to learn now to be a part of a group. As a team or group member he finds that there is a pecking order and as the newest member, he may very well find himself at the bottom of the heap. This may be hard internally while being expressed externally as, "Hey, I'm one of the guys."

As a member of a gang, group or team, the adolescent boy finds acceptance, sources of authoritative information, a feeling of strength and a sense of belonging. This in many ways prepares him to become a part of groups in the labor market, social setting, and recreational athletic teams that can constitute life long activities.

Usually as part of group membership, the adolescent will find some very special friends with whom he can develop closer relationships based on mutual desires and needs. Here he finds confidants to talk to about private and special things, and comrades to make decisions with. He begins to separate from his biological family as the most important source of information and guidance. Often the group is used as his bridge to independence; parents may hear a frequent refrain, "the guys said . . .", implying that what the guys say is gospel and not to be doubted.

Through no fault of my own I reached adolescence. While the pressure to prove myself on the athletic field lessened, the overall situation got worse—because now I had to prove myself with girls. Just how I was supposed to go about doing this was beyond my, especially because, at the age of 14, I was four foot nine and weighed 78

pounds. (I think there may have been one ten year old girl in the neighborhood smaller than I.) Nevertheless, duty called, and with my ninth grade gym class jock strap flapping between my legs, off I went.”

Julius Lester, “Being a Boy” ¹

Suggested Classroom Strategy

After viewing the slide and/or reading the vignette, students might:

Debate the following statement:

Sports: the need to participate in sports is more important for boys than for girls.

The teacher will act as moderator and coach. The teacher will spend 5-10 minutes with each side (three participants who agree, three who disagree). Allow each side six minutes to present their points of view (two minutes each). Allow five minutes for questioning and refuting. Allow leader of each team time to summarize main points.

Have the class vote on which side is the winner. Votes and comments explaining individual decisions will be tallied by the moderator and used for closing discussion.

or, Complete a Compare and Contrast Writing Assignment.

You may wish to use additional photographic images showing boys in other activities: A Boy Running Alone on a Track

Two Boys playing Backgammon

A group of Boys just hanging out

Ask the students to describe the activity each boy in the image is involved in. Explain this involvement may be important to his identity. Explain how this activity may change his role in the family.

III. Moral Dilemmas – Decision Making

Johnny is shopping one day with his best friend, Tom. Tom tries on a couple of shirts. Before coming out of the dressing room, he leaves one shirt on under his old shirt and walks out a side door. Meanwhile, the clerk has called the security guard who demands that Johnny tell him the name of the other boy. The owner of the store

threatens prosecution as an accomplice if Johnny does not tell the name.

Photographic image: A Young man being confronted with an authority—superimposed images of mother, friends)

Adolescents are often faced with difficult decisions to make. Certainly a teacher would point out the reasons Jonny should reveal Tom's name: What kind of friend would leave you to take the responsibility for his stealing, how much do you owe a friend (it will go on your record, not his). Shoplifting is wrong and hurts us all because prices go up. However, often it is hard for teenagers to truly consider the future consequences of their present activities. Johnny may say: This store can afford it; it was just one shirt; no adult (authority figure) is going to make me do anything, much less squeal on a friend; Tom would do the same for me; or, stealing isn't that bad. Johnny may also find himself under quite a bit of peer pressure because there are other guys in the gang who have taken the 'rap' for friends. Anyway, "If you're tough and a man, you can take it".

Perhaps the investigators who have the most work in the areas of moral development and cognitive developmental approaches to the formation of a value system are Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Piaget presented three aspects in the hierarchal stages of moral development:

1. Goodness is defined as obedience to adult commands; acts that do not conform are bad.
2. Rules are perceived as given from above; they are externally imposed and consequently demand external compliance to the letter of the law rather than the spirit.
3. An act is evaluated in terms of its consequences rather than its intentions. Punishment is incurred for behavior, regardless of the person's intentions. ²

Piaget also conceded to the thought that the child slowly and gradually discontinues to view morality in the terms of "unilateral authority" and changes to a focus on rules as essential for getting along with peers.

In Kohlberg's work, this movement has been extended and elaborated. He pictures six stages in his theory of moral development:

Stage one: the child gives in to the superior position and power of the parent.

Stage two: the child agrees to a rule or does a favor only if he thinks it will benefit him (egocentrism).

Stage three: "good boy-nice girl" orientation. Here the youngster tries to get approval from others and conforms in order to please.

Stage four: Law and order orientation. Stick to the rules so as to maintain social order.

Stage five: "social contract-legalistic orientation"—justice flows from a contract between the governor and governed that assures equal rights for all.

Stage six: High abstract—the individual chooses according to ethical principles. ³

Now what does this have to do with Johnny and his plight? He's embarrassed, he's challenging authority, having his peer group's values and beliefs challenged and thinks of himself as a have not. He doesn't tell on his friend, thinks authority stinks, becomes embittered and takes the 'rap'.

Suggested classroom strategy

Guide the students through a discussion which allows them to share their points of view, hear what their classmates have to say, explore their feelings and a discussion which allows you in a nonjudgemental manner to present the Piaget and Kohlberg concepts. Should Johnny protect his friend and not tell his name? Why or why not. Does Johnny really owe anything to Tom, who left him holding the bag?

Hand out large index cards. Have each student write a case study—situation in which a boy is faced with a moral dilemma and must make a decision. Examples to start with:

- Tony is out on a date. He wants to 'score' to impress his friend, but he really cares for this girl and knows they aren't ready to have intercourse.
- Ricky asks one girl to the prom. Before the date set for the dance arrives, he's begun to like another girl better than the one he's invited.
- Lenny is walking down the street at night with a group of boys. One boy starts taunting an elderly woman walking alone.
- John sees a school classmate taking a bike from a neighbor's yard. He knows the other boy is just going to take the bike for a joy ride and then abandon it.
- Greg's sister (age 15) has been asked out by Ralph, a boy in Greg's crowd. Greg knows some things about Ralph's attitudes about girls in the past that he (Greg) doesn't like.

Collect the Cards and select a few to read out loud. Allow the students to share their advice and solutions.

IV. Adolescent Sexuality

Photographic Images: A Boy and Girl rollerskating together.

A Boy walking away from his front steps where mother and sisters are sitting.

A boy talking with men on a corner.

A Boy wondering if he should walk into a family planning clinic.

A boy and a girl sitting quietly alone in the park together.

A vignette (case study) is included in a lesson on birth control included in this section.

There are about 21 million young people in the United States between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years. Of these, more than 11 million are estimated to have had sexual intercourse—almost 7 million young men, and 4 million young women.

Guttmacher Report

11 Million Teenagers

1976

Factors Contributing to Early Heterosexual Experience Among Urban Youth

Boys achieve their sexual peak at age 15 or 16. Kinsey studies document that the male sex drive, his orgasmic capacity, reaches its peak at age sixteen. ⁵The inner city male, based not on biological changes, but rather on learned behaviors, fulfills his sexual drives through early heterosexual relationships, often involving intercourse. Masturbation and mutual masturbation are not acceptable alternatives for the adolescent male from a lower socio-economic class. As Rainwater discusses in *Behind Ghetto Walls*, “. . . heavy petting in the manner of middle class adolescents—involving genital contact, semi-nakedness, or manipulation to the point of orgasm—is not considered an alternative to coitus.” ⁶Pride in sexual conquest and the lack of power and prestige attained through other than sexual activities encourages early heterosexual experimenting. Sadly, it seems, the push to actual intercourse among increasingly younger adolescents disallows learning how to develop other aspects of an intimate relationship.

In his essay, “Sex in the Culture of Poverty”, Rainwater discusses premarital sexuality among white lower class males. “Boys are expected to engage in sexual relations whenever they have an opportunity and pride themselves on their ability to have intercourse with many different girls”. ⁷This behavior strengthens his position in the peer group and it involves much bragging and competition. The adolescent boy receives his cues from adult males and peers; the double standard is alive and well. Hence, while it may be argued that there may be more acceptance of sexual activity for both girls and boys from the lower socio-economic urban Black family, the dilemma for the young woman—white, Black or Hispanic—remains. The young man receives messages from peers, fathers, male teachers and coaches which encourage him to prove his masculinity (and vent his biological urges) through intercourse. The young man who can ‘score’ is rewarded with labels—macho, stud, dude, a man; the sexually active young female risks labeling as a bad girl, a whore, a prostitute, cheap, easy. Even the most sensitive of young men, in their search for identity and acceptance into manhood (and with inadequate time and knowledge for a more gradual sexual development process) may find himself employing the standard lines: You’ll be a woman, now. I wanna make a baby with you. You know I love you; prove you love me. You’ve got to let me—I can’t stop now.

Hopefully, a long range goal for any course of study including teen sexuality will be to help students develop a healthier personal sexuality which includes a sense of responsibility to one’s self and to others, and that helps prepare them for meaningful adult relationships.

In the adolescent sexuality component of this course of study, the following objectives should be kept in mind:

Students will develop improved communication skills for effectively relating to peers and adults and will practice applying these skills in roleplaying situations.

Students will develop improved decision-making skills and will practice applying these skills in

roleplaying situations.

Students will develop an accurate knowledge base regarding human sexuality.

Students will more fully understand his (her) personal ethics and values related to sexuality.

Burt Saxon's, *Modern Human Sexuality* and Frank Caparulo's, *Masculinity and Femininity* readings and lessons provide direction in achieving some of these goals.

Only 4 in 10 Teens Get Sex Education; Only 3 in 10 Learn About Contraception

. . . . Only 31 percent of students say that they were taught about contraception. In other words, of the 21 million young people of junior and senior high school age, nine million have had some kind of sex education in school and 6.5 million of these have had courses that included instruction in contraception.

Female students appear to fare somewhat better than males especially if they are older

Guttmacher Report, *Teenage Pregnancy , The Problem That Hasn't Gone Away*⁸

The information in the most recent Guttmacher report confirms that young people are not receiving sex education and counseling which they consider adequate, and that boys especially need all the information they can get! My own counseling and teaching experience in the areas of sex education and contraception has led me to recognize that students often need the same information presented in a variety of ways, they need opportunities to process the information repeatedly, and an opportunity to periodically review the information and to reassess their feelings in light of their daily changes in personal development.

While the scope of adolescent sexuality goes far beyond the issue of pregnancy and contraception, the role of the classroom teacher poses tremendous concerns—especially in the face of a rapidly changing morality, changes in family patterns, the media influences. Certainly not all of our students are sexually active, but at the high school level, a fair number are engaging in heterosexual relationships involving intercourse. I have included some of the materials which I have found to be effective for all levels of students. The materials are specific to the teaching of contraception; I include them here because the classroom provides an opportunity to educate boys—many of whom have little or no contact with available health care systems which could provide them with this information. These materials presume adequate knowledge of reproductive anatomy and physiology.

I. Sex Attitude Survey

An excellent survey to conduct as an introduction to any aspect of a teenage sexuality course. It can be completed in one class period.

II. Decision Making About Birth Control

This worksheet can be used for each class session on the various methods of contraception:

pills, I.U.D., condoms and foam, the diaphragm etcetera.

III. Important Questions About the Birth Control Pill

This worksheet-quiz can be used following a detailed presentation on how the birth control pill works. Pamphlets are available in quantity from Family Planning, Sherman Parkway, New Haven.*

IV. Case Study and Worksheet

This case study and worksheet allow students to review knowledge and practice decision making skills in a “real life” situation.

*Teaching in this area demands updated information on contraceptive technology, current medical research and findings. Karen Longo-Baldwin, Community Educator, New Haven Health Department, Family Planning, is an excellent resource person.

I. SEX ATTITUDE SURVEY PLEASE FILL IN:

today's date _____

your sex (M/F) _____

your code no. _____

your age _____

There are no correct answers to the questions below. We want to know your attitudes and feelings about these statements. Please mark the statements with:

A for AGREE—if you agree with this statement

D for DISAGREE—if you disagree with this statement

U for UNCERTAIN—if you aren't certain if you agree or disagree.

- ___ 1. Teenagers should not have sexual intercourse.
- ___ 2. You should only have sex if you're married.
- ___ 3. Having sex is OK if you're in love.
- ___ 4. Having sex is the best way to prove your love for someone.

- ___ 5. Having a baby is a good way to get out of an unhappy home situation.
- ___ 6. If you think you' re going to have sex with someone, you should first talk to him/her about birth control.
- ___ 7. Sex just sort of happens spontaneously. If you use birth control that's a sign that you have planned to have sex and that is wrong.
- ___ 8. Birth control is the woman's problem—after all, she's the one who gets pregnant.
- ___ 9. Any girl who has sex with a guy who is too cheap to buy a rubber is just plain stupid.
- ___ 10. Talking about sex spoils the experience.
- ___ 11. It's a good idea to tell your sex partner what feels good to you when you're having sex.
- ___ 12. As soon as a girl starts getting her period and a guy starts ejaculating, they are ready for sexual intercourse.
- ___ 13. No one should have sex just because "everyone else is."
- ___ 14. Masturbation is only for guys not men enough to get a woman.
- ___ 15. Oral sex ("sucking") is not a normal sexual behavior.

II. DECISION-MAKING ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL

ALTERNATIVES PROBABLE OUTCOMES FACTS VALUE/FEELINGS

III. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIRTH CONTROL PILL

1. Name the two hormones in the birth control pill.
_____ and _____

IV. CASE STUDY:

Martha is 17. Right now she is applying to college although she isn't sure what she wants to study. She has a steady boyfriend and they are starting to have sex. When they talk about birth control David says it's up to her to use something. He'll go with her to get it but he wants her to be responsible for the birth control. Martha is wondering what would be a good method for her. Her dad died from a heart attack when he was in his 40's and her mother has high blood pressure. Martha herself smokes nearly a pack of cigarettes a day. She gets her period every month and almost never has cramps. She isn't sure just how helpful David will be about using a birth control method.

On the next page, you will find a worksheet to be used with this case study. After students have read the case study and filled out the worksheet, they are to circle the method of birth control they think is best for this couple should use. Class discussion should follow.

You may wish to develop a variety of case studies to be used with this worksheet.

CASE STUDIES ABOUT DECISION-MAKING

THE GIRLS AND GUYS IN THESE CASE STUDIES HAVE DECIDED THAT IF THEY ARE TO REACH THEIR GOALS THEY HAD BETTER USE SOME METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL. YOUR JOB IS TO HELP THEM CHOOSE THE METHOD THAT WOULD BE BEST FOR THEM.

READ THE PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING THE SITUATION. THINK ABOUT WHAT METHOD OF BIRTH CONTROL WOULD BE BEST FOR THE COUPLE ACCORDING TO THE FACTS GIVEN IN THE PARAGRAPH. FILL IN THIS CHART AS YOU MAKE YOUR DECISION.

THE NAMES OF THE GIRL AND GUY: _____

METHOD CHOICES	WHAT MAKES THIS A GOOD METHOD FOR THEM	WHAT MAKES THIS A BAD METHOD FOR THEM
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foam

&

condoms

the

diaphragm

the

I U D

the birth

control

pill

WHEN YOU FINISH, CIRCLE THE METHOD YOU THINK IS BEST FOR THEM.

The Connecticut State Board of Education has recently published a Guide to Curriculum Development in Family Life Education which contains a policy statement regarding teaching about *controversial issues* .

Learning to deal with controversial issues is one of the basic competencies all students should acquire.

Controversial issues are those problems, subjects or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion based for the most part on the differences in the values people bring to the appraisal of the facts of the issue.

In teaching about adolescent male sexuality, the classroom teacher should be prepared to handle two such controversial issues: homosexuality and masturbation.

The research related to both of these topics suggests that little is known about the role of masturbation in the development of human sexuality and, while a lot is written about homosexuality, we still have very incomplete knowledge about the homosexual feelings, interest, and behaviors of children and adolescents and the meaning this may have in relation to their over all development. ¹⁰

Students and teachers are likely to have some difficulty in discussing these topics, especially in a heterosexual classroom setting; yet, questions about both masturbation and homosexuality, directly or indirectly, should be anticipated. It may be of interest and helpful for the teacher to have the following information:*

Masturbation

1. It appears that about half of today's teenage boys and about one third of the girls masturbate by the age of 15. This figure probably rises to about 85 per cent for males and 60 percent for females by the age of 20. (Sorensen, 1973; Hunt, 1974; Abramson, 1973; Arafat and Cotton, 1974; Playboy, 1976).
2. There appears to be a reduction in fear and guilt about masturbation among contemporary adolescents, though considerable embarrassment about the practice remains (Sorensen, 1973; Hunt, 1974).
3. "Blue collar" males and females were less approving of masturbation than "white collars" and less likely to practice it. Also, females (Hunt and Kinsey). but not males, who were high in religiosity were less likely to masturbate (analogous to findings for premarital petting and intercourse).

***The studies cited here are referenced in Chilman's *Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society* .**

Homosexuality

1. About one-half of blue collar youth and three fourths of college students in 1971 found “nothing morally wrong about homosexual behavior between consenting partners”. (Yankelovich, 1974).
2. About 10 percent of boys and five percent of girls may engage in sex relations with the same sex at least once during early adolescence.
3. Only three percent of males and half that many females are thought to engage in long term, serious homosexual relationships (these figures are lower than the Kinsey data suggest).
4. Despite higher visibility of homosexuals in today’s society, the prevalence of the behavior appears not to have increased.
5. The causes of homosexual orientations are not clearly known. Some evidence suggests origins in disturbed family relationships, in social learning, in prenatal endocrine factors, and in one-sex living situations at critical periods of development.

The Connecticut State policy concludes that although teachers have the right to express their own viewpoints and opinions, they do not have the right to indoctrinate students with their personal views.

Note : If questions about either of these areas have arisen and the teacher feels the need to address them in the classroom, the *Values in Sexuality* book is a good resource. The authors offer suggestions for creating an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and non-judgmental listening and sharing, and provide activities to facilitate group processes on a variety of controversial subjects.

If I am aware of students with varied religious backgrounds within my class, I encourage them to share their point of view. I have occasionally invited an individual student to research and present the policy of a particular sect on a specific topic, while I take responsibility for presenting the broader belief systems when appropriate.

If a teacher feels that a particular student is unduly concerned, anxious, worried or preoccupied about masturbation or homosexuality, the teacher may wish to seek the guidance of the school social worker or another professional.

V. Teenage Fatherhood

Aaron is sixteen years old, a junior in high school. Pat is fifteen, a sophomore. Their son, Jared, is nine months old. Pat wants to move into an apartment with Aaron because she is having problems living at home with her family; she doesn’t get along with her mother’s boyfriend. Aaron lives with his family and wants to finish training in carpentry so he can eventually work with his uncle. He says that when Jared can walk, he’ll take him out more often along. Both Aaron and Pat are looking for part time jobs so they can pay the babysitter while they’re in school.

Images: A boy on his bike with the baby.

A boy and a girl taking baby to clinic.

A teenage couple with a child looking for jobs and an apartment.

There are 11 million sexually active teenagers in our country and seven million of them are males. While the paucity of information on teenage male sexuality is astounding, the unwed adolescent father has been even more neglected. Parke has noted our general ignorance of adolescent fathers by referring to them as “shadowy unknown figures.”¹¹

A commonly held misconception is that adolescent fathers have little or no contact with their infants. The available data detailed by Parke et. al. in their review of the literature contradicts two notions connected with this misconception: They found that the majority of births did not occur out of wedlock (54% of conceptions out of wedlock, but only 35% of births out of wedlock) and that unmarried fathers DO maintain contact and relationships with the mother or the child after birth.

More recent statistics (Gutthacher report, 1980) indicate that increasingly fewer premarital conceptions are being legitimized by marriage. By 1978, 46% of teenage conceptions were out of wedlock births.

Adolescent fathers do maintain contact, but cultural support systems do not exist to assist the young man in a healthy adjustment to his role as a young father. Unfortunately, his attempts to function as a father may negatively influence (directly or indirectly) his own development as well as the young mother’s and the child’s. As a teenager, the normal developmental tasks (the need to experiment and risk, to prove himself with peers, the struggle towards autonomy and independence, the exploration of different intimate relationships, the attempts to develop skills and careers options towards attaining financial independence) may seriously conflict with his attempts to be a father.¹² Teenage boys who become fathers before they are 18 are two fifths less likely to have graduated from high school than those who waited (Guttmacher report, 1980, p. 30)—just one bit of evidence that adolescent fatherhood frustrates educational opportunity and preparation for a career.

If they do marry, teenage parents are far more likely to separate or divorce than couples who postpone childbearing until their 20’s. This trend is more pronounced among white than among blacks. 44% of women who gave birth at ages 14 to 17 are separated or divorced within fifteen years, three times the proportion among women who did not begin childbearing until age 20 or later. Marriage disruption is two times more likely among those who become parents at ages 18-19 than among those wait until their twenties. (Guttmacher Report, 1980, p. 31).

It may be of interest to students and faculty to know some of the legal concerns of young fathers. Ruth Timothy, R.N., M.S. Coordinator of the Regional Young Parents Program, Hamden, Connecticut, has compiled a report which would be a useful resource. This document, *Welfare and Legal Issues Regarding Teenagers , Pregnancy and Young Parenthood* , answers some questions about proving paternity, financial and legal responsibilities and right, birth certificates, welfare and court processes and proceedings. Much of this information is complicated, but a few facts may answer the questions most frequently asked by students:

1. Paternity doesn’t give the father rights to “pop in”; he must set up reasonable visitation with the girl. If the girl refuses, he can take her to court to get visitation privileges. Paying support and visitation are not tied together.
2. If an unwed mother marries, she must get permission of the baby’s father for adoption by her new husband.

3. The State is seeking reimbursement wherever possible from absent parent or spouse. There is a formula to determine the amount to be paid for support, but the court has the final say. In order to receive assistance from the State, the girl must give the State the following information:

- Baby's father's name, address, where he works, where he "hangs out"
- Any information to help locate him.

If the girl is not married to baby's father, she must help prove he's the father. There are federal regulations detailing exceptions to this cooperation, ie. in the case of rape, incest, potential harm to mother or child.

4. Blood test of alleged father, mother and baby 26 different test types can not prove paternity but can rule out paternity.
5. Signing of birth certificate form doesn't admit paternity; he must sign paper acknowledging paternity.
6. Father cannot force girl to name baby after him.
7. Mother can relinquish child for adoption.
8. State law says after three years from birth of child or three years from cessation of support, State cannot go after the baby's father for support.
9. Welfare is called a reimbursable program. Father is liable forever for total amount paid out for his child if he has acknowledged paternity—but only three years for State to establish he is the father.
10. Welfare has a right to seek reimbursement. Teenage parent may not be able to pay while young, but will be billed later when he becomes of age.

If a young parent wins the lottery, the State would take back money owed before the parent would get the winnings.

The debt doesn't go away, even if welfare doesn't seek reimbursement.

Strategies for the classroom

A three day lesson plan for use with the film, *Teenage Father* , is included in this unit.

Independent student projects related to the issue of teenage fatherhood might include:

1. Designing and conducting a survey of attitudes about teenage fatherhood from students, parents, teachers, clergy, social workers, psychologists.
2. Designing a questionnaire and interviewing a number of teenage fathers.
3. Writing a research paper on contraceptive services and use and teenage boys.
4. Writing a research paper on the legal rights, responsibilities and realities of teenage fatherhood.
5. Writing a research paper on decision making and pregnancy the adolescent male's participation and point of view on adoption, abortion and keeping the baby.

Notes

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4. *11 Million Teenagers* , What Can Be Done About the Epidemic of Adolescent Pregnancies in the United States, (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, New York, New York, 1976), p. 1.
5. Chilman, Catherine S., *Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society* , Social and Psychological Perspectives (Bethesda: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1979), p. 4.
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7. Rainwater, Lee, "Sex in the Culture of Poverty", In C. Broderick & J. Bernard (Eds.), *The Individual , Sex and Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969).
8. *Teenage Pregnancy : The Problem That Hasn't Gone Away* , (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, New York, New York, 1980), p. 40.
- 9 *A Guide to Curriculum Development in Family Life Education* , Connecticut State Board of Education, 1981, Appendix C, p. 88.

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11. Parke, R.D., T.G. Power and T. Fisher, "The Adolescent Father's Impact on the Mother and Child", *The Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1980, pp. 88-106.
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Sample Lessons

Lesson One : Adolescent Sexual Conflict

Audio Visual: Film *Are We Still Going to the Movies*

14 minutes, color

Producer: McGraw Hill Films

1221 Avenue of the Americas

New York, N. Y. 10020

Levels: Junior High, Senior High, College, Adult

Subject Areas: Psychology, sociology, social problems, sex education and ethics and values

Introduction

This film depicts an unhealthy late adolescent relationship (chronological ages 17-19) that was based mainly on a physical attraction. Both young people in this film demonstrate traditional points-of-view in conjunction

with male and female adolescent behaviors and expectations. Because this interaction demonstrates how many adolescents view premarital sexual activity and sex roles in general, a professional is extremely necessary. The couple's names are Jack and Dana.

Day One—PRELESSON

Title: Implicit and Explicit Societal Expectations

Time required: One Class Period

Materials: magazine ads of men and women where sex is used to sell a product

Process: Several days before the class, ask students to collect ads that use sex as a selling point. Have the males bring in ads that use the female body and the females bring in ads that use the male body. Display them on cardboard so that the class can see them all.

Ask the male students to explain what they see as the explicit message in the ads on women, and then the implicit messages. Do the same for your female students on the ads using males. Have the females also respond to the messages that the males said they got and the males react to the messages the females got from the male ads.

Discussion: How does this affect your expectations of a member of the opposite sex?

Finale: Finish the following sentence, "I learned . . ."

Day 2: Show the Film. (One class period)

Process: The instructor should take the role of "Interlocutor" after the film to: (a) desensitize the sensitive issues raised by the film; (b) focus the follow-up discussion on the relevant issues.

Have the female students react to Jack and label him using any word or name they feel necessary to explain their feelings. List these words on the blackboard under the heading *Jack*. Have the male students do the same for Dana.

Ask the following questions about the film:

- a. How real was this film?
- b. How do you think Jack felt at the end? Lana?
- c. How did Dana try to smooth things over? Do females do this often?
- d. When Jack used the line, "You don't love me anymore", what did you think?
- e. Do you think Jack was right when he got angry? Explain.
- f. If you were Dana, how would you have handles this situation? If you were Jack?

Make a list of questions that are pertinent to the age group that you are showing this film to.

Sample Lessons

Lesson Two: Adolescent Pregnancy

Audio Visual: Film *Teenage Father*

30 minutes, color

Available through: New Haven Schools Audio visual

Dept. and Planned Parenthood of
Conn., 129 Whitney Avenue, New
Haven, Ct. 06510 865-0595

Levels: Junior High, Senior High, College, Adult

Subject areas: Adolescent male sexuality, peer relationships, adolescent heterosexual relationships, social problems and sex education

Introduction

This is a documentary film depicting the drama following the teenage father through the prenatal period until the delivery and the part he does (or doesn't) play in the final decision. A 17 year old boy finds himself in an unwanted pregnancy. Both he and the young woman discuss the pregnancy with their families and they receive counseling. Before the delivery, the young man is very involved; however, at the birth he discovers exactly what role he is to play. This film won the 1979 Academy Award for a docu-drama.

Day one PRELESSON

Title: The Teenage Father (Role Play and Fish Bowl)

Time required: One class period.

Purpose: to demonstrate whether or not a teenage male is ready emotionally, socially and psychologically to take on this responsibility.

Process: Select three male volunteers to act as teenage fathers on a T.V. Interview Show (ie. The Donahue Show)

Teenage Father #1

His baby is three months old and he is still dating the mother.

Teenage Father #2

His girlfriend is 5 months pregnant and he doesn't want her to keep the baby.

Teenage Father #3

His baby is 2 years old. He is not dating the mother anymore and he's really not interested in being a father. His present girlfriend is jealous and doesn't want him to see the baby too much.

Step 1—Have the teenage fathers introduce and tell the audience about their situations.

Step 2—the “Interviewer” (the teacher) should ask questions to get to their feelings about being teenage fathers. (ie. How do your parents feel about what's happened? What rights do you have as a teenage father? How have your friends responded?)

Step 3—Open it up for questions from the audience.

Finale: Secret ballot—Answer yes or no to the following question and explain why you gave your answer:

Question: Do teenage boys make good fathers?

Yes _____ No _____

Explain.

Day two—Show the film (this will take almost a full class period —o plan the time carefully.

Discussion: Ask the group to respond to how they feel about:

1. His parents and their attitudes.
2. Her mother and her feelings.
3. His friends.
4. The role of the social worker.
5. What happened to him at the hospital.
6. What rights and responsibilities teenage fathers have.
7. The teenage mother and her not wanting to see him in the hospital.

Questions: Have each student write down one (or more) questions they may have had during the film or the discussion. (Anonymous)

Day three—Post-lesson

Study the questions from the students and use them to prepare a follow up lesson (May mean presentation of Facts; may mean more time for processing feelings.)

Sample Lessons

Lesson Three: Early Adolescent Sexual Development (Male)

Audio Visual: Film *Am I Normal?*

24 minutes, color

Available through: Planned Parenthood League of Com. 129 Whitney Avenue

New Haven, Ct. 06510

865-0595

Levels: Junior High, Senior High, College and Adult

Subject Areas: Physiology, psychology, myths and misconceptions, peer relationships, sex education

Introduction

This film deals mainly with early male sexual development (chronological ages 12-15). It is comical and enjoyable and can be used in a co-educational setting for all the levels mentioned above. The film depicts a young man's attempt to get advice and correct information on sex-related questions most commonly asked by boys his age. The film also explores issues about being male at his age peer group pressure, self image and concepts of masculinity. The film can also be used to help bridge the communications gap between parent/adult and sons/young males.

Day One—PRELESSON

Title: Facts and Fancies

Time required: One class period

Materials: List of facts and myths about male sexuality

Purpose: To give early male adolescents correct information about them selves

Process: Put the following statements either on a blackboard or a large sheet of newsprint. Have the class write after each: True, False, uncertain. (Be sure the class doesn't put their names on their papers because they are going to correct each others. You may wish to number them so you know whose is whose) After about five minutes, collect the papers and redistribute.

1. Wet dreams happen to boys who are girl crazy.
2. A man makes sperm all the time.

3. Erections only happen when a boy thinks about sex.
4. All boys can make babies.
5. Using a condom is 100% safe.
6. Penis size is very important.
7. Sex is the most important thing in a relationship.
8. A male can not get raped.
9. Masturbation can use up all your sperm.
10. Homosexual men want to be women.
11. There are more men in American than women.
12. Men don't have to worry about birth control.
13. Men should have sexual experience before they get married.

Discussion: Go over each question and discuss the myths and truths about the topic.

Day two—Show the film. Ask the class to record questions (anonymously) on index cards during the film. Collect the questions and use them to guide the discussion following the film.

Day three—You may wish to invite a pediatrician or a pediatric nurse practitioner in to answer questions: puberty, early and late adolescent sexual development.

You may also wish to develop lessons around the following films:

1. *Boys Don't Do That* 3-6 minutes, color
Planned Parenthood League of Conn.
129 Whitney Avenue
New Haven, Ct. 06510

Experiences both subtle and not so subtle determine the concepts we have of appropriate sex role behavior. While looking through a family picture album, a teenage boy and girl reveal many examples of *sex role stereotyping* .

2. *Friends of Carl* 3-6 minutes, color
Planned Parenthood League of Conn.
129 Whitney Avenue
New Haven, Ct. 06510

While getting ready for the next class in a gym locker room, four young men discuss their views concerning *marriage* . Ted, whose mother is divorced and is now dating, has developed some negative attitudes about matrimony; Jeff sees marriage as a boring existence; Monty believes that continued happiness in marriage depends on a strong physical relationship; and Raymond is silent on the entire subject. Action begins when Monty asks Ted if he can go to the game that evening, and Ted replies that he cannot because he must babysit for his mother while she goes out on a date.

3. *What About McBride?* 20 minutes, color
McGraw Hill Films
1221 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N.Y. 10020

Two boys (about ages 14 or 15) discuss their feelings about a third boy (McBride) who shows some stereotypic traits of *homosexuality* . The boys debate about whether to include McBride in a camping trip they are planning. This excellent film could be used effectively in a high school class. Consideration should be given regarding the appropriateness of using it in a co-educational class. The film is open-ended and requires careful pre and post lessons.

Teachers' Bibliography

Broderick, Carlfred B. and Bernard, Jessie, *The Individual , Sex and Society* , A Siecus Handbook for Teachers and Counselors. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969.

An anthology containing pertinent essays on contemporary sexuality. Authors include: Ladner, Rainwater, Kirkendall, Money, Chilman, Bernard and Broderick.

Chilman, Catherine, *Adolescent Sexuality in a Changing American Society* , DHEW Publication No. (NIH) 79-1426 Social and Psychological Perspectives, Bethesda: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1979.

This volume provides an excellent review of the literature about adolescent sexuality; an excellent resource for teachers, it contains detailed summaries and interpretations of the research and an updated, annotated bibliography.

Erickson, Erik, *Identity , Youth and Crisis* . New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1968.

Erickson explains how all of the life crises relate to the growth of an identity.

Gutthacher Reports: *11 Million Teenagers , What Can Be Done About the Epidemic of Teenage Pregnancies* , New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1976.

———. *Teenage Pregnancy , The Problem That Hasn't Gone Away* , New York; The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1980.

These two reports contain nationwide findings and statistics about: Adolescent sexual activity and marriage, contraceptive use, teenage pregnancy and its resolution, adolescent birth, sex education, abortion, services to pregnant teenager, adolescent parents and their babies.

Hanckel, Frances and Cunningham, John, *A Way of Love , A Way of Life : A Young Person's Introduction to What it Means to be Gay* . Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1979.

A sensitive book written by people who are having the experience for people who want to understand it.

Johnson, Eric W. , *Sex : Telling It Straight* , Lippincott and Crowell, 1979.

A simple but honest treatment of those topics in human sexuality of greatest concern to adolescents. Written for teenage slow readers, especially those within problem environments, and presents positive views on sex without preaching or moralizing. Retailing for \$7.95, I have included here on the teachers' list as a reference book.

Kagan, Jerome and Coles, Robert, ed. *12 to 16 , Early Adolescence* . New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972.

A collection of essays by Tanner, Gordon, Blos, Bakan, Kagan, Adelson, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Martin, Conger, Gagnon, Coles, LaFarge, Cottle and de Varon. Social scientists pool their observations about the child passing through the critical stage of physical and emotional development, Early Adolescence.

Katchadourian, Herant and D.T. Lunde. *Fundamentals of Human Sexuality* . New York: Bolt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975.

A text book, excellent as reference and general reading in preparation for any teaching in the area of sexuality.

Morrison, Eleanor and Mila Price, *Values in Sexuality , A New Approach to Sex Education* . New York: Hart Publishing Co., Inc., 1974.

An excellent book for teachers containing values clarification exercises and group activities for the classroom.

It contains a knowledge and attitude survey and anatomy and physiology worksheets.

Simon, Sidney B., L. Howe and H. Kirschenbaum, *Values Clarification : A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* . New York: Hart Publishers, 1972.

A collection of practical strategies and hundreds of specific suggestions to help students become aware of their own feelings, ideas and beliefs.

Winship, Elizabeth, F. Caparulo and V.K. Harlin, M.D., *Masculinity and Femininity* , Teachers Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978.

An excellent text for classroom use with high school students including narrative, questions and exercises on male and female roles, dating, puberty, sexual behavior, sexual health care, problems of sex in society, sexual abuse, family life, pregnancy and birth.

Zilbergeld, Bernie, *Male Sexuality* . Little, Brown, 1978.

A book written for the man who wants to get more in touch with his own sexuality, this book might help a teachers process his or her own feelings about male sexuality and consider issues pertinent to adolescent males.

Journal of Social Issues , Teenage Parenting : Social Determinants and Consequences , Issue Editor: Howard B. Gallas. Volume 36 Number 1, 1980.

The Family Of Children , A Ridge Press Book, Grosset & Dunlap, 1977.

A collection of photographic images of children of all ages from around the world.

Annotated Bibliography For Students

Gans, Herbert J. *The Urban Villagers , Group and Class in the Life of Italian - Americans* . New York: The Free Press, A division of MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1962.

This book is a report of a participant-observation study of an inner city Boston neighborhood. For advanced students, the chapters on the family and peers provide thought provoking materials for comparing and contrasting urban life styles.

Gordon, Sol. *Facts About Sex for Today's Youth* . Syracuse: Ed-U Press, 1979.

A short, direct approach in explaining anatomy, reproduction, love and sex problems. The book includes slang terms when giving definitions and a section answering the 10 questions frequently asked. Well illustrated.

Hamilton, Eleanor. *Sex With Love , A Guide For Young People* . Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

This readable book includes discussion of the rituals of early dating and filling the body's need for affection and sexual expression.

Hunt, Morton, *What is a Man? What is a Woman?* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979.

Focuses on sex roles and behavior for adolescents concerned with their sexual identities.

Johnson, Eric W. *Love and Sex in Plain Language* , Bantam Books, 1979.

Provides basic information on sexuality, and emphasizes that sexuality should always be seen in the context of one's total personality and expressed in responsible, respectful interpersonal relationships.

Jully, Sam, *Men's Bodies , Men's Selves* . Delta (Dell), 1979.

This book might be a useful classroom resource book. It contains a collection of thoughts and information relating to men and masculinity in contemporary society.

Larrick, Nancy and Merriam Eve, Eds., *Male and Female under 18* . New York: Avon Books, 1973.

A compilation of poetry and brief prose selections by girls and boys; would be an inspiration for discussions and writing assignments.

Lieberman, E. James and e. Peck, *Sex and Birth Control: A Guide for the Young*. Harper & Row, To be Published 1980-81.

This book has been written to encourage sensible and responsible use of birth control, and to encourage young people to develop principles and values by which they will live their sexual lives.

Liebow, Elliot. *Tally's Corner , A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* . Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

This book would be an excellent book for an outside independent reading project or for a small group reading and discussion project; students could be guided in an examination of the implications for today's urban adolescent male.

Loeb, Robert. *Breaking the Sex Role Barrier* . Franklin Watts, 1977.

This book guides the teenage reader through a structured exploration of the forces that program male and female behavior, and the myths and misconceptions involved.

McCoy, Kathy and C. Wibbelsman. *The Teenage Body Book* . Pocket Books, 1979.

A thoughtfully written, reassuring resource for adolescents, dealing with their various psychological and physiological concerns.

Pamphlets and Booklets

Am I Parent Material ? National Alliance for Optional Parenthood, 1977. Free.

A pamphlet listing thoughtful questions about an important decision. Available in Spanish.

Man's Body : An Owner's Manual . The Diagram Group. Bantam Books, 1976.

Clear answers to questions about how the male body functions, from infancy to old age.

Sexuality . . . Decisions , Attitudes, Relationships . Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1979.

Booklet dealing with how to clarify feelings about sexuality and relationships.

The Problem with Puberty . Rocky Mountain Planned Parenthood, 1976.

For boys, explaining emotional and physical changes taking place in puberty, and discussing problems of peer pressure.

The View from our Side : Sex And Birth Control For Men . Emory University-Grady Memorial Hospital Family Planning Program, 1975.

Well-written, intelligent booklet on the male role in sexual relationships.

What's Happening , available through Planned Parenthood, Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Ct.

An excellent handbook of adolescent girls and boys with information re: sexuality, relationships, health care and contraception.

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