



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 11-12
About the Author:	Adapted, with permission, from a lesson by Connie Landry, Ottawa Board of Education, and from the Ontario Ministry of Education's <i>Media Literacy Resource Guide</i>

Sex in Advertising

Overview

To introduce students to the use and prevalence of sexuality in advertising.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of the multiple meanings of sexuality
- an understanding of the ways in which the media capitalizes on sex to sell a wide variety of products
- an understanding of the value systems underlying sexualized media messages

Preparation and Materials

- Task Sheet

Prepare these overhead transparencies

- Sex
- Sex Sells
- Sex Has Multiple Meanings
- Biological
- Emotional
- Spiritual
- Power

For this class you may use advertisements from magazines brought in by students or choose from the advertisements listed below

- Calvin Klein
- Burberry
- Hickey Freeman
- Diesel Jeans



- Dolce & Gabbana
- Comparison Ads

The Lesson

1. Place the first overhead, *Sex*, onto the projector. Ask your students

- Does this word get your attention?
- Why does it get your attention?

It is human nature to be curious about sex. You know this and so do advertisers.

2. Place the *Sex Sells* overhead onto the projector

In the marketing world it is no secret that sex sells. But what is sex?

3. Place the *Sex Has Multiple Meanings* overhead onto the projector.

When we define sexuality, we can look at it from a biological, emotional/physical or spiritual point of view.

4. Ask your students for a *biological* definition of sexuality. After giving them an opportunity to come up with their own definitions, place *Biological* overhead onto the projector. Points to consider are:

- from a biological standpoint, sex is a reproductive mechanism
- it is a basic biological drive that exists in all species
- it is hormonally controlled

5. Ask your students for an *emotional*, or *physical* definition of sexuality. Once they have suggested their own definitions, place the *Emotional* overhead onto the projector, reinforcing the idea that:

- sex represents a bond between two individuals
- it is an expression of profound emotional feelings
- it is a physical manifestation of emotions of love, trust, and caring

6. Ask your students for a *spiritual* definition of sexuality. After they have brainstormed definitions, place the *Spiritual* overhead onto the projector, emphasizing that from a spiritual perspective

- sex is an expression of inner human spiritual life
- it is an ethereal, unearthly connection between two individuals

7. *But sex is not always used positively. What are some ways that sex can be used in a negative manner? Sometimes, sexuality can be used to dominate or control another individual.* (Place *Power* overhead onto the projector.)

When sexuality is used in advertising, certain values and attitudes towards sex are being 'sold' to consumers along with the products. The overriding question that must be asked when deconstructing any advertisement, is "what underlying message is being sold by this ad?"

Ask students what messages they receive from the following (or similar) ads:

- *Calvin Klein* (women are objects of sexual desire and sexual violence)



- *Burberry* (women are exclusively sexual objects)
- *Hickey Freeman* (women don't have to be awake to consent to sex)
- *Diesel Jeans* and *Dolce & Gabbana* (men need to display symbols of their masculinity)

Historically, the trend in advertising has been to eroticize women more often than men. However, in recent years we have begun to see young men portrayed in a similar manner, though you are still more likely to see women sexualized in advertisements. This becomes very apparent when you look at ads that depict couples together, or in advertising campaigns that use men and women to advertise the same product. (Distribute Comparison Ads or similar advertisements among students.)

Ask your students

- Why do you think women tend to be sexualized more often than men?
- Why might young men now be sexualized in the same manner?

When looking at couples in ads, note the sex-role messages. Is one person dominant? Who has the power? Sometimes messages are very subtle — a man's hand placed on a woman's shoulder might not be sexual, but it may indicate dominance and control. As students decode these advertisements, ask them to consider the following:

- What are the women doing?
- What are the men doing?
- Who is in the foreground?
- Who is in the background?
- How is juxtaposition used to convey meaning?
- Are the women or men placed beside objects that send out specific messages?
- Who is active?
- Who is not?
- How are they dressed (or undressed)?
- Are there any patterns in the images of males and females that emerge from these ads?
- Are there any ads that break these patterns?

Activity

- Divide class into groups
- Distribute Task Sheets to students
- Each group is to select and deconstruct four advertisements from the magazines they have brought to class:
 - one depicting women in a sexualized manner
 - one depicting men in a sexualized manner
 - one depicting a couple in a sexualized manner
 - one depicting a couple in a more positive, egalitarian manner



- Using their Task Sheets as a guide, students are to analyze the ads they have chosen and present their responses to the class.
- A written response to the questions on the Task Sheet will also be submitted by the group.

Evaluation

- Group presentation and completed Task Sheet.



Sex in Advertising: Task Sheet

Answer the following questions for the four advertisements you have chosen

1. What is the product being sold by the ad?
2. Who is the target audience for this ad? (Include age range, culture, gender, race, socio-economic level.)
3. What underlying message or value is being sold by the ad? Is it obvious or subliminal?
4. Do you agree/disagree with this message?
5. Which aspect of human sexuality is being appealed to? (Emotional/physical? Spiritual? Biological?)
6. In this a positive or negative portrayal of sexuality?

In your 'couple' advertisement

1. What is the women doing?
2. What is the man doing?
3. Who is in the foreground?



4. Who is in the background?
5. How is juxtaposition used to convey meaning?
6. Is the woman or man placed beside objects that send out specific messages?
7. Who is active?
8. Who is not?
9. Is one person more eroticized than another?
10. What is the message you receive about this relationship?
11. Who has the power in this relationship?
12. Is this a positive or negative depiction of relationships and sexuality?



Sex in Advertising: Sex

Sex



Sex in Advertising: Sex Sells

Sex Sells



Sex in Advertising: Sex Has Multiple Meanings

Sex Has Multiple Meanings



Sex in Advertising: Sexuality - Biological

Sexuality

is a reflection of a biological (innate) need

to reproduce

the species, shared by

all animals



Sex in Advertising: Sexuality - Emotional

Sexuality

is a physical expression
of the emotional bond
between two individuals



Sex in Advertising: Sexuality - Spiritual

Sexuality

is a spiritual connection
between two individuals



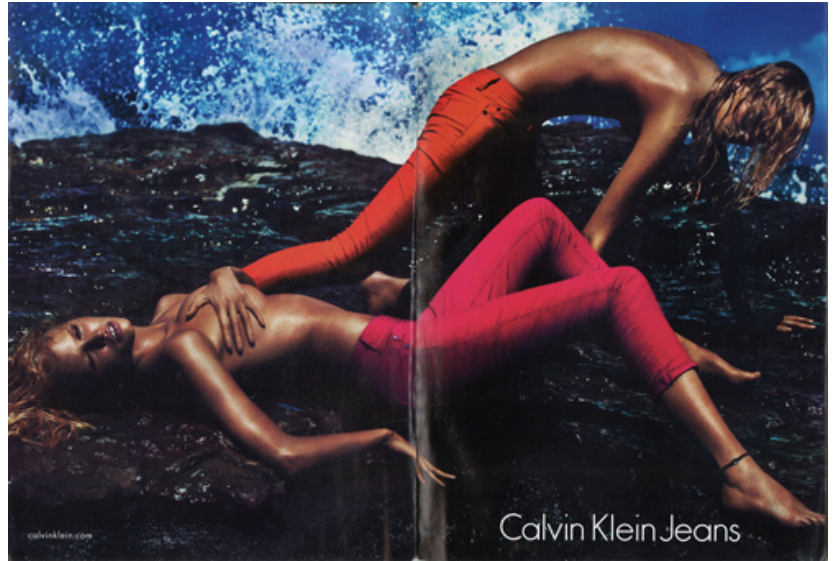
Sex in Advertising: Sexuality - Power

Sexuality

can be utilized to exert
dominance or power
over another individual



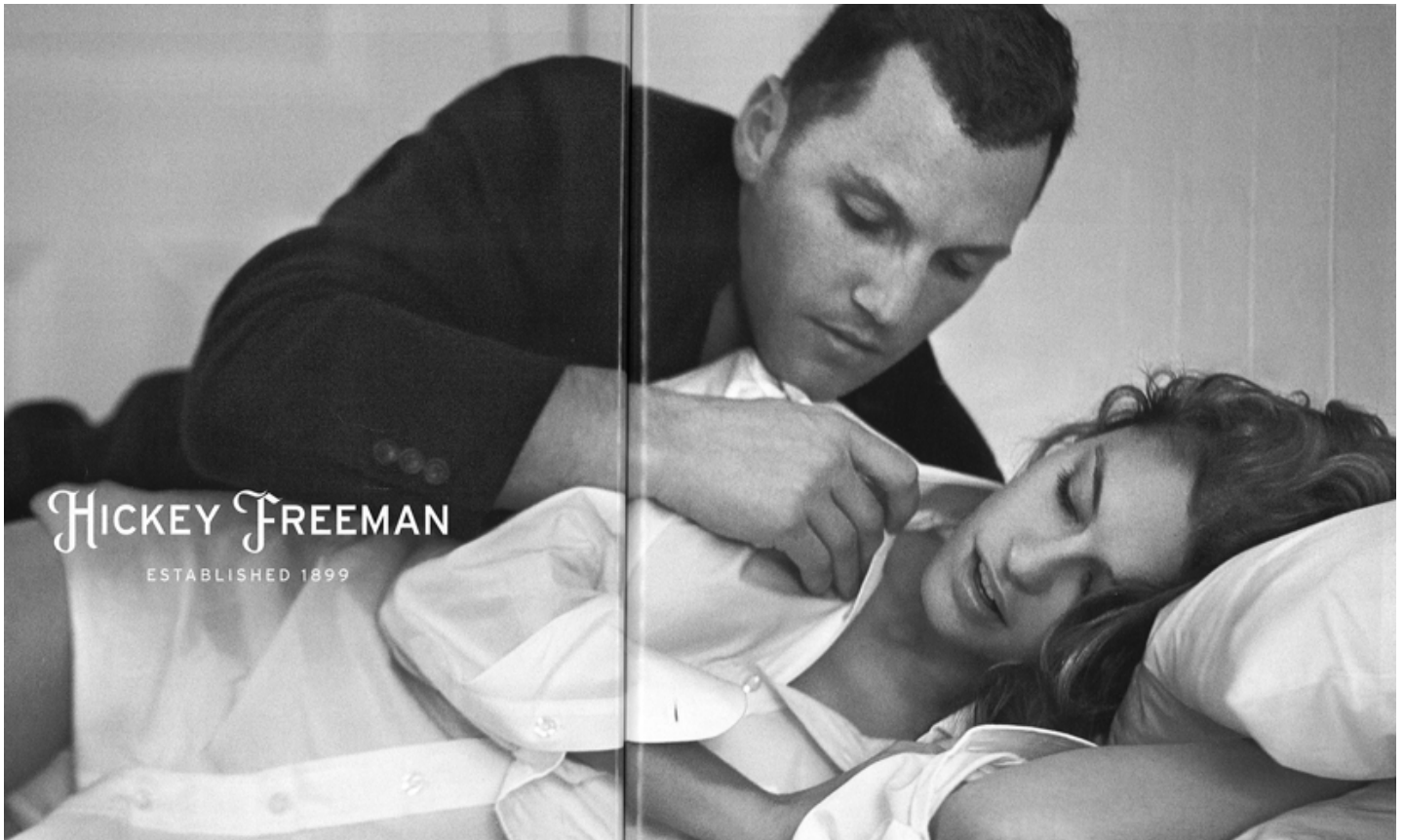
Sex in Advertising: Calvin Klein



Sex in Advertising: Burberry



Sex in Advertising: Hickey Freeman



Sex in Advertising: Diesel Jeans



Sex in Advertising: Dolce & Gabbana



Sex in Advertising: Comparison Ads

Compare how males and females are depicted in advertising campaigns which use separate ads focusing on men and women.

For example, both these campaigns use a man and a woman to sell the same product, but note how the images of women are more sexualized than those of the men!

