Reproductive Justice: Past, Present & Future

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

Fostering responsibility by respecting young people's rights to honest sexuality education.

NSES ALIGNMENT:
SH.10.CC.6 - Define reproductive justice and explain its history and how it relates to sexual health

TARGET GRADE: High School

TIME: 50 Minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Computer with PowerPoint
- Projector and Screen
- **PowerPoint Presentation: *Reproductive Justice: Past, Present, Future***
- Worksheet: *Reproductive Oppression - Revisiting the Past – one per every two students*
- Homework: *Reproductive Justice - Present and Future*
- *Dry erase board or flipchart paper and markers*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define Reproductive Justice and describe its importance [Knowledge]
2. Recall at least two examples in US history of sexual and reproductive oppression [Knowledge]

LESSON RATIONALE:

Reproductive oppression is the control and exploitation of women, girls, and gender-oppressed people through their bodies, sexuality, labor, and reproduction. It has been used to dominate and control communities of color in the United States and beyond. In order for our sexuality education to remain critical and transparent, discussing how reproductive justice is needed to combat present and future oppression is crucial. Sexuality education without courageous conversations about justice and the US's painful history is biased erasure. Young people deserve to be informed and prepared for adulthood so we can improve the policies and practices of the past.

ADVANCED PREPARATION:

- Please read the lesson plan in its entirety and decide if you will use PPT slides or prep Newsprint ahead of time
- It is in your best interest to do additional research outside of this activity. Please see the resource material attached to the lesson. Even if you are well versed in reproductive justice, you understand the importance of keeping current with examples and shifting language; we all have an amazing responsibility!
- Please note you will also come across resources that now expand the coined "reproductive justice" to "sexual and reproductive justice" and/or "gender and reproductive justice."
- To prepare for the homework, look into some ways young people can stay/remain engaged. What are some resources, social media handles, etc. that can be passed on when present and future are being discussed?
- While this lesson is beneficial, it is important to infuse discussions of sexual and reproductive justice within daily instruction. Quality comprehensive sexuality education for all *is* reproductive justice. We will have a greater impact when we are explicit and clear about our stance on reproductive justice throughout any curriculum rather than one solitary lesson.

- Although this is a stand-alone lesson, planning context behind placement would provide opportunities to weave in previously covered topics; it could also help with time management. That way, conversations can focus on understanding reproductive justice rather than clarifying sexuality-specific content. Some questions to reflect on when planning this lesson:

  - Has reproductive oppression or justice been mentioned previously?

  - Would this lesson be most effective at the beginning of your class as part of the foundation? Between certain lessons that provide helpful context? Paired with the 3Rs lesson *The Impact of Racism and Inequality on Sexual Health*?

  - What lessons would best equip participants to be present with this content while applying what they've previously learned about sex(uality)?

  - What would the impact be if I facilitated this lesson at the end of our time together?

PROCEDURE:

STEP 1:

Start by letting the students know that today's lesson is going to be about reproductive justice and sexual health. This is a perfect opportunity for you to reinforce that our culture, backgrounds, community, etc. inform the way we live our lives (revisiting the Circles of Sexuality *insert link here* may also be helpful). Say, **"These topics can be challenging or can make us feel a variety of emotions so we're going to set the stage and remind ourselves of our group agreements (*or 'how we treat each other' if agreements are not used*) and how important it is to also take care of yourself."**

Note to the Teacher: *Reminder to use trauma-informed strategies in the classroom. For example, informing the students of potential activating or triggering content. Below are a few resources:*

- Cardea's **Guide to Trauma-Informed Sex Education (PDF)**
- Advocate For Youth's **Trauma Informed Approaches When Teaching Sex Education (YouTube)**

Let your students know if you will be taking questions throughout or waiting until an allotted Q&A time (and set a time for that).

Say, **"Today we are going to talk about reproductive justice and its connection to sexual health." Ask the students if they have ever heard of RJ and/or what comes up for them when they hear the term. Write responses on board or separate newsprint titled, "Reproductive Justice".** Leave room next to or around each response for later.

(5 minutes)

STEP 2:

Begin your PowerPoint presentation (unless transferred to newsprint). Provide the definition of reproductive justice either on newsprint or Slides 2-7. The slides progress from explaining its parts (Reproductive Justice = Reproductive Rights + Social Justice) to naming its creators. Before moving on to discussing its history, return back to what the participants shared at the beginning of the class. Highlight any applicable mentions and/or affirm how close and accurate the participants were.

Go to Slide 8 and say, **"As you can see, reproductive justice addresses injustices that impact our well-being - individually and collectively."** Go to Slide 9 where reproductive oppression is defined. Say, **"Communities have been policed and controlled impacting their finances, political decision making, families, bodies, and livelihoods. Next, we are going to review some instances where sexual health and wellness has been affected by reproductive oppression."**

(10 minutes)

STEP 3:

Explain the activity to the students. Say, **"I am going to put you in pairs and, together, you will complete a worksheet. Each group will look at each example in history and answer the questions. Let's do one together."** Go to Slide 10 and review the example and Slide 11 to review questions. Have the students discuss the questions while you assist with answering. Say, **"Remember, reproductive justice happens when we have autonomy, decision-making power, and the ability to thrive."** Group students into dyads or triads and distribute worksheets.

Note to the Teacher: *Please make sure participants understand the terminology (i.e. sterilization).*

The example used refers back to an example mentioned in the lesson The Impact of Racism and Inequality on Sexual Health. You can also supplement additional examples from this lesson and/or based on previous discussions in class.

Engage and encourage dyads as they complete the assignment. We want them to answer the questions on their own yet still know you're available for support. (20 minutes)

STEP 4:

Review their answers as a class. Discuss using the following questions:

- What was this activity like for you?
- What new or surprising information did you learn?
- What kind of messages do you think these events could give to people who have been impacted?
- What is an important takeaway from this lesson?

(15 minutes)

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Steps 2 and 4 are designed to address the first learning objective and Step 3 addresses the second learning objective.

HOMEWORK:

Have students complete the homework worksheet *Reproductive Justice: Present and Future.*

[Written by Cindy Lee Alves for Advocates for Youth.]

Worksheet
Reproductive Oppression - Revisiting the Past

Please read the following examples in history and answer the corresponding questions.

1875 - The Page Act prohibited “unfree laborers’’ and women for “immoral purposes” from entering the United States. Although the law didn’t explicitly restrict based on nationality, it banned immigration by Chinese women into the United States.

Who is affected in this example?

How is this an example of reproductive oppression?

1956 - Clinical trials for the earlier versions of the birth control pills were conducted on poor women of color in Puerto Rico. The women were not informed of the trial or the pill’s dangerous side effects as they were given higher doses experimentally - more than the acceptable levels of today.

Who is affected in this example?

How is this an example of reproductive oppression?

1970s - Doctors in the United States performed sterilizations on an estimated 25 to 42% of Native American women, the youngest being 15. Subsidized by the federal government, sterilizations were often coerced or without consent.

Who is affected in this example?

How is this an example of reproductive oppression?

1977 - Hyde amendment makes it illegal for federal Medicaid to pay for abortions except in the case of life endangerment.

Who is affected in this example?

How is this an example of reproductive oppression?

2000s - States began to pass laws criminalizing drug use while pregnant. From 2006-2017, investigative journalists identified 479 arrests in Alabama alone.

Who is affected in this example?

How is this an example of reproductive oppression?

HOMEWORK
Reproductive Justice - Present and Future

Review the events mentioned in the *Revisiting the Past* worksheet. Can you name one example of reproductive oppression that has occurred within the last 10 years? Share where you found this information.

Can you think of one way to support communities impacted by reproductive oppression?

Reflection: Envision the future. What would reproductive justice look like?

Resources

- Before the Chinese Exclusion Act, This Anti-Immigrant Law Targeted Asian Women
- Coerced sterilization of Native women occurred in the 70s
- Hyde Amendment - Planned Parenthood Action
- Page Law (1875)
- The Puerto Rico Pill Trials | American Experience
- RJ Founding Mothers | Black Women for Reproductive Justice
- Sistersong
- USA: Criminalizing pregnancy: policing pregnant women who use drugs in the USA