



**GHENT
UNIVERSITY**

STIGMA SURROUNDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S SEXUALITY

November 10th 2016

CONTENT PRESENTATION

Stigma on adolescent sexuality: changing perspectives

Stigma based on gender (norms) and how it influences adolescent sexuality



STIGMA ON ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY: CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON ASRH*

Adolescent sexuality in a negative context

- Ignorance (e.g. youth health centre Kinshasa)
- Dangerous (e.g. peer education Rwanda)
- Shame and guilt



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON ASRH

Consequences:

- Intervention/programmes on: abstinence and risk reduction
- Research on: determinants of risky sexual behaviour, condom use, STI risk, pregnancy, violence etc.

→ Stigmatization of sexually active adolescents



CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON ASRH

Since 2000 adolescent sexuality in more positive context

- Mainly visible in western settings
- Sexuality as integral to adolescent identity formation
- “[s]igns of a shift toward a more normative perspective have begun to appear” (Welsh, 2000)
- Shift to comprehensive/holistic sexuality education instead of risk reduction

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON ASRH

**At least 100 schools tricked
into teaching homosexuality**

About 100 schools have been duped into training disguised homosexuality to their teachers and students, according to Saturday Monitor investigations

This shift is prudent...

- ‘Comprehensive’ remains problematic
- Opposition against (Standards for) sexuality education
- Literature: only 5 articles worldwide on sexual pleasure among adolescents (Katherine Brown, Coventry)

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON ASRH

... but significant and visible in research

- New perspectives on sexual behaviour *Eg. Sexual repertoires*
- New perspectives on sexual selfhood *Eg. Sexual motivations and desire young women, sexual pleasure, diverse sexual orientation and behaviour*
- Sexual socialization in the 21st century *Eg. Sexual development as a social process - risk versus facilitating factors*

Developing countries: body-image, self-esteem, respect, setting boundaries, gender equality

STIGMA BASED ON GENDER (NORMS) AND HOW IT INFLUENCES ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

**SOCIAL RULES THAT YOU SHOULD FOLLOW ON
HOW TO BEHAVE AND THINK AS A GIRL AND BOY IN
A GIVEN CULTURE**

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

Adolescent girls who are virgins are...?

"good girls", boring, intelligent, lesbians,...

Adolescent boys who are virgins are...?

"good boys", boring, intelligent, a sissy, ...

Adolescent girls who have condoms in their pockets are... ?

sluts, responsible, easy, ...

Adolescent boys who have condoms in their pockets are... ?

sluts, responsible, easy, ...

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

- Inequitable gender norms are linked to poor ASRH outcomes and wellbeing



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW THE
RULES ON HOW TO BEHAVE AND THINK AS A GIRL
AND BOY IN YOUR CULTURE?

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

Research 1:

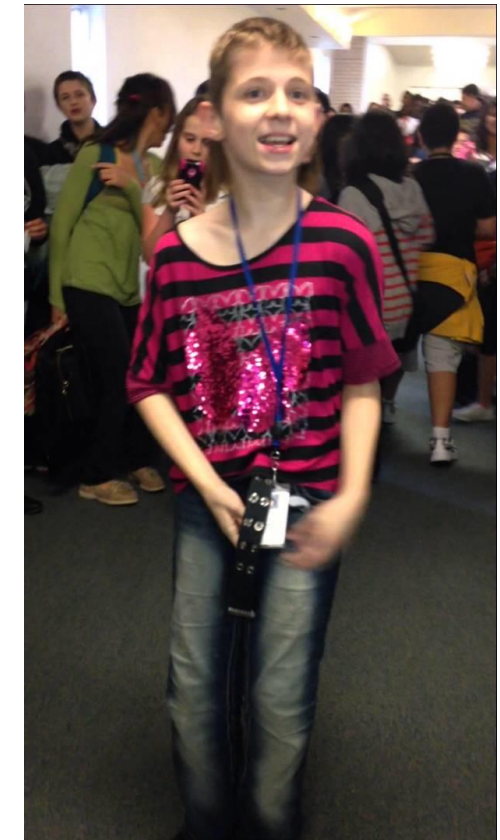
Qualitative research conducted in:

Belgium (Ghent), China (Shanghai), India (New Delhi),
US (Baltimore)

**A cross-cultural comparison of young adolescents
who challenge traditional gender norms**

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

- Traditional gender norms regulate (perceptions of) expressions/behaviour of boys and girls
- Growing acceptability for girls to challenge the norms, less for boys
 - masculinity dominance



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

- Challenging traditional gender expressions/behaviour:
 - can vary between cultures
 - acceptance related to specific behaviour
- Challenging gender norms could lead to
 - verbal and
 - physical negative consequences
 - not always



ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

Research 2:

Quantitative research conducted in:
Bolivia (Cochabamba) and Ecuador (Cuenca)

A cross - sectional study

**Positive attitudes toward gender equality - sexual behavior
sexual experiences
communication about sex**

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND GENDER NORMS

The research has indicated a correlation between:

Positive attitudes toward gender equality - higher current use contraceptives
positive (ideas about) sexual experiences
good communication about sex



CONCLUSION

- Stigma is present in (research on) ASRH
 - Adolescent sexuality as negative
 - Gender norms as barriers to develop healthy ASRH
- In Western countries stigma is more and more recognized and trend towards more positive approach is growing

Prof. Dr. Kristien Michielsens and Sara De Meyer

ICRH

 Ghent University
 @ugent
 Ghent University

E Kristien.Michielsen@ugent.be
SaraA.DeMeyer@ugent.be

T +32 9 000 00 00

M +32 400 00 00 00

www.ugent.be