

INTRODUCTION

For young adolescent, healthy sexuality is not only about sexual experiences, but also reflected through their appreciation of themselves, their smooth interaction with both genders, and their expression of love which are consistent with one's own values. Early Adolescents(EAs) are socialized within different family, school, and societal contexts. Gender norms are among the most influencing factors impacting adolescents' healthy sexuality. Adolescents are not just passive receptors, they are active adaptors and reformers of norms.

This study tries to illustrate if the intergenerational transmission of gender norms has impact on EAs' sexuality in an urban poor community of Shanghai, China through a qualitative study.

METHODS

A total of 34 dyads of parents and adolescents aged 11-13 years old living in the urban poor area of Shanghai, China were interviewed to collect their stories and opinions on gender norms. The conversations were audio recorded, transcribed and translated into English. Scripts were carefully read and coded in Atlas.ti 7.5 for analysis. A thematic approach was used to analyze the data.

Intergenerational transmission of those norms were assessed by how similar or different the values instilled to adolescent boys and girls through parenting. Assessment of healthy sexuality was based on extractions from adolescents' interviews expressing the traits of most popular boys and girls (as to be boyfriends or girlfriends) among them, their friendships with same and different sex peers and their feelings of possessing present or opposite gender.

RESULTS

What boys and girls should be in parents' and adolescents' eyes:

Cognition of gender norms were similar among two generations.

Parents thought

Boys: *Strong*, Smart, *Sporty*, Protective, Curious, Energetic, Humorous, Knowledgeable, *Endurable*, Straight-forward, *Responsible*, Decisive

Girls: Sensible, Communicative, *Tender*, *Elegant*, Family-oriented, Virtuous, Independent, Be alert to protect oneself.

Adolescents thought

Boys: *Sporty*, Brave, Broad-minded, *Responsible*, *Endurable*, *Strong*, Confident, Polite, Neat, No violence.

Girls: Composed, Conservative, Reserved, Obedient, Easy-going, Good-mannered, *Speak softly*, *Elegant*, No dirty words, No fight.

Parents instilling values of being boys and girls:



Values instilled to boys



Values instilled to girls

Adolescents' perception of ideal boys and girls:



Traits of ideal boys



Traits of ideal girls

Appearance seemed to be quite important in deciding whether a boy/girl would be popular, which was actually not indicated in parents' value instilling process. There was also a trend that *gentle* and *tender* personality were welcomed among both boys and girls.

Adolescents' interactions with same/different sex peers:

Interactions among girls were mostly words and expression related, among boy were mostly activities and competitions related.

Girls with girls

- Talking secrets
- School work
- Music and art

Girls with boys

- School work
- Chat and joke

Boys with boys

- Sports
- Video games
- School work

Adolescents' appreciation of one's own gender identity:

In a hypothetical situation of being changed to another gender, most boys (14 out of 17) were quite resistant to become girls; while most girls (12 out of 17) would be happy to accept the change when talking about this possibility.

CONCLUSIONS

Parents and adolescents perceived similar stereotypical gender norms. Gender differences were emphasized.

Being a man was considered as a privilege by most young adolescents. The result revealed the impact of generational transmission of gender norms that ensures the patriarchy.

Feminine personalities like gentle, affectionate or tender were both welcomed by boys and girls, but were less instilled to boys during the parenting process, indicating EAs would not only adapt but also verify what they have learnt and then shape the gender norms of their own generation during their growing process.

The contrast between ideal traits required of boys and instilled norms by parents and/or societies, as well as the male preference among EAs called for an effort to create a gender egalitarian environment to help young adolescents form health sexuality.

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