



Transitioning from deviance to acceptance of youth condom use: Qualitative findings from rural Kenya

By Paula Tavrow, Eunice Muthengi,
Albert Obbuyi and Vidalyne Omollo

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Introduction

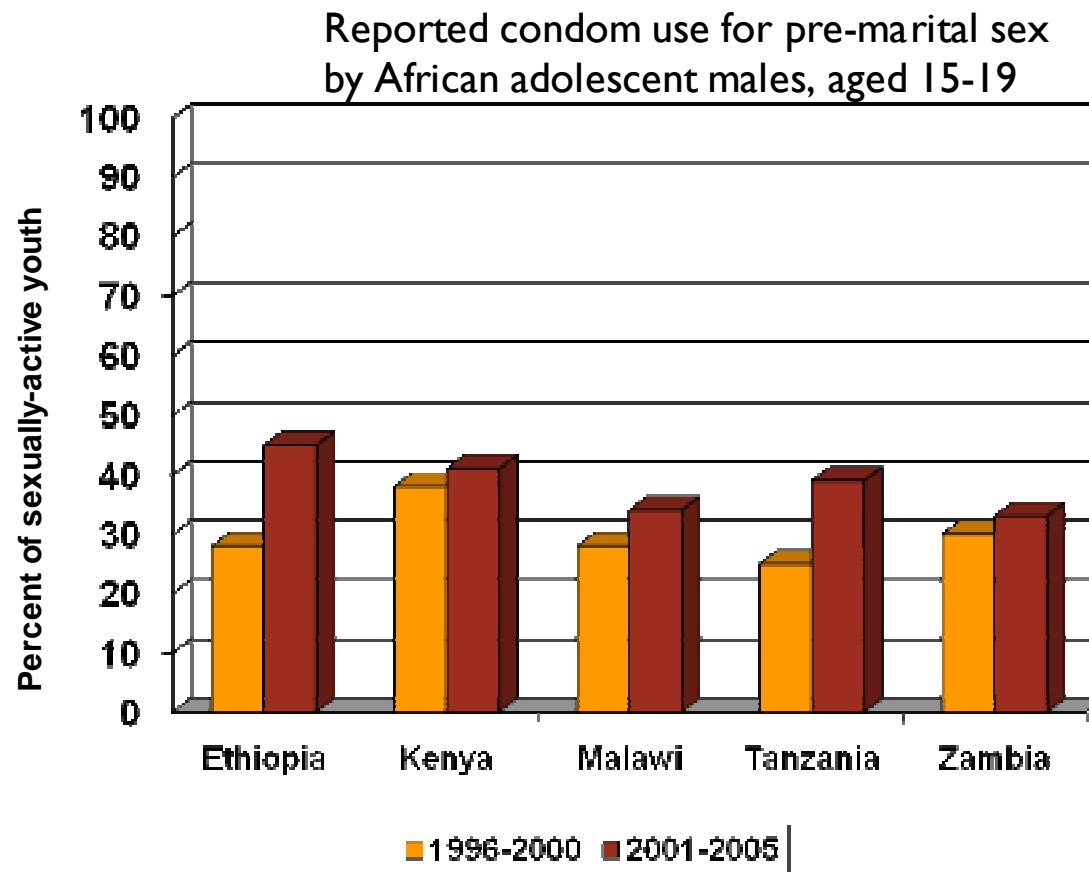
- HIV has a young face, especially in Africa
 - More than half of all new infections occur in people under the age of 25
 - Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 63% of people aged 15-24 living with AIDS
- Preventing AIDS among youth (using the ABCs) has not been very successful
 - Most prevention programs focus on **abstinence** (A)
 - **Being faithful** (B) isn't particularly relevant to youths
 - Ambivalence about youth sexuality limits discussion of **condoms** (C)



From www.sichange.org

Sources: UNAIDS,
Advocates for Youth

Youth condom use in Africa: trending upwards, but slowly



Source: DHS Surveys, 1996-2005




Significant barriers to male condom use...

Added barriers for youth in Africa:

- Access
- Deviant labeling and social sanctions

Adult barriers:

- Reduces pleasure
- Inconvenience
- Interrupts the sexual act
- Financial cost



Why be concerned about deviance labeling?

- Definition of deviance*:

“Departures from norms that draw social disapproval and may elicit negative sanctions”

- Implications

- Deviance is relative, based on context and social norms (which are in flux)
- The ABC strategy may:
 - perpetuate labeling youths who use condoms as deviant
 - legitimize punishment from schools and parents
- **Most people avoid behavior considered deviant**

*Source: Clinard and Meier, 2004

Purpose of Study



1. To delineate contemporary norms about youth condom use as **deviant behavior** among segments of rural Kenyan society
2. To identify transitional views that would classify some youth condom use as **non-deviant**
3. To make recommendations for how to reduce **penalties and deviant labeling** of rural youth who use condoms

Study location: Bungoma, Western Kenya



**Bungoma
District**

Bungoma district:

- Population: ~ **1 million**
- Less than 20 years old: **60%**
- Adult HIV prevalence: **6-8%**



Methods

- **31 focus group discussions** held in three rural sub-locations of Bungoma district, Kenya, during July-Aug 2005
- Duration of FGDs: usually about **1.25 hours**, covering a range of issues on adolescents
- All FGDs conducted by same interviewer (Kenyan), **in English**, tape-recorded and transcribed
- FGDs analyzed using **MAXQDA** qualitative software
- Lead questions for this study:
 1. **If a school finds a youth with condoms, what should the school do? Why?**
 2. **If a boy who is about to become Head Boy is found with condoms, should the school still make him Head Boy? Why or why not?**
 3. **If a boy goes to a health center and asks for condoms, should the nurse try to discourage him from playing sex? Why or why not?**

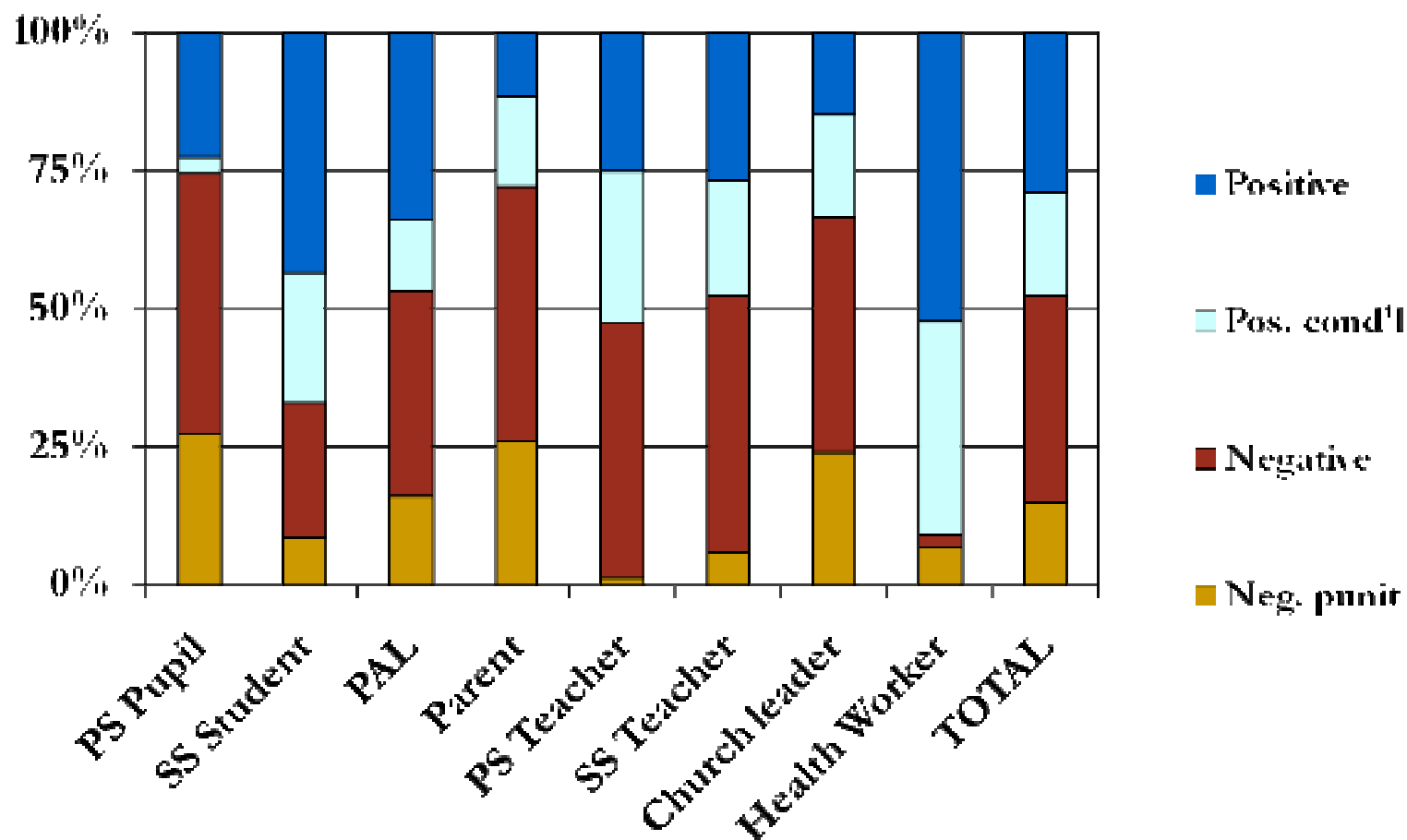
Categories: 3 FGD for each, 31 Total

| Category | # of Participants |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Female pupils (primary) | 34 |
| • Male pupils “ | 34 |
| • Female students (secondary) | 35 |
| • Male students “ | 31 |
| • Mixed peer educators “ | 37 |
| • P.S. Teachers | 29 |
| • S.S. Teachers | 25 |
| • Parents | 27 |
| • Church Leaders | 29 |
| • Health Providers | 29 |

SUMMARY

| | | | | | | |
|---------|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| Youths: | M | 83 | F | 88 | T | 171 |
| Adults: | M | 74 | F | 65 | T | 139 |
| Total: | M | 157 | F | 153 | T | 310 |

Results: Opinions about youth condom use by type of respondent



Focus group discussions, July-August 2005, Bungoma District, Kenya



Examples of: Negative, Punitive

- “...For mixed schools there is a rule that prohibits love affairs. In that case, if he [male student] is found with a condom the interpretation will be that he is playing sex, and therefore he should be **punished or even expelled.**” (Female peer educator)
- “When my son was in Kibabii Boys High School, he was found with condoms and I was called. We agreed with the teachers and **we beat the boy.** We have never seen him with them again. Even the teachers are saying he has now changed.” (Male health provider)
- “A boy [found with condoms] should not be made the head boy, because the school will think that this is encouraging sex. Other students will also follow his footsteps and the whole **school will be in a mess.**” (Male secondary student)



Examples of: Negative

- “In my shop I have never seen a young boy coming to buy condoms . Therefore if a boy in school is found with them, then that is a **very dangerous** human being.” (Male primary teacher)
- “A school head boy should be a good leader and a role model to the others. If he is found with condoms, then we as teachers **will look at him as an immoral person**, and even the students will not respect him.” (Male secondary teacher)
- “By letting youths have them [condoms] it will **encourage sexual activity in the school**. The condoms are also not 100% sure. And the boy may want to have sex with more girls.” (Male peer educator)



Examples of: Positive conditional (transitional)

- “The youth [found with condoms] should just be left in school and not be punished, because there are people who are HIV positive and they can **force one into sex**. If the boy is **caught in such a situation**, then he can just put on a condom and use it and then he is not infected.” (Male primary pupil)
- “They must be given [condoms] because youths are playing sex, and if they are not given **they will still go ahead and play sex**. The nurse should give them [condoms] in order to save their lives.” (Male secondary teacher)
- “I think the student should not be punished because these adverts are all over the media, and the interpretation is that **he is taking care**. ... As a school we do not encourage [condom use], but should also not punish [a youth] when found with it.” (Male secondary teacher)



Examples of: Positive

- “Previously it was obscene to find a youth carrying a condom, but **now it is normal**. The only thing one has to understand is how to use them. Therefore **teachers should be open and free** to talk to the youths in order to reduce the rate of HIV infection among the youths.” (Female health provider)
- The nurse should give him [student] the condoms, since he is playing sex and the **condoms are used for protection** against disease. (Male primary pupil)

Traditional Norms → Transitional Views (I)

| | Traditional Norm | Transitional View |
|----------------|--|--|
| Abstinence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youths should abstain from sex until marriage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not realistic to expect all youths to abstain until marriage |
| Morality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condoms cause sexual immorality to occur | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual activity is already occurring; having condoms doesn't increase sex |
| Condom quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condom use could be dangerous for youth, because of holes and breakage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condoms do not usually have holes, and are unlikely to burst if used properly. |

Traditional Norms → Transitional Views (2)

| | Traditional Norm | Transitional View |
|--------------|--|--|
| Sex | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sex distracts youths from school | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youths are interested in sex; they will pursue it regardless |
| Youth rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youths should not be given condoms | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youths have a right to protect themselves from disease transmission |
| Role models | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A head boy found with condoms is a bad influence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A head boy found with condoms can educate others to protect themselves |



Conclusions

- Majority of respondents consider condom use by youths to be **deviant**.
 - Many believe it encourages **immorality and promiscuity**
 - A significant minority believe that youths found with condoms should be punished and/or expelled
 - Health providers and secondary students were most lenient
- However, a notable transition is occurring in the public's view, particularly among health providers
 - Some are prepared to label condom use as showing that youths are **being careful**, and **trying to protect themselves** from disease
 - Some think youths may need condoms for “emergencies” or if forced
 - People are getting **accustomed to youths having access** to condoms



Recommendations

- Develop new approaches to promote condom use to youths
 - Advocate “emergency preparedness”
 - Portray condoms as normative, “safe” behavior
 - Not for the stylish or trendy, but for the careful youth
- Demystify condoms in the community
 - Use health providers and some male youths for outreach
 - Demonstrate condom durability
- Train health providers not to ask youths’ purpose for getting condoms
 - Make condoms easy to obtain
 - Focus on proper use and disposal
- Discourage schools from expelling or punishing youths found with condoms
 - Help schools to appreciate that this is counterproductive