

# THE GLOBAL EARLY ADOLESCENT STUDY: RESULTS FROM PHASE I - GHENT

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# CONTENT

Data collection Ghent

Gendernorms (GN) related to:

- Romantic relationships
- Friendships
- Perceived risks when entering adolescence

What happens if you don't take into account the GN?

# DATA COLLECTION GHENT

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In 8 poor neighborhoods in Ghent: selected on yearly net income per household

7 group sessions with adolescents (min 4 participants) from September – November 2014

- 1 - school
- 1 - primary health care center
- 5 - non-profit organisation working in poorer neighbourhoods in Ghent (vzw Jong)

During the same period individual interviews with 27 mothers and 1 father

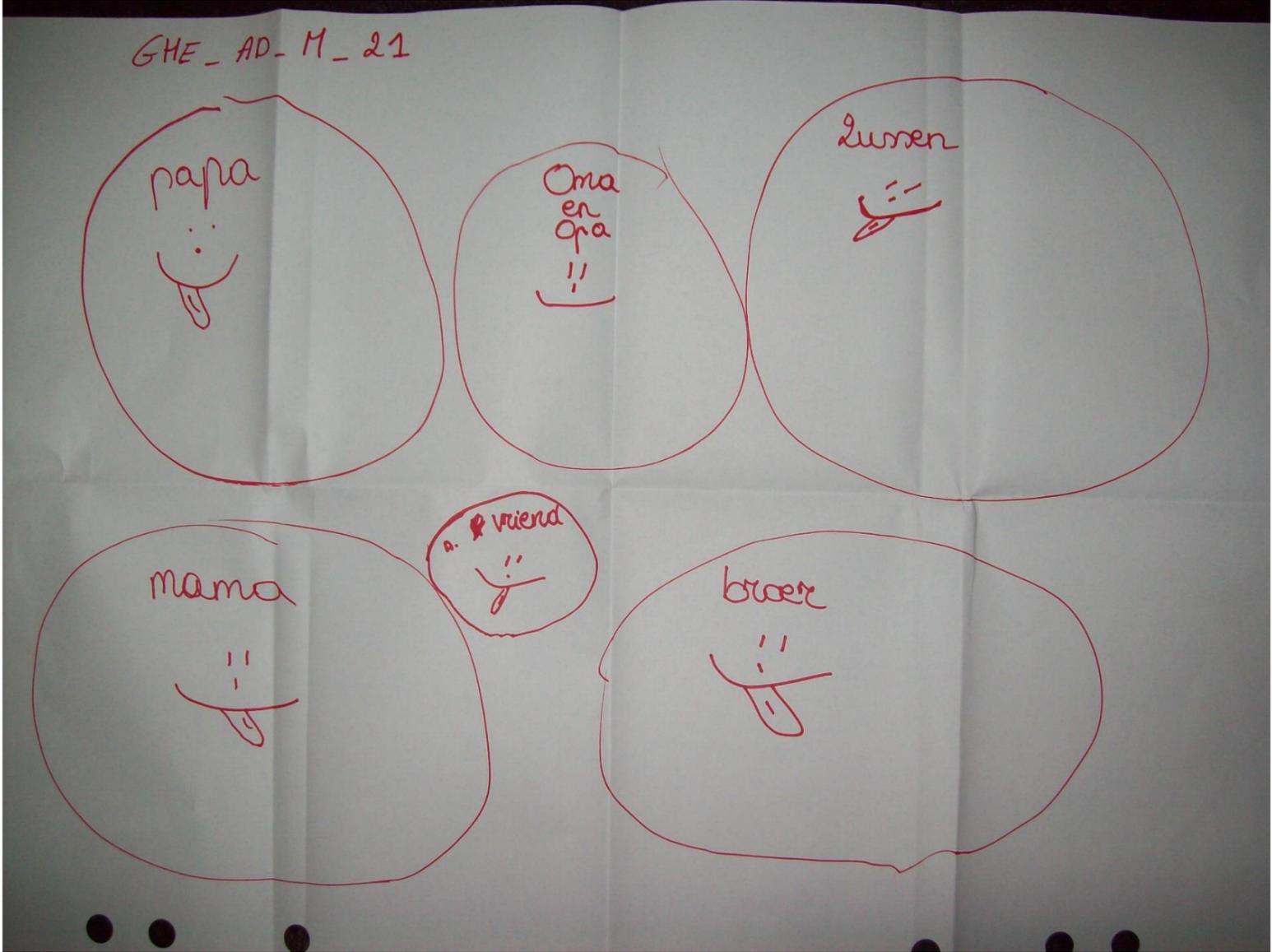
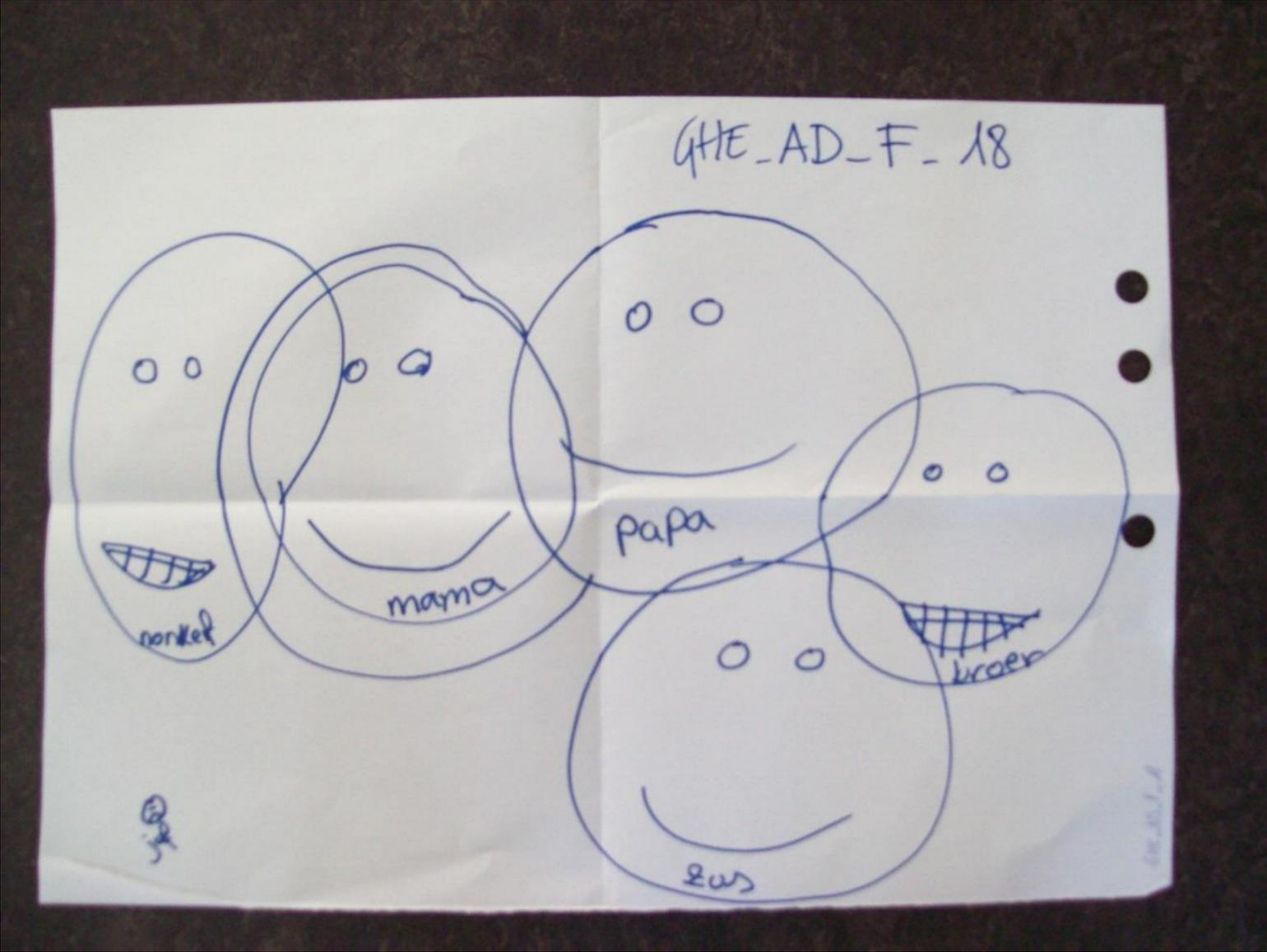


# DATA COLLECTION GHENT

Characteristics	Ghent
<b>Sex</b>	
• Boys	12
• Girls	18
<b>Ages</b>	
• 11	9
• 12	11
• 13	10
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
• Belgian	5
• Maghreb	8
• Turkish	12
• Other	5

Characteristics	Ghent
<b>Family structure</b>	
• Two-(step)parent	17
• Single parent	11
<b>Interview language</b>	Dutch
	Turkish (some mothers)

# EXAMPLES VENN DIAGRAMS





# GENDER NORMS RELATED TO ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

# GENDER NORMS AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Differences between boys and girls

- Boys ask girls out
- Some male respondents indicated that they had already several girlfriends

*“In the beginning that’s still like ‘Gosh, that’s an ugly girl!’*

*Ugly?*

*Yes! But if you actually get to know her better then... And see her more, then she gradually starts to get more and more beautiful. And then I suddenly fall, yes, ‘Boom! In love!’.” (Boy, 12 years old)*

# GENDER NORMS AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

## Similarities between boys and girls

- Some boys and girls indicate they were already in love / others were not
- Few respondents actually had a boy/girlfriend – all heterosexual
- If they are in love, it's mostly with a classmate, some also mention holiday love, or other etc..
- Friends are important for boys and girls in the context of love
  - To talk about the person they are in love with
  - To ask someone out
  - Peer pressure to (not) be in love

# GENDER NORMS RELATED TO FRIENDSHIPS

# GENDER NORMS AND FRIENDSHIP

Influence of gender norms on choice of friends as well as the type and place of shared activities

Mainly same sex friendships

- Girls: classmates, neighbors and family friends
- Boys: classmates, in the neighborhood, sport clubs or the mosque

Less opposite-sex friendships:

- Lack of shared interests, mismatch in personality style
- Afraid of being misunderstood
- Mainly groups

# GENDER NORMS AND FRIENDSHIP

## Girls

- Activities:
  - Conversation
  - Homework, listening to music, playing games, shopping, sleepover

- Mutual trust

*I'm her real BFF [Best Friend Forever] ... because she shares her biggest secrets with me (girl, 12 years old)*

- Similar personal traits – for example sharing the same native language

# GENDER NORMS AND FRIENDSHIP

## Boys

- Less focus on conversation more on sharing activities, mainly sports
- Mutual trust and honesty

*When you tell him something ... that is a secret, he won't tell it to someone else (Boy, 13 years old).*

- Defending each other

*For example when someone talks bad about me then he will say things like, 'If you ever say that again, I will go to the principal.' (Boy, 12 years old)*

# GENDER NORMS AND FRIENDSHIP

Girls and boys reported that girls are limited in the places they can go in ways boys are not.

*Boys, they can stay up late, I mean, stay outside and they can see friends a lot ... But girls ... they either have to stay at home ... or sometimes they can walk around with girlfriends during the day or have parties at their girlfriends' place. ... But, like, really staying up late outside and all, that, no. That's mostly for boys (Boy, 13 years old).*

GENDER NORMS RELATED TO:

PERCEIVED RISKS WHEN ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

# GENDER NORMS AND PERCEIVED RISKS WHEN ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

Data from parents and adolescents

Compared: Baltimore, Ghent, Nairobi, Ile Ife, Assuit and Shanghai

Three types of risks are mentioned:

- Risks related to sexuality: harassment, rape, STI's and pregnancy
- Risks related to sexual orientation: homosexuality
- Risks related to violence and drugs

# GENDER NORMS AND PERCEIVED RISKS WHEN ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

## **Risks related to sexual harassment, rape, STI's and pregnancy**

Increases once adolescent girls' bodies start changing (every site)

Risk is related to physical weakness (every site)

Only in Ghent the increasing risk for STI's and unwanted pregnancies is also mentioned for boys.

*If he comes to talk to me, I'm going tell him to pay attention... women can get pregnant... I haven't said that yet but I'm going tell him one day when he's in a relationship with a woman, to use condoms. That he should pay attention. That there are many diseases...  
(mother, Ghent)*

# GENDER NORMS AND PERCEIVED RISKS WHEN ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

## **Risks related to homosexuality**

*No, all colors are for boys and for girls. But pink isn't right!? ... We had a cousin who loved Barbie dolls – thankfully [he does] not anymore. He learned not to .... But W. [another boy who loves pink] is going to learn that too soon. Now everyone is saying “Yeah W. is going to be bullied in high school because he's a ‘gay’”.*

And why ... do you say ‘Thankfully!’? Do you think it's important that boys don't play with Barbie anymore?

*Yes, because I do think that playing with Barbie is for girls... My sister has recently told me that... there was a boy who was play[ing] with Barbie dolls and later he turned into a girl. ... [I had] 2 pens [and I asked] my cousin ‘blue or pink?’. He chose the pink one. I accepted that. ... [but] I was scared as well. I wouldn't like it if my cousin were to become a girl.*

(Girl, 11 years old)

# GENDER NORMS AND PERCEIVED RISKS WHEN ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

## **Risks related to violence and drugs**

Across all sites (with the exception of Ghent) boys were perceived to face more risks related to violence and drugs (including smoking and alcohol use) compared to girls

*Yes, I always mention it when she goes to school alone for example, “don’t talk to anyone, [behave] nicely on the bus... and, where people smoke, don’t go there”. She’ll watch once, watch twice and the third time she will smoke as well. (Ghent parent)*

# GENDER NORMS AND PERCEIVED RISKS WHEN ENTERING ADOLESCENCE

## **Some reflections**

Except for Ghent, girls were perceived to be much more vulnerable compared to boys.

Ghent is exception! Why?

MARCHING TO A DIFFERENT DRUMMER:

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

THE GENDER NORMS?

# SOME RESULTS – CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS

Girls who challenge gender norms are more accepted than boys who challenge gender norms

Boys are perceived to challenge GN when they	Girls are perceived to challenge GN when they
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• don't like football</li><li>• knit or jump ropes</li><li>• love Barbie dolls</li><li>• love pink</li><li>• wear make-up</li><li>• walk “like faggots”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• play football</li><li>• dress or do their hair like boys</li><li>• act sporty or tough</li><li>• say dirty words</li><li>• go to bars and parties</li><li>• sit with legs open</li></ul>

# WHAT IF YOU DON'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT GENDER NORMS?

*And euhm I asked her “Why are you sitting like a boy? And she said “because I like it more”... And I said “I don’t like it when girls act like boys” and she said “I do like it because those girls can defend themselves”, that’s what she said (Girl, 12 years old).*

*Uh, a man can also have something feminine, but if you want to be a real man... That you have to adapt with those things, with your clothing and stuff. And also play soccer and stuff, well yeah, or not like put on make-up and like mascara and paint your nails. Then you’re not a boy (Boy, 11 years old).*

# WHAT IF YOU DON'T TAKE INTO ACCOUNT GENDER NORMS?

## **Examples of change**

*Girls are hundred percent [as involved as] boys in football. [Today] there are more girls playing football than boys (13 year old boy).*

*What happens with boys and girls who don't behave like 'a typical boy or girl'? That's not a big deal. That's her own idea; she can choose what she does... But, there will be people who will talk about her, or they'll say that she's a bit boyish, but... That's not a big deal...*

# SOME FINAL RESULTS

Gender norms are present among our respondents

There are also examples of early adolescents who experienced more gender equal practices or have more positive attitudes towards gender equality

We still need to invest but there is as well a window of opportunity!

Many interesting topics to investigate in the second phase of the research

Thank you!