

Summary

YOUTH SEXUALITY IN CROATIA: SYMBOLIC AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES, 1972— 2005

Aleksandar Štulhofer

University of Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Croatia
Department of Sociology

Milana Dokmanović

Ministry of Defence of Republic of Croatia

Dean Ajduković

University of Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Croatia
Department of Psychology

Ivana Božičević

School of Public Health „A. Štampar”, Medical School, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Krešimir Kufrin

University of Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Croatia
Department of Sociology

Adolescent sexuality is often an object of moral scrutiny, even panic. The reasons for such a state of affairs are mostly to be found in the cultural history of sex in the West and the complex ambiguity regarding human sexuality and its content. In this paper, the authors analyze changes in the sexuality of youth in Croatia during the past three decades. Our goal is to provide some empirical insight into the process of social construction and organization of youth sexuality. The analyses are based on data collected in two national surveys on sexual behavior and attitudes of young people (*Attitudes and Activities in Sexual Lives of High-School Youth in Croatia, 1972*, and *AIDS and Youth 2005*). Comparisons include a number of behavioral dimensions (sexual initiation, reasons for first sex, number of sexual partners, use of contraceptives, and orgasmic competency), sources of information about human sexuality, and attitudes regarding abortion and premarital sex. The findings clearly point to a major change in the observed period. The differences found, both behavioral and attitudinal, could be described as a rise of *double permissiveness*, representing the breakdown of earlier moral norms and sexual constraints combined with an increase in gender equality regarding sexual rights. Although our analyses suffer from a number of methodological restrictions, and should therefore be considered illustrative rather than confirmatory, the consistency and magnitude of the 1972-2005 differences support the validity of our interpretation.

Key words: sexuality, youth, sexual permissiveness, gender egalitarianism, Croatia