



*Arubaanse jongeren over hun ouders en seksualiteit*  
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## Summary

### **Aruban adolescents and their parents and sexuality.**

In my work in Aruba, starting with sex instruction to adolescents and then giving psycho-social help to individuals and couples, I could make good use of the knowledge and experience I achieved during my education and work in Holland and Curaçao. As time went by it struck me that the recurrent reactions of my clients that referred to traditional customs such as separate sex role patterns, collective norms and values did not result in any more social interactions being achieved.

This raised the question: 'What is going on here?'

The responses of the adolescents in connection with the sex instruction raised questions, such as:

- how come the adolescents do not respond to the knowledge they acquire on the subject of biology and social matters?
- how come the adolescents do not behave in accordance with the information received even when they grow older?

Apparently it is quite beyond them. They hear what is said and they put it aside.

What about the private sessions when meeting with adolescents and adults individually? There I met with exactly the same situation. The adolescents did not take on the knowledge provided. It seemed to me that the essence of the matter was that they did not connect the information with their own situation. In other words, the introspection seemed to be lacking.

Then I really started to think in a systemic way about my contacts with my adult clients. There the same thing occurred. I tried to convince them that they should think about their situation and then come to the conclusion that they have to do what is required. This also did not work out. They have a different way of thinking.

I discovered that there is a quite different pattern of thinking (and living) that in short could be summarized as thinking in terms of concrete daily tasks and obligations and talking about these matters among each other. In other words: one lives up to a way of thinking of practical and necessary things without much wider concepts and ideas. Further analysis showed that this was organized by a coherent pattern of thinking. Namely, the rules that are carried out by everyone as a collective and as a way of interaction are part of a given culture. Those practical rules are part of this culture and preserve this by forms of custom. In a more structural way you can put it like this: a coherent living and thinking pattern that is based on thrust in the established order. Those are continually protected and maintained by incitements and also sanctions to follow the rules and customs. If one fails to follow the rules and customs this will result in the penalty of loss of the socially indispensable good reputation. And in case of serious deviations this will result in social exclusion.

Here I met with a quite different culture that I had to consider when rendering help. Among many things this led to the question to what extent adolescents still continue to follow these patterns or do they live according to a more reflective way of life?

By means of empirical studies I verified to what extent the adolescents follow the socially prevailing pattern or else rebel in a secretive or open way.

In general there certainly is a positive relationship between the adolescents and their parents. The adolescents accept their parents' authority and their rules and regulations to regulate their conduct. The youths think it is important that the children comply with the set of rules and the authority. They look upon it as the way of protection of the children and the adolescents. The girls think that, compared to the boys, they are submitted to constraint, subjected to social control and to a high degree must comply with norms concerning decency and reputation. They see and accept that fulfilling the parental rules and regulations is important and not learning to deal with the urge to explore and with the autonomy as an adolescent. The studies also show that a significant number of adolescents take their chance in doing what they want without the knowledge of their parents and against the parental rules and regulations. As such they hold double standards. When looking for relevant knowledge with regard to sexuality as for the adolescents the fieldwork data shows that a significant part of the boys and girls that are sexually active risk their health or else take the risk of unplanned parenthood by not taking the necessary measures.

Knowledge about issues concerning sexuality and relationship are not converted into general abilities. Mentioned results also show that as for the knowledge they get at school the adolescents take the same view as their parents. There is the assumption that educational achievements correspond to opportunities in the labour market and as such securing a good material existence. The knowledge achieved is not meant as a stimulus to continue to look for the coherence of phenomena and problems that emerge.

This data corresponds to the way of living and thinking of the locals. The contribution from the outside with a possible new western way of thinking seems to be limited to foreign groups that live and think accordingly and to a small group of highly educated Aruban parents.