Special Study:
Stigma and Discrimination
towards MARP's
in Central America

Belize, August, 2012

Introduction

- Introduction
- Framework
- Methodology
- Findings
- Comments

The issue of stigma is of public health interest because:

- Contributes to disease burden.

- Influences the effectiveness of diagnosis and treatment.

- Marginalized groups may be more vulnerable because they suffer from a multiplicity of reasons to be stigmatized.

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History of concept

Erving Goffman (1960's) on the concept of stigma.

"It is the situation of an individual who has been disqualified from social acceptance."

This view can refer to behaviors, perceptions, and social judgment.

The variety of conditions that can be identified as a reason to qualify someone socially are varied.

Taxonomy of Stigma (Goffman)

1. **Abnormalities of the body:** physical deformities.

2. **Character weaknesses:** "passions", rigid thinking and dishonesty (mental disorders, addictions, unemployment, etc.)

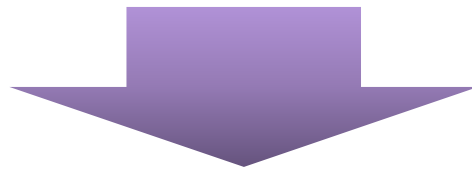3. **Identity:** "race"/ethnicity, sex, religion, and national origin.

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For the purposes of this study, the basis for analyzing stigma are:

- – Disease/health condition **(PHIV)**

- – SES/economic activity **(FSW)**

- – Sexual preference **(MSM)**

Goffman's followers have reformulated the concept of stigma.

Stigma based on social interactions.

Additionally recognized:

•Auto perceived stigma
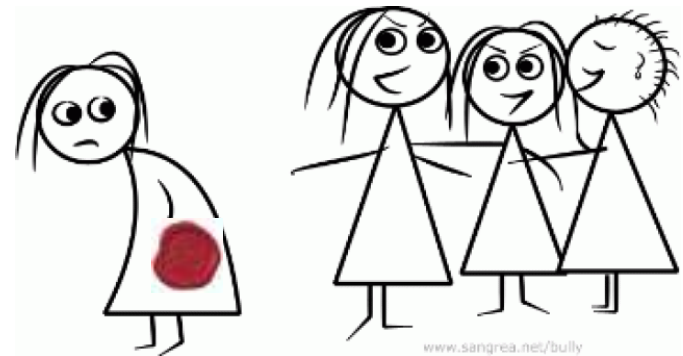
•Stigma within the same group.

Framework

Stigma - mark

Complex construct.
Characteristic of social
processes.
The stigmatized are
exploited and oppressed.

Discrimination

Is operational.
It is generally assumed
as negative.

www.sangrea.net/bully

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Stigma

1. **Social process in which elements such as:** labels, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination **occur in a power relationship that allows or encourages it** (Link & Phelan).

2. **A social or personal experience** characterized by exclusion, rejection, blame or devaluation that results from experience or anticipation of an **adverse social judgment about a person or group.**

Stigma in practice

"Acts of discrimination"

Internalized Stigma

1. Devaluation, shame, secrecy, and isolation due to the application of negative stereotypes to oneself.
2. The fear of being discriminated against.

Study Objective

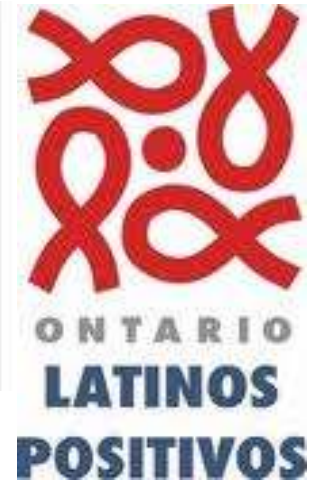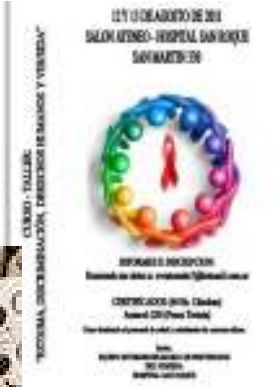- Provide input to develop a **regional communication approach** that encourages:

    – Tolerance???

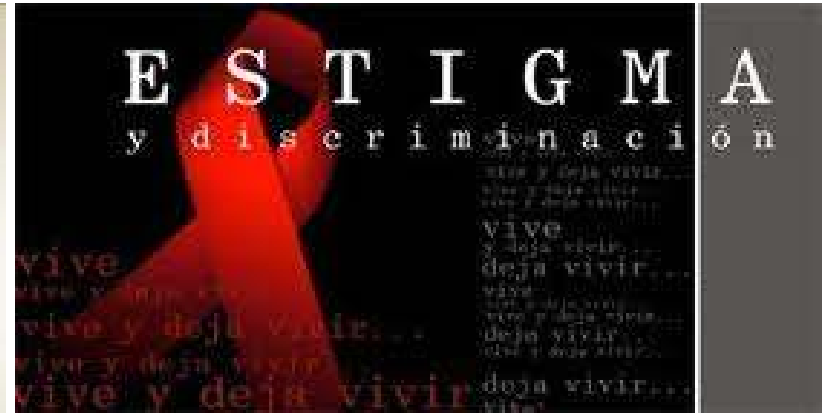   – Inclusion and respect

To populations previously defined: PHIV, FSW, MSM

Note: Communication is not exclusive so that it can be extended to other populations.

Many campaigns focus on denial unwanted behavior rather than promoting the desired behavior.

A different example:

Campaign
"I have a gay friend"*

It focus on:
- Acceptance
- Decision
- Approach

*Panamá

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"Once you mark/label me, you deny me."

Soren Kierkegard, 1813-1855

Danish philosopher and theologian

Understanding the phenomenon...

- The phenomenon is generated from social interactions.

- It is important to understand both the individual or population stigmatized as well as those that stigmatize.

Special Study on Stigma and Discrimination

- **Participating countries:** Panamá, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala y Belize.

- **Methodology:** Qualitative

- **Techniques:** Triangulation: focus groups, in-depth interviews, case studies.

Population

- Was conducted with the general population through social institutions that influence the value systems:

    – **Family:** father/mother
    – **Church:** active members
    – **School:** teachers/professors

Note: We have all been through at least one of these social institutions in any of its various forms. In the case of Belize, interviews and focus groups with teachers could not be carried out because most were busy preparing for the start of the new school year.

Participant distribution per social institution in each country

	Family		School		Church	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Focus Groups	4	4	4	4	4	4
In-depth Interviews	1	1	1	1	1	1
Case Study	1	1	1	1	1	1

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Participant distribution per social institution in Belize

	Family		School		Church	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Focus Groups	3	4	0	0	0	5
In-depth Interviews	1	1	0	1	1	2
Case Study	1	0	0	1	0	1

Note: Male participation was low as well as participation by educators/teachers.

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Analysis

- Theme Analysis
- Segmentation
- Elaboration of Archetypes(16).

Family

José Francisco

Father

40 yrs. old

SES Type C (Middle Class)

Auditor

School

Ms. Mayra

Primary school teacher

39 yrs. old

SES Type C

Technical degree

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José Rubén

Church leader

44 yrs. old

SES Type C

Business owner

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Mommy
Single Mother
45 yrs. old
SES Type C (Lower-middle)
Government worker

Findings: Hierarchy of tolerance

- **<u>FSW:</u>** is justified due to economic necessity…
    - "As long as they do not get involved with my man"
- Ethnic/racial association with practice:
    - ✓ Immigrants/migrants
    - ✓ Spanish
    - ✓ Tricked
- Will engage in sexual practices that he cannot have a home
- What would happen if we did not have FSW in Belize
    - ✓ More familial problem
    - ✓ Increase in sexual abuse
    - ✓ More young girls entering in relationships with older men

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Findings: Hierarchy of tolerance

- **PHIV:** being institutionalized segregates them more. Moreover there can be rejection on the part of family members.
- Population has identified knowing at least 3 persons HIV+
- Generate fear and rejection with the exception of children, "innocent victims"
- Have found men who have never gotten an HIV test and assume negative because <u>children are negative</u>
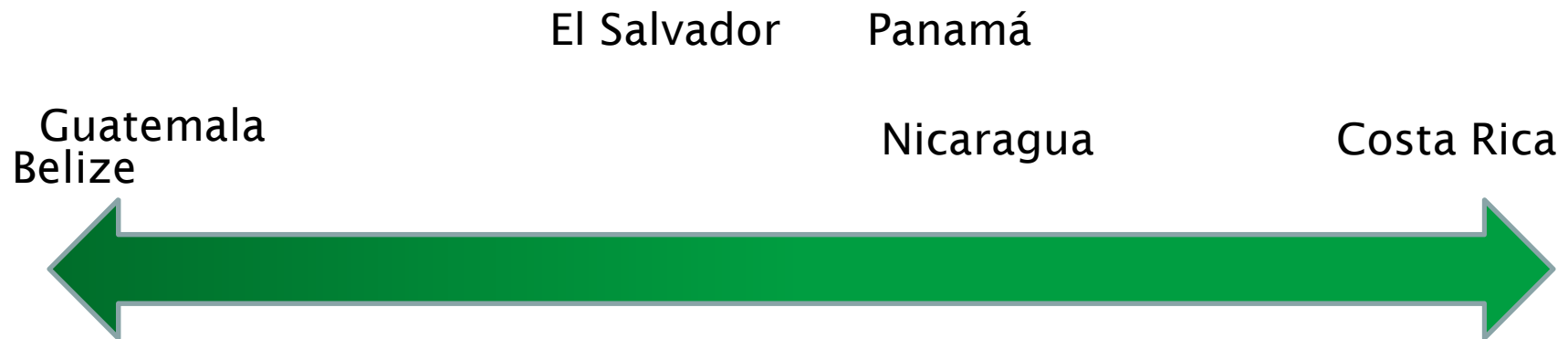 - ✓ Fear
  - ✓ Distrust of public system

Findings: Hierarchy of tolerance

- **MSM:** are the least tolerated, generate rejection for breaking social norms and morals.
- Being associated to them harms prestige and status of other men. Thus contact is avoided and public rejection is expressed.
- Lesbians are more tolerated
- Issue of masculinity
  - ✓ Procreation
  - ✓ Sense of betray
  - ✓ Important to understand masculinity construct

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Findings:
Level of tolerance per country

El Salvador   Panamá

Guatemala   Nicaragua   Costa Rica
Belize

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Note: Tolerance limits are restricted, based on the social connectedness; the closer they get to the individual and his/her family tolerance diminishes at the onset.

"As long as they don't mess with me…"

Informants have had difficulty expressing what it means to mess with one. It seems that the mere existence of individuals in this population is annoying.

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- Few strategies have been identified to successfully reach the desired behavior (tolerance, inclusion, and respect) from the general population.

- Personally knowing someone and having an emotional attachment to persons from these populations facilitates tolerance, respect, and inclusion.

Key findings

1. Some progress has been made in terms of tolerance in the region.

2. Among the most important values, respect was identified, but only when it applies to equals (those that follow conventional social norms).

3. Stigma among the study populations is closely associated with sexuality.

4. The archetypes represent individuals with social roles that prevent them from challenging the system because they are role models and responsible for education within a framework of values already established.

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- Social Capital

- Masculinity

Thank you

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