



## Using Body Mapping to Explore Gender with Adolescents in Uttar Pradesh

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### INTRODUCTION

Young women and girls in Uttar Pradesh (UP), India, face gender inequalities which threaten their health and well-being. For instance, gender inequality is associated with nutritional deficiencies in young women and their children, as is gender-based violence among Indian girls, and early marriage is associated with poor maternal and child health outcomes. Research suggests that addressing gender inequalities is important for supporting adolescent health and well-being.

Published in the *Journal of Youth Studies*, Ci3 researchers conducted a study using body mapping, a visual participatory research method, to learn from adolescents ages 15 to 17 living in Lucknow about how gender norms affect their daily experiences. Body mapping involves a facilitator-guided drawing session with the aim of describing social processes and relationships in relation to bodily experiences, along with a participant-directed narrative and/or discussion component reflecting on the body map.

Forty adolescents participated in the body mapping sessions. Facilitators were Indian NGO employees who had previous experience working with young people similar to this study's participants. Facilitators were trained in body-mapping by members of the Ci3 research team in Lucknow.

### FINDINGS

Participants' body maps and narratives about those maps demonstrated the following:

- Starting in adolescence, family and community members strongly enforce divergent gender norms for girls and boys.
- Girls face restrictions on their clothing, mobility, and education, whereas boys have comparative freedom in these domains.
- Girls experience persistent public harassment by boys and men, severely constraining their ability to move freely in public spaces.
- In contrast, the school was a setting where adolescent girls and boys experience more relaxed gender norms.

### IMPLICATIONS

Overall, this study describes the link between gender norms, health, and well-being for adolescents in Uttar Pradesh. It also illustrates the value of participatory and adolescent-friendly research methods for exploring gender norms among adolescent boys and girls in India, and indicates that multi-system approaches are needed to address gender-related inequalities in health and well-being. For more information about our Kissa Kahani Intervention in India, please visit [our website](#) or contact Ci3 at [ci3info@bsd.uchicago.edu](mailto:ci3info@bsd.uchicago.edu).

Read the full article [here](#).

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