



# **Crippling sex education: lessons to be learned from a programme aimed at youth with mobility impairments.**

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# Why this research?



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- Informed by previous research about adults' sexual experiences
- More focus on youth with intellectual impairments
- sex education + mobility impairment unexplored



# Background 1/2



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- Adolescence and young adulthood formative in socio-sexual development
- Disabled young people may face additional difficulties
- Segregated schooling
  - ambivalence



# Background 2/2



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- Compulsory sex education since 1955
- Subject integration
- Various aspects, norm-critical approach
- Themed days, 'seizing every opportunity'
- Not in teachers' education

# Theoretical framework



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- Social-relational model of disability (Carol Thomas 1999)
- The social model as an oppositional device (Beckett & Campbell 2015)
- Crip theory (McRuer & Mollow 2012) – pragmatic use (Connor and Gabel 2013)

- 1 of 4 special programmes in Sweden
- Adjacent to mainstream high school
- Dormitories, habilitation clinic
- 6 pupils 18-19 years old (2–4th grade)
  - 3 individual interviews (1 female, 2 male)
  - 1 focus group (3 male)
- 4 personnel (female)
  - 1 sex education teacher/team leader
  - 2 subject teachers
  - 1 habilitation counselor



- 2 sessions per semester in 1st and 2nd year: "too little, too unstructured, too giggly sometimes" (focus group)
- Mixed-gender discussion groups appreciated:

"It's probably good that you are both [girls and boys] because then you get more out of the conversation (...) Girls can have more experience in some area and guys in another, and then you get a discussion about both girls' and boys' views" (pupil, interview).

“Why should I be ashamed? I’m an adolescent – it’s normal! I mean, you get curious. And if I can’t have [sex] because I can’t go out and pick someone up very easily, I still want to, I’m curious and want to see how two persons, or several, have [sex]. Ok, they do it like that. So that can be a kind of a lesson when you can’t get out there yourself, then you have to watch it and try the theory later when you meet someone, when the time has come” (pupil, focus group).



“I mean, we wanted to talk about sex but also about how people see themselves, that sex is not only about penetration, and if you feel attractive, and so on. And well, they were asked to mention positive things about their bodies, and many of them couldn’t come up with anything”  
(habilitation counselor, interview).

# Conclusion



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- Same but different
- Crippling normative sexuality
- Relevant to all SRE
- Empowerment through the social model

