Stereotyping Women in the Abortion Context
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Edinburgh, October 19, 2012
Outline of talk

1. Gender Stereotyping
2. Legal Examples
3. Dismantling Gender Stereotyping
1. Gender Stereotyping

Process of ascribing to a woman specific characteristics or roles by reason only of her sex
e.g. ascribing motherhood to a woman, irrespective of her desire to be a mother, therefore denying her information & services
Why Do We Stereotype?

• To describe
  - women are weaker than men
• To prescribe women’s modesty, chastity & obedience
  - women should be mothers/caregivers
• To assign difference ("otherize")
  - e.g. women are bad decision-makers
2. Examples of Gender Stereotypes

Reflection delay – incapable of medical decision making

Spousal authorization – incapable of moral decision making

Parental consent - adolescents incapable of decision making
Recent Court Decisions

Sentencia C-355/06, Colombia Constit. Crt (2006)
A.B.C. v. Ireland, ECHR (2010)
R.R. v. Poland, ECHR (2011)
3. Dismantling Stereotypes

• Name the operative stereotype
• Understand means of perpetuation
• Explain duties to dismantle
FIGO Ethics Guideline on Harmful Stereotyping

Names Stps:
mothers & caregivers vulnerable/unreliable promiscuous (unmarried)
Their Means of Perpetuation

– unconscious reluctance to respect women’s decisions
– health sectors failing to respect women’s decisions
– laws/policies justifying men as sole decision makers
Legal Duties to Dismantle
to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct to eliminate prejudices and practices based on the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for men and women (CEDAW, Art. 5(a))
Legal Duties to Dismante

to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, equal access to health care services, including those related to family planning. (CEDAW, Art 12.1.)
Further Reading

Cook & Cusack, 
**Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives**
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010
Spanish edition, Profamilia, 2011