## Developmental Psychology of Sexuality



#### M. Nithya Poornima, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bengaluru, India

#### Outline

- Gender, Sex and Sexuality
- Development of Sexuality
- Sexuality across the life span
- Challenges



- Sex Physical or physiological differences between males and females, including primary sex characteristics and secondary characteristics
- Gender social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female
- Gender identity Extent to which one identifies being feminine or masculine (Diamond, 2002)



- Sexuality/ sexual orientation emotional and sexual attraction to a particular sex
  - Heterosexuality
  - Homosexuality
  - > Bisexuality
  - > Asexuality



- What contributes to our development of gender identity and sexuality?
- Prenatal hormones?
- Intrapersonal development?
- Socialization?
- Interpersonal experiences?
- Is this process of development linear and universal?

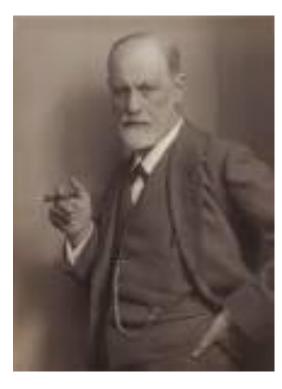


#### **Development of Sexuality**

#### Freud's theory of psychosexual development

- > Oral 0 to 1
- > Anal- 2nd year of life
- Phallic 3 to 6 years
- Latency- 6 to puberty
- Genital- Puberty and upwards
- Interplay between Id, Ego and Superego

 Acknowledging object relations and relational contexts (Fonagy, 2008)





#### **Development of Sexuality**

Learning theories



- Classical conditioning Smells, textures, images (Pavlov)
- Operant conditioning Experiences that are rewarding and punitive (Skinner)
- Social learning Observation, identification and imitation (Bandura)



#### **Development of Sexuality**

- Social Exchange Theory
- Behaviour patterns learned based on rewards and costs experienced during a relationship between two people through negotiation
- Stability and change based on choices between alternative options. (Cook and Rice, 2004)



#### **Cognitive Theories**

 Gender schema theory- all of us possess a cognitive structure comprising the set of attributes (behaviors, personality, appearance) that we associate with males and females. (Bem, 1981) (feminine, masculine, androgynous, undifferentiated)





- One month old Isha has received many gifts already. The dresses, soft toys, blankets, rattles etc. that have been brought for her have often been pink.
- Four year old Jaden used to like playing pretend with the kitchen utensils till a few months ago now he prefers to play with trucks, cars and building sets



 Five year old Raj wants to have long hair and not go for a haircut. His family convinces him that boys don't have long hair and that he must cut his hair.
 Raj consents but silently wonders that his playmate Gurdeep is called a boy but has long hair.



Five year old Harry had preferred dolls and kitchen sets to other toys for a while now. In the last year he had started drawing himself as a girl wearing a dress and high-heeled shoes. He argued with classmates that he was a girl. Though his parents initially thought he might grow out of his preferences, they are currently concerned.



Eight year olds Ronnie and Rebecca had enjoyed playing hide-and-seek together for a few years. In the last year however their frequency of playing together has reduced, Ronnie usually plays football with a group of boys and Rebecca usually plays board games or 'party' with a few girls.



- Teachers of a primary school are concerned that 9 and 10 year old children are talking secretly about private parts and trying to show each other their private parts.
- Their counterparts in middle school are concerned that their students are already talking about girlfriends and boyfriends.



Haleema is 14 years old and has been having difficulty with her parents over the last couple of years. Want to meet boys, have a boy friend like many of her friends do with the consent and knowledge of her parents



Roshan is 16 years old, of Indian origin, moved to an African country two years back, had a girlfriend whom he trusted very much, felt very betrayed when she spoke ill of him with other friends and finally broke up with him



- Puberty and Pushing away from parents, pairing with peers
- "Attracted to others...intense, wonderful and frightening all at once"
- Puberty and brain changes of adolescence do not always happen simultaneously
- Time between onset of adolescence and taking on of adult responsibilities has been changing

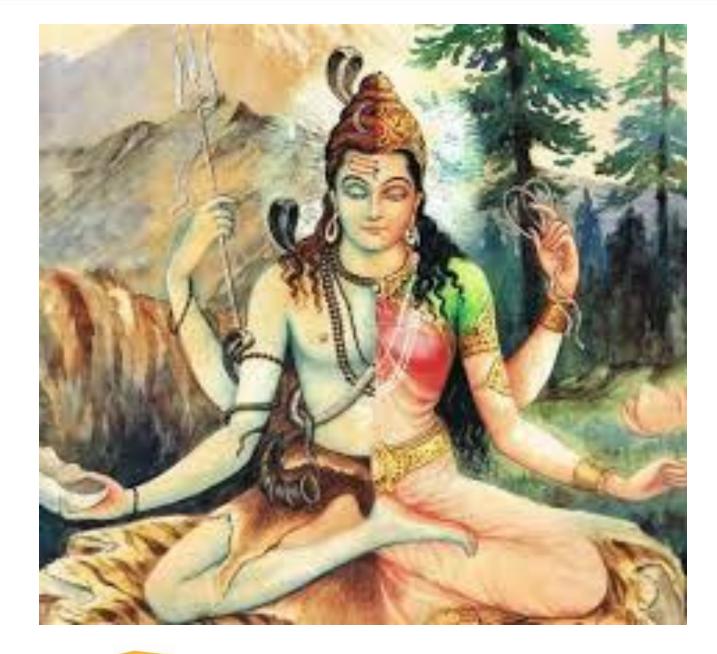
(Siegel, 2013)



#### Sexuality in adulthood

- Sexual explorations
- Committed relationships
- Sexuality over various life-stages
- Sexuality in seniors







### Jung's archetypes



- Masculine energies in the female - Animus
- Feminine energies in the male Anima
- Everyone has a blend of feminine and masculine energies in them



#### Dilemmas over time













### Sexuality in the digital era

- Earlier exposure
- Easier and unsupervised access
- Online bullying and online sexual predators
- Online pornography
- Emotional distancing and infidelity





# We don't need to share the same opinions as others, but we need to be respectful.

**Taylor Swift** 



- Bem, SL 1981. Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. Psychological Review, 88 (4), 354-364
- Diamond, M. 2002. Sex and gender are different: Sexual identity and gender identity are different, Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104502007003002
- Siegel, D.J. 2013. Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain. New York; Tarcher/ Penguin
- Sigelman, C.K. & Rider, E Life-Span Human Development,
  3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, New York: Cengage

