


# Psychoanalysis & Sexuality 2: *Homosexuality*



*personal, gender, sexual and  
procreative identity*

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- R.C. Friedman & J.I.Downey (2002):  
*Sexual Orientation and Psychoanalysis*  
*Sexual science and clinical practice*  
New York, Columbia University Press
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*Sexual Orientation and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy*  
*Sexual science and clinical practice.*  
New York, Columbia University Press

# Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

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- ❑ It is about the development from the early infantile (pregenital)sexuality to the **genital** (adult) **sexuality**
- ❑ Difference between drives and component drives
- ❑ Sexual excitement is connected to the erotogenic zones: those parts of the body on which the child can experience sexual pleasure
- ❑ So Freud describes the sexual development related to those **erotogenic zones**
  - Oral character
  - Anal character
  - Phallic character
  - Oedipal character
  - Genital character

# Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

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- Sexual identity was seen as related to:
  - The oedipal constellation
  - The discovery of the differences between the sexes
  - Castration anxiety and Penis envy
  - Psychosexual development closes during puberty/adolescence
  
- Nowadays identity formation is about the quality:
  - Of the self esteem from beginning of life,
  - Of the exploration of the self and the other
  - The importance of oedipal constellation is relative as is the discovery of the differences between the sexes
  - It is more about the separation and in that sense about the loss of the mother. More about the helplessness of the child in relation to the overwhelming powerfull preoedipal mother

# The oedipal conflict

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## Freud

- ❑ Oedipus is about murdering the father and marrying the mother

## After Rank, Ferenczi and Horney

- ❑ Oedipus is first about separating from the mother and (when that went on in an inadequate way) after that murdering the father and marrying the mother
- ❑ It is about the putting in perspective of the oedipus complex. That created space for another way of thinking about homosexuality within psychoanalysis

# Fonagy: sexuality

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- The development of Sexuality is related to
  - Adequate mirroring of affects
  - To affect regulation
  
- The development of psychosexuality is determined by
  - The intimacy of the early object relations
  - Early peri and prenatal sensomotoric experiences
  
- Mental functioning is rooted in fysical experiences
  
- Sexuality in early childhood exist but is difficult to mirror by the primairy objects

# Sexuality

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- ❑ Because of its early roots sexuality is not totally part of the consciousness and cannot be mentalized, because the ability to mentalize is not yet available
- ❑ Next to that research shows that in case of sexuality, mirroring by parental figures and by that containing fall short.
- ❑ The child cannot mentalize what the parents are not able to mentalize
- ❑ Sexual excitement cannot fully represented in a mental way
- ❑ It cannot be an integrated part of the self, in a way it will be experienced as "strange" or "alien" → sexual experiences are in a way uncongruent or not cohesive/ integrated with the self
- ❑ Sexual excitement will be experienced in the other and because of that it can be experienced with the other

# Homosexuality

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- ❑ Homosexuality is not a form of pathology, it is a form of object relational functioning in relation to a form of personal, gender,sexual and procreative identity.
- ❑ It is an expression of sexuality
- ❑ During their development towards a firm personal,gender,sexual and procreative identity homosexual people will meet some risc factors, they should find a way to cope with them
- ❑ **Otherwise they could develop an internalized homophobia**



# Homosexuality

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- ❑ Homosexuality as a phenomenon is there since prehistoric times
- ❑ Prevalence more or less the same across different cultures
- ❑ Freud believed that all people have inherited bisexual dispositions and many varieties of love and desire are experienced as alternative pathways to intimacy
- ❑ In sexual orientation, there should be differentiated between:
  - Sexual fantasy
  - Behavior and identity
- ❑ Recently (20th century) both aspects are integrated (Cohler and Galatzer- Levy 2000).

# Psychic Development

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- Constitutional self
- Comprises inborn personality characteristics including
  - Sexual identity
  - Constitutional developmental capacities
  - Genetic-risk factors for the development of psychopathology (Gergely 2007)
- The self must take an active role as a mental agent interacting with its environment to construct its own personal and sexual identity

# Homosexuality

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- Psychic development is the result of the interaction of the constitutional (genetic, non mentalized) self and psychosocial experiences
  
- The development of the Self is determined by the self concept or identity
  - Self as object (“Me Self”)
  - Self as agent/subject (“I Self”)
  
- **Sexual Identity** is related to
  - personal identity
  - gender identity
  - procreative identity

# Personal Identity

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- ❑ The development of the conscious sense of self starts by the age of one year and a half.
- ❑ The toddler recognizes itself in a mirror
- ❑ In early childhood the self representations are determined by the mirroring interaction with the parental figures.
- ❑ During latency and adolescence it is also determined by the mutual affirmative interactive process with peers and school
- ❑ In the beginning the representations of the self are concrete during adolescence they become more abstract and more dependent on romantic attractiveness, status at school and work (Harter 2012)
- ❑ Mirroring (Fonagy 2002) is about the mechanism of affect or self mirroring

# Affect & Self Mirroring

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## Affect Mirroring

1. Focal Attention and recognition of the affect
  2. Interpretation and representation of the affect
  3. Modulation of the affect
  4. Expression of an emotional response or action
- **Leading to the development of Mentalized Activity**

# Affect & Self Mirroring

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## Self Mirroring

1. The contingent mirroring of constitutional self states construction of secondary (psychic) representations of the self: sensitivity
2. Apart from the *realistic self* representation of the parent
  - When the parent mirrors a *realistic self* representation the mirroring is not-contingent: **non sensitive**
  - It is about the development of the autobiographical self through congruent mirroring by the parent of the authentic self of the child
  - If the mirroring is not contingent the child will develop alienated secondary self-representations

# Personal Identity

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- ❑ Should be definitely created during Adolescence
- ❑ Denotes a sense of consistency and continuity of the self as well as a sense of personal norms and ideals
- ❑ Adolescence should be a period of “Moratorium” to discover and create the various aspects of the authentic adult identity (Erikson 1968)
- ❑ In the formation of identity the peer group is very important
- ❑ They mirror and admire each other in joint activities and ideas → mutual mirroring

# Personal Identity

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- ❑ Identity formation asks for a private space, free from the rules and restrictions of the parental home. But they should have the opportunity to fall back occasionally on the secure base of their parental home
- ❑ Homosexual adolescents need the homosexual subculture as their needed private space to develop their sexual and personal identity.
- ❑ Those homosexual peer group is very important in the process of coming out



# Sexual Identity

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- ❑ The development of the sexual identity starts with the unmentalized constitutional self
- ❑ Inborn-neurobiological factors play an important role
- ❑ The development of the sexual identity has to do with:
  - Gene-expression
  - Neurochemical and brain development
  
- ❑ Before the social changes in the seventies sexual identity was not a prominent issue. Social stigma played a powerful role
- ❑ In 1973 APA removed homosexuality as a diagnostic category from the DSM (perversion)

# Gene-Expression

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- ❑ 17 year old adolescents (an age in which the sexual identity is not yet fully crystalized) who were reared in lesbian families 0% of the girls and 5.4. of the boys identified themselves as homosexual, while 18% of the girls identified themselves on the bisexual spectrum (Gartrell 2011)
- ❑ In a study about adult sons of gay fathers 9% showed a homosexual orientation (Bailey 1995)
- ❑ In the average population approximately 3% of the females and 4% of the males express exclusive homosexual desires
- ❑ Children of homosexual parents grow up predominantly identifying as heterosexual (Tasker and Patterson 2007)

# Neurochemical and Brain Development

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- Sexual differences within the brain in terms of:
  - Gender identity (male, female)
  - Gender role behavior (masculinity, femininity)
  - Sexual identity (erotic fantasy and the desire for intimate relationships)

Are under the influence of prenatal androgens

- Prenatal androgens determine the development of maleness. If there are no prenatal androgens, the foetus will be female
- The Prenatal Androgen Theory postulates that male homosexuality is due to a variation in levels or function of prenatal androgens.
- Such a variation is only present prenatally. Among adults there is no difference in sex-hormone level of homo or heterosexuals

# Sexual Identity

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## Friedman & Downey (2008):

- Psychosexual development starts in the prenatal period.
- Under the influence
  - of the sex chromosomes
  - of the development of the **H**ypothalamic **P**ituitery **G**onodal axis production
  - of the sex steroids hormonesthe process of the psychosexual development starts
- Programming takes place in the brain of the psychosexual development in the first 5 years of life
- The activation of the HPG-axis at the start of puberty: **Sexual Identity**

# Sexual Identity

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- ❑ After 6 months infants start to touch their genitals and experience erotic arousal
- ❑ The programming of the regulation of sexual arousal in the child during different libidinal phases takes place in the mirroring interaction with the parents
- ❑ Inadequate mirroring( non sensitive or non responsive) leads to a distortion of the development of psychosexual experience of the self
- ❑ The pre homosexual boy may develop within the oedipal period romantic feelings and fantasies (subconscious) towards same gender peers → when there is no possibility for mirroring then feelings of alienation and isolation will occur
- ❑ the mirroring role of the father is very important for pre-homosexual boys.

# Sexual Identity

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- ❑ The pre homosexual boy takes a distance to the same gender peers and his father to avoid recognition and rejection of his romantic feelings
- ❑ Father becomes detached because he feels that his son is different from other boys and because of his sons need for closeness and romantic attachment
- ❑ The withdrawal of the father is experienced as rejection, and that can go along with feelings of masculine inadequacy
- ❑ In mirroring a realistic self representation the mirroring by the heterosexual father of the son's pre homosexual identity becomes incongruent.
- ❑ Such an incongruence leads to feelings of alienation and inadequacy → **internalized homophobia**

# Sexual Identity

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- During adolescence after the emergence of the conscious homosexual fantasies there should be a coming out as a necessary phase for the development of an adult homosexual identity
  - Acceptation of one's own erotic fantasies and the subsequent self definition as homosexual
  - The struggle between the homosexual desire and social stigma, of being a member of a minority → efforts to view the self as heterosexual, this sometimes results in a period of bisexuality: homosexual and heterosexual experimentation. After that the individual identifies with homosexuality

# Sexual Identity

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- Positive contacts with homosexual peers, reduction of feelings of alienation and isolation, looking for affirmative mirroring and positive role models
- Committing to a homosexual orientation as a legitimate lifestyle: being proud of their identity and adequate feeling about themselves



# Gender Identity

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- ❑ Core Gender Identity is established before the oedipal period and not primary related to the discovery of the differences between the sexes (Stoller 1968; Money and Ehrhardt 1972)
- ❑ Gender Identity is a psychological construct influenced by constitutional biological factors, cognitive development and psychosocial learning
- ❑ Formation of Core Gender Identity is not dependent upon the perception of the genital difference nor is it primary motivated by castration anxiety or penis envy (Fagot,Leinbach and Hagan 1986; Yates 1993)
- ❑ The establishment of Core Gender Identity precedes and organizes the way in which the child experiences the oedipal conflict and not the reverse (Tyson 1982)

# Gender Identity

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- ❑ Starts at birth with gender assignment
- ❑ 1,5 year core gender identity is formed, the consciousness of being a boy or a girl
- ❑ Curiosity about gender differences can be seen in sexual-explorative play
- ❑ Together with psychosocial influences, prenatal sex hormones influence the emergence of masculine or feminine identity
- ❑ A solid identity will occur during childhood by congruent parental mirroring during the oedipal phase and later on in adolescence by congruent mirroring by peers

# Gender Identity

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- **Gender role behavior** (Friedman & Downey 2008):
  - Boys: rough and tumble. Involves acts of dominance; aggression and competition. Gender non confirmant boys are depreciated
  - Girls: maternal doll play; make up. More verbal, empathic and relational. Gender non confirmant girls are accepted by boys and girls.
  
- Sexual identity (erotic fantasy) and gender role behavior (masculinity and femininity) are not necessary related (Cohler and Galatzer- Levy 2000).

# Gender Identity

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- ❑ Many gender non-confirming children become heterosexual
- ❑ On the other hand many homosexual men and women experienced gender non-confirmity during childhood
  
- ❑ Homosexual men demonstrate diversity in gender role behavior:
  - Hyper masculine: leather men
  - Hyper effeminate: drag queen

To avoid average masculine behavior (Cohler and Galatzer- Levy 2000).

# Procreative identity

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- ❑ Generativity involves beliefs and actions which express concern for the next generation's welfare
- ❑ Research (Berkowitz 2007) shows that procreative consciousness is present from age 5 and is equally present in adolescence in young homo- and heterosexual men
- ❑ Some homosexual men and women shape their generativity by means of biological procreation, others by means of cultural procreation
- ❑ In cultural evolution, skills, ideas, faiths, science are copied and transmitted to the next generation from brain to brain (Dawkins 1976).

# Procreative identity

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- ❑ The masculine procreative identity involves becoming a father, and developing the capacity for paternal, watchful protectiveness (Diamond 1997)
- ❑ To day a significant part of homosexual men and women have children often by committing to a parental alliance, a gestational mother or adoption → homosexual fathers and lesbian mothers

# Procreative identity

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- ❑ Studies about the development of psychological problems in children show no differences between homosexual or heterosexual families
- ❑ Some studies indicate that gay/lesbian families which are quite planned report a better quality of their partner relationship than heterosexual families in which there are quite a few unintended pregnancies (Regnerus 2012)
- ❑ Children from families in which there is a parent who failed in having a heterosexual partner relation did a bit less well, because of the fact that they had to deal with the disclosure process of the parental figure (Regnerus 2012)

# Risc Factor for the development of pathology

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**Internalized homophobia:** related to inadequate mirroring

- ❑ The internalization of negative attitudes and beliefs about homosexuality
- ❑ It influence: identity formation, self esteem, object relations, the elaboration of defenses and superego functioning
- ❑ Late childhood experiences are important in the development of internalized homophobia
- ❑ Internalized homophobia can result from unresolved childhood traumatic stress reaction



# Risc Factor for the development of pathology

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- Can result into:
  - severe feelings of guilt,
  - shame,
  - self hatred
  - self destructive/ suicidal behavior (masochistic behavior)
  
- Leading to a negative therapeutic reaction: **the unconscious need to suffer.**

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