

Sexual Orientation (Slide 11 summary)

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-**Sex:** Refers to the biological traits that define humans as **female or male**.

-> **Generally, the term sex refers to sexual activity.**

-**Sexuality:** Central aspect of being human. It encompasses many features including **sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction.**

It is experienced and expressed in many dimensions such as **thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships.**

->Not all of these dimensions are expressed / experienced.

-It is influenced by many factors :

- Biological
- Psychological
- Social and economic
- Historical and religious
- Legal and political

-**Sexual Health:** A STATE OF **PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, AND SOCIAL WELL BEING** with regards to sexuality.

It is not merely(just) the absence of disease or dysfunction.

-It requires:

1. Positive and respectful approach towards sexuality and sexual relationships.
2. Having Pleasurable and safe sex experiences; free of violence and discrimination.

-**Sexual Orientation:** Degree of sexual attraction an individual has towards someone of the **same sex or opposite sex.**

->It comprises several distinct **components**, including erotic attraction or sexual desire, sexual behavior, romantic attraction and self-identification as **heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual**.

-Most behavioral scientists conceptualize sexual orientation as a continuum ranging from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality.

-**Kinsey's** research: in late 40's and early 50's in USA he put 7 points ranging from **0-6(range)**.

- it is common for an individual to be at different points on the scale for different components.
- For instance, many people who are sexually attracted to person(s) of the same sex have never participated in any homosexual behavior. Moreover, many individuals whom participate in many homosexual actions do not identify themselves as homosexuals.

-In a survey of sexuality in U.S.A 10.1% of adult men and 8.6% of adult women reported at least one of the following:

- 1.they are currently attracted mostly or only to person(s) of their own sex.
 - 2.they found having sex with someone of the same sex somewhat very appealing.
 - 3.they had engaged in sexual behavior with a person of the same sex since being 18 years of age.
- In terms of self-identification:2.8% of the men and 1.4% of the women identified themselves as homosexual or bisexual.

---->This is an under-estimate because many people are reluctant(deny) to report desires or behaviors that are still considered to be immoral or pathological.

- **Causes of sexual orientation:** earlier life experiences or due to innate biological influences; such as **genes or prenatal hormones**.
- **San Francisco** study 1981 included 1000 homosexual and 500 heterosexual men and women.
- The study uncovered one major factor that predicted a homosexual orientation in adulthood for both men and women.
- Childhood gender non-conformity.

^Review the chart below for a better understanding.

SAN FRANCISCO STUDY:				
Gender nonconformity preferences and behavior	men		women	
	Homo	Hetero	Homo	Hetero
Had not enjoyed sex typical activities	63%	10%	63%	15%
Had enjoyed sex atypical activities	48%	11%	81%	61%
Atypically sex typed (masculinity/femininity)	56%	8%	80%	24%
Most childhood friends were opposite sex	42%	13%	60%	40%

Results of the study :

1. A person's identification with an opposite sex parent while growing up has **no significant effect** on **sexual orientation**.
2. Homosexuals of both sexes were no more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to report having their first sexual encounter with a person of the same sex. Also they neither lacked heterosexual experiences during their childhood and adolescent years nor found such experiences unpleasant.
3. Usually determined by **adolescence age** even if not yet sexually active.

ΔHence, the study concluded that Homosexual **FEELINGS and NOT BEHAVIOR** is what leads to an adult homosexual behavior.

--> It disregards the simple learning theory of sexual orientation which states that a person can become homosexual as a result of being seduced by an individual of the same sex.

- To confirm the validity of this study, Cross cultural data(same study in different cultures) was also consistent with this. For instance, the Zambian culture of new Guinea in which all boys engage in exclusively homosexual behavior from pre puberty through late adolescence, then all of them marry and become exclusively heterosexual.

-Biological factors leading to sexual orientation differences:

1)Hypothesis of Prenatal hormone effect: a study following girls who were exposed to high levels of prenatal testosterone.

Stages:

1--->Girls born with ambiguous genitalia, corrected surgically after birth.

2 ---->Tomboy's at **mid-childhood**.(Tomboy's are girls exhibiting traits of men as in wearing mens' clothes etc..)

3-----> **At early adulthood** they were more likely than the control group to have same sex fantasies(Homosexuality), prenatal testosterone had masculinized their brain.

- It has been reported that **homosexual men** have small differences in their Hypothalamic structure with regards to heterosexual men.

There's a very high possibility that Prenatal hormones play an effect in sexual orientation. Furthermore, there's a **well-established link between Genetics and sexual orientation**.

- A study of 5000 twins confirmed the heritability of sexual orientation for men but **not for women**.
- Chromosomal analysis of 114 families of homosexual men and 40 families in which there were two homosexual brothers **showed evidence of a genetic marker of homosexuality on X chromosome**.
- Homosexual men had more homosexual male relatives on the mother's side than on the father's side of the family.

The exotic become erotic theory :

- Proposes that genetic and other biological factors **do not influence adult sexual orientation**. Yet they **influence a child's temperament and personality traits**, there is a solid evidence that most personality traits have a strong genetic or heritable base including temperaments such as emotionality, sociability and activity level.

Temperament: predisposes a child to enjoy some activities more than others, some prefer rough play (**male typical**) others prefer quite play (**female typical**).

- -> Gender conforming children will come to have comfortable yet non-erotic friendships with members of the **same sex**, while **gender nonconforming** children will come to have comfortable but non-erotic friendships with members of the **opposite sex**.

->Hence only the exotic becomes erotic.

Note: Gender nonconformity refers to the individual being unable to identify him/herself as male/female. (a female would exhibit male traits and actions and the male would do the counterpart)

Thank you.

