



Female Adolescence: Personal, Sexual Identity and Homosexuality

HUMBERTO NAGERA MD

Female Adolescence: Personal, Sexual Identity and Homosexuality

- ▶ Much less written about female adolescents than about male adolescents
- ▶ Yet, female development is considerably more complicated
- ▶ Consider for example that:
 - a) Girls oedipal development has two stages (boys only one)

Original Description of the Oedipus Complex

			
<p>Positive</p>  <p>MOTHER +++ FATHER ---</p>	<p>Inverted</p>  <p>FATHER ++++ MOTHER ----</p>	<p>Positive</p>  <p>FATHER +++ MOTHER---</p>	<p>Inverted</p>  <p>MOTHER ++++ FATHER ----</p>
<p>Negative</p>  <p>Father + Mother -</p>		<p>Negative</p>  <p>Mother + Father -</p>	
<p><i>BOYS OEDIPUS C.</i></p>		<p><i>GIRLS OEDIPUS C.</i></p>	

Oedipus Complex of the Girl


FIRST STAGE
(PHALIC-OEDIPAL)


SECOND STAGE
(OEDIPAL)

<p>  Positive MOTHER +++ FATHER --- </p>	<p>  Inverted FATHER ++++ MOTHER ---- </p>	<p>  Positive FATHER +++ MOTHER--- </p>	<p>  Inverted MOTHER ++++ FATHER ---- </p>
<p>  Negative Father + Mother - </p>		<p>  Negative Mother + Father - </p>	

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- b) Must exchange object mother for father
- c) Then change again for a non-incestuous object
- d) Must give up her earlier active-masculine identifications for a passive-feminine one

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- e) Some early ego fantasies need to be modified (she will grow into a boy etc)
- f) During adolescence and adulthood girls must combine and complement their various erotogenic zones

Female homosexuality seems to have increased lately.
Is it a real increase and if so how to explain it?
For discussion at the end

Female Adolescence: Personal, Sexual Identity and Homosexuality

Importance of the role of menstruation and identification with the mother

Body changes during puberty and pre-puberty

Do not assume that tomboyish behavior in latency girls has always ominous implications

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A brief discussion of the dangers and consequences of drug addiction

Personal and Sexual Identity

What needs to be accomplished in adolescence?

- 1) A consolidation of a sexual and personal identity
- 2) Some resolution of the conflicts of dependence-independence, adult-child, passive-active and masculine-feminine
- 3) Better control of pregenital impulses by means of repression, sublimation, reaction formation, etc

Personal and Sexual Identity

- 4) Acquisition of reasonable control over the genital impulses themselves
- 5) More definite and firm ego boundaries
- 6) A more complete body and psychological self now to include breast, vagina and uterus with accompanying sensations and feelings
- 7) Such developments give a home to the wish for a child

Personal and Sexual Identity

- 8) A final and more complete separation from the parents
- 9) New bindings of loving feelings and sexual yearnings to non-incestuous objects, sex appropriate objects.
- 10) In early adolescence this may serve more the purpose of exploring new sensations than establishing intimate ties [Kestenbaum]

Personal and Sexual Identity

- 11)) The adolescent experience of her own mother --of her capacity to mother-- and the way that mother has dealt with her own femininity, and that of her child is of primary importance*
- 12) The question of reaching a personal identity is very complex in female adolescents due to the multitude of factors and variables that influence that personal identity.

* (1988) Pines, D., *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 8: 234-351

Personal and Sexual Identity

13) They include among others, role assignments (that vary from culture to culture) and other psychosocial factors of many types, such as:

- a) Objectifying the female through constant evaluation, criticism and sexualization*

* Kaschak, 1992 (quoted by Ollech and McCarthy, 1997)

Personal and Sexual Identity

- b) The dilemma of some female adolescents in choosing whether to fabricate a self in order to obtain “male favors, safety and security”**
- c) The general tendency to devaluation of females (cultural, religious, economic etc)
- d) Looking to others for confirmation, validation and affirmation

** Jack, 1991 (quoted by Ollech and McCarthy)

Personal and Sexual Identity

- e) “In adolescence feelings of self-esteem are particularly related to physical appearance and to the image of the self mirrored in positive or negative response from peer figures” (1997, Dinorah Pines). This is more so with females
- f) The mores of the culture, that even today greatly favors males.
- g) For many women their final personal identity will have to wait for pregnancy and child-birth

Personal Identity

For a more in depth view of the complexity of the processes involved in females developing their personal identity you can read :

(1997) Ollech, D. PsyD, & McCarthy, J. PhD,
Impediments to identity formation in female adolescents, *Psychoanal. Psychol.*, 14: 65-80

Personal and Sexual Identity

As a result of the various processes described, female adolescents move towards the acquisition of a sexual identity and take significant steps towards the consolidation of a personal identity.

Let me refer now to some comments by Kestenbaum, Ritvo, Simon, Sutherland/Cressey, and Rosenthal.

Conflicts That May Contribute To Female Homosexual Development

- 1) Unconscious fantasies of possessing a phallus with many variations
- 2) Unmodified pre-oedipal fixation to the mother
- 3) Massive traumatic rejection of the girl's femininity by the father
- 4) At times sexual abuse

Conflicts That May Contribute To Female Homosexual Development

- 5) An overt, traumatic and/or hostile reaction to any signs of the girl's femininity (when mother sees her as competitor for her father/husband love)
- 6) Identifications during the phallic-oedipal phase with a terrifying, sadistic, violent father
- 7) A strong wish for a boy, by either or both parents

Conflicts That May Contribute To Female Homosexual Development

- 8) Absence of father or suitable father figure (may remain fixated to mother for ex)
- 9) Absence of the mother or suitable mother figure (may identify with father and lack of feminine identifications, etc)

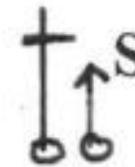
Conflicts That May Contribute To Female Homosexual Development

Keiser and Schaffer on the basis of observations in a psychiatric ward divided adolescents homosexuals girls into three types:

- 1) Aggressive, fighting masculine girls, that carry knives, etc
- 2) Outward passive girls
- 3) Completely maladaptive girls that refused the feminine role from infancy

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