

4.2 Psychosexual development and gender-role socialisation

Introduction. Since sexual behaviour and motivation are closely related to age and physical and social development of the individual, the authors of a larger share of scientific and popular psychosexological literature follow the age principle: “Children and Youth Sexuality,” “Sexuality under 30,” “From a Boy to a Man,” “Sexuality at Mature and Elderly Age,” and so on. Despite a large amount of empirical data, we do not know that much about the development of sexuality. Even dividing this process into periods is problematic.

The first difficulty is the multidimensionality of the occurring changes. Psychosexual development is one of the aspects of ontogenesis, closely connected with the general biological development of the body, especially with sexual maturation and subsequent change of the relevant function. In this connection, the attention of researchers is drawn to such natural boundaries as the stage of puberty, the age and characteristics of menarche in girls and the first ejaculation in boys, age dynamics of hormonal processes and sexual activity of adults, the factors related to childbirth, menopause, weakening of the sexual function with age, and so on.

You can only understand these phenomena in the system of the life cycle of the organism. However, psychosexual development is the result of gender socialisation in the course of which the individual learns a certain gender role and rules of sexual behaviour. Social factors are crucial here: the structure of the individual’s activity, their relationships with significant others, standards of sexual morality, age and standard forms of early sexual experimentation, normative definition of marital roles, etc. Psychosexual development of the individual, their sexual behaviour and motivation depend on both of these two factors, but the periods based on the stages of the development of the body can not coincide with the periods of the individual’s life path.

The second difficulty is a wide variation, multiplicity of the types of psychosexual development. The male model of development is very different from the female one; the timing and sequence of phases characteristic of one generation may be unsuitable for another, and so on.

The third difficulty is an extreme disparity in the distribution of scientific data on psychosexual features of different stages of life. Most of the information (biological, social, and psychological) is about teenage and youth sexuality. We know much less about childhood because of the special sensitivity of this subject and methodological difficulties of studying it. More or less systematic study of sexuality of the elderly and old people began only in the late 1960s, with the start of rapid development of social gerontology. Paradoxically, it is even worse with studying the cycle of adulthood: although there is enough empirical data on the sexual behaviour of adults, they are almost always studied statically, without considering the whole development of the personality.

Without a wholesome concept of development of the personality, it is difficult to assess the significance of its separate stages. S. Freud and his followers believed that almost all psycho-sexual problems and difficulties of adults are determined by “traumatic experience” in their early childhood. According to the words of British writer H. Walpole (1884 - 1941), the tragedy of the childhood is that its disasters are forever. Representatives of another direction in psychology consider such fatalism as exaggerated. In order to conduct a scientific dispute, we need not episodic, fragmentary data, but special longitudinal research covering the entire life path of man from birth to death. As long as we do not have such studies, our understanding of the principles of psychosexual development has to be considered hypothetical. However, this also applies to other areas of developmental psychology.

Presenting main material. No matter how fragmentary scientific data is, there is no doubt that the psychosexual development of man, not including the prenatal period, begins with the formation of the baby’s gender identity, in the process of which adults play a crucial role. Having defined the passport gender of the baby, parents and other adults begin to teach the child their gender role, instilling into them what it means to be a boy or a girl. Even though the difference in the nature of the socialisation of boys and girls is not always conscious, it is quite significant. To what extent these differences are defined by the goals of upbringing, and to what extent by the natural differences in the behaviour of boys and girls (e.g., the fact that boys are always more

active and aggressive) is an open question, but these differences are everywhere, finding their reflection in the mind of the child this way or the other.

Primary gender identity, namely awareness of your sex, is already formed in a child before they are one year old, making up the most stable, core element of their self-consciousness. With age, the scope and content of this identity change, including a wide range of masculine and feminine characteristics.

A two-year-old child knows their sex, but cannot justify this attribution. At the age of 3 or 4, a child consciously distinguishes sex of the surrounding people (babies intuitively respond differently to men and women), but they often associate it with the purely external characteristics (such as clothes) and allow the principle reversibility, the possibility of sex change (actually, the change of the child's passport gender at this age is already very difficult psychologically). Thus, a 4-year-old boy tells his mother, "When I grow up, I will become a dad, naturally. Well, when will I become a woman then?"

At the age of 6-7, a child fully realises the irreversibility of gender attribution, which coincides with the rapid acceleration of gender differentiation of behaviour and attitudes: at their own initiative, boys and girls choose different games and partners, show different curiosity, behaviour, etc. This spontaneous gender segregation (mono-gender groups) promotes clarity and realisation of gender differences.

By what characteristics children identify their and someone else's gender identity is not quite clear. At the age of 3-4 years old, gender identity is associated with certain somatic (body image including the genitalia) and behavioural properties, but attributed to them meaning and correlation of such features may be different. It is important to stress that the child's awareness of their gender role / identity supposes a certain attitude to it. [65]

Firstly, it is gender-role orientation, the person's understanding of how much their qualities meet the expectations and requirements of male or female role. Secondly, these are gender-role preferences, which gender roles / identity the individual prefers; this is normally found out through such questions as "Whom you rather be, a boy or a girl?" and experiments in which the child has to choose between a male and female

model or role. This issue is particularly relevant in children with dysfunctions of their biological gender, such as endocrine disorders. The mismatch of gender-role preferences and gender identity is usually somehow manifested in the child's behaviour and becomes the subject of discussion and evaluation among peers and adults (evaluation of the gender-role adequacy).

Thus, the psychological mechanisms of gender socialisation and gender identity formation are poorly studied. There are three alternative theories.

The theory of identification, rooted in psychoanalysis, emphasizes the role of emotions and copying, assuming that the child unconsciously imitates the behaviour of adults of the same gender, first of all parents, whose role they want to take.

The theory of gender typification, based on the social learning theory, gives the definitive role to the mental support mechanisms: parents and others encourage boys to show masculine behaviour and judge them when they behave in a "feminine" way; girls get positive reinforcement for feminine behaviour and get judged for the masculine one.

According to W. Michael, "gender typification is a process by which an individual learns sexually dimorphic patterns of behaviour; first, they learn to distinguish between patterns of behaviour that are differentiated by sex, then to spread this private experience onto new situations, and, finally, to comply with the certain rules".

The theory of self-categorisation, based on the cognitive-genetic theory, emphasizes the cognitive side of this process, giving special importance to self-consciousness: a child first learns the idea of sexual identity, of what it means to be male or female, then identifies themselves as a boy or a girl, and then seeks to coordinate their behaviour with what seems to them appropriate for such identity.

In the light of the theory of gender typification, a child could say, "I love getting encouragement; and they encourage me when I do "boys" things; that is why I want to be a boy," and in light of the theory of self-categorisation, "I am a boy, so I want to do "boys" things, and such behaviour brings me pleasure." Each of these theories contains a part of the truth, but none explains all the facts we know.

The main objection to the theory of identification is the uncertainty of its basic concept, which denotes both likening yourself to others, and imitation and identification with others. Protective identification of the boy with his father for fear of him (Freud's Oedipus complex) has little to do with the imitation based on love. Imitation of the father's features of personality is often mixed with the adoption of his social role (father as a domineering figure). In fact, a model, an ideal for a boy is often not the father, but another person (a real person, a literary or outstanding character). Besides, the children's behaviour is not always based on imitating the behaviour of adults, for instance, mono-gender groups of boys emerge clearly not because the boys see as their fathers avoid female society.

The theory of sex typification is often criticised for its mechanicalness. It sees a child as an object rather than a subject of socialisation. From this perspective, it is difficult to explain the emergence of numerous and independent from upbringing individual variations and deviations from sexual stereotypes; in addition, multi-stereotypical masculine and feminine reactions form spontaneously, regardless of learning and encouragement, and even despite them.

The theory of self-categorisation to some extent fuses both approaches, suggesting that the child's idea of normative behaviour for their gender depends both on their own observations of the actual behaviour of men and women as examples, and on the approval or disapproval their actions bring up in others. However, the weakest link in this theory is that gender-role differentiation of behaviour in children begins long before they form a stable imagination of their gender identity.

Perhaps these theories should be seen not so much as alternative, but as mutually complementary. They describe the process of sexual socialisation from different perspectives: the theory of sex typification – from the point of view of the teachers, while the theory of self-categorisation sees it from the perspective of the child. In addition to that, the focus of the cognitive and genetic theory is on the processes of categorisation, the theory of sex typification analyses the processes of learning and training, and the theory of identification – emotional ties and relationships.

Besides parents, a crucial universal agent of gender socialisation is peer society

of both sexes. Assessing the child's physique and behaviour in the light of their masculinity / femininity criteria, which are much stricter than in adults, peers thereby confirm, strengthen or call into question their gender identity and gender-role orientation. Peers have an especially great influence for boys, whose gender-role standards and ideas (of what a true man must be like) are usually much higher and stricter than among girls. Whether this can be explained by the fact that masculine traits are traditionally more valued than feminine, or by the general biological regularity, according to which all levels of sexual differentiation formation of masculinity requires more effort than femininity, and nature makes more mistakes here, remains an open question.

Peers are also the main mediator in bringing the child to the accepted in society, but hidden from children sexual symbolism system. Violation of the child's gender-role pattern of behaviour greatly affects the respect of their peers: feminine boys are rejected by the boys, but are willingly accepted by the girls, and masculine girls are easier to be accepted by the boys than the girls. However, there is one important difference: while girls prefer to be friends with feminine peers, their attitude to the masculine girls remains positive; conversely, boy's attitude to the feminine boys is extremely negative. Lack of communication with peers, especially in pre-adolescence and adolescence, can significantly slow down psychosexual development of the child, leaving them unprepared for the complex emotions of puberty.

Formation of gender role / identity and respective psychosexual orientation and preferences is an autonomous part of this process. Unfortunately, today we know very little about children's sexuality, and even the term itself remains unclear. There are two common mistakes in this area. The first is an explanation of any child's behaviour somehow connected with the genitalia, similarly and in the same terms as the behaviour of adults. If a child exposes their genitalia, it is called exhibitionism; games involving touching their genitalia among children of the same sex are called homosexual, and so on. Even though the experts understand the conditionality of such notions, they still cause completely irrelevant in this case fears and thoughts of sexual pathology among people, so such terms are best avoided.

The second mistake is made by people who deny any possibility of erotic feelings before puberty begins. While no one sees erection in new-born boys as an indicator of sexual arousal, very young children of both sexes may experience orgasmic sensations; according to the observations of A. Kinsey, they may be experienced by more than half of the 3-4-year-old boys and almost all the boys who have not reached puberty (there is no data on girls).

Genital stimulation causes pleasant feelings in children and an increased interest to these parts of the body, so paediatricians recommend the parents to avoid such touches, opt for loose clothing for the child, and such. The most common manifestations of “sexual interest” in preschool children are questions on this topic and looking at the genitalia of others or showing their own. Widespread among pre-schoolers are so-called socio-sexual games (“mom and dad,” the “doctors”), where children sometimes show each other their genitalia and touch each other. Playing games including showing or touching genitalia with peers of the opposite sex in their childhood (pre-puberty) was retrospectively admitted by half of the men and about a third of women from the “purified” sample of A. Kinsey, and with peers of their own sex – by 54.4% men and 34.8 % of women. In direct interviews of the pre-adolescent boys (212 people), the figures rise to 70% and 60% correspondingly.

Naturally, the prevalence of children’s genital games and their techniques may be significantly different in different social, cultural and ethnic environment. In accordance with A. Kinsey, these figures considerably correlate with the level of education of the respondents. The terms “coital game,” “homosexual game” themselves are relative and inaccurate, as they describe behaviour without showing its essence. The motives for participation in such games may vary a lot. They are quite often not erotic, being merely “research” or an ordinary role-playing game, in which the child gets familiarised with certain social roles and situations.

However, the prevalence of these games even under strict monitoring indicates their psychological pattern, especially if you remember the information about “gender socialization” in primates. [66] Horror of adults when faced with such cases is exaggerated and can harm the child. Besides, these data cause the error of Freud’s idea

about the existence of the “latent phase” in the psychosexual development, when a child allegedly has no interest in gender issues. It is just that a 7-10-year-old child already knows the basic rules of decency, and their behaviour is qualitatively different from that of a 3-5-year-old. The interest in the sexual life, as well as in some forms of sexual experimentation, does not disappear, but modifies. Hence follows an impossibility of an apriori, universally suitable interpretations of the child’s questions and actions.

The so-called children’s sexual curiosity is mostly a common research activity or role-playing game, in which the child “tries on” and acts out unfamiliar situations. If a small child persistently intrudes into the prohibited area or violates the rules adopted by it (e.g., showing genitalia or saying “obscenities”), in most cases it is not sexual, but social experiment – violation of the rules as a way of checking and learning it.

Hormonal changes really cause changes in the body structure and new sexual experiences, and uneven physical and psychosocial development urges an adolescent to re-interpret and assess their gender and sexual identity in all its physical, mental, and behavioural manifestations. Puberty qualitatively changes the structure of gender self-consciousness, because then appears and forms for the first time not only gender, but also sexual identity of the subject, including their sexual orientation.

Although the course of puberty depends on the individual’s sexual constitution, and even serves as its indicator, hormonal processes, erotic feelings and behaviour (sexual experimentation and such) and emotional attachments and affections develop largely autonomously and heterochronically. Their correlation varies from person to person, and the content of sexual fantasies and erotic interests of a teenager is largely determined by their childhood experiences and cultural norms.

First of all, it is the so-called issue of teenage hypersexuality, e.g., increased sexual excitability manifested in boys in the form of frequent and long-lasting erections, uncontrollable erotic fantasies, and so on. The physiological basis for this issue is considered to be a sharp increase in the secretion of androgens, whose level in an 18-year-old boy is 8 times higher than in a 10-year-old. According to the

observations of T. Karakan and others, in children and adult men until their old age, erections occur 3-4 times a night and last generally 2 to 3 minutes. At puberty, the number of such episodes varies from 3 to 11 (7 on average), and the total duration of an erection is an average of 3-5 minutes. Frequent involuntary erections occur during the day, too. It seems to boys that everybody notices it, and it often bothers them. Increased sexual excitability stimulates the appearance of erotic interests and such. According to the data of A. Kinsey and some other authors, boys that mature early start having sex before others. Similar tendencies exist in girls, too. Nevertheless, we should not overestimate the role of hormonal factors.

Medical literature often views puberty in a purely biological and additionally normative way. Actually, it is not only a phase of the biological development, but also a certain social transition (it is not for no reason that more than a half of the archaic societies studied by the Page family arrange menarche through special rituals). In addition, biological and social processes alike, covered by the notion of puberty, are extremely uneven and heterochronic, with moveable borders and multiple individual variations. We have already spoken above about the menarche age shift. However, its beginning and continuation depend on a range of certain conditions, for instance, body weight change. Young gymnasts and ballerinas, who keep stable weight, have menarche one or even several years later than others. Moreover, puberty status may experience some kind of regress. Teenage and young girls suffering from emotional anorexia, after losing over 15% body weight, stop having menarche, and their hormone secretion returns to the pre-puberty type. Psychological stress may act similarly, independently from weight loss. For example, many English girls had disrupted menstrual cycle during the test period.

Social aspects of puberty are even more changeable: cohort (generational) dynamics of the development of puberty, its concurrency in time with some social transitions and life events.

Finally, the subjective, psychological side of the issue: how the teenagers themselves see, experience, and evaluate puberty changes and events (menarche, night pollutions, and changes in appearance), whether they are ready for them, afraid or

happy, and so on. It depends equally on social conditions of development, including sex education, and on the individual characteristics of the adolescent. Unfortunately, these factors have not been studied well enough, especially among boys. Meanwhile, the development of self-consciousness is the core psychological process of puberty, without considering which the objective data on physical growth and sexual behaviour of adolescents have practically no psychological sense, being frequently interpreted loosely.

German (FRG) researcher Jürgen Schlegel, having divided the examined 13-year-old students into pre- and post-puberty (post-menarche girls and post-oigarche boys), compared the levels of socio-sexual activity in both groups (love, kisses, hugs, sex). It turned out that by all indicators post-puberty boys are ahead the pre-puberty ones, i.e., puberty stimulates their sexual activity. Girls did not show such dependence, except for the fact that post-menarche girls fall in love more often. Perhaps it is not only about physiology but also in the system of gender roles.

However, the retrospective survey data are not very reliable psychologically. There have been no longitudinal studies that trace the dependence of sexual activity on puberty yet. In any case, sexual behaviour of teenagers is not a simple expression of their internal needs. Based on a representative survey of 12-17-year-old teenagers (7514 people) through the detailed medical examination and interviews, the researchers found that the age when adolescents begin to flirt (go on dates) considerably correlates with their individual sexual maturation, but its dependence on the chronological age is much bigger. [67] In other words, the fact that teenagers start to flirt does not depend on their own sexual maturation so much as on the acceptance within the cultural norms of their age group, school class, and so on. In the children with premature puberty, physiological maturity in most cases is accompanied by early sexual activity, their sexual interests more correspond to their psychological rather than hormonal growth.

Sexual behaviour of adolescents is connected with a wide range of social and psychological factors. Simple behavioural statistics – when, with whom and how sexual life begins – does not specify it. The work of Michael Newcomb et al., which surveyed 376 American 12-18-year-old adolescents born in 1962, 1965, and 1968,

compared 8 autonomous parameters of biological, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural aspects of development:

- 1) involvement into dating and sexual activity;
- 2) acceptance of self, self-esteem;
- 3) feministic gender-role attitudes;
- 4) deviant sphere of communication;
- 5) the sense of dating and sexual life, which subjective needs they satisfy;
- 6) communicative difficulties of the heterosexual communication, lack of sexual competence;
- 7) intense life events and situations;
- 8) sexually active sphere of communication.

It was found that sexual behaviour of adolescents directly depends only on how important it is and which exactly subjective meaning is given to it. High self-esteem and intense life events increase the meaning of this side of life, whilst lack of experience of poly-gender communication decreases it. In its turn, communicative incompetence is connected with low self-esteem, which partly depends on intense life events. High sexual activity of adolescents allows us to predict their involvement into deviant social environment and sexually-active surrounding; furthermore, both of these factors are interconnected. [68]

The aforementioned study raises serious questions. Some sociologists believe that the increase in sexual activity of teenagers is primarily a consequence of the liberalization of sexual morals, and quite specific youth subculture. On the contrary, Michael Newcomb observes that belonging of the adolescent to the deviant and sexually-active environment does not allow us to predict their sexual behaviour, while the latter enables us to predict their group and subculture affiliation. To put it into other words, teenagers choose the environment of communication that meets their chosen behaviour and reinforces it. Intense life situations stimulate the search for deviant and sexually-active environment primarily through practical involvement into such relationships, which in turn reflects the impact of normative orientation of a more common social environment. [69]

Thus, the difference between the theories of gender-role socialisation is that they explain the mechanism of acquiring a gender role and its different meanings for people of both sexes. The earliest interpretation of gender-role socialisation was offered by S. Freud, whose theory was based on the recognition of unconscious instinctive and connected with maturation processes determined by different anatomical structure of male and female bodies. [70]

Another important system of beliefs is based on the theory of social learning. This theory gives special importance to physical and social skills of parents and the nature of the reinforcement processes during children's acquisition of gender roles. Parents and other significant figures around the child reinforce simulated behaviour, when it is considered appropriate for the sex of the child, and ignore or punish them for the behaviour inadequate for their sex.

The cognitive theory of development emphasizes the role of the child's own behaviour in reinforcing gender roles. This theory assigns a much more important role to the child's putting themselves to the category of "boy" or "girl," than to the passive acquisition of behavioural patterns through the processes of reinforcement, provided by others.

Probably, acquiring gender roles appropriate to the biological gender is connected both with the work of social learning mechanisms, and the influence of certain aspects of cognitive development. For example the data of numerous cross-cultural studies indicate that different cultures have similar and stable differences in how mothers and fathers treat their sons and daughters to increase the autonomy and independence of the former and improve emotional relationships with the latter. However, the behaviour of the parents may be inappropriate in some cases. The effects of parental socialisation practices may be modified by such variables as the physical characteristics of the child, their birth position, and sex of the siblings. In addition, the behaviour of parents reveals differences depending on their race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, and the purpose of research and the conditions in which it is conducted.

Empirical studies show that children gain an understanding of various aspects of

gender in a constant sequence. First they reach a primitive level of the child's own attribution to a certain sex, then the object categorisation focuses on another person of the same sex, and, finally, this object focuses on another person of the opposite sex.

An important question that cannot seem to be answered by either the theory of social learning or the cognitive theory of development concerns the different effects of the boys' and girls' gender-role socialisation of in our society. Although girls and boys can learn about their gender identity at about the same (early) age, throughout childhood significantly more girls than boys express their preference to certain aspects of the role of the opposite sex. There are several possible explanations for this gender asymmetry. One of them is that masculine characteristics are considered as more useful and desirable for society as a whole.

Girls are probably not punished as severely as boys for deviation from their traditional gender roles. These considerations suggest that changes in intrapsychological gender roles towards a greater androgynism can not be assessed without considering social norms.

Let us trace the correlation between sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Sexual revolution brought a more liberal attitude to sex and variations of sexual behaviour for men and women alike. Some of the reasons why it stopped are an increase in teenage pregnancy cases and an epidemic of venereal diseases.

- The age of the first sexual contact changes depending on the gender and focus on studying.
- The correlation between sexual activity and self-respect differ depending on the gender.
- The parents-children relationships and other family factors may influence the degree of teenager's sexual activity.
- Early bloomers have a tendency to have an earlier sexual activity; on the whole, boys show earlier sexual activity than girls.
- Sexual abuse injures girls and boys alike.
- In Europe, the number of children born to teenagers who are not married is decreasing, but hundreds of thousands of children are born by teenagers out of wedlock

each year.

- The teenagers in the United States are not more sexually active than the in most European countries, but due to different attitude of teenagers to the issue of conception, the rate of teenage pregnancies in the US is much higher.
- Being a parent is extremely difficult for teenagers both in and out of marriage, and can have consequences for the rest of their lives.

Now let us consider the essence of the concept of gender roles (GR) Despite the huge number of books and articles, the name of which includes the term “gender roles,” there seems to be surprisingly low similarity in the definitions of the term. At the most general level, GR can be defined as “a set of behavioural patterns and characteristics that are widely considered as:

- a) typically female or male (gender-role stereotypes);
- b) desirable for women or men (gender-role standards)”.

The characteristics that are usually considered belonging to the person’s GR include personality traits, values, skills and abilities, interests and activities performed within the family or professional roles.

If gender-role stereotypes and standards reflect the idea of male and female persons, the term “gender typification” is used to refer to the individual characteristics connected to the gender-related parameters. The degree of gender typification can be defined by learning how a person evaluates their own characteristics but not the characteristics of others.

Let us consider the gender-role development (*sex-role development*) in detail. As it was mentioned above, gender roles are sets of distinctive characteristics that include attitudes, personality traits and behaviours, defined by the culture as appropriate for a particular sex. This ideas of appropriacy are usually shared, at least partly, by the majority of members of a particular culture. Gender-role ideas turn into gender-role stereotypes when people use these characteristics as standards and apply them to virtually all men and women.

Generally speaking, gender-role stereotypes in technologically developed cultures are quite similar. The stereotypes of femininity include qualities that can be

attributed to the category of expressive or collectivistic (*communal*). The stereotypes of masculinity include qualities that are usually associated with support (*instrumentality*) or activity (*agency*).

Gender roles and stereotypes accompanying them have significant variations in the transition from culture to culture. For instance, Margaret Mead studied personality traits and behaviour of men and women in the three cultures of New Guinea. Each culture had its own gender roles and stereotypes, but they do not correspond to the feminine-expressive and masculine-instrumental roles and sexual stereotypes in the technologically developed countries. This diversity of gender roles is the first sign that the characteristics associated with them are not biologically determined and passed down through the channels of a particular culture.

Gender-role stereotypes, like any other stereotypes, are important for several reasons. Firstly, many people expect others, and themselves too, to behave in accordance with the relevant gender-role stereotypes. Secondly, gender often determines typical events that people encounter with in their lives. Thirdly, for many people their gender role is an important source of ideas about themselves (self-concept).

Let us now look into the theory of sexual development. Traditionally, psychologists have turned to three broad classes of theories to explain the processes connected with gender roles: psychoanalytic traditions, theories of social learning, and cognitive theories. The psychoanalytic theory postulated protective identification of the child with the parent of the same sex as the main factor of the gender role.

The theory of social learning supposes the existence of three main – mostly environmentally controlled – mechanisms for the adoption of gender roles and gender-role stereotypes. Firstly, children learn the content of gender roles through direct learning. Secondly, children adopt gender roles through the direct reinforcement mechanism. Thirdly, and most importantly, a large proportion of sex education, as all other kinds of learning, is the result of observing models' behaviour. Advocates of social learning emphasize the importance of parents as role models and agents of reinforcement, especially for young children.

In the modelling related to gender roles, there are two aspects: learning (or recognition) and implementation. During the learning phase, children learn the meaning of female and male gender roles alike. However, children naturally do not implement all the patterns of behaviour, which they learned at this stage. They tend to copy or generalise the patterns of behaviour learned from those models whose actions had positive effects, or at least did not have any negative ones.

Cognitive theories focus on cognitive processes, giving much less importance to the external environmental actions. Following the cognitive development model created by J. Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg proposed the model of age-related changes that occur in the process of GR: from the appearance of gender identification (proper marking themselves and others by sex) at the age of about 2-3 years old until the gradual formation (about 7 years) of gender identity (realising the impossibility of sex change). Proponents of the cognitive approach argue that after achieving gender identity it becomes a mechanism for self-reinforcement for gender-role behaviour approved in a particular culture. Basically, children themselves begin to prepare themselves for the social life within the meaning of their gender roles, sanctioned by their culture.

Now we turn to the issue of the development of gender roles and gender identity. Gender identity, also known as gender orientation, reflects the personal perceptions of yourself in terms of your nominal sex. As this is a personal perception, it is extraordinarily difficult to measure. An abnormal gender identity is diagnosed in people, particularly males who behave differently from the gender roles sanctioned by their culture, thus often attracting the attention of others; such people often include pampered, effeminate boys, homosexuals, transsexuals and transvestites.

For many years, John Mani and his colleagues have worked with the people who displayed the discrepancy between their gender identity, physical characteristics and sex chromosomes, mainly due to prenatal hormonal effects. Based on clinical experience, these researchers came to the conclusion that you can change the nominal (registered) sex of the child to the opposite, if such a change takes place until about 18 months of age. The children whose gender is changed later often experience serious

psychological problems. Thus, the formation of a stable gender identity occurs at the age of approximately 1.5 years old.

Let us describe the development of gender identity. Young children do not know that sex is a constant characteristic or that it is usually determined by the structure of the external genitalia. At approximately 2 years old, children learn to define themselves according to their sex. At about 3, they can already almost unmistakably identify other people's sex. The next step is the understanding of gender consistency. Somewhere around 7 years old, children realise gender consistency or, in other words, they become sure that the person's gender does not change along with the change of their name, clothing or behaviour. Finally, between 7 and 9 years old, children come to a clear understanding that the person's gender is determined by the external look of the genitalia.

Gender-role knowledge indicates people's accurate perceptions about gender roles. It reflects the descriptive, not evaluative characteristics. As it can be expected, children's knowledge about gender roles grows with age. Up to 3 years old, children learn about some conceptually simple aspects of gender roles, particularly those related to appearance (e.g., hair length, size, clothing, etc.), toys, personal things, and some professions and occupations. As children grow up, their knowledge deepens and expands, covering the imagination of most of the other professions and future roles, male and female occupations, features of appearance and personality traits. After a few years of primary school, children learn the majority of aspects of gender-role stereotypes in their culture.

Unlike the gender-role knowledge, gender-role attitudes include an evaluation component connected with the "rightness" and "fairness" of the corresponding stereotypes. The subject of the research in this area was the attitudes towards jobs, children and adult roles, personality traits, and typical occupations, as well as the gender-role aspects of self-concept.

At the early pre-school-primary school age, children's gender-role attitudes generally gain a more apparent gender typification at least partly caused by their broader knowledge about gender roles. However, in separate cases, young children

often exempt themselves from following those rules and regulations that they derive from their own gender-role attitudes, although boys are more inclined to adhere to these rules and regulations.

During the years at the primary and junior high school, gender typification of many gender-role attitudes, by contrast, experiences a steady decrease. Age tendencies at the next stage of development (high school) are not so clear, but apparently at least some of the teenagers' gender-role attitudes begin to acquire an evident gender typification again. These age patterns may occur due to several factors, including cognitive maturity and socioeconomic status.

Those adults who are actively involved in raising their children are the most traditional in their attitudes, whilst childless young couples and couples expecting a child, take an intermediate position in this respect. The least apparent gender typification of the attitudes is observed in single adults and adults with grown-up children.

Throughout the entire life cycle, gender-role attitudes of men are more often characterised by a more evident gender typification than the corresponding attitudes of women. The roles connected with housekeeping and raising children show the biggest differences between the sexes. Representatives of the "strong" sex more often than representatives of the "weak" sex attribute these roles mainly to women.

There is hardly any reliable evidence of psychological sex differences in behaviour, while gender-role stereotypes suggest that there are significantly more sex differences than have actually been found, and that they are bigger than it is thought.

The origins of the study of sex differences lie in the area of differential psychology, the beginning of which is connected with the research carried out by F. Galton, who measured, expressed in quantitative units, and compared different physical and mental traits of men and women.

Research in the field of sex differences gained a new boost in the important work of Eleanor Maccobi and Carol Jacklin, where they analysed psychological literature covering more than 1,000 studies in more than 50 thematic areas, in pursuit of one goal – to determine which sex differences really exist. They came to the conclusion that

stable gender differences can be found only in four areas: girls outperform boys in verbal ability; boys outperform girls in visual-spatial abilities; boys outperform girls in terms of mathematical abilities; males are more aggressive compared to females. Ambiguous evidence of sex differences was found in the following areas: girls have higher tactile sensitivity; males are more active, especially in the company of others; girls are more likely or more willing to show their fears or anxiety; males are characteristic for competitiveness and striving for dominance; girls tend to be more compliant. E. Maccobi and C. Jackline did not find indisputable evidence of sex differences in other traditional areas of research.

Conducted by Alice Eagly and Linda Carli meta-analysis of the literature on gender differences in the ability to influence, and carried out by Janet Hyde meta-analysis of the published studies of sex differences in such cognitive areas as verbal, numerical and visual-spatial abilities indicate that variability of the studied sex differences is typically very small. The assessment showed that the gender factor explains only 1% of variation of the ability to influence. According to Hyde, even in the most evident gender differences – namely, visual-spatial ability –the gender factor explains only 5% of the established data variability.

The area of sex differences is one of the few with an on-going debate about the role of nature and nurture in human development. While most of the scientists involved in this problem consider sex differences as a product of interaction of biological and social factors, researchers tend to focus on the study of the influence of biological and social variables on sex differences. Besides, this area may have different types of interactions that can lead to completely different types of research.

Let us consider the notion of “sexual orientation.” Homosexual orientation (erotic attraction to the same sex) is still considered in society as a perversion. Nonetheless, bisexuality and homosexuality are increasingly being accepted as normal variations of the sexuality range. A. Kinsey and his colleagues have put forward the concept of a seven-step continuum of expression of sexuality from “exclusively heterosexual” to “exclusively homosexual.” This gradation includes variations of sexual behaviour, as well as psychological reactions (feelings, desires, etc.). Recently,

to describe sexual orientation we have started to often use the third dimension – sexual fantasies. People are different by the representation of each component – behaviour, fantasies and desire / love, which complicates their strict categorisation.

The question how widespread homosexuality is remains open. The A. Kinsey report shows important basic data, even though they contain serious distortions due to methodological errors: all the respondents were from the white population, and the information was gathered solely with the method of self-reports. Despite these drawbacks, the paper estimates the representation of homosexual behaviour in the population. 37% of the 5,000 surveyed men had at least one homosexual contact accompanied by orgasm, and about 10% had the exclusively homosexual behaviour periods of at least three years. For women this percentage is lower: 13% had at least one homosexual contact accompanied by orgasm (28% felt sexual arousal connected with homosexual contact), and from 2 to 6% unmarried women (1% married) have exclusively homosexual contacts.

Conclusions. Thus, gender-role behaviour is a general term covering both sexual and masculine or feminine behaviour. Despite the attempts to avoid labelling personality traits as masculine or feminine, men are still regarded as more aggressive and less emotional, while women are seen as caring and emotional. Gender typification is expressed differently in different cultural environments and social classes, but the male role is usually instrumental: men try to control the situation. The female role is expressive: women should be responsive to others. In addition to the influence of social environment, there are indications that boys and girls prefer different types of activities since early childhood. Although these desires are greatly influenced by the environment and accessible role models, they are stable in all cultures.

Sexual behaviour manifests itself in early childhood. People learn from the environment how to express their sexual feelings. As for the explanation of the impulse to express sexual behaviour, there has been no consensus yet. The followers of the Freud's theory proceed from the theory of innate drives. According to other points of view, sexual feelings and behavioural patterns are the learned reactions to social expectations. Probably, no point of view can explain the whole phenomenon; sexual

drives and their behavioural expression are determined by internal conditions and external influences alike.

Naturally, there is a strong influence of the environment, bearing in mind an incredibly wide range of expressing sexuality and its differences across cultures. However, it has also become clear that there are also internal neural reactions of the brain, connected with emotional feelings of sexual interest. W. Masters and V. Johnson equate sexual interest to other “natural” impulses, e.g., hunger, respiration and the need for sleep. Each of these drives is modified and formed by the environment. Sex, however, is the only impulse that can remain unsatisfied for long periods of time with no apparent damage.

Sexual behaviour can express a wide range of emotions – not only love and desire for intimacy, but also anger, sadness, care or brutality. Rules of culture define what is acceptable in order to control the population – the result of a collective idea that sexual desires are “inherently unstable and anarchic.”

As the role of sex began to gain more importance, a new role appeared – sex as a criterion of the interpersonal competence. The performance skills as a sexual partner are causing greater concern than ever. The changes have particularly affected women. It used to be thought that a woman can engage into sexual relationships only within marriage. Today they are expected to be active partners.

Most psychologists explain sex differences as the effects of environmental influences and cognitive development in combination with biological potential. However, they conclude that social environment in this case provides much more practical action than the biological factors underlying these differences and processes.

Even though some people accept traditional gender-role stereotypes, knowledge and attitudes as reasonable and natural due to their wide distribution, many psychologists disagree with that. Traditional gender-role stereotypes are incompatible with sex differences and are de-adaptive for most adult roles. In order to live and work successfully in a society of other people, adults must have positive qualities of the opposite stereotypes – both masculine and the feminine. Stereotypisation itself is a normal cognitive process; people categorise many things according to the distinct

evident measurements to bring order to the vast amount of continuously received information. However, it is the external surrounding (social and cultural environment) sets those measurements, according to which stereotypes will be formed.