

*ISSWSH Master Journal Club 2016*

# Sexuality Development and Sexual Wellbeing in Adolescent Women

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## Toward clinical and public health relevant perspectives on adolescent women's sexuality development and sexual wellbeing

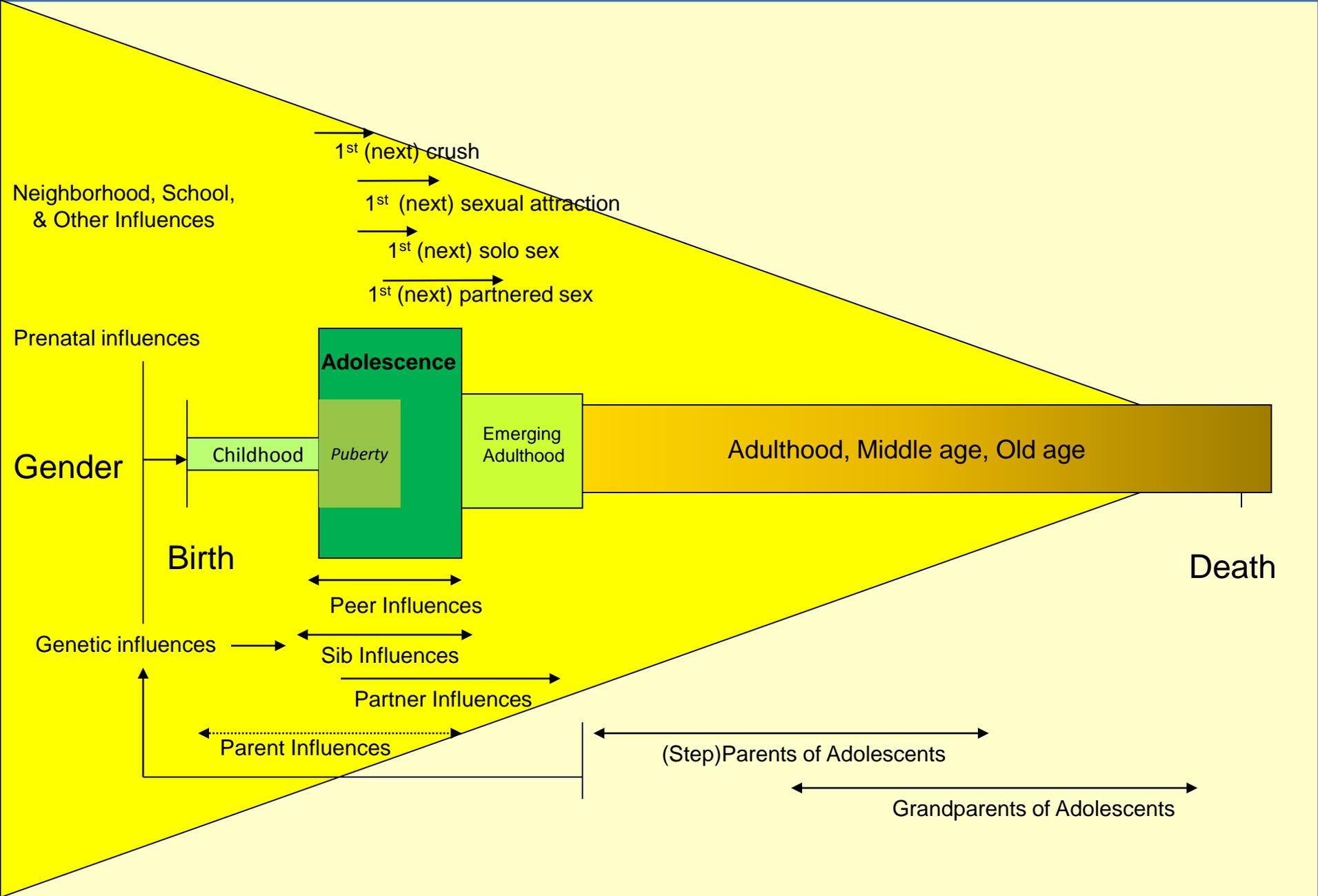
- Healthy adolescent sexuality as an oxymoron in current practice
- Sexuality development attends to attractions, desires, identifications, pleasures in addition to more common clinical and public health focus on risks of sexual behaviors
- Sexual wellbeing contextualizes sexuality development in terms of personal autonomy, safety, and community inclusion in addition to health
- The (slowly) fracturing monolith of heterosexuality as a developmental norm

## Three sentinel papers

- Zimmer-Gembeck MJ, et al. A prospective study of young females' sexual subjectivity: Associations with age, sexual behavior, and dating. *Arch Sex Behav.* 2011;40(5):927-938.
- O'Sullivan LF, et al. Prevalence and characteristics of sexual functioning among sexually experienced middle to late adolescents. *J Sex Med.* 2014;11(3):630-641.
- McClelland SI, et al. 'I liked girls and I thought they were pretty': Initial memories of same-sex attraction in young lesbian and bisexual women. *Arch Sex Behav.* 2015.

## Using Literature for Attentional Focus

- Importance of empathic experience in research design and in clinical interaction
- Rhetorical adjunct to data
- Playful and ironic leavening



**A prospective study of young females' sexual  
subjectivity: Associations with age, sexual behavior,  
and dating**

Zimmer-Gembeck MJ, Ducat WH, Boislard-Pepin M-A

*Arch Sex Behav.* 2011;40(5):927-938.

My daughter, at eleven  
(almost twelve), is like a garden.

Oh, darling! Born in that sweet birthday suit  
and having owned it and known it for so long,  
now you must watch high noon enter –

...

Oh, darling, let your body in,  
let it tie you in,  
in comfort.

What I want to say, Linda,  
is that women are born twice.

...

What I want to say, Linda,  
is that there is nothing in your body that lies.  
All that is new is telling the truth.

*Methods*

# Zimmer-Gembeck, et al 2011

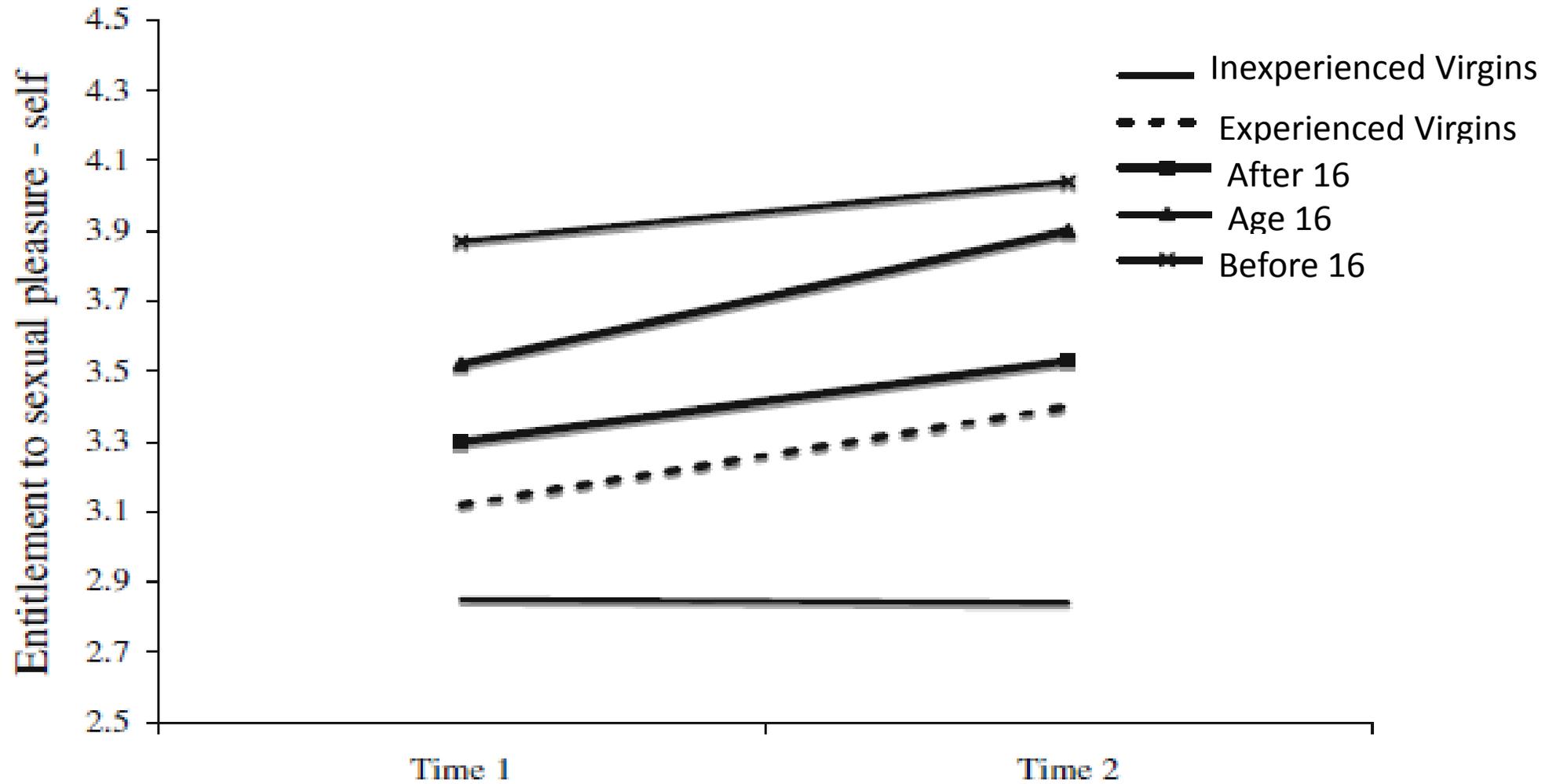
- 251 women ages 16–25 years
- Recruited by field intercept on Australian university orientation day
- Self-administered survey at two intervals
- Measures
  - Female sexual subjectivity index
    - Sexual body-esteem
    - ***Self-entitlement to sexual desire and self-pleasure***
    - Entitlement to sexual pleasure from a partner
    - Self-efficacy in achieving sexual pleasure
    - Sexual self-reflection
  - Sexual behaviors
  - Relationship status
- Analyses
  - Mixed effects analysis of variance

*Key Findings*

Zimmer-Gembeck, et al 2011

- Sexual subjectivity elements were higher among girls with more sexual experience
- Perception of entitlement to desire and pleasure increased over time
- Sexual body-esteem was stable
- Girls sexual intercourse before age 16 had the highest sexual subjectivity, but sexual subjectivity increased the most among girls without coital experience or who had more recent first coitus.

# Key Findings



# **Prevalence and characteristics of sexual functioning among sexually experienced middle to late adolescents**

O'Sullivan LF, Brotto LA, Byers ES, Majerovich JA, Wuest JA

*J Sex Med.* 2014;11(3):630-641

Love is not a profession  
genteel or otherwise

sex is not dentistry  
the slick filling of aches and cavities

you are not my doctor  
you are not my cure,

nobody has that  
power, you are merely a fellow/traveler.

# Methods

- 144 Canadian women ages 16-21 with recent partnered sex
- Recruited by community print, targeted advertisement, and existing research data base
- Self-administered survey
- Measures
  - Sexual history and behaviors
  - Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI)
    - Desire
    - Arousal
    - Lubrication
    - Orgasm
    - Satisfaction
    - Pain
  - Female Sexual Distress Scale (FSDS)
- Analyses
  - Linear regression analyses

*Key Findings*

## Weighted means of sexual functioning domains for adolescent women and selected comparative samples

<b>FSFI</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Hypoactive Sexual Desire</b>	<b>Sexual Orgasm Disorder</b>	<b>Adult Women</b>
Desire	<b>4.1</b>	3.0*	3.9	4.3
Arousal	<b>4.9</b>	3.9*	4.3*	5.1
Lubrication	<b>5.2</b>	4.7	5.0	5.5
Orgasm	<b>3.8</b>	4.4	3.0*	5.1*
Satisfaction	<b>4.6</b>	3.6*	4.2	5.0*
Pain	<b>4.3</b>	4.5	5.5*	5.5*
Full Scale	<b>26.9</b>	23.9	25.8	30.8*

**'I liked girls and I thought they were pretty': Initial memories of same-sex attraction in young lesbian and bisexual women**

McClelland SI, Rubin JD, Bauermeister JA

*Arch Sex Behav.* 2015

...I turn again, slip my arm  
under the pillow turned for relief,  
your breathing traces my shoulder. Two women sleeping  
together have more than their sleep to defend

The Images  
Adrienne Rich, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*  
*Poems 1978-1981*

# Methods

- 30 women ages 18-24
- Recruited by targeted Facebook advertisement
- Audio-recorded interviews by telephone, 60-90 minutes
- Measures
  - Age of first same-sex sexual attraction
  - Contexts of initial attractions
- Analyses
  - Summative content analysis
  - Thematic analyses

# Key Findings

- Timing of early same-sex attractions
  - 10 and younger
  - 16 and older
- Contexts of early same-sex attractions – different kinds of attraction in different people at different times
  - Embodied experiences
  - Relational pathways
  - Social pathways

# Embodied Contexts

I started getting the feelings you get for when you see a boy you like, and I seen a couple girls I like, I started gettin' butterflies in my tummy and, and dreamin' about 'em and just, just feelin' the same way you would if you would if seein' somebody that you like or anything like that

[age22, white, bisexual, rural, SSA at 11]

# Relational Contexts

When I was about like nine years old...I liked boys but I also liked girls. Me and my friends, we would kiss and stuff, so that's what made me think I liked girls...I told my Mom when I was about 11 years old that I liked girls and I thought they were pretty, and I would want to date one

[age 22, white, bisexual, rural, SSA at 9]

# Social Contexts

I never found men to be visually interesting...other girls would have pictures up of like “hot guys,” in their locker when we were young... And I just never understood that at all, because I just never felt visually interested, you know?’

[age 20, white, bisexual, urban, SSA at 8-9]

## *Summary*

# Toward clinically relevant perspectives on sexuality development and adolescent wellbeing

- A model of sexuality development emphasizes sexual learning, sexual subjectivity, and sexual autonomy
- A sexual health and wellbeing perspective allows clinical and public health attention to sexual dysfunction as a legitimate experience of young women
- Sexuality development and sexual wellbeing of sexual minority offers new opportunities for clinical and public health advocacy, health policy, and clinical activity