

Adolescence, Psychology, and Homosexuality in the Weimar Republic

JAVIER SAMPER VENDRELL

Grinnell College

ADOLESCENCE HAS A HISTORY OF ITS OWN. This phase of life is commonly characterized by physical transformation, including sexual development, yet the evaluation of data about height, weight, and the age of the first menstruation in order to understand what it means to grow up has changed over time. The transition between childhood and adulthood in European countries is generally marked by coming-of-age rituals such as religious confirmation, the start of working life, and the end of mandatory schooling.¹ More than a physical state or an integration into adult social roles, adolescence, especially in literature, is often depicted as a period of psychological turmoil and rebellion against authority. Such tribulations were famously depicted in Goethe's novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774), but they gained even more force as a literary trope with the production of Frank Wedekind's play *Frühlings Erwachen* (*Spring Awakening*, 1891) and the publication of other early twentieth-century texts that took as their main theme the problems of young age: suffering under authoritarian parents and schools, excesses of emotion and a predisposition for suicide, and a confusing sexual awakening.²

All translations unless otherwise noted are my own.

¹ There is a robust body of scholarship on the history of childhood and youth in Europe. For overviews, see Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Knopf, 1962); Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979); Elizabeth Harvey, "The Cult of Youth," in *A Companion to Europe 1900–1945*, ed. Gordon Martel (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 66–81; Sterling Fishman, "Suicide, Sex, and the Discovery of the German Adolescent," *History of Education Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1970): 170–88; Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); and John Neubauer, *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

² Some additional texts dealing with the problems of adolescence include Felix Hollaender's *Der Weg des Thomas Truck* (1902); Thomas Mann's *Tonio Kröger* (1903); Hermann Hesse's *Unterm Rad* (1905); Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat* (1905); Robert Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless* (1906); and Friedrich Huch's *Mao* (1907). See Fishman, "Suicide, Sex," 185.

To borrow a phrase from Michel Foucault, there was a “multiplication of discourses” concerning adolescence around the turn of the twentieth century, and adolescence became a legitimate topic of study in physiology, psychology, psychoanalysis, criminal justice, pedagogy, and sociology.³ The American psychologist G. Stanley Hall integrated all these disciplines in his monumental 1904 study *Adolescence*, which promoted the idea that young people should be given access to play and leisure as long as these pursuits did not threaten the established social order.⁴ He incorporated Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory and Ernst Haeckel’s recapitulation theory to argue that the trajectory of individual human development repeated the evolutionary stages of the species and that inherited traits manifest themselves during adolescence. Hall maintained that individual development mattered a great deal. In his view, developmental irregularities compromised the prosperity of the nation and “the race,” as well as the overall success of civilization.⁵

Hall’s multidisciplinary approach to the study of adolescence was influential throughout Europe in the early twentieth century.⁶ German psychologists, however, paid less attention than him to the physiological transformations of adolescence and focused instead on the adolescent’s social and spiritual development.⁷ Their emphasis on the soul or psyche (*Seele*) allowed them to underplay the significance of sexuality in the process of growing up. In this article, I examine how pioneers in the field of youth psychology, particularly William Stern, Walter Hoffmann, Eduard Spranger, and Charlotte Bühler, reacted against psychoanalytic interpretations to emphasize how prevailing gender and sexual mores influenced adolescent sexuality. With attention to woman’s suffrage, increasing expectations for sexual satisfaction within marriage, demands for birth control, rising rates of premarital sex, and the growth of a robust homosexual subculture and rights movement,⁸ each of them established institutions and methodologies that shaped debates on adolescent psychology during the Weimar Republic (1919–33). Stern and Bühler ran internationally respected psychology

³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), 18.

⁴ G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904).

⁵ Mitterauer, *History of Youth*, 143–45.

⁶ Neubauer, *Culture of Adolescence*, 150.

⁷ Mitterauer, *History of Youth*, 147.

⁸ For overviews of these changes, see Edward Ross Dickinson, *Sex, Freedom, and Power in Imperial Germany, 1880–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 137–241; Robert Beachy, *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Atina Grossmann, “Continuities and Ruptures: Sexuality in Twentieth Century Germany: Historiography and Its Discontents,” in *Gendering Modern Germany: Rewriting Historiography*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert (New York: Berghahn, 2007), 208–27; and Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

institutes in Hamburg and Vienna, where they conducted controlled experiments on the relationship between physiological and psychological development.⁹ Spranger, a professor of philosophy and pedagogy at the University of Berlin, garnered significant fame with his 1922 book *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Psychology of adolescence), which was in its tenth printing by 1925, a real success among contemporary books in the field. Spranger influenced Hoffmann and Else Croner, who understood psychological development as a process of individualization and socialization.¹⁰ All three practiced humanistic psychology (*geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie*), which focused on ideal types and on understanding how not only physiological changes but also social, cultural, religious, and ethical values shape the development of the youthful psyche.¹¹ They agreed that the end goal of development was “conformity to cultural life,” though in practice their theories concentrated on the experiences of bourgeois youths.¹² Together, these experts helped create the field of adolescent psychology.

Although interwar experts in adolescent psychology followed prevailing cultural norms in their naturalization of heterosexuality, marriage, and reproduction, they did not ignore homosexual behavior. In what follows, I will demonstrate how theories of adolescent sexual development and theories of homosexuality informed one another.¹³ While acknowledging that youths often engaged in same-sex behavior, including kisses, hugs, caresses, and mutual masturbation, Hoffmann, Spranger, Bühler, and Croner all insisted that these manifestations of sexuality during this phase of life should be understood as indeterminate and unfinished—as preparation for adult life. This trivialization of adolescent sexual behavior displays their rejection of the possibility of genuine same-sex desire among youths and can be understood as an effort to both protect heterosexuality and pathologize adult homosexuality.

⁹ Gerhard Benetka, “Schulreform, Pädagogik und Psychologie: Zur Geschichte des Wiener Psychologischen Instituts,” *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 5–6 (2004): 705–17; Rebecca Heinemann, *Das Kind als Person: William Stern als Wegbereiter der Kinder- und Jugendforschung 1900 bis 1933* (Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt, 2016).

¹⁰ Dudek, *Jugend*, 147–67, 216–55.

¹¹ For a very concise history of psychology’s origins in Germany, see Ludy T. Benjamin, *A Brief History of Modern Psychology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 38–44.

¹² The quote is from Dudek, *Jugend*, 273. Otto Rühle was one of the few interwar psychologists to write about working-class children and youth or to mention class relations and educational reform. Otto Rühle, *Die Seele des proletarischen Kindes* (Dresden: Verlag am andern Ufer, 1925).

¹³ For similar developments in the United States, see Don Romesburg, “The Tightrope of Normalcy: Homosexuality, Developmental Citizenship, and American Adolescence, 1890–1940,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21, no. 4 (2008): 417–42; and John C. Spurlock, “From Reassurance to Irrelevance: Adolescent Psychology and Homosexuality in America,” *History of Psychology* 5, no. 1 (2002): 38–51.

THEORIES OF ADOLESCENT SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

The youth psychologists of the Weimar era often wrote against Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories of sexual development. Freud's publication of *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*) in 1905 produced an explosion of interest in adolescent sexuality. For example, William Stern (1871–1938), who was a professor of applied psychology at the University of Hamburg and who became Germany's first forensic psychiatrist, coedited two of the most important journals in psychology and youth studies: *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* (Journal of applied psychology and psychological research) with Otto Lipmann; and, after 1916, *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik* (Journal of pedagogical psychology and experimental pedagogy) with the pedagogue Otto Scheibner. Stern published several diatribes against psychoanalysis in these journals, expressing his belief that psychoanalysis robbed youth of their innocence by making sexual knowledge accessible. "Freudians," he claimed, "see the soul, like completely colorblind people, only with a single color"—the color of sex.¹⁴ He argued that to maintain legitimacy as a scientific discipline, youth psychology had to build a protective wall against Freud's negative influence, and he set out to discredit psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline.¹⁵ Stern was fond of depicting psychoanalysis as a pseudoscience akin to phrenology and chiromancy, practices that he called a "magical-mystical system for the interpretation of signs."¹⁶ He pointed out that psychoanalysts only paid attention to psychopathic children and that their broad theories thus only represented a "determinate psychological type" whose main characteristic was the "hypertrophy of sexual thoughts and feelings."¹⁷ Stern stressed that youth psychologists, rather than focusing only on mentally ill individuals, sought to delineate the outlines of normal development.

Viewing psychoanalysis as fundamentally harmful to youth, Stern considered the process of bringing back repressed memories to be counterproductive, since "what remains unconscious in the adolescent is what should remain unconscious." While psychoanalysts sought to find an explanation for neuroses in the unconscious, Stern argued that the repression of these memories guaranteed proper intellectual and psychological development. "Who has a reason, or the right," he asked, "to liberate with violence these minuscule seeds from their protective ground and, in the artificial warmth

¹⁴ William Stern, "Die Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf Kindheit und Jugend: Ein Protest," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* 8, no. 1–2 (1914): 74.

¹⁵ Ibid., 91; William Stern, "Warnung vor den Übergriffen der Jugend Psychoanalyse," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie und psychologische Sammelforschung* 8, no. 1–2 (1914): 378.

¹⁶ Stern, "Die Anwendung," 73.

¹⁷ Ibid.

of the psychoanalytic greenhouse, grow them into a muggy [*schwül*], precocious sexual consciousness?"¹⁸ (Stern's choice of the word *schwül* was not arbitrary. By the early nineteenth century, an earlier Low German variation of this word, *schwul*, had come to act as a synonym for "pederast" and "homosexual," particularly in Berlin slang but even in colloquial parlance and within homosexual circles.)¹⁹ He maintained that analysts were actually putting sexual thoughts into their patients' heads—that they were seducers with the power to awaken in youth a fledgling sexuality that should stay dormant. Insisting upon the inherent innocence of youth, Stern argued that psychoanalysis's obsession with sexuality could thwart normal processes of sexual development.²⁰

While Freud's *Three Essays* acted as a catalyst for such arguments, he was neither the first nor the only one to write about the polymorphous sexuality of children and youth and the existence of adolescent bisexuality.²¹ For example, the physician, philosopher, and aesthetician Max Dessoir (1867–1947), a professor at Berlin University known for his work on aesthetics, art history, and parapsychology, proposed a theory of sexual development in 1894.²² In "Zur Psychologie der Vita sexualis" (On the psychology of sexual life) he argued that sexuality was "undifferentiated" during youth and that heterosexuality was the result of the "specialization" of the sexual instinct during adolescence.²³ He insisted that same-sex acts were common but transitory experiments that could be explained with reference to the biological and psychological traces of a primordial universal human bisexuality. Dessoir maintained that "undifferentiated sexual feeling" (*undifferenziertes Geschlechtsgefühl*) should not be mistaken for "larval homosexuality."²⁴ In his view, transitory same-sex desire was part of the natural development of sexuality into normal heterosexuality: growing up implied becoming aware of the cultural and social inhibitions against homosexuality.

¹⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹⁹ See Hanns Gross, *Encyclopädie der Kriminalistik* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1901), 74, where the word is defined simply as "pederast." For a longer discussion of usage, see Beachy, *Gay Berlin*, xi.

²⁰ For a discussion of the construction of sexual innocence and vulnerability, see Louise Jackson, "Childhood and Youth," in *The Modern History of Sexuality*, ed. H. G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 231–55.

²¹ On this subject, see Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, "Loss of Innocence: Albert Moll, Sigmund Freud and the Invention of Childhood Sexuality around 1900," *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (2012): 156–83. For a more general discussion of the relationship between psychoanalysis and sexology, see Volkmar Sigusch, *Geschichte der Sexualwissenschaft* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2008), 261–84.

²² "Dessoir, Max," in *Philosophen-Lexikon: Handwörterbuch der Philosophie nach Personen*, ed. Werner Ziegenfuss (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1949), 232–36.

²³ Max Dessoir, "Zur Psychologie der Vita sexualis," *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie* 50, no. 5 (1894): 941–75.

²⁴ Ibid., 945.

Dessoir suggested that in a minority of cases a combination of social and constitutional traits, such as some forms of inherited degeneration, could lead to a form of arrested development and to adult homosexuality.²⁵ Adolescents, he believed, could be struck by a “same-sex impression” during the period of undifferentiated sexuality, resulting in permanent homosexuality as an adult.²⁶ Dessoir used first-person testimonies to describe the most common instances of such impressions, which were usually first formed when schoolmates enlightened each other about sex. In one of these testimonies, a man remembered how he had heard about ejaculation (“succum facere”) from two brothers when he was fourteen and how he had tried it himself at home.²⁷ Later he engaged in mutual masturbation with one of the brothers, a regular activity that lasted several years. Fortunately, Dessoir opined, the sexuality of the youth had not been completely fixed at this point, and though he was infatuated with the other boy, he still found the female body and girls attractive. The author of the testimony visited a prostitute “known for her beauty and expertise” but did not experience any pleasure. Such encounters scared him and made him impotent. Nevertheless, he continued to pay for sex with women and “at least got used to lying next to naked women and to find the feminine body aesthetically pleasing.”²⁸ Psychiatrists found intercourse with prostitutes actually counterproductive in these cases. Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926), a renowned professor of psychiatry at the University of Munich, used the example of men who had their first sexual encounter with prostitutes, an experience that produced “disgust” with women and encouraged same-sex acts.²⁹ Although the author of the report in Dessoir’s article married, he continued to be aroused by twelve-to-seventeen-year-old boys throughout his life.³⁰ Weimar psychologists believed that these early “impressions” had the power to derail the proper path toward heterosexuality and marriage.

Although Dessoir had influenced Freud, the Viennese doctor became the most famous name associated with the belief in transitory bisexuality during childhood and adolescence. Psychoanalysis moved the attention from the body, where doctors had sought physiological explanations for mental illness (and for homosexuality), to the psyche.³¹ Looking into the

²⁵ Ibid., 942. Degeneration theory informed the work of Albert Moll and Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Although its influence peaked in the 1890s, it continued to be popular in the 1920s. See Ralph M. Leck, *Vita Sexualis: Karl Ulrichs and the Origins of Sexual Science* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 144.

²⁶ Dessoir, “Zur Psychologie,” 970.

²⁷ Ibid., 943.

²⁸ Ibid., 944–45.

²⁹ Emil Kraepelin, “Wesen und Ursachen der Homosexualität,” *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 23 (1922): 51.

³⁰ Dessoir, “Zur Psychologie,” 944–45.

³¹ Arnold I. Davidson, “Closing Up the Corpses: Diseases of Sexuality and the Emergence of the Psychiatric Style of Reasoning,” in *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Tim Dean and Christopher Lane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 59–90; and Davidson, “Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality,” *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 1 (1987): 16–48.

depths of the human mind, Freud claimed to have found proof that everyone, even if unconsciously, has had a libidinal attachment to someone of the same sex and that this former bisexuality was repressed in adulthood. Inspired by evolutionary and recapitulation theory and certainly influenced by Hall, Freud viewed ontogenesis, the physical and psychological development from birth to adulthood, as a repetition of a larger process of phylogenesis, the evolution of a species: a person relived as an embryo, a child, and an adolescent the entirety of human natural history from a bisexual origin to full sexual dimorphism.³² Freud viewed this process of repression as a natural and necessary stage on the path to adulthood. According to this theory, vestiges of original bisexuality were still visible during adolescence, and same-sex attraction was a manifestation of primitive traits in humankind.

The complexity of sexual development explained the frequency of sexual aberrations during childhood and adolescence. Freud's account of normal sexual development described a "period of latency" during which the child builds "barriers against sexuality" and learns to sublimate his or her sexuality into socially sanctioned pursuits. Heterosexuality, in other words, does not develop without a hitch in Freud's account. On the contrary, adult heterosexuality "is not accomplished without a certain amount of fumbling."³³ Same-sex attraction and sexual experimentation were part of growing up. While Freud acknowledged the possible permanence of polymorphous perversity into adult life, he maintained that heterosexuality was the only appropriate adult outcome—not because heterosexuality is *natural* but because it is culturally sound.³⁴

Freud's psychoanalytic theories received harsh criticism in medical circles. One of his detractors was Albert Moll, who in 1891 published *Die conträre Sexualempfindung* (The contrary sexual feeling), the leading reference work

³² For an in-depth analysis of embryonic bisexuality and the possibility of physiological sex reversal, see Lisa Carstens, "Unbecoming Women: Sex Reversal in the Scientific Discourse on Female Deviance in Britain, 1880–1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2011): 62–94. Carstens argues that theories of embryonic hermaphroditism and recapitulation theory had been discredited by the late 1920s, when sex differentiation was believed to be determined at conception, based on newer endocrinological and chromosomal theories (ibid., 87–88). See also Geertje Mak, "Conflicting Heterosexualities: Hermaphroditism and the Emergence of Surgery around 1900," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 3 (2015): 402–28.

³³ Sigmund Freud, "Lecture XXI: The Development of the Libido and the Sexual Organizations," in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 404.

³⁴ For discussions of Freud's views on homosexuality, see Henry Abelove, "Freud, Male Homosexuality, and the Americans," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele A. Barale, and D. Halperin (London: Routledge, 1993), 381–93; and Arnold I. Davidson, "How to Do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*," in *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 39–64.

on homosexuality for over two decades thereafter.³⁵ In 1908, three years after Freud's *Three Essays*, Moll also contended that sexuality was linked to both biological and social needs and that heterosexuality was the culmination of sexual development.³⁶ Nevertheless, he strongly opposed the notion that everything we observe in the child should and could be explained in sexual terms; thumb sucking, for example, was a relatively harmless activity that only the most perverse mind would link to a sexual act. Moll nevertheless discussed aspects of sexuality offensive to bourgeois decorum. Like every other physician who dared to explore child and adolescent sexuality, he believed it necessary to come to terms with same-sex attraction as an observable fact. He agreed that "some young boys and some young girls stumble during this period" and that "it is the role of a good doctor to prevent that fatal consequences result from this."³⁷ The undifferentiated stage could begin at different ages, but it was common that the "‘perverse’ sentiments of childhood . . . disappear spontaneously," usually after the twentieth birthday.³⁸

Whereas Moll acknowledged that adolescents "stumble," he denied that these instances of same-sex attraction were really sexual: "Friendships between boys or between girls are formed during the period in which the sexual impulse is still undifferentiated, or after its differentiation has occurred . . . [and] must not be identified with sexual feelings."³⁹ Moll admitted that adolescent same-sex attraction occasionally failed to disappear. In such rare instances, the adolescent's innocuous *perversity* turned into a *perversion*. Richard von Krafft-Ebing had made a distinction between these two terms in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). While adult homosexuality was a perversion, a condition caused by physiological abnormalities, same-sex acts were a form of perversity, one of many deviant sexual practices without a biological basis. Perversities, Krafft-Ebing believed, should concern those invested in morality and law and not doctors.⁴⁰ For Moll, the perversity of adolescent same-sex acts had to be distinguished from adult homosexual perversion. He

³⁵ Albert Moll, *Die conträre Sexualempfindung* (Berlin: Fischer's medicinische Buchhandlung, 1891). Revised editions were published in 1893 and 1899. For more information on Moll, see Matthew Conn, "Sexual Science and Sexual Forensics in 1920s Germany: Albert Moll as (S)expert," *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (2012): 209; and Volkmar Sigusch, "The Sexologist Albert Moll: Between Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfeld," *Medical History* 56, no. 2 (2012): 184–200.

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

³⁷ Albert Moll, *Ein Leben als Arzt der Seele: Erinnerungen* (Dresden: Reißner, 1936), 152.

³⁸ Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, trans. Eden Paul (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), 62. The book was published first in German as Albert Moll, *Das Sexualleben des Kindes* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1908).

³⁹ Moll, *The Sexual Life of the Child*, 139.

⁴⁰ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: A Medico-Forensic Study*, trans. Harry E. Wedeck (New York: G. P. Putnam's & Sons, 1965), 247; Davidson, "Closing Up the Corpses," 82.

based this distinction on his belief that sexual desires could not be consummated in adolescence. He divided sexuality into two phases: *Kontrektation* (contraction) and *Detumescenz* (detumescence). Contraction described sexual arousal and attraction. This was the first stage of sexual desire and excluded intercourse. Adult sexuality required detumescence: intercourse and ejaculation. According to this distinction, child and adolescent sexuality was relegated to the realm of contraction. Any display of sexuality during this period remained an immature form of sexuality incapable of fulfilling sexuality's higher aim of reproduction.

Moll continued to be in the vanguard of German sexology in the 1910s and 1920s. Beginning in 1915, he published the journal *Archiv für Sexualforschung* (Archive for sex research), and he organized the First International Congress for Sex Research, which took place in Berlin in 1926. He continued to argue well into the 1930s that psychoanalysis had taken the wrong approach by oversexualizing the child.⁴¹ Similarly, he dismissed the opinions of sexologists such as Magnus Hirschfeld, who insisted that patients remembered identification with the opposite gender and same-sex attraction in their childhood.⁴² Moll doubted the validity of such memories, arguing that memory was a peculiar skill: one could choose what to remember and what to ignore.⁴³ Moll insinuated that adult homosexuals had simply chosen to forget any heterosexual memories from their past, thus reversing psychoanalysts' arguments that heterosexuals had repressed homosexual feelings.⁴⁴

Despite their differences, Moll and Freud did agree on a key issue: they both rejected inborn homosexuality. By contrast, Hirschfeld championed this idea, which the pioneer of sexual emancipation, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–95), had advocated in the 1860s.⁴⁵ Hirschfeld, a prominent Berlin doctor and sexologist, had been advocating the decriminalization of homosexuality since 1896, when he published a pamphlet on same-sex love titled *Sappho und Sokrates*.⁴⁶ In 1897 he cofounded the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), an organization of Left-leaning and profeminist doctors and intellectuals who advocated sexual reform, the decriminalization of homosexuality, and the legalization

⁴¹ Moll, *Ein Leben*, 147, 150.

⁴² Even before Hirschfeld and Freud, Krafft-Ebing had based his ideas about sexuality on patients' early life memories, an approach that Karl Heinrich Ulrichs had also employed. See Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 162; and Hubert Kennedy, *Ulrichs: The Life and Works of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Pioneer of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson, 1988), 121.

⁴³ Moll, *The Sexual Life*, 24.

⁴⁴ Wilhelm Stekel, "Onanie und Homosexualität (Die homosexuelle Paraphilie)," in *Störung des Trieb- und Affektlebens* (Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1923), 2:7.

⁴⁵ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 54–84.

⁴⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sappho und Sokrates: Wie erklärt sich die Liebe der Männer und Frauen zu Personen des eigenen Geschlechts* (Leipzig: Spohr, 1922).

of abortion.⁴⁷ Hirschfeld supported the decriminalization of homosexuality on the grounds that it was inborn and natural, but, unlike previous emancipationists, he was able to lend this idea the power and respectability of medical discourse. According to his view, homosexuals could not be guilty of a crime, since they were not responsible for a desire that reflected their biology.⁴⁸ In his view, homosexuality was a natural and stable sexual inclination that occurred at all times in history and among all species.

Against many of his colleagues' opinions, Hirschfeld stressed that homosexuality could be observed in childhood, and unlike his contemporaries he viewed this not as an indication of transitory bisexuality but as evidence that homosexuality represented an "intermediate sexual stage" (*sexuelle Zwischenstufe*). To reach this conclusion, he drew from the research that German doctors had been conducting on hermaphroditism and embryological sexual development since the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ According to Alice Domurat Dreger, "The hermaphrodite and the homosexual share a surprising amount of medical history."⁵⁰ Doctors sought to find answers for hermaphroditism and other sexual "abnormalities" in the genitals and their embryological development.⁵¹ At some point along the path of gestation, something could go wrong, which would impede the proper development of the gonads. Homosexuality, it was theorized, represented a similar form of arrested sexual development. Despite their lack of success in finding evidence for constitutional differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals, such as differently shaped genitalia, Krafft-Ebing and, especially, Hirschfeld looked for vestiges of the other sex in the bodies of same-sex-desiring men and women. Hirschfeld believed that the skeletal structure, fat distribution, and pubic hair of homosexuals proved they were a type of hermaphrodite.⁵² Rather than entirely male or female, homosexuals occupied an "intermediate sexual stage."⁵³

Although persuaded by physiological evidence, Hirschfeld also believed that signs of homosexuality could be found in the psyche. Inborn homosexuality had been described by laymen such as Ulrichs and, later, by psychiatrist Carl Westphal (1833–90) as a form of gender inversion, or, as

⁴⁷ Edward Ross Dickinson, *Sex, Freedom, and Power in Imperial Germany, 1880–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 162–76.

⁴⁸ For Hirschfeld's biography, see Ralf Dose, *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Origins of the Gay Liberation Movement*, trans. Edward H. Willis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014); and Manfred Herzer, *Magnus Hirschfeld: Leben und Werk eines jüdischen, schwulen und sozialistischen Sexologen* (Hamburg: MännerschwarmSkript, 2001).

⁴⁹ Ulrike Köppel, *XXOXY Ungelöst: Hermaphroditismus, Sex und Gender in der deutschen Medizin; Eine historische Studie zur Intersexualität* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010), 238–48.

⁵⁰ Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵³ Köppel, *XXOXY*, 266.

Foucault evocatively put it, “hermaphroditism of the soul.”⁵⁴ Hirschfeld dabbled in psychoanalysis from 1908 until 1911, when it became clear to him that the psychological explanation for homosexuality was incompatible with the biological theories of inborn homosexuality he had begun to promote.⁵⁵ More importantly, Hirschfeld, like his predecessors, relied on notions of childhood and adolescent sexuality to structure his theory of inborn homosexuality. He hoped that as scientists learned more about the inborn character of homosexuality it would be possible to diagnose it earlier in a person’s lifespan. Hirschfeld believed that early diagnosis would do away with the belief that homosexuality was a form of perversion. To support his theory, he relied on testimonies of his patients, who claimed to have discovered their desire for persons of the same sex very early in their childhood and who had been perceived by others as possessing traits of the opposite sex. He theorized that homosexual girls had most likely been tomboys, just as homosexual boys had grown up showing effeminate traits. Hirschfeld paid attention to the physical development of adolescents, and he believed that abnormal sexual development, such as the underdevelopment of the breasts in girls or the lack of a deep voice in boys, was proof of their intermediate sexual stage. Even though Hirschfeld was certain that homosexuality could be observed at an early age, he accepted that sexuality was undifferentiated during adolescence. Most adolescents would develop into heterosexual adults despite their “strong androgynous make-up and sexual incongruences.”⁵⁶

While Hirschfeld looked for a biological explanation for homosexuality, he did not completely ignore psychological factors. He believed that it was important that doctors pay attention to a person’s entire personality when diagnosing homosexuality at an early age, since he believed that homosexuality had both physical and psychological dimensions.⁵⁷ Countering Freud, he insisted that it was not the soul that had an influence on the body but the other way around: differences in personality and character were manifestations of the biological sexual intermediacy of homosexuals.⁵⁸ Hirschfeld also added a new dimension to Krafft-Ebing’s division between perversity and perversion, one that included feelings. Homosexuality should not be assessed on the basis of perverse acts alone (such as same-sex acts during youth) but through an investigation of perverse feelings. Homosexuals, he argued, shared a psychological disposition in which gender characteristics—the

⁵⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:43.

⁵⁵ Claudia Bruns, “Kontroversen zwischen Freud, Blüher und Hirschfeld: Zur Pathologisierung und Rassierung des effeminierten Homosexuellen,” in *Dämonen, Vamps und Hysterikerinnen: Geschlechter- und Rassenfigurationen in Wissen, Medien und Alltag um 1900*, ed. Ulrike Auga (Bielefeld: Transkript 2011), 164–66.

⁵⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 121.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

way they act and think of themselves, as well as how they are perceived by others—did not necessarily match the sex they were assigned at birth.

Hirschfeld insisted on a balance between biological and psychological explanations for homosexuality. Yet other physicians did not want to give up their search for a theory of inborn homosexuality and kept looking for it within the material boundaries of the body and its microscopic parts. During the 1920s physicians turned to the biochemical processes caused by hormones, research that was first conducted in 1905 by the physiologist Ernest H. Starling (1866–1927) at University College London. This research on sex hormones raised further questions about the physiological and psychological basis of sexual difference, and it offered a biochemical explanation for masculinity and femininity.⁵⁹ Instead of providing a definitive explanation for sexual difference, however, research on hormones led scientists to believe that sex was less stable than they had assumed. Hormone research initially corroborated traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, yet by the 1930s researchers had come to agree that male and female hormones were not mutually exclusive: both types of hormones were present in men and women.⁶⁰

Given the role that adolescence played in theories of sexuality, it should not be surprising that homosexuality and adolescence intersected again in the study of sex hormones. The Austrian physiologist Eugen Steinach, a professor of medicine at the University of Vienna, turned to hormones to explain sexual differentiation. His discovery of the “sexual specificity of hormones” was an important contribution to the biochemical explanation of sexuality.⁶¹ Steinach’s identification of hormones seemed to have answered the question whether sexual differentiation started in the genes or whether it was a product of a physiological process in the embryo. His research with rats, which involved implanting ovaries into male specimens and testes into female ones, showed that sexual differentiation was a gradual process that continued after the embryonic phase as the gonads continued

⁵⁹ Nelly Oudshoorn, *Beyond the Natural Body: An Archaeology of Sex Hormones* (London: Routledge, 1994), 17; Helga Satzinger, “The Politics of Gender Concepts in Genetics and Hormone Research in Germany, 1900–1940,” *Gender & History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 735–54.

⁶⁰ Oudshoorn, *Beyond the Natural Body*, 28.

⁶¹ Steinach published his results in Eugen Steinach, “Künstliche und natürliche Zwitterdrüsen und ihre analogen Wirkungen: Drei Mitteilungen,” *Archiv für Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen* 46 (1920): 13; E. Steinach and R. Lichternstern, “Umstimmung der Homosexualität durch Austausch der Pubertätsdrüsen,” *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, no. 6 (1918): 145–48; and E. Steinach, “Histologische Beschaffenheit der Keimdrüse bei homosexuellen Männern,” *Archiv für Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen* 46 (1920): 29–35. For secondary explorations of the impact and popularization of his work, see Chandak Sengoopta, “Glandular Politics: Experimental Biology, Clinical Medicine, and Homosexual Emancipation in Fin-de-Siècle Central Europe,” *Isis* 89, no. 3 (1998): 445–73; and Rainer Herrn and Christine N. Brinckmann, “Of Rats and Men: The Steinach Film,” in *Not Straight from Germany: Sexual Publics and Sexual Citizenship Since Magnus Hirschfeld*, ed. Michael Thomas Taylor, Annette F. Timm, and Rainer Herrn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 212–34.

producing the characteristics of masculinity and femininity and shaped sexual behavior. This process peaked during adolescence in males, when the “puberty gland” (*Pubertätsdrüse*), as Steinach called the Leydig cells present in the male testes responsible for producing androgens, started to secrete the hormones that accelerate sexual differentiation.

Puberty—the process of sexual maturation—therefore played a central role in Steinach’s theory of hormonal sexual differentiation. He hypothesized that there was a direct correlation between hormonal secretion during adolescence and the presence of homosexual desire, which arose from the ambisexuality (*Zwitterigkeit*) of the puberty gland.⁶² Homosexual men, he argued, “suffer[ed] the loss of the internal-secretory masculine element of this gland during puberty, while the feminine elements [were] ‘activated’” instead, leading to a physiologically “feminine” erotic life.⁶³ Alexander Lipschütz (1883–1980), who had conducted research with Steinach in Vienna and published a study on the topic in 1919, argued that once people were convinced that even the psychological sexual characteristics depended on the secretions of hormones, they would agree that homosexuality represents “a misdevelopment of the puberty glands.”⁶⁴

Steinach’s theory supported the ideas Hirschfeld had proposed, namely, that homosexuality had biological roots and represented a form of physiological hermaphroditism. Furthermore, the discovery of this gland offered a new possibility to treat homosexuality, since it left open the possibility that doctors might one day remove the glands of homosexual men and transplant them with heterosexual ones. Hirschfeld, who was generally pessimistic about the possibility of healing homosexuality (for example, with medicine, isolation, castration, or psychotherapy), thought that Steinach’s transplants offered “a little better prospect” for treating homosexuality.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Hirschfeld maintained that homosexuality was determined by nature and was a fundamental part of a person’s physiological and psychological constitution since birth. Hirschfeld expressed grimly that death was the only way to “destroy a drive [*Trieb*] that clings indissolubly to one’s individuality until the end of life.”⁶⁶

⁶² Steinach, “Künstliche und natürliche Zwitterdrüsen,” 28. In “Histologische Beschaffenheit” Steinach describes some experiments he conducted on homosexual men whose testicles had been infected by tuberculosis. After surgically removing these diseased testes, he compared them to those of healthy men (by which he meant men free of both tuberculosis and homosexuality), he claimed to have found unmistakable signs of degeneration and atrophy in the specimens. Although Steinach believed that he had found a biological explanation for homosexuality, he still admitted that “every puberty gland has a degree of bisexuality.” In this case, heterosexuality would be contingent on the inhibition or deactivation of the “puberty gland cells” of the other sex present in a given individual.

⁶³ Steinach, “Künstliche und natürliche Zwitterdrüsen,” 25–26.

⁶⁴ Alexander Lipschütz, *Die Pubertätsdrüse und ihre Wirkungen* (Bern: Ernst Bircher Verlag, 1919), 342.

⁶⁵ Hirschfeld, *Die Homosexualität*, 416.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 436.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MALE ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

While Hirschfeld claimed to be able to diagnose homosexuality in childhood, youth psychologists drew from Moll's theories and a wealth of scientific evidence to argue that adolescent sexuality was unfinished and, hence, unimportant to the adult development of the individual. Stern and other youth psychologists came to the conclusion that adolescence was an "unstable [and] problematic period of transition."⁶⁷ Stern made his position public at the International Congress of Sexual Research, which took place in Berlin from October 10 to 16, 1926. In a contribution that the pediatrician Oskar Bosch considered worthy of being discussed at length in the *Hannoversche Kurier*, Stern posited adolescence as a transitional period from the child's world of "play" to that of adult "seriousness" (*Ernsthaftigkeit*). Adolescent sexuality, Stern argued, should be considered "partially playful" and, hence, not completely significant for adult life.⁶⁸ These psychologists' response to psychoanalysis's threat was to trivialize some of the puzzling displays of adolescent sexuality or to interpret romantic attachments, flirting, and young love as indications of adolescence's psychological crises and stages of growth. Faced with the adolescent's undifferentiated sexuality, Hoffmann, Spranger, Bühler, and Croner insisted that heterosexuality was the only possible outcome of normal development. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that modern life was full of dangers that could permanently damage the incipient and ambiguous sexuality of youths.

Walter Hoffmann (1884–1944), a juvenile court judge with an honorary appointment in social psychology and juvenile justice at the University of Leipzig, called upon his fellow psychologists "to come out of that muggy [*schwül*] and hysterical atmosphere" of psychoanalysis.⁶⁹ In his book *Die Reifezeit* (The age of maturity), Hoffmann rejected Freudian theory about sexual development and contended that sexuality plays a limited role in adolescence. He warned against mistaking physiological for psychological "sexual stimuli": young boys may be aroused, but they do not necessarily understand why. In this sense, Hoffmann's position resembles Moll's. Both believed that youths cannot grasp the psychological complexity of sexuality. Hoffmann considered shyness a psychological mechanism that prevented youth from engaging in precocious sex; exercise, bathing, and other hygienic

⁶⁷ Ulfried Geuter, *Homosexualität in der deutschen Jugendbewegung: Jugendfreundschaft und Sexualität im Diskurs von Jugendbewegung, Psychoanalyse und Jugendpsychologie am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994), 31–32.

⁶⁸ Dr. Oskar Bosch, "Die Sexualforscher in Berlin: Internationale wissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit," *Hannoversche Kurier*, October 20, 1926, 38, clipping in Bundesarchiv Berlin, Nachlass Reinhard Mumm, BAArch N/2203/168.

⁶⁹ Walter Hoffmann, *Die Reifezeit: Grundfragen der Jugendpsychologie und Sozialpädagogik*, 3rd rev. ed. (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1930), 209. The first edition of the book was titled *Die Reifezeit: Probleme der Entwicklungspsychologie und Sozialpädagogik* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1922).

measures fulfilled the same function.⁷⁰ In addition, he recommended that parents and pedagogues prevent youths from becoming sexually active, since precocious sexual activity could lead to serious psychological crises. Hoffmann's ideas contributed to the belief that sex was necessarily dangerous, especially when it involved young people.

Hoffmann's humanistic psychology displayed widespread, yet prejudiced, assumptions about gender. He believed that girls presumably do not feel any sexual attraction and need to be awakened to such feelings. For that reason, girls were threatened by the dangers of the city and modern culture and should be kept away from anything that may be sexually exciting so that they could develop their natural "form and decency" (*Form und Sitte*). By contrast, Hoffmann described boys as inherently sexual beings who have to be taught self-control; the "hardening and toughening of the body," he maintained, was essential to a man's virtuous life.⁷¹ He recommended that parents and teachers monitor the proper development of gender: segregated schools and clubs could help to prevent boys from being too "weak" (*leicht*) and girls from becoming "rough" (*rau*).⁷² His advice to boys was clear: practice restraint. Hoffmann believed that sexual maturity should be delayed for as long as possible (ideally into the twenties) for the sake of the "intensification and perfection of intellectual achievement."⁷³

Psychologists were aware that there was a tension between their dismissive treatment of adolescent sexuality and its irrefutable reality. Hoffmann recognized that it was no longer realistic to expect youth "to stay pure while they matured" (*rein bleiben und reif werden*), as Walter Flex had put it, encapsulating the fantasy of a wholesome and pure upbringing that characterized the pre-World War I youth movement.⁷⁴ This transformation was most visible in the phenomenon of adolescent same-sex sexuality. Sexual stimuli led to homosexuality, Hoffmann feared.⁷⁵ He lamented that psychologists had to address the "sexual aberrations" that were growing as a consequence of negative environmental factors, such as alcohol, prostitution, dance halls, and other popular entertainments. In fact, he claimed that youths now displayed certain traits that could only be considered pathological in adults, such as fetishism and exhibitionism. Although he accepted that "expressions of love appear for the first time in friendship" and that puerile infatuation,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 213–16.

⁷¹ Ibid., 235.

⁷² Ibid., 239.

⁷³ Ibid., 244.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 177. In his autobiographical war novel, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten* (The wanderer between the two worlds), Walter Flex (1887–1917) celebrates leadership, friendship, and heroism. The novel, which was widely popular in the interwar period, influenced a generation of German youth. The original words are "Rein bleiben und reif werden—das ist schönste und schwerste Lebenskunst." Walter Flex, *Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1917), 41.

⁷⁵ Hoffmann, *Die Reifezeit*, 6–8.

tenderness, affection, and jealousy often take place between friends of the same sex, one need not characterize these juvenile relationships as romantic love or sexual attraction.⁷⁶ Same-sex friendships during youth, he continued, could be so complex and deep as to resemble marriage but should still not be considered sexual. He lamented the fact that youths were surrounded by literature celebrating homosexuality (such as the scientific publications of Magnus Hirschfeld and the broader homosexual movement), and they were being tempted by the many homosexual seducers who offered them intellectual and aesthetic education.⁷⁷ But Hoffmann rejected applying the term “homosexuality” to youths.⁷⁸ Same-sex experiments were “part of the character of adolescence” and “should be called by their proper name, that is ‘puerilities’ and ‘foolishness.’”⁷⁹ There was no such thing as an adolescent homosexual; instead, the adolescent had been talked into believing that he was one. This position treated adolescent same-sex acts as an important but pathologized adult homosexuality, understood as a form of arrested psychological development.

Like his colleague and follower Walter Hoffmann, Eduard Spranger (1882–1963) envisioned adolescence as a period of transition, but he rejected that it involved physical transformations alone. He maintained that subjectivity, consciousness, and will reside in the intellect and not in the body.⁸⁰ In his 1921 book *Lebensformen* (Types of men), he outlined how geography, ethnicity, history, culture, profession, and intellectual traditions shaped the human psyche. Adolescence, he argued, was not “a ‘mere’ reflex, a ‘mere’ secondary phenomenon [*Begleitphänomen*]” to physical development but rather a distinct psychological phase that occurs between the undeveloped psychological structure of the child and the adult.⁸¹ He outlined this phase in three key psychological events: “the discovery of the ego” (die Entdeckung des Ich); “the gradual development of a life plan” (die allmähliche Entstehung eines Lebensplanes); and the phase of “growing into the particular areas of life” (das Hineinwachsen in die einzelnen Lebensgebiete). The first event represented a metaphysical “fundamental event of Individuation,” while the second described the process of becoming an individual in light of the different facets and choices in life. Only the third phase of life produced a fully formed individual in society.⁸² These ideas

⁷⁶ Ibid., 213–14.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 264.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 248–51.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 265–66.

⁸⁰ Eduard Spranger, “Die Frage nach der Einheit der Psychologie” (1926), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 4, *Psychologie und Menschenbildung*, ed. Walter Eisermann (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1974), 17; Mitchell G. Ash, “Weimar Psychology: Holistic Visions and Trained Intuition,” in *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, ed. Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 284–85.

⁸¹ Eduard Spranger, *Psychologie des Jugendalters* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925), 106–7.

⁸² Ibid., 38.

underscored that culture and society played a larger role in the formation of the adolescent psyche than physical transformations.

Spranger could not deny that sexuality mattered during adolescence, but he disregarded the physiological aspects of sexuality to focus instead on its spiritual and aesthetic dimensions. He believed that the harmony of "love and sexuality" (*Liebe und Eros*) was a precondition for civilization. These two qualities shared some traits, he acknowledged, but they "belong to different layers of the soul."⁸³ While sexuality was a physiological characteristic, Spranger described love as a psychological feature, the result of "becoming one with another soul."⁸⁴ The psychologist maintained that the adolescent feels attraction for the person whom he idealizes and with whom he empathizes. This attraction, however, was not carnal but remained at an ideal and aesthetic level. For Spranger, then, eroticism and sexuality were distinct psychological facets of adolescence, an "ideal-theoretical side" and a "sensual-sexual side."⁸⁵ These two aspects had little interaction with each other, but both were important for psychological development, since reaching adulthood implied the confluence of sexuality and eroticism: the "blossoming summit of life" and the communion of body and soul with another person of the opposite sex.⁸⁶

Heterosexuality may have been the desired developmental outcome for Spranger and other psychologists, but he had to face the possibility of same-sex attraction as well. Spranger discussed "that important phenomenon of adolescence," namely, same-sex friendships and, occasionally, same-sex acts.⁸⁷ He agreed that undifferentiated sexuality could explain passionate same-sex friendships during adolescence. But Spranger considered these relationships to be immature, insisting that distinguishing between same-sex eroticism and homosexuality was more than just "a stubborn use of language." Adolescents may feel attracted to the vitality of each other's body, to the aesthetic force that their peers emanate, but this attraction was erotic rather than sexual in nature. With this distinction, Spranger sought to stress that adolescent same-sex attraction was a temporary phenomenon. As far as he was concerned, such displays of affection were linked to the perception of beauty and not physiological sex. Spranger swept aside the possibility of inborn homosexuality, which would have been observable during childhood and youth.

Spranger nevertheless agreed that adolescent same-sex acts could be ambiguous. "One cannot deny," he conceded, "that from here on there is only a blurry border to homosexual intercourse."⁸⁸ A youth, however, was not born

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*.

a homosexual, but he could be turned into one. How could homosexuality be natural if “nature, in its explicit symbolism, [had denied it] fecundity”?⁸⁹ Instead, Spranger believed that homosexuality resulted from seduction. A homosexual identity could become entrenched through erotic material and its “excessive nourishment of fantasy,” through “precocious homosexual activity,” and, of course, through Freud’s writings.⁹⁰ Spranger compared psychoanalysis to erotic material: both catered to the most basic instincts. Like Stern, he worried that psychoanalysts might be able to convince their patients and the lay public that the sex drive is the most important human urge. Furthermore, Spranger asserted that modern life, alcohol, movies, variety shows, trashy literature, and the lack of religious sensibility encouraged homosexuality, produced continual feelings of arousal, and obstructed a healthy aesthetic and spiritual development toward marriage.⁹¹ Spranger’s differentiation between eroticism and sexuality was representative of youth psychologists’ efforts to promote heterosexuality and marriage as the culmination of normal psychological development. This dualism was also used to play down same-sex acts during adolescence and, accordingly, to pathologize adult homosexuality as the result of abnormal development and seduction.

DO GIRLS HAVE SEXUALITY?

Youth psychologists paid more attention to boys than girls. Even their tendency to trivialize adolescent sexuality by rejecting the possibility of homosexuality implied a focus on young men, since they assumed that sexual deviance of all kinds was more common in males. But they also displayed deeper prejudices within their field. As the deeply misogynist philosopher Otto Weininger put it in 1903, psychology “is usually understood to mean the psychology of the psychologists, and psychologists are exclusively men: never in the history of psychology has a *female* psychologist been heard of. That is why the psychology of woman is usually dealt with in a chapter appended to general psychology in the same way as the psychology of the child.”⁹² This view that women, like children, were less developed than men was by no means exceptional. The professional prospects for female psychologists had not improved much since 1903, even as interest in understanding the adolescent girl’s psyche grew considerably in the 1920s, when more girls had access to secondary and postsecondary education and were becoming active in the labor force. This new field of research created opportunities for female psychologists.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 124–26.

⁹¹ Ibid., 137.

⁹² Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*, trans. Ladislau Löb, ed. Daniel Steuer and Laura Marcus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 75.

Charlotte Bühler (1893–1974) was one of the most important contributors to the psychology of adolescence. Trained in Munich, she conducted research in Dresden under Karl Bühler, whom she married in 1916. When Bühler was appointed to the University of Vienna in 1922, Charlotte followed him and became a lecturer at the university and a research affiliate in her husband's institute.⁹³ As one of the first women to receive a doctorate in psychology, she increased her claim to legitimacy and gained international attention for her research on girls. Yet rather than offering girls and women a path toward more sexual freedom and autonomy, she viewed psychology as a tool to help undo the “erosion” of social norms and values.⁹⁴ Her developmental narrative stressed the importance of adolescence in preparing girls for their adult role as wives and mothers, and she followed her male counterparts by representing same-sex acts between girls as unimportant events on this path.

In her 1922 book *Das Seelenleben des Jugendlichen* (The psychic life of a young person), Bühler analyzed a series of diaries written by young girls.⁹⁵ She believed that personal diaries allowed psychologists to discern the main characteristics of the adolescent's psyche and to uncover an unmediated cross section of a youth's life and psychological development. Although the diaries were produced outside of an “artificial situation,” Bühler recognized the implicit class bias of relying on a source that was generally only produced by members of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, she felt that investigations of diaries could methodologically complement other sources and experiments and offer a window into individual experiences, thoughts, self-observations, and feelings.⁹⁷ She was also reacting to the 1919 publication of Hermine Hug-Hellmuth's *Tagebuch eines halbwüchsigen Mädchens* (Diary of an adolescent girl), which chronicled the life of a girl from age eleven to fourteen and a half and for which Freud had written the preface.⁹⁸

⁹³ Dudek, *Jugend*, 424.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁵ Charlotte Bühler, *Das Seelenleben des Jugendlichen: Versuch einer Analyse und Theorie der psychischen Pubertät* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1922). Bühler published revised editions in 1923, 1927, and 1929. She also published two diaries written by adolescent boys in *Zwei Knabentagebücher: Mit einer Einleitung über die Bedeutung des Tagebuchs für die Jugendpsychologie* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1925). William Stern followed in Bühler's footsteps by analyzing a boy's diary in *Anfänge der Reifezeit: Ein Knabentagebuch in psychologische Bearbeitung* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925).

⁹⁶ Quote from Bühler, *Zwei Knabentagebücher*, v.

⁹⁷ Bühler, *Das Seelenleben* (1922), x.

⁹⁸ Hermine Hug-Hellmuth, *Tagebuch eines halbwüchsigen Mädchens* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1919). Freud later repudiated the book, which was apparently a fraud. See Gerhard Benekta, Klaus Grossmann, and Brigitte Rollett, “Retrospektive: Charlotte Bühler und ihre Zeit,” in *Charlotte Bühler und die Entwicklungspsychologie*, ed. Lieselotte Ahnert (Göttingen: V & R, 2015), 41. Historians of psychoanalysis rarely mention this episode, and there is no reference to it in Peter Gay's monumental biography of Sigmund Freud. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life of Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988).

Seeking to counter Hug-Hellmuth's presentation of sexually precocious adolescence, Bühler was keen to present her colleagues with the authentic diaries of normal girls.⁹⁹

Bühler's book introduced a systematic periodization and characterization of adolescent psychological development. Trained in experimental psychology, she contended that psychological and physical development were deeply intertwined and should be analyzed together. Physical development implied anatomical growth as well as the growth of the nervous system: the maturation of the gonads and the production of secondary sexual characteristics (which included the growth of breasts in girls and of the beard in males, the change in voice for boys, the growth of pubic hair, and so on) and the first menstruation in girls (and, according to some researchers, the first ejaculation for boys). Bühler argued that psychological puberty stretched from ages twelve to twenty-four and affected individuals differently according to their assigned sex: girls matured between the ages of thirteen and fifteen; boys did so a bit later, between fourteen and sixteen. She divided this twelve-year process into two main stages with different psychological functions: "puberty" (*Pubertätszeit*) and "adolescence" (*Adoleszenz*). She described "psychological puberty" (*seelische Pubertät*) as a period characterized by "a need for completion" (*Ergänzungsbedürftigkeit*) and the rejection (*Verneinung*) of childhood—by "reluctance, agitation, and discomposure, a physical and psychological discomfort, which is expressed in defiance and wildness, moodiness, [and] laziness."¹⁰⁰ After this initial period of denial came a period of "affirmation" (*Bejahung*) characteristic of adolescence. This stage produced the progressive acceptance of social norms and roles, which Bühler considered the necessary step to becoming an adult.

Like her male colleagues, Bühler took into account sexuality in her developmental theory.¹⁰¹ She had to address an issue that was right before everyone's eyes: the adolescent body's readiness for sexual intercourse. She accepted the theories of Louis Max Kötscher and Albert Moll about undifferentiated sexuality in youth, and she justified this view with the concept of a "latency of cerebral sexuality" during adolescence.¹⁰² She insisted that individuals with "a lower level of development" (*bei geistig Niedrigstehenden*) were more likely to act on their sexual instinct at an early age.¹⁰³ For Bühler, then, the adolescence of average boys and girls was a period of contraction (as Moll would have put it) and sublimation (as Freud described this process); this was a phase of pent-up desire that could be expressed through "love, flirting, sympathy, and the need for hugs

⁹⁹ Bühler, *Tagebuch eines jungen Mädchens*, iv.

¹⁰⁰ Bühler, *Das Seelenleben* (1922), 6, 8.

¹⁰¹ Dudek, *Jugend*, 231.

¹⁰² Louis Max Kötscher, *Das Erwachen des Sexuallebens und seine Anomalien: Eine psychologisch-psychiatrische Studie* (Wiesbaden: Bergmann, 1907), 17; Bühler, *Das Seelenleben* (1922), 12–13.

¹⁰³ Bühler, *Das Seelenleben* (1922), 11–12.

and kisses.”¹⁰⁴ Adolescence, however, was not a period of detumescence, of sexual intercourse. Like Hoffmann and Spranger, Bühler gave priority to psychological over physiological development. This standpoint allowed her to minimize the significance of adolescent sexual behavior, including same-sex attachments.

Bühler expanded her views on adolescent sexuality in a new edition of her book, published in 1929. She divided adolescent love into four different stages: a period of platonic love; one of flirtation; the first romantic relationship; and a final stage that included sexual intercourse.¹⁰⁵ In this new edition, Bühler argued that human sexual development was similar to that of higher animals: during adolescence, she contended, the gonads mature, sexual characteristics develop, and humans become prepared for copulation and reproduction.¹⁰⁶ But she insisted that this process had been altered by culture: the “love play” (*Liebesspiel*) the naturalist observes in animals had been modified in humans, and its culmination, sexual intercourse, had been delayed. Sexual intercourse did not occur when the body was ready for it but when the mind was, Bühler argued. This delay made displays of same-sex sexuality during adolescence seem transitory. Bühler agreed with her colleagues that desire during adolescence was undifferentiated. She described how young girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen are taken over by a phase of passionate enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) for classmates, teachers, pastors, singers, and theater and movie stars.¹⁰⁷ These crushes, however, did not determine adult sexuality. Whether a girl had a crush on a girl or a boy did not matter, because this was just a psychological mechanism, the “expression of advanced [cultural] development” that helps young people unload their excess of emotion.¹⁰⁸ As in her predecessors’ theories of male same-sex desire, the psychologization of female same-sex attachments eliminated the possibility of female homosexuality. Bühler insisted that these temporary obsessions had no physiological basis and only expressed a young girl’s desire to find figures who would help in her ethical and intellectual development.

Flirtation and romantic relationships were important for adolescent development, but these behaviors excluded actual sex. Bühler argued that heterosexual flirtation was all about tension and, ultimately, with the onset of adulthood, reciprocation. In her view, flirtation was psychological

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Charlotte Bühler, *Das Seelenleben des Jugendlichen: Versuch einer Analyse und Theorie der psychischen Pubertät*, 5th rev. ed. (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1929), 175–84.

¹⁰⁶ Charlotte Bühler, “Die Schwärmerei als Phase der Reifezeit,” *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* 100, no. 1–2 (1926): 10.

¹⁰⁷ For the history of female same-sex friendship and affection in Victorian Britain, see Alison Hennegan, “Victorian Girlhood: Eroticizing the Maternal, Maternalizing the Erotic; Same-Sex Relations between Girls, c. 1880–1920,” in *Children and Sexuality: From the Greeks to the Great War*, ed. George Rousseau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 268–90.

¹⁰⁸ Bühler, “Die Schwärmerei,” 13.

preparation for adult heterosexual intercourse; it was a form of love play that excluded sexual contact *per se*.¹⁰⁹ She recognized that contemporary youths fell in love more frequently than in past times due to the “freedom and equality” they enjoyed in urban environments. These relationships often resembled marriages; young couples would go to the movies or to the theater, read together, and protect each other. But she emphasized that these relationships needed to remain fundamentally platonic because youths were not psychologically prepared for sexual intercourse.¹¹⁰ In her theory, girls entered a cumbersome “waiting period” after puberty. Marked by flirtation and play, this phase forced girls to wait for their “actual entrance in life, for the moment to prove themselves, for the man, marriage, and occupation.”¹¹¹ In contrast, Bühler thought that boys passed over this period, since their lives started much sooner after puberty, when they were expected to choose a career or a profession—possibilities that Bühler seemed to foreclose for most girls who would become wives and mothers. Of course, her description of the stages of experiences all but ignored the lives of working-class youths, both male and female, who entered the labor force much earlier than their bourgeois counterparts and who were much more likely to engage in premarital sex, even if in the context of steady relationships.¹¹²

Like Hoffmann, Bühler described female sexuality as something latent that has to be “awakened,” presumably by men and not by popular entertainments, alcohol, or other women. Whereas boys had a natural “pronounced need” for sex, female sexuality could not be separated from “emotional life” (*Gefühlsleben*).¹¹³ Emphasizing emotions in psychological investigations of girls was common. In the 1926 book *Die Psyche der weiblichen Jugend* (The psyche of female youth), psychologist Else Croner (1878–1942) argued that the “physical and psychological revolution” of adolescence is even more “shattering” for girls than for boys, because “the preparation for motherhood touches [them] more deeply than the preparation for fatherhood” does boys.¹¹⁴ Croner dedicated her book to Eduard Spranger, and his influence was obvious not only in her humanistic approach but also in her description of female ideal types. She differentiated between five types of girls: motherly, erotic, romantic, pragmatic or matter-of-fact, and intellectual. Croner encouraged the motherly type. Such girls were most likely to fulfill the expectations of adult womanhood. In contrast, she described

¹⁰⁹ Bühler, *Das Seelenleben* (1929), 179.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹¹¹ Bühler, *Das Seelenleben* (1922), 10–11.

¹¹² Stefan Bajohr, “PartnerInnenwahl im Braunschweiger Arbeitermilieu 1900 bis 1933,” *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 3 (2003): 88.

¹¹³ Charlotte Bühler, *Kindheit und Jugend: Genese des Bewusstseins*, 3rd rev. and expanded ed. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1931), 339.

¹¹⁴ Else Croner, *Die Psyche der weiblichen Jugend* (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1926), 7.

girls of the erotic type as shallow and likely to play with danger, though she did not specify whether this danger meant pregnancy, venereal disease, or loss of honor. The romantic type was naive, and the pragmatic girl lacked the "ideals and lofty wishes" that characterize youth.¹¹⁵ Ironically, given her own status as an intellectual, Croner showed no sympathy for the intellectual type. She nevertheless stressed that women should remain emotional and personal, unlike boys, "who can engross their minds in pure intellectual things."¹¹⁶ It followed, then, that most girls should have no professional goals, and only the few who were willing to compromise their womanhood should aspire to have careers. At most, girls could aspire to have a job, a "source of income" as a transitory stage toward "something better": marriage and motherhood.¹¹⁷

Hoffmann, Spranger, and Bühler addressed same-sex sexuality during adolescence, but their theories relied on the concept of undifferentiated sexuality to treat this phenomenon as temporary and unimportant for the overall sexual development of adults. Boys and girls would grow up and eventually *grow out* of these same-sex attachments. While these psychologists acknowledged the budding sexual needs of boys, most of them internalized a sexist discourse that ignored both female sexuality and female homosexuality.¹¹⁸ Bühler chose to see female same-sex attachments as displays of excessive emotion. By contrast, Croner admitted that same-sex acts between girls did occur, but only wherever heterosexual possibilities were not available. She was confident that even the worst pathological thoughts could be reversed in a healthy environment.¹¹⁹

Adolescent female homosexuality was believed to be an impossibility. This belief was dominant and shared in pedagogical journals at the time. In an article on friendship between girls, the theologian Adolf Sellmann dismissed the existence of adolescent female homosexuality. He argued that "it is possible, as some want to make us believe, that homosexuality plays an important role in friendship, especially in male friendships." But homosexuality among women was "generally out of the question."¹²⁰ Sellmann suggested that educators turn a blind eye to worrisome behavior between their female pupils; parents could rest assured that their daughters were safe from sexual aberrations. Female sexuality was already a taboo topic. Bühler,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁸ There are some exceptions. Hirschfeld discussed female homosexuality in *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes*. Freud also wrote an essay on this topic, "The Psycho-genesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works* (1920–1922) (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 147–72.

¹¹⁹ Croner, *Die Psyche*, 30–31.

¹²⁰ Adolf Sellmann, "Freundschaft unter Mädchen," *Zeitschrift für pädagogische Psychologie und Jugendkunde* 20 (1919): 340.

Croner, and Sellmann did not have to make a great effort to play down the sexuality of girls. Like male adolescent same-sex acts, female same-sex acts were perversities rather than perversions and, therefore, not worthy of being considered homosexuality at all.

CONCLUSION

Siegfried Bernfeld (1892–1953), a radical pedagogue and researcher of youth known for his commitment to psychoanalysis and socialism, claimed that Charlotte Bühler had “interests beyond psychology” and that she was invested in upholding bourgeois social norms.¹²¹ I have shown that Hoffmann, Spranger, and Croner shared the same intentions. The theories they promoted during the Weimar Republic contributed to the understanding of adolescence as the transition between childhood and adulthood, a moment of psychological distress in which not only the body but especially the mind were being prepared for the challenges and duties of adulthood: work, marriage, and reproduction. These self-declared experts on adolescent development supported an agenda that included the naturalization of gender roles according to bourgeois norms and the trivialization of adolescent sexuality. Influenced by the theories of Albert Moll, Weimar-era psychologists agreed that youths experienced erotic attraction but were *psychologically* unable to consummate these desires. These psychologists maintained that any displays of sexuality during youth should be considered either meaningless play or the manifestation of lower cultural and intellectual forms.

These psychologists’ understanding of adolescent sexuality is important for contextualizing the history of homosexuality in the first half of the twentieth century. Open displays of affection and even same-sex acts between youths of the same sex were not necessarily uncommon, they recognized, but they were certainly not significant for the development of an adult. Downplaying any traces of sexual ambiguity in youthful sexual behavior, Hoffmann’s, Spranger’s, and Bühler’s theories implied that homosexuality was only a form of adult sexual deviance for men and that it was an impossibility for women. In contradiction to Magnus Hirschfeld’s theories, the psychologists I have investigated here shared the opinion that youths could be lured into engaging in same-sex acts and that homosexuality was therefore something that was acquired rather than inborn. As historians of Nazism have demonstrated, the conviction that youths could be seduced into homosexuality persisted during the Third Reich and was used to intensify legal measures against homosexuality as a means to protect youths.¹²²

¹²¹ Siegfried Bernfeld, *Die heutige Psychologie der Pubertät: Kritik ihrer Wissenschaftlichkeit* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1927), 37.

¹²² Claudia Schoppmann, *Nationalsozialistische Sexualpolitik und weibliche Homosexualität* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verl.-Ges., 1991), 42–54; Clayton Whisnant, *Male Homosexuality*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JAVIER SAMPER VENDRELL is an assistant professor of German at Grinnell College. His work has appeared in the *Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* and the *German Studies Review*. He is currently completing a book about the entangled histories of homosexuality, youth, and mass culture in the Weimar Republic.

in West Germany: Between Persecution and Freedom, 1945–1969 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 82–88.