

Homosexuality: Let's get it straight!

Homosexuality is one of those controversial topics that most people avoid because of the prejudice and discrimination that is associated with homosexuals. The source of this prejudice and discrimination can be traced back to the fact that homosexuality was long regarded as a psychiatric disorder. Nevertheless, homosexuality soon was declassified as a perversion and rather referred to as a “different” sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation is one of the components of sexuality that is noted by patterns of emotional, romantic and sexual attractions to individuals of a particular sex. Homosexuality is a sexual orientation recognized as an attraction to individuals of one's own sex. Most individuals find it puzzling and hard to comprehend why people engage in homosexual activities. Moreover, the “possibility of enjoyment” that such engagement holds is also often questionable.

The peculiar nature of homosexuality led people to question the causes and origins behind such sexual orientation. Is it genetic, biological, social, psychological, or simply a matter of personal preference? Many theories touch on the possible explanations for what determines homosexuality. However, it is crucial to note that there is no consensus among professionals about the exact reasons behind why individuals develop a particular sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation emerges around early adolescence for most people, without them being exposed to preceding sexual experiences. Moreover, some individuals claim that they found no success in changing their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual. Thus, professionals often ruled out the probability that homosexual orientation is a conscious choice that people voluntarily choose.

In addition to dismissing sexual orientation as a sense of choice, professionals also urge to dispel the stigma that associates homosexuality with mental illness or even emotional problems. A rational explanation behind the negative thoughts that some homosexuals often have about themselves could be linked to the negative attitudes they receive from their social environment rather than their sexual preference itself. As a result, homosexuals regularly find themselves struggling through emotional and social conflicts.

The most prominent theories that tackle sexual orientation correlate it with genetic and biological factors. Twin studies have shown that individuals that have homosexual twins are more likely to be homosexual than the general population. Even though these studies highlight genetics as a probable proof for homosexuality, yet it does not prove there is solely a “gay gene”. Other studies showed that the rate of homosexuality for adopted siblings is higher than the general rate in society, thus lowering the probability of it being genetically inherited and highlighting the possible role of social environment.

Furthermore, biological studies that examine the brain structures and hormones support the probability of an individual to be “born gay”. Studies conducted showed physiological

differences between the anatomical structures of a homosexual's brain in comparison to a heterosexual. These differences were mainly found in specific areas of the human brain that is associated with sexual drive and function. It is hypothesized that high exposure to some hormones will make the fetus more attracted to females and more masculine. As a result, deficient levels of androgen in males will show signs of submission in matters of sexual drive and attraction to other males. Similarly, females that get exposed to excessive levels of androgen exhibit elevated levels of aggression and sexual drive towards other females.

Even though genetic and biological studies bring forth valuable evidence for the causes behind homosexuality, sociologists and psychologists are not convinced. Instead of biological factors, this opposing perspective focuses on how homosexuality is the result of environmental factors. Most theories discuss the family environment which usually focuses on the parent-child relationship. Theorists believe that dysfunctional relationships during childhood with the parent of the same-sex of the child can lead to homosexual orientation. Thus, lack of intimate bonding and love in a father-son or mother-daughter relationship can lead the child to lack of confidence and fear of failure in heterosexual contacts.

In addition to the family environment, social theorists believe that peer pressure plays a role in reinforcing the process of forming a homosexual identity. Children who find themselves as a masculine female or a non-masculine male don't exactly "fit in". Hence, they find it easier to identify with their opposite sex peer group. However, this opposite sex identification can lead to gender confusion during adolescence.

Gender confusion can also lead a child to identify with other peers of the same sex that also suffer from similar feelings of isolation. The shared homosexual label brings forth feelings of security, self-understanding and acceptance. Moreover, the identification with the homosexual culture "coming out" provides an individual with a chance to escape from conflict, reduce pain of rejection and ensure human contact. Thus, being part of a supportive and accepting homosexual community can be powerful motive for accepting one's homosexual orientation.

Despite all the logical debates that aim to understand the reasons behind homosexuality, there is no definite answer. However, exploring the possible contributors of homosexual orientation is crucial because the society is saturated with misinformation. Whether "born gay" or "grew up to become gay", understanding homosexuality is a right and duty because it promotes kindness, compassion and empathy within all humanity.

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