

Critically discuss the  
different perspectives  
on the causes of  
homosexuality



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Homosexuality has been a topic of much concern for debaters all over the world. Although the concept of homosexuality and the actions involved with it are not new and it has been practiced all over the world throughout various stages of our history. People still find it very hard to accept. Many people scorn upon the ideas and consider homosexuals to be freaks of nature. This cannot be further from the truth since it has been observed that many species of other animals, such as certain species of reindeer and dolphins, also exhibit homosexual behavior.

The writer will first define homosexuality, sexual orientation and further highlight the different perspectives on the causes of homosexuality. There have been many other studies that have pointed to other causes of homosexuality. Weiten (2002) states that one study believes that it is caused by intrauterine influences. Other studies suggest postnatal environment, choices made during development, or it is a learned behavior. These and more will be discussed deep.

Weiten (2002) defined homosexuality as sexual interaction and / or romantic attraction between individuals of the same sex while Kasiyara and Chipandamira (2002) define homosexuality as sexual behaviour of one's own sex. Homosexuals engage in sexual activity with members of the same sex over an extended period. Sometimes, homosexuals are referred to as gays (for men) and lesbians (for women), Kasayira and Chipandamira (2002). In modern use, the adjective homosexual is used for intimate relationships and/or sexual relations between people of the same sex, who may or may not identify themselves as gay or lesbian.

Homosexuality, as an identifier, is usually contrasted with heterosexuality and bisexuality. People often ask where homosexuality starts and whether or not there is a choice. Some psychologists agree that while we can choose to act on our feelings, sexual orientation is not considered to be a conscious choice, which can be voluntarily changed. Yet other psychologists argue that there is a choice because of the existence of bisexuality. If there were no choice, then one's sexual orientation would be either homosexual or heterosexual. Sexual orientation emerges in childhood.

Evidence supporting this assertion comes from studies by Green (1987) in Sarason and Sarason (1993) cited in Kasayira and Chipandamira (2000). “The homosexual men who took part in the study said that they had a greater sexual interest in other boys and intense homosexual fantasies in childhood. The average of same sex attraction was 13 years and self designated to homosexuality occurred at 20 years. It also emerged that sexual orientation develops as one continued to have sexual experiences with same sex partners and or as homosexual feeling and attractions persisted.

It occurs over a period of time where one feels extreme emotional turmoil, at times even suicide” Kasayira and Chipandamira (2002). Sexual orientation has been related to biological factors. Anatomic differences between brains of homosexuals and those of heterosexual. Levay (1991) in Kasayira and Chipandamira carried a study on homosexual men who had died of AIDS related disease and found that part of the hypothalamus had the anatomical form found in women rather than that found in heterosexual men. The hypothalamus is thought to influence sexual behaviour.

Researchers believe that the relationship between sex and brain structures is related to activity of male sex hormones. The other suggestion is that the level of hormones to which fetus is exposed during the pre-natal period may lead to development of alternative sexual orientation (i. e. excess or deficiency of hormones can affect sexual behaviour). For instance, Money and Schwartz (1977) in Sarason and Sarason (1993) in Kasayira and Chipandamira (2002) suggested that females with excess pre-natal androgen (hormones) that develop secondary characteristics in males were more likely to have homosexual orientation.

Conditioning and socialization have been cited as explanations for lesbianism. Masters and Johnson (1979) in Sarason and Sarason (1993) in Kasayira and Chipandamira (2002) found that some individuals who have early sexual experience with members of the same sex could develop homosexuality. Unpleasant heterosexual activities and rewarding homosexual relationships result in homosexual orientation. In other words, a person engages in homosexual relations because they have pleasant consequences. Change of sexual preference in adults is seen as evidence for the claim that homosexuality can be learnt and unlearnt.

Behavioural theorists argue that homosexuality is a learned, preference acquired when same-sex stimuli have been paired with sexual arousal, perhaps through chance seductions by adult homosexuals” Bell et al (1981) cited in Weiten (2001). Psychoanalyst view lesbianism as a neurotic defense mechanism out of failure to resolve the conflicts, which arise in the phallic stage around the age of four years. Gartell (1981) in Walsh (1987) in

Kasayira and Chipandamira (2002) says mother fixation, penis envy and <https://assignbuster.com/critically-discuss-the-different-perspectives-on-the-causes-of-homosexuality/>

material indifference contribute to sexual orientation, thus parent child relationships and childhood experiences are stressed.

Other psychoanalysts viewed homosexuality as a phobic response to members of the opposite sex. However efforts to reach homosexuals personal histories have yielded a number of interesting insights. Bailey & Zucker (1995) in Weiten (2001) stated that “ extremely feminine behaviour in young boys or masculine behaviour in young girls does predict the subsequent development of homosexuality, For example 75% to 90% of highly feminine boys eventually turn out to be gay”.

Consistent with this finding, most gay men and women report that they can trace their homosexuals leanings back to their early childhood, even before they understood what sex was really about Garnets & Kimmel (1991) in Weiten (2001). Weiten stated that over the years many environmental theories have been floated to explain the origins of homosexuality, but when tested empirically, these theories have garnered remarkably little support.

The Freudian theorists argued that a male is likely to become gay when raised by a weak, detached, ineffectual father who is a poor heterosexual role model and by an overprotective, close-binding mother, with whom the boy identifies. Most also report that because of negative parental and societal attitudes about homosexuality, they initially struggled to deny their sexuality was not a matter of choice and not something that they could readily change Breedlove (1994) in Wetein (2001). These findings obviously suggest that the roots of homosexuality are more biological than environmental.

Environmental influences of some kind probably contribute to the development of homosexuality, but the nature of these environmental factors has proven extremely elusive. Most theorists originally assumed that hormonal differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals must underlie a person's sexual orientation. However, studies comparing circulating hormone levels in gays and straights found only small, inconsistent differences that could not be linked to sexual orientation in any convincing way. Thus, like environmental theorists, biological theorists were stymied for quite a while in their efforts to explain the roots of homosexuality.

One example is a study by Bailey and Pillard (1991) in Pransky (2000), whose subjects were gay men who had either a twin brother or an adopted brother. They found that 52% of the subjects' identical twins were gay, that 22% of their fraternal twins were gay, and that 11% of their adoptive brothers were gay. A companion study of the lesbians has yielded a similar pattern of results. Given that identical twins share more genes than unrelated adoptive siblings, these results suggest that there is a genetic predisposition to homosexuality. An explanation of the logic underlying twin and adoption studies.

Causes of homosexuality since the 1800's, psychiatrists and psychologists have concluded that homosexuality is a mental disorder, Weiten (2002). They have believed it is brought about by misguided upbringing and their social environments. For instance, it was believed that if the child was lacking a male figure in the home, he would most likely be gay or that child abuse can lead to homosexuality. Homosexuality is innate. It is perfectly  
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natural, and it is okay. Homosexuality has been present in some form in nearly every culture presently known.

Even on the more primitive level, homosexuality is natural. Weiten (2001) stated that in many mammals, "homosexual" activity is a common part of social interaction. Female Rhesus monkeys mount each other to establish a dominant rank in their troop's class system. Cows perform similar actions in order to coordinate their menstrual cycles and calve at the same time Douglas et al (1988) stated that there are several theories that homosexuality is caused by a hormonal imbalance before birth.

Dr. Lee Ellis believes that "stress during pregnancy may alter the production of sex hormones in the mother, changing the level of hormones reaching the brain of the fetus; if this happens at a crucial time in development, sexual orientation can be affected" (Painter, D4). Similarly, other research has shown that "certain hormonal influences on a developing fetus may predispose to brain development of a feminine character." The feminine brain may fix the sexual orientation of the man toward other men Douglas et al (1988: 327). Other evidence, although not scientific, can be observed that homosexuals do not choose their sexual preference.

Homosexual men often have fewer masculine traits and interests than heterosexual men. Lesbians, to some extent, are less feminine than heterosexual women. Many homosexuals realized they are different at a young age and most discover their preference by early adolescence. Walsh (1987) in Kasayira and Chipandamira (2002) contends that there is no agreement as to the causes of either male or female homosexuality. This has

been attributed to lack of adequate understanding of homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle.

In addition, most studies tend to think of homosexuals as a homogenous group. Here are some factors that could lead to homosexuality due to outside causes: an inherited temperament didn't have a good father/mother figure, sexual abuse, needs feeling of comfort, lack of sympathy, guilt, reliever of distress, born with certain features that have characteristics of homosexuals.

From the perspectives postulated above the one that articulates the etiology of homosexuality is that people are "born gay". Therefore, it's impossible for anyone to change. This myth is primarily based on two widely reported scientific studies: The study of slight differences in the hypothalamus region of the brain of homosexuals as discovered by Dr. Simon LeVay and the study of identical twins done by Dr. J. Michael Bailey in Weiten (2001).

Homosexuality has many issues that it has to face in the future. As a society today, we will have an open mind to homosexuality but there will always be discrimination by someone, somewhere.

Types of discrimination towards someone's sexual preference are name-calling, hate crimes, firing from a job, violence, murders, and vandalism of property. Unfortunately, when one is not part of the norm one is picked on and discriminated against. Homosexuality is becoming a more common and open thing but it still has people disagreeing with its moral values

Homosexuality will never be a comfortable issue to talk about but we can



help make a difference in their lives by supporting them as we would any individual.