# Human sexuality paper assignment

Art & Culture

SXS400 Dec 7th, 2009 SXS 400 Essay If sexual orientation is something that we can't change or choose, then how are these specific preferences such as heterosexuality and homosexuality created? How does one person progress to either heterosexuality or homosexuality? Studies showed that there were genetic factors linked to influencing sexual orientation in males before they were born by increasing the female reproductive capacity in mothers during multiple births. Iemmole, Ciani, 2008: 393) Though that doesn't mean that there technically is a " gay gene" that has been discovered, just that several human genome studies has suggested promising areas of research that are pointing to that direction. (Iemmole, Ciani, 2008: 393) With more studies and information, it seems that sexual orientation is primarily established more by a biological factor than any environmental factors. Not saying that personal environmental factors do not contribute to developing sexual orientations, because that still remains uncertain at the moment.

But biological factors seem to weigh more heavily on the general make up of one's orientation. Biologists would strongly disagree while psychologists would agree that environmental factors influence sexual orientation. If a person growing up is sexually abused or neglected, or lived in a dominantly paternal or maternal environment, Psychologists would argue that these types of factors can contribute to shaping a person's sexual identity. Joan Roughgarden would argue that a person's sexual orientation is like a person's accent.

It's developed at a very early age and most people can't change it while others can. (Roughgarden, 2009, 256) Though the accents are not genetic, they are thick most of the times because of the secluded surrounding

environment that people live in for long extended periods of times that helps keep it intact. An example of this would be that older generation people who are lets say born and raised in England have a thick English accent and most of the times they can't stray away from their accents because all their lives they were exposed to it.

While other younger people can change their accents because they might be possibly exposed to more diverse cultures or live abroad where their mother tongue is a secondary language, Roughgarden compares that with sexuality saying that some people can sway into heterosexuality or homosexuality and can be open when it comes to their orientations. (Roughgarden, 2009, 257) If sexuality is developed at an early stage in a person's life, then how does homosexuality occur? Homosexuality in Darwin's selection theory doesn't even exist. Roughgarden, 2009, 127) Some say that it's based on the person's surrounding environment and influences while others say that it's purely genetic. There has been substantial evidence that points to both genetic and environmental factors in developing homosexuality, but no one factor that clearly pushes over the top to define the origins of homosexuality. Statistically if a male is straight then there is a 4% percent chance that his brother might be gay, but if the male himself is gay, then the percentage jumps to 22%. Roughgarden 2009: 247) These statistics simply show that gay males tend to group in families, it doesn't necessarily point out anything specific about the environment's effects or the male's genetic makeup. (Roughgarden, 2009, 247) Another study that was conducted almost 20 years ago mentioned that an adopted brother of a gay male is twice as likely to become gay later on compared to a adopted brother of a straight man.

(Roughgarden, 2009, 248) The end result of this study entailed that the adopted child was being placed in an environment that ultimately contributed to their sexual orientation. Roughgarden, 2009, 248) Contradicting this statement, a scientist named Dean Hamer went on an interview on television saying that, “ there is new evidence that homosexuality may be inherited in some cases and not a matter of choice. ” (Roughgarden, 2009, 255) Ted Koppel who was interviewing him repeatedly asked him to confirm his new found evidence, but Hamer continued to dodge the question and later in some off-air comments said that, “ a particular area of the X chromosome and some other genes were involved in causing homosexuality. He also said that “ most researchers and scientists agree that there’s a very slight choice in choosing to be homosexual. ” (Roughgarden, 2009, 255) Another independent research suggested that while a mother is pregnant with the fetus, her immune system activates and causes a reaction when the fetus is a male. Basically the reaction in the mother’s immune system causes a change in the antigens produced by the male fetus, and supposedly “ acts against the way a male brain thinks. ” (Iemmole, Ciani, 2008: 394) The study then also further states that this conflict increases in later born males thus increasing the chances of homosexuality.

This statement then later coincided with the fact that homosexual families tended to be much bigger than heterosexual families. Meaning the multiple births increased the chances of the children to have a homosexual orientation. (Iemmole, Ciani, 2008: 394) Not only do multiple births increase the rate of homosexuality but Hamer also said that his analysis showed that

there was also an increased rate in homosexuality in the maternal line of families. This piece of information once again confirms his hypothesis of an existing change in the X chromosome that favors male sexuality. Hamer: 1993) Sexual orientation in our nearest relatives the primates also shows a substantial level of same sex mating. Most interactions revolve around females, but since the female populations sometimes tend to outnumber the males, the ratios are typically around four females to one male primate. (Roughgarden, 2009, 142) You would think that because of the ratios favoring the females that they would compete more for the male's attention, but instead more female to female relationships are formed.

That tends to also isolate the males who then find other males for sexual interactions as well. Thus it confirms that there is same sex sexuality amongst primates and it opens up debates for homosexuality and why it exists? (Roughgarden, 2009, 144) Just like human beings, they don't participate in same sex activity because heterosexual partners aren't available or to show forms of domination, but it's almost as if it's an additional form of sexuality to them. Some would say that homosexuality is like a byproduct of evolution and overall sexual orientation. Roughgarden, 2009, 144) In primates and other animals' sex same activities do not really disrupt reproduction because females still tend to have a substantial amount of offspring who then later on grow up and engage in homosexual activities, but still reproduce their own offspring. Joan Roughgarden stated that the " more complicated the social system was for animals the more likely homosexuality would exist…" (Roughgarden, 2009, 144) Some scientists say that over time homosexuality has gained more of a distinction in some

species such as humans and primates, while in others have not been majorly present.

This raises the notion that some scientists think that possibly some species might have a special homosexual influenced chromosome or gene. (Roughgarden, 2009, 145) Once again though this has yet to be determined, for now homosexuality seems to be a recreational alternative for most animals. If homosexuality is a common and natural part of life, is it harmful? Some scientists say that since it is like a byproduct of sexuality and does not really pose a threat to natural selection and reproduction among animals that it is basically harmless. Roughgarden, 2009, 146) Some people might say that if this statement is at all true then why doesn't homosexuality just fade away? Well the answer to that question is still not clearly known. There has been no concrete information that allows researchers and scientists to presume that different forms of sexual orientation such as homosexuality and heterosexuality are determined by any specific factors though the biological information is weighing in more heavily as more and more data is being compiled.

In my opinion I believe that both nature and biological effects influence sexual orientation in humans. A lot of times people are not aware of their own sexual identities until later in their lives and I think that while genetics has a great deal of influence in one's identity, I believe the surrounding environment then comes into play and helps determine a person's true sexual orientation.

One detail that solidifies this assumption is that a good majority of people take more time in their lives to discover their sexuality. In which they need their surroundings to help them determine what they feel and who they really are? So even if sexual orientation is an “ inbuilt” genetic quality or characteristic of a person, it also defines the group of people in which that person would most likely discover the most gratifying and fulfilling relationships that is ultimately the key of that person’s true identity.