Tabitha Dorsey November 19, 2018

English 1101

Biological and Environmental Factors of Homosexuality

 For many years, people have continued to argue the biological components and environmental influences that have played a role in homosexuality. Environmental and biologicals factors are equally important when it comes to the extent in which they participate in a homosexual. Some people may argue that homosexuality is greatly due to environmental influences rather than genetics. Using the articles, “Homosexuality: Born on Bred?” by Newsweek Staff published on 02/23/92, a chapter of a book, *The Gene* by Siddhartha Mukherjee, “Everything you Need to Know About Being Gay in Muslim Countries” by Brian Whitaker published on 06/21/16, and “‘God Made You This Way,’ Pope Is Said to Have Told Gay Man”, by Jason Horowitz published on 05/21/18, I will present the continued argument of nature vs. nurture and present evidence to support that biology is the primary factor.

 Many scientists believe that homosexuality can be traced back to a genetic basis. In, “Homosexuality: Born or Bred?”, Simon LeVay, a neuroscientist, uses his own experience to test his theory that homosexuality doesn’t make a father hostile toward a gay son but rather the lack of masculinity from the beginning causes a father’s disapproval. LeVay’s scan of the brains of 41 cadavers, 19 of whom were homosexual males, concluded that “a tiny area believed to control sexual activity was less than half the size in the gay men than in the heterosexuals” (Newsweek Staff). Doug Barnett, LeVay’s identical twin brother, was a former heterosexual when he discovered he was attracted to men after his brother’s coming out, had participated in a study of homosexuality. The experiment proved that it’s almost three times more likely for a twin to be gay if one of the identical twins is gay supporting a more genetic underline of homosexuality. Newsweek Staff and a chapter of the book, *The Gene*, share J. Michael Bailey’s twin study as a common idea of biological cause. Newsweek and Mukherjee explain how Bailey tested his theory that a higher percentage of identical twins should both be gay as opposed to fraternal twins. The Bailey-Pillard study gathered 110 male twins in which one twin is gay and found that in 56 pairs of identical twins, both twins were gay in 52%. The fraternal twins showed that 22% of the twins were both gay. This would prove a strong connection to genetics but certainly not the last of evidence.

 Mukherjee details the 1971 case of Canadian twin brothers favoring more of a genetic connection and less of a person’s surroundings and culture being an influence on homosexuality. Separated within weeks of birth, with one twin being adopted and the other by the biological mother in Canada, they were raised under different circumstances. They coincidentally ran into each other at a gay bar in Canada. The author even says, “but the twin studies provided incontrovertible evidence that genes influenced homosexuality more strongly than, say, genes influenced the propensity for type 1 diabetes” (Mukherjee 374). Another significant link between genetics and homosexuality shared is the “gay gene”. Dean Hamer, a researcher at the National Cancer Institute, began to map the “gay gene” by conducting an experiment of 114 gay men to reveal a pattern of inheritance. Hamer collected samples of genes and blood and ultimately created a family tree of the men. The study resulted in the siblings having about a 20% higher concordance in sexual orientation than the population rate of about 10%. Digging deeper, Hamer also showed a trend of gay men usually having a gay uncle on the maternal side. The trend had a higher concordance in maternal cousins rather than paternal cousins with this pattern continuing from generation to generation. He believed this would support an idea of the X chromosome contributing to gayness since it was shown that the sister’s son would be more likely to be gay than the brother’s son. The search within in the X chromosome resulted in a small stretch known as Xq28. This contribution to biology’s extent in which it plays in homosexuality isn’t the only evidence.

Many homosexuals often find themselves split between religion and sexual orientation. In, “‘God Made You This Way,’ Pope Is Said to Have Told Gay Man,” Horowitz describes how Pope Francis’ acceptance with homosexuality prove to be a sense of change. Juan Carlos Cruz, a Chilean clerical sex abuse survivor, explains how Pope Francis had no problem with him being a homosexual. The pope reportedly told Cruz, “you have to be happy with who you are. God made you this way and loves you this way, and the pope loves you this way” (Horowitz 1). This would signify that the pope might be more inclusive and understanding of the biological basis of homosexuality. Brian Whitaker also brings to light the biological importance in homosexuality in, “Everything You Need to Know About Being Gay in Muslim Countries”. In many Arab Countries, homosexuals face a substantial amount of backlash when the U.S. supreme court approved same-sex marriage in 2015. Gayness resulted in frequent executions in Iran, while other gays are imprisoned for up to 10 years in many other Arab countries. He says, “In more extreme cases, coming out results in the person being ostracized by their family or even physically attacked” (Whitaker 4). Whitaker explains the problem presented within the traditional arrangement-marriage culture in Muslim countries. Muslims who aren’t attracted to the opposite sex can result in some that do decide to come out, some prolong their studies abroad as an escape from the conflict, and few are able to find gay/lesbian partners to enter a fake marriage. Muslim societies consist of maintaining the beliefs in conformity and any expression of individuality is looked down upon. This would prove homosexuality to be more biological than anything since people were being killed, imprisoned, or going to extreme lengths as a result of their gayness.

Even with incontrovertible evidence that genetics is the primary connection to homosexuality, some people still argue that surroundings may have a larger influence. Newsweek Staff also explain how environmental factors are believed to have been an influence on homosexuality dating back to Sigmund Freud. Freud believed that homosexuality stemmed from unconscious disputes and experiences that sprout in early childhood. However, more evidence and petition from gay-activists has since debunked this view and homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association in 1974. Even still today, some psychiatrists still disapprove the removal of homosexuality from the official list of emotional disturbances. There is also the common reference to a son having a close relationship to a woman figure or not having a father figure, they’re more likely to become gay. This has proven not to be true since Simon LeVay did have a father around and a close relationship with his mother but ultimately knew he was gay since a young age.

In the end, you can see how genetics is more of the active role in homosexuality than a person’s surroundings. Biological explanations of a homosexual presence have been shown from neuroscience to chromosomes and are slowly adjusting in cultures and religion still today. You can always consider that one’s environment can have an influence on homosexuality but clearly biology has the upper hand.

Works Cited

Horowitz, Jason. “‘God Made You This Way,’ Pope Is Said to Have Told Gay Man.” *The New York Times,* 21 May 2018.

Mukherjee, Siddhartha. “The Last Mile.” *The Gene*, Scribner, 2016, pp. 370–90

Staff, Newsweek. *Homosexuality: Born or Bred?* http://www.newsweek.com/homosexuality-born-or-bred-200636, 23 Feb. 1992

Whitaker, Brian. *Everything You Need to Know about Being Gay in Muslim Countries*. The Guardian, 21 June 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/21/gay-lgbt> muslim-countries-middle-east.