Sexual Orientation
Components of Sexual Orientation

**Behavior**
- Physical sexual experiences

**Attraction**
- Fantasies
- Desires

**Identity**
- Self-identification

**Definition**

*A distinct preference for sexual partners of a particular sex in the presence of clear alternatives*
Defining Sexual Orientation

**Heterosexuality**
- Attraction to members of the opposite sex

**Homosexuality**
- Attraction to members of the same sex

**Bisexuality**
- Attraction to members of either sex

**Others??**

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**Kinsey and Colleagues’ (1948) Rating Scale for Sexual Orientation**

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<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>Exclusively heterosexual</td>
<td>Incidental homosexuality</td>
<td>More than incidental homosexuality</td>
<td>Equally hetero and homo</td>
<td>More than incidental heterosexuality</td>
<td>Incidental heterosexuality</td>
<td>Exclusively homosexual</td>
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# Homosexuality in Context

## Attitudes and Current Issues

### National Opinion Research Center Poll

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<th>Question</th>
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<th>2002</th>
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<td>Are sexual relations between adults of the same sex:</td>
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<td>Always wrong?</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost always wrong?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes wrong?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not wrong at all</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>Should an openly homosexual man be allowed to teach in a college of university?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
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</table>
Homosexuality in Context

Attitudes and Current Issues

**Morality**

- 2003 NY Times poll indicated 50% of Americans believed homosexuality was amoral

- 1976 Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress:

  "Thus the functions of the sexual organs of a man and a woman... are ordained by nature to serve one particular purpose, the procreation of human kind. Therefore, any and all uses of human sex organs for purposes other than those ordained by creation, runs contrary to the nature of things decreed by God...."

**Morality**

*The Orthodox Church believes that homosexuality should be treated by society as an immoral and dangerous perversion and by religion as a sinful failure. In both cases correction is called for. Homosexuality should be accorded the confidential medical and psychiatric facilities by which they can be helped to restore themselves to a self-respecting sexual identity that belongs to them by God’s ordinance."*
Morality

• Pope Benedict XVI: Homosexuality… “tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder. A person engaging in homosexual behavior therefore acts immorally.”

• Trent Lott: Homosexuality is a sickness similar to alcoholism and kleptomania

• Dr. Laura Schlessinger: Homosexuality is a biological error

Prejudice

Homophobia: irrational fear of homosexual individuals

Sexual Prejudice: Socially reinforced negative attitudes towards homosexuals

Politics and Civil Rights

• Domestic partnership benefits, Employment discrimination, Military service, Hate crimes

• By 2006 forty-one states had passed constitutional amendments banning gay marriage
Homosexuality in Context

Same-sex marriage across the world
Homosexuality in Context

Prevalence

**Worldwide Phenomenon**
- Despite what the president of Iran says…

**Ford & Beach (1951)**
- Studied 76 diverse societies worldwide
- All societies had some form of homosexual activity
- 2/3 of societies homosexual activity was accepted

**Rates in the USA**

**Kinsey 1948, 1953**
- 4% of men exclusively homosexual
- 2% of women exclusively homosexual
- 37% of participants reported 1 homosexual activity
- What about the 10% we’ve all heard about?
Prevalence

Rates in the USA

Hunt (1974)

• 20-25% of men had same-sex experience
  • 12-13% after age 15
  • 2-3% exclusively homosexual
• 20% of women had a same-sex experience
  • 10-12% after age 15
  • 2% exclusive homosexual

Rates in the USA

Lauman et al., (1994)

• 2.8% of men were homosexual
• 1.4% of women were homosexual
• 9% of men had a homosexual experience after puberty
• 3.3% of women had a homosexual experience after puberty
Homosexuality in Context

Prevalence

Overall
• 3-5% of men are homosexual
• 1-2% of women are homosexual

What That Adds Up To
• 3 million Americans 20+ years
• Worldwide
  • 37-56 million men
  • 19-37 million women
Psychoanalytical Causes

Freud

- Neither homosexuality or heterosexuality is innate
- Sexuality is determined based on how the *Oedipal Complex* is resolved
- **Boys:** Domineering, rejecting, over-protective mother; turn to father for love
- **Girls:** Cold, rejecting mother, identify with father
- Not supported by empirical work (Bem, 1996)
Origins of Homosexuality

Social Causes

**Social Learning Theory**

**Main Idea:** Sexual orientation is based on the learned history of the individual

- Good experiences with members of the same sex
- Bad experiences with members of the opposite sex
Exotic Becomes Erotic (Bem, 1996)

Main Ideas:

• Gender nonconformity in childhood leads to homosexuality
  • The *exotic* (in childhood) becomes *erotic* (in adulthood)
  • Sexual orientation is not predisposed by biology

Instead…

• Childhood temperaments are predisposed by biology
Origins of Homosexuality

Social Causes

**Exotic Becomes Erotic (Bem, 1996)**

- Biological Variables (genes, prenatal hormones)
- Childhood Temperaments (Aggression, activity level)
- Sex-typical/atypical Playmate preference (gender conformity/nonconformity)

**Feeling different from opposite/same-sex peer group members**
(dissimilar, unfamiliar, exotic)

**Arousal from opposite/same-sex peers**

**Erotic/romantic attraction to Opposite/same-sex persons**
(sexual orientation)
Origins of Homosexuality

Social Causes

**Exotic Becomes Erotic (Bem, 1996)**

“Male Homosexuals in Four Societies”

-Fredrick Whitham, Robin Mathy

**Childhood Play**

- 10% men no feminine behaviors
- 65% men feminine behavior
  - At puberty became masculinized
- 25% men feminine behavior throughout life
Origins of Homosexuality

The Myths

**Recruitment**

• Almost all homosexuals reported having desires for members of the same-sex before having same-sex sexual contact (Rind, 2001)

**Gay Parents Will Raise Gay Children**

(Brewaeys & van Hall, 1997)

• No gender identity conflicts
• Do not have problems with emotional adjustment
• Match population rates of heterosexuality
Origins of Homosexuality

Biological Causes: Genetics

What We Know

- Genetics are the building blocks for our physical as well as psychological characteristics
  - Height, weight, eye color, etc…
  - Shyness, depression, religiosity

Is There a Gay Gene?

- No!
- No single gene is responsible for homosexuality
Origins of Homosexuality

Biological Causes: Genetics

What They’ve Found

• Five DNA segments with “markers” on the tips of the X chromosomes have been linked to homosexuality

Empirical Study (Hammer, 1993)

• 40 pairs of gay brothers
• 33 had the same pattern of “markers”
• If X chromosome comes from Mom, then mom’s side of the family should have more homosexuals
  • Findings supported the hypothesis

Empirical Research: Twins Studies

• Monozygotic Twins (come from one egg) – identical twins
  • Identical DNA
• Dizygotic Twins (come from two eggs) – fraternal twins
  • Overlapping DNA

Hypothesis

• If Homosexuality is genetic, identical twins are more likely than fraternal twins to share sexual orientation
Origins of Homosexuality

Biological Causes: Genetics

Empirical Research: Twins Studies
Bailey & Dillard, 1991

- Men (167 pairs of brothers)
  - 52% identical
  - 22% fraternal
- Women (143 pairs of sisters)
  - 47% identical
  - 16% fraternal
- Some studies indicate higher rates 65.8% (Whitam et al., 1993)

Summary of the Findings
National Twin Study, 2000

- Identical twins are more likely to have a concordant homosexual sexual orientation than fraternal twins

Why Only 50%?

- If they share the same genetic material, shouldn’t they both always be gay?
- Genes are affected by the environment
  - Two-way interaction
Origins of Homosexuality

Biological Causes: Brain Structure

**Big Picture**

- Different brain structures → Different brain functions → Different brain functions lead to differences in behavior/personal identity

**Ground Breaking Work**

LeVay, 1991

- Examined SDN structure in Hypothalamus
- Gay males’ SDNs’ were 2x smaller than hetero males
- SDN in gay males resembled females

**Controversy and Questions**

- What caused the difference in brain structure:
  - Was it biology?
  - Or was it behavior?
- All gay males in the study had died of AIDS. AIDS lowers T levels and size of SDN is affected by T

**Counter Arguments**

- Gay males had same # of neurons in SDN → Neurons were more densely packed
Other Structural Differences

- **Anterior Commissure**: connects frontal hemispheres
- Larger in females than males
- 34% larger in gay males than females
- **Corpus Collosum**: connects cerebral hemispheres back of brain → 13% larger in gay males than hetero males (Witelson, 1994)

Significance of the Finding

- Both structures are unrelated to sexual behavior → Sexual behavior unlikely to affect structure size
From Brain Structure to Behavior

• Measured brain activity (using an MRI) of hetero males, hetero females, and gay males while listening to musical tones (Reite, 1998)

Findings

• Hetero males processed musical tones with right brain

• Females and gay males processed tones with both hemispheres

• Similar results have been found with language processing
From Brain Structure to Behavior

University of Mississippi

- Measured brain activity (using an EEG) of hetero males, hetero females, and gay males in a emotional judgment task

Findings

- All groups were equally accurate
- Brain activity of gay males looked similar to that of hetero females
Origins of Homosexuality

Biological Causes: The Prenatal Environment

Hormone Levels

Handedness

• Gay males 34% more likely to be non-right handed
• Lesbians 91% more likely to be non-right handed

Finger Ridge Count

• Identical twins with discordant sexual orientations have different finger ridge counts

Finger Length Ratio

Conclusions

• Sexual orientation is primarily determined before birth
  • 2nd – 5th month of gestation (Ellis & Ames, 1987)
• Sexual orientation influenced, but not destined by biology
• Environment (prenatal and otherwise) may interact with an individual’s genes to “activate” the biological disposition to be homosexual
Social or Biological – Why does it matter?

Why do we need an explanation?

Biology measures “fitness” in terms of the likelihood to produce offspring…So if that’s the case, why is homosexuality still in the gene pool?
Typical Experiences

Coming of Age

So… When Did You Know?

Gay Males

• Typically report awareness of same-sex attraction during childhood (4 – 8 yrs old; Kinsey, 1948)

Lesbians

• Most adult women who identify as lesbians did not report having awareness of a same-sex attraction during childhood…(some do: 10–12 yrs)
• 18 yrs identity questions/transitions
• 20 yrs solidified lesbian identity

So… Did You Ever Have Sex With…

Diamond & Savin-Williams (2000)

• 2/3 Attracted to men, only ½ indicated exclusive homosexual attraction
• 4/5 Sexual experience with a man
• ½ Said lesbian identity was a deliberate, conscious choice

Gay Males

• ½ Sexual experience with a woman
• Most gay men attracted to men exclusively
Typical Experiences

Coming of Age

Why the Difference?

Lesbians

• Trigger: Attraction to member of same-sex was often triggered by an emotionally intense relationship
• Place more emphasis/value on the emotional connection of a relationship
• Less emphasis on sex
• (Loulan, 1995): 1600 lesbians
  • 25% had been celibate for 1-5 yrs
Typical Experiences

Coming Out

**Stages**

1. *Identity Confusion*
   Because of societal norms, individuals typically assume a heterosexual identity as children

2. *Identity Comparison*
   A person seeks a social group to match his/her internal desires

3. *Identity Tolerance*
   A person integrates into their self-concept the label of their societal group, e.g. “I am a homosexual”

4. *Identity Acceptance*
   A person accepts, rather than merely tolerates their new identity

5. *Identity Pride*
   In-group/out group bias – The “super gay” phase

6. *Identity Synthesis*
   Comfortable with sexual identity and with people whose identities differ
GLBT Lifestyles

Relationships

**Desire For Commitment**
Bryant & Demian, 1990

- 760 Lesbian couples – 560 Gay couples
- Together for 10+ years
  - 14% of lesbian couples
  - 25% of gay male couples

**Psycho-Social Dynamics: The Similarities**
Herek, 2006

- Desire for cohabitation
- Emotional commitment:
  - Intimacy, love, equality, loyalty, stability
- *Emotional Satisfaction* equivalent to heterosexual couples
- Relationship dissolution

**Herek, 2006**

- Steady romantic relationships:
  - 45–80% Lesbians
  - 40–70% Gay men
GLBT Lifestyles

Relationships

Psycho-Social Dynamics: The Differences

- Household chores/tasks
  - Less likely to divide tasks along traditional gender lines
- Less social support from family – more support from friends
  - Many homosexuals report disapproval from at least one family member
GLBT Lifestyles

Relationships

Different Sexual Patterns

Decline in frequency of sex with primary partner:

• Gay Males (least)
• Heterosexual
• Lesbians (most)
**GLBT Lifestyles**

**Bars and Subcultures**

**Small Towns**
- One gay bar: multiple functions
  - Dance, cruising, coffee shop, community center
  - A place where everyone knows your name

**Big Cities**
- Specialized bars for each subculture
  - Boy bars, dance clubs, neighborhood, leather/daddy/motorcycle bars, drag bars, sports bars, kink, and older folks
GLBT Lifestyles

Sex

**Top, Bottom, or Versatile – Gay Males**

**Anal Intercourse**
- 70-80% of men engage in anal sex
- 20% prefer only one sex role

**Oral Intercourse**

**Mutual Masturbation**

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**Top, Bottom, or Vestal – Lesbians**

- Penetration typically occurs with fingers/hands
- Few women use dildos

**Frontage**

- Rubbing genitals on one another

**Oral Intercourse**

**Mutual Masturbation**

- Lesbians have orgasms more regularly than heterosexual females