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The Building Blocks of a Gay Man's Identity: Biology, Family, and Society



Gay men face unique challenges and obstacles to becoming a well-defined, solid individual. Their passage to selfhood is impacted by three primary systems; biology, family, and society and it is also influenced by anxiety, stress and fear related to their sexual identity and orientation. The author examined a gay man's odyssey to becoming a self through the lenses of Bowen theory, biology, genetics, epigenetics, evolution, and societal process (culture, religion and history.)

The author documented the scientific basis for male homosexuality and illustrated that to date, no evidence exists that identifies any one factor that accounts for its existence. However, there is evidence indicating that a number of variables may be involved; evolution, genetics, epigenetics, inter-uterine hormonal processes. From an evolutionary perspective, he reports how Social Selection theory rather than Sexual Selection theory provides a basis for understanding for how homosexuality just as heterosexuality serves a positive, functional purpose for the survival of a species.

The eight concepts of Bowen theory were utilized to illustrate how the emotional process is often managed between a gay man, his nuclear and extended family, and within his social structures. He reported that in his work with gay men in same-sex partnered or marriages revealed that the emotional appears to replicate the emotional process existing between heterosexual partners.

3rd International Conference on Bowen Family Systems Theory



The author created 5 stages of development that gay men move through to become a healthy functioning individual with meaningful relationships and productive lives. It was clear that anxiety, acute and chronic, impacted and interfered with the development of self (solid self and pseudo-self.)

Evidence to support these stages of development was drawn from the author's clinical observations and experience of coaching over 400 gay men utilizing Bowen theory as well as the personal experience of his peers and himself.

This 40-minute presentation seems quite relevant to the conference theme in that it discusses, from a systems perspective, an aspect of human sexuality present within our world-wide society that for centuries has impacted the lives of individuals and families. The current trend toward more acceptance of homosexuality and its integration in society is representative of our changing world.

3rd International Conference on Bowen Family Systems Theory

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