

Where do we get our sexual preferences?

Philip Bitar

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In this context, *sexuality* refers to the means for creating and satisfying sexual arousal. Sexual arousal, in turn, is a well-defined physiological process. Satisfying sexual arousal is similar to satisfying hunger since both are hormonally based.

Where do we get our sexual preferences?

We learn them.

Our sexual preferences are learned just as our food preferences are learned. Sexual preferences, like food preferences, are learned by the automatic unit of our mind, and such learning will be influenced by biologically endowed personality propensities interacting with life experiences.

A person is genetically endowed with the physiological functioning of sexual organs and sexual hormones, and the person's sexual behavior beyond these basic physiological functions is the result of learning and personal choice.

More specifically, human sexuality — the means for creating and satisfying sexual arousal — is not inherently relational. A person must learn to make their sexuality relational, and doing so usually confers a sexual orientation on the person. If human sexuality were inherently relational, due to natural selection it would necessarily be heterosexual in order to propagate the species. But since human sexuality is not inherently relational, it is not necessarily heterosexual, and this makes it possible for humans to learn homosexuality, as well as any other means imaginable for creating and satisfying sexual arousal.

As a result, humans can evidently learn to associate anything that they want to with sexual gratification, including extremes such as inflicting pain, receiving pain, having sex with children, having sex with animals, and having sex with corpses.

Sexual preferences — and, hence, sexual orientation — can be changed, just as food preferences can be changed, with a qualification, as follows. We can't erase our prior preferences, but with concentrated effort we can override them. Yet, to do so we will need adequate motivation and adequate social support. Furthermore, retraining our automatic unit may require concentrated effort over a period of time. The same applies to longstanding, highly automated food preferences.

The reason that longstanding sexual preferences seem biologically endowed is that they have become highly automated in the automatic unit of our mind. And the same applies to longstanding food preferences. It takes concentrated effort over a period of time to change highly automated preferences and highly automated behavioral patterns. As we all know, it can be quite challenging to change longstanding habits! So it is with longstanding, highly automated food preferences and sexual preferences.

Understanding the mind

Please see the presentation of this topic in the agenda of the meeting on sexual promiscuity and marriage.

Meeting format

We'll cover the foregoing material interactively, discussing the concepts as we proceed.