

He Made the Most of His Life ... but He Didn't Choose It

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You are smart people. I can sure use your help on this one. Our medical school training was adamant in the view that homosexuals adopted their lifestyle because it was the less anxiety-producing "way of life" when a boy was growing up in a home with a cruel and distant father and a cold and dominating mother. This confused boy is unable to resolve his oedipal conflict, so he safely "adopts" an effeminate role so he will not suffer his rival's (father's) wrath. This was taught as a universal truism because it was based on Freudian rules which were indisputable. I passed tests on the subject, so this concept was locked into my left brain.

As a pediatrician I thought I could detect young boys who seemed to be on their way to this form of sexual persuasion, but the family "dynamics" I had been taught were not obvious to me. In families with several boys, why did only one become gay? Something had to be wrong with that unresolved oedipal theory. And what were the dynamics for lesbians? Were they just mesomorphic girls who did well at sports, so were pushed into a Rambo attitude?

My wife and I had five children, all about 12 to 18 months apart. Our fourth child, a boy, was born 11 months after our third child. This boy, D, was smaller at birth than the others. He had terrible colic, and none of the free samples worked. We had to simmer skimmed milk for five hours before he could even hold it down. Even with that, the sloppy green stools continued. He needed the pacifier constantly. Using a suppository relieved some of the gas, temporarily. He was comfortable when upright in the car seat while the car was moving. Stop lights were a disaster; he had to be moved or rocked. He was uncuddleable; he would stiff-arm us as if we were too close. Could he have thought that we caused his pain as we only held him when he was screaming with the cramps? Was he forced to believe his parents were his enemy?

He grew up avoiding milk. He was very bright, a scholar of the classics, an oboe player, and a writer of philosophy. He had great enthusiasms. He admitted to us that he was gay when he turned 17 years. He acted surprised when we said, "Yes, we knew that some years ago." He wondered why we had not thrown him out of the house as happened with so many of his friends. "We love you, D. What does being gay have to do with it?"

He died at age 38 from complications of AIDS, two years ago. His blood pressure was barely 100/50-60. His blood sodium level hovered around 135 meq/L, and his calcium was but a low 8.5 mg/dl. Both of these deficiencies are associated with susceptibility to infections.

Recently, I have found out that if a male -- going through puberty -- is low in sodium, his body finds it next to impossible to turn cholesterol into testosterone. (As a corollary, if a female is low in potassium when she is approaching puberty, her body has a struggle to manufacture estrogen.) Their bodies correspond to the genetically determined chromosome pattern, but maybe the hormones are not quite

sufficient to convince their brains that they are to be heterosexual.

Recently, in Oregon, gay rights measures are being voted down. The anti-gay, anti-lesbian groups somehow feel that these folks decided to become gay because of the influence of other homosexuals. I have the feeling that these people protest too much.

I have to believe that D's lifestyle was a combination of a nutrient-deficient gestation, a stress-producing allergy, and years of a low calcium and sodium diet. He did make the most of the life that was placed upon him, but he did not choose it.

What do you think?

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