

## What Does SSA Entail?

**Summary:** For many people with unwanted same-sex attraction homosexual feelings are just one part of what they may be dealing with. The sections below provide a basic understanding of the broader spectrum of what they may be experiencing.

Below are descriptions of many issues we have observed. Please keep in mind that every person is unique, and so these issues will not apply to everyone.

### [Sexual Arousal Oriented Toward Others of Their Own Sex](#)

All homosexual people experience spontaneous sexual attractions toward others of the same-sex. But individual attractions and arousal patterns vary widely. [[MORE](#)]

### [Homosexual Behaviors](#)

There are diverse ways in which an individual might behave sexually. The levels of involvement also vary widely from person to person. [[MORE](#)]

### [Life Histories That May Include Trauma](#)

Many with same-sex attraction have painful life histories. Abuse of various types is common. However, some with same-sex attraction have not experienced circumstances or events that they consider traumatic. Same-sex attraction can develop in the absence of trauma, but trauma is far more common than not. [[MORE](#)]

### [Emotional and Psychological Problems](#)

Emotional and psychological problems often accompany same-sex attraction. Some of these problems may be the result of homosexuality. Others may be intrinsic to the person or may result from the same life circumstances that caused the homosexuality. [[MORE](#)]

### [Identity Issues](#)

Those with same-sex attraction identify with their homosexuality in a variety

of ways. Some see it as an unwanted personal trial while others consider it a fundamental part of who they are. [[MORE](#)]

### **Spiritual Challenges**

Many people with unwanted same-sex attraction are dissatisfied with their sexuality because it conflicts with their faith. This conflict can have far reaching implications. [[MORE](#)]

### **Statistics on Homosexuality**

A recent [Gallup poll](#) found that 3.4% of adult Americans surveyed identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). [[MORE](#)]

### **Sexual Arousal Oriented Toward Others of Their Own Sex**

**Summary:** All homosexual people experience spontaneous sexual attractions toward others of the same-sex. But individual attractions and arousal patterns vary widely.

Arousal patterns—meaning what specifically excites a person sexually and how frequently and intensely they become aroused—vary greatly from one person to another. Very often, men with unwanted same-sex attraction report that their attractions are actually based on non-sexual feelings like envy, admiration, awe, or wishing they were the other man. They can also be experienced as longings for closeness, nurture, love, and companionship with another of the same sex. Sometimes sexual desires are a replay of early life experiences, especially sexual abuse.

Sexual arousal can be oriented toward specific body parts like feet, body hair, or a man's chest. These attractions are known as "fetishes." Or arousal can be toward situations that involve sadistic or masochistic behaviors. And sexual arousal may be oriented toward individuals in the person's same age group or toward those who are much older or much younger.

The intensity of arousal also varies greatly from person to person. Some individuals experience their attractions as compulsory and may have no control over their behavior. This would clearly indicate the presence of a sexual addiction. Other people experience just a feeling of attraction, which

they are able to set aside and not act on.

It may not be necessary for you to understand the specifics of your friend or family member's arousal pattern in order to support them.

## Homosexual Behaviors

**Summary:** There are diverse ways in which an individual might behave sexually. The levels of involvement, also vary widely from person to person.

Everything after the spontaneous attraction involves some degree of agency and choice. Some individuals are able to avoid engaging in homosexual behavior despite their attractions. Others may lack the impulse control that would be necessary to control their behaviors. For some, the feelings are so strong that it may seem impossible to control their behavior. Some people with same-sex attraction have had little or no involvement in homosexual behavior. Others may be sexually addicted and unable to stop.

Homosexual behavior may include:

- Fantasies
- Masturbation with homosexual thoughts
- Use of pornography, including chat rooms, gay dating websites, “soft core” images of partially naked men, and “hard core” images and videos.
- Arousing behaviors with other men that don't include genital contact, such as kissing and touching.
- “Cyber sex”— sexual behavior done online using a webcam, texting, or cyber chats.
- Various types of in-person sexual behavior.

## Life Histories That May Include Trauma

**Summary:** Many with same-sex attraction have painful life histories. Abuse of various types is common. However, some with same-sex attraction have not experienced circumstances or events that they consider traumatic. Same-sex attraction can develop in the absence of trauma, but trauma is far more common than not.

Trauma is not a necessary predisposing factor in the development of same-sex attraction. However, it is our experience that most individuals with same-sex attraction experienced traumatic events as they were growing up. Typically, they also felt entirely alone with the pain and fear caused by the trauma. Trauma can come in a variety of ways.

**Neglect and abandonment** result from failure of parents or caregivers to provide for basic physical needs, emotional nurturing and support, education, safety, and social skill development.

**Verbal abuse** may be defined as threatening, angry, critical, insulting, or vulgar speech directed at an individual. Sometimes verbal abuse is very blatant, such as when someone angrily shouts at, or threatens to hurt someone. But verbal abuse can also be subtle, such as when a person speaks in a condescending way or insults someone indirectly.

**Harassment or bullying** is repeated or prolonged mistreatment or persecution. Young people in schools and neighborhoods commonly harass one another. Sometimes, this harassment gets so out of hand or becomes focused so intensely on one individual that emotional harm is done. Often, a boy who is already unsure of himself because of negative experiences he has had in earlier relationships frequently becomes a target for this type of abuse.

**Physical abuse** is any action by one person that is intended to inflict pain or injury on another person. Physical abuse is significant when it creates long-term anger, resentment, mistrust, and problems with self-acceptance. The degree to which physical abuse affects a child can depend on how the child perceives the treatment and the person giving the treatment. For example, some boys may be almost amused by a vigorous spanking from their mother. But these same boys may feel terrified and deeply injured by a

mild spanking from their father. The father may have inflicted less pain, but his intimidating personality makes the experience feel worse.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when one person uses another for his or her own sexual gratification against their will or without their consent. It occurs when an adult engages a minor in sexual activity or exposes them to sexually explicit material or language with or without their consent. It occurs when an older and more powerful child engages a younger or smaller child in sexual activity.

**Significant losses** can also create trauma. For example, the emotional or physical loss of a parent, sibling, friend, or pet through death, divorce, betrayal, or relocation can create lasting pain. Sometimes trauma results when a family moves during a vulnerable time in a child's life, especially when the child is unable to fit in or adjust well to the new circumstance.

**Accidents** also create trauma, particularly when the person feels out of control and vulnerable.

## **Emotional and Psychological Problems**

**Summary:** Emotional and psychological problems often accompany same-sex attraction. Some of these problems may be the result of homosexuality. Others may be intrinsic to the person or may result from the same life circumstances that caused the homosexuality.

Those with same-sex attraction with whom we have worked often report tendencies toward obsessive-compulsiveness, perfectionism, and rumination. We don't know whether these conditions arise from inherent temperaments or whether they develop from life experiences. same-sex attraction people also often experience dissociation, anger, unfinished grief, and posttraumatic disturbance, which are usually the result of traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence. Addiction is another common condition among those with same-sex attraction.

While these kinds of trials can make life difficult for any person, for those with same-sex attraction they are particularly problematic. This is because these conditions tend to increase distress and decrease resilience, which can

intensify homosexual desires and encourage acting on them as a means of blunting pain. Usually, the same-sex attraction can't be addressed until these other issues have been resolved to some degree.

Since these issues are often not apparent to someone who is unfamiliar with them, they are not likely to be overcome without help from a therapist who is well trained in working with unwanted same-sex attraction.

## Identity Issues

**Summary:** Those with same-sex attraction identify with their homosexuality in a variety of ways. Some see it as an unwanted personal trial while others consider it a fundamental part of who they are.

Some people see homosexuality as a core part of their identity. They might refer to themselves as “gay,” and may feel homosexuality has always been part of who they are. These people might be less interested in therapeutic interventions or in trying to change their lives.

On the other hand, some same-sex attraction people will view their homosexuality as merely a set of feelings that have no bearing on their core identity. They will not feel that same-sex attraction represents who they really are. They will likely consider the attractions to be an unwanted burden. Their identity may be formed around being broken or deficient, or it may be centered in the belief that they are basically good, but just have a peculiar challenge in their life.

We have not seen success in changing the way individuals identify with their same-sex attraction. Parents who attempt to talk their gay-identified children into trying to change their sexuality tend to aggravate and alienate the child. Use of punishment and withdrawal of emotional or financial support to encourage change is hurtful and destructive and could lead to depression, anxiety, and suicidal feelings. Change-oriented therapy under these circumstances is not useful. However, therapy can be helpful in working through family conflict and resolving other issues so long as all parties accept that a shift in sexuality is not the goal.

## Spiritual Challenges

**Summary:** Many people with unwanted same-sex attraction are dissatisfied with their sexuality because it conflicts with their faith. This conflict can have far reaching implications.

In our extensive experience, nothing has ever indicated that homosexuality is caused by problems with spirituality. Nor does having same-sex attraction necessarily mean that an individual will have spiritual problems. In fact, for some religious people, the challenges with same-sex attraction increase their sense of connection with God and rely on Him for help.

However, others will find their faith greatly challenged by their same-sex attraction. The intensity of their needs and desires can overwhelm their desire to live a traditionally pious life. They may feel intense desires to experiment and satisfy their urges. Some of these people may feel abandoned or betrayed by God, ecclesiastical leadership, their families, or by other members of their faith community.

In addition, many men and women with same-sex attraction become predisposed to resent and mistrust males and those in authority. These issues tend to be deep-seated and result from problems in past relationships. We have found that showing profound love and acceptance toward these individuals can do much to lessen the intensity of these feelings. Nevertheless, therapy may be required to help the individual fully grow beyond these issues.

## Statistics on Homosexuality

**Summary:** A recent [Gallup poll](#) found that 3.4% of adult Americans surveyed identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT).

The statistics were higher for younger people than for older people. Among 18 to 29 years olds, 6.4 percent identified as LBGT. That number dropped by half among 30 to 49 year olds, where only 3.2

percent identified as LGBT. Among the oldest age group (65+) only 1.9 percent identified as LGBT. The numbers were also higher among females than among males, particularly in the youngest group (18 to 29) where 8.3 percent of females identified as LGBT, compared with only 4.6 percent of males.

The public perception of how many Americans are gay is vastly out-of-step with the reality reported above. Another [Gallup poll](#) revealed that Americans on average believe that almost twenty-five percent of the population is gay or lesbian. Younger and less educated people placed that figure even higher. On average, people age 18 to 29 years old believed 30 percent are LGBT while age groups over 50 placed that figure at only 22 percent. Those with a high school education or less believed that 31 percent are gay while individuals with a post-graduate degree put the average at 16 percent.

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## What Causes Male Homosexuality?

**Summary:** The psychological and scientific communities provide much speculation but few reliable answers about the causes of same-sex attraction. Our many years of experience provide some helpful insights.

### [Statement From The American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#)

The official explanation from the APA says that there is no consensus about what causes homosexuality. We agree. But we have observed eight kinds of life experiences that are common in the backgrounds of men with same-sex attraction. [[MORE](#)]

#### 1. [Unhealthy Childhood Relationships With Females](#)

Females can wound young boys by smothering, criticizing, controlling, and

ignoring proper boundaries. Some boys who have experienced such wounding develop unhealthy relationships with women in adulthood in which they either push them too far away or hold them too close. [[MORE](#)]

## **2. Distorted Concepts of Gender**

Unhealthy childhood relationships with females can distort a man's view of the female gender, affect how he sees himself in relation to women, damage his sense of masculinity, and prevent the natural development of a sense of genderedness. This can leave the individual without a sense of the opposite sex as complementary and attractive. [[MORE](#)]

## **3. Feeling Incongruent With One's Own Gender**

Feeling incongruent with what a man believes his gender requires may create a psychologically unstable situation, resulting in the unconscious mind compensating through fixations or attractions toward males and masculinity. [[MORE](#)]

## **4. Problems In Relationships With Other Males**

During childhood, some boys disconnect from other males due to negative experiences with males, negative stereotypes about males, and fear of being seen as strange. This leaves their normal needs for same-sex connection and bonding unmet, resulting in longings and cravings for male closeness. [[MORE](#)]

## **5. Sexual Conditioning**

Sexual desire can be conditioned through pairing specific stimuli with sexual arousal. Male-on-male sexual abuse and early exposure to male pornography may create or intensify homosexual arousal for some boys. [[MORE](#)]

## **6. Sexual Abuse**

In addition to its potential role in conditioning sexual arousal, sexual abuse can create or intensify gender incongruity, disaffiliation from other males, and if the perpetrator is female, fear or hatred of women. It may also create repetitive patterns of compulsive sexual behavior. [[MORE](#)]

## **7. Certain Biological and Physical Issues**

Research on direct biological and genetic causes of homosexuality is

inconclusive. But our experience suggests that certain biological factors can have an important impact on a boy's sense of his masculinity and on his relationships with other males. [[MORE](#)]

## **8. Certain Emotional and Psychological Problems**

Certain emotional and psychological issues are common in the backgrounds of homosexual men. These issues seem to intensify the effect of other life experiences, particularly gender incongruity, same-sex disaffiliation, sexual conditioning, and sexual abuse. [[MORE](#)]

### **Hypothesis: Two Necessary and Sufficient Factors**

Given the frequency with which these eight kinds of life experiences occur in the backgrounds of men with SSA, it is possible that these experiences might influence the development of homosexuality by creating two conditions.

[[MORE](#)]

### **Statement From The American Psychological Association (APA)**

**Summary:** The official explanation from the APA says that there is no consensus about what causes homosexuality. We agree. But we have observed eight kinds of life experiences that are common in the backgrounds of men with same-sex attraction.

The statement below is from the [APA website](#):

“There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.”

Our experience working with this issue causes us mostly to agree with this statement by the APA. We agree that the causes of same-sex attraction are

complex and that nature and nurture both play complex roles. And we find it true that those with same-sex attraction don't have a sense that they chose their homosexual feelings. We also agree that evidence is as yet inconclusive about the exact factors that determine sexual orientation.

However, from our work with hundreds of men, we have observed eight kinds of life experiences that are common in the backgrounds of men with same-sex attraction. Opinions differ on whether these kinds of experiences were the cause or the consequence of same-sex attraction—or perhaps had nothing to do with SSA. We can't say for sure. Few men with same-sex attraction experienced *all* of these factors. And many men who are *heterosexual* have experienced at least a few of them. So it seems clear that the factors don't have a simple and direct causal effect. But it has become clear to us that these kinds of experiences have a significant impact on those who have gone through them and they are often central to a person's therapy.

You can read more about these eight common experiences under the tabs below. As you read these sections, keep in mind that the variety of backgrounds among homosexual men is truly vast and what you read won't necessarily apply to every man with same-sex attraction.

**Consider the comments below from experts on this topic:**

“The stages of psycho-social development toward adult heterosexuality are clearly demarcated, known and understood by developmental psychologists, and are so obviously learned that heterosexuality is clearly not genetically mandated. Surveys of adult homosexuals show conspicuous deficits in several of these developmental stages – showing that homosexuality is cultural and environmental rather than genetic.”

*Whitehead, Neil E., PhD. (1999). My Genes Made Me Do It!. Huntington House Pub. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“Human sexual orientation is influenced by biological, cognitive, cultural, and subcultural variables in interaction, leading to multiple types of heterosexuals, bisexuals, and

homosexuals... [T]here is so much variation within each group that the chances of finding any small set of variables which will account neatly both for average differences between groups with differing sexual orientations and for variations within groups approaches the vanishing point.”

*Van Wyk, Paul H., PhD, and Schiro-Geist, Chrisann, PhD. (1995). Biology of Bisexuality: Critique and Observations. Journal of Homosexuality, vol 28 (3-4). Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

## 1. Unhealthy Childhood Relationships With Females

**Summary:** Females can wound young boys by smothering, criticizing, controlling, and ignoring proper boundaries. Some boys who have experienced such wounding develop unhealthy relationships with women in adulthood in which they either push them too far away or cling too closely to them, disrupting their capacity for opposite-sex attraction.

In order to understand the issues with women that so many men with same-sex attraction have, we must begin by looking at the relationship experiences that create those issues. Females-including mothers, sisters, extended family members, teachers, babysitters, and others-can wound a boy in a frightening variety of ways. They may overwhelm him with their attention, smothering him with too much love or concern. They may control, dominate, and overprotect him, leaving him feeling emasculated and incapable. They may over-connect with the boy and use him as a confidant, perhaps pulling him into their problems with other males, including conflicts with his own father, grandfather, or brother.

Females may criticize a boy, causing lasting feelings of shame, insecurity, and self-doubt.

Females may also criticize a boy for his weaknesses, causing lasting feelings of shame, insecurity, and self-doubt. Sometimes, females specifically shame boys about being male or about their male traits, creating gender shame. Conversely, they may over-praise him with complements that are overdone, unrealistic, or insincere. They may feminize him by using him

in their make-believe play as another girl-sometimes dressing him up as a girl or even telling him he is a girl. And females, especially mothers, sometimes rely on a boy emotionally or even physically, requiring him to take care of them, creating in him a sense of being engulfed and used, and fostering feelings of guilt if he tries to be independent.

By failing to observe boundaries and standards of modesty, females may sexualize the relationship with a boy. They may do this by leaving bedroom or bathroom doors open while they are changing, bathing, or using the toilet, or by walking around the house in their underwear or even naked. They may sexualize him by commenting on his body or by talking to him about their sex lives. And occasionally, females also directly abuse boys by engaging them in sexual behavior.

**We have observed four broad categories of unhealthy relationships: oppositional, avoidant, enmeshed, and comfortable.**

Experiences like these cause some boys to form unhealthy relationships with women in adulthood. We have observed four broad categories of unhealthy relationships: oppositional, avoidant, enmeshed, and comfortable. Some same-sex attraction individuals relate to women with feelings, impulses, and behaviors from more than one of these categories.

Those who become oppositional in their relationships tend to reject women and push them away. They may do so out of feelings of resentment, dislike, disgust, or even hatred. Or they may do so in reaction to feeling threatened and endangered by women. Some same-sex attraction men are completely conscious and blatant about their dislike of females. For others, negative feelings toward women may show up only in subtle behaviors and thoughts of which they are barely aware. And some may be completely unconscious of their opposition.

Men who become avoidant in their relationships with women tend to experience feelings of fear and anxiety, which may cause them to keep their distance. Or they may simply feel apathetic and indifferent toward women, perhaps treating them as if they don't exist.

The distancing that occurs in avoidant and oppositional ways of relating with women may block an adult male's natural capacity for attraction to the opposite sex. When sexual abuse by females

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is part of a man's background, the repulsion that often ensues from having experienced female sexuality too early in life and in such repellant ways may contribute to that distancing.

Those who develop enmeshed relationships with women tend to feel needy of their approval or dependent on their support. They may subordinate themselves to women, allowing themselves to be controlled by them. The dependency may go the other direction as well, as in the case where an elderly mother or another disabled female is dependent on a man for assistance in ways that disrupt his ability to individuate and live his own life. And the man may be bound to maintain this situation by tremendous feelings of guilt. If he tries to free himself from the entanglement, his guilt overwhelms him and he gives in.

Those same-sex attraction men who develop comfortable relationships with women tend to seek out females and female settings as sources of safety, security, and consolation. In this case, "comfortable" means something more than simply being at ease with women. And it implies an over-familiarity and over-resonance with them, sharing interests and perspectives, or feeling included as "one of the girls."

Enmeshed and comfortable relationships with women are ways of clinging too closely to the feminine. Being feminized by girls and women in childhood brings the feminine even closer-inside the man where it doesn't belong. A healthy distancing from females and femininity seems vital for the development of genderedness in males and is essential for heterosexuality, as we describe in the next section.

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## 2. Distorted Concepts of Gender

**Summary:** Unhealthy childhood relationships with females can distort a man's view of the female gender, affect how he sees himself in relation to women, damage his sense of masculinity, and prevent the natural development of a sense of genderedness. This can leave the individual without a sense of the opposite sex as complementary and attractive.

In addition to engendering unhealthy relationships with women, unhealthy childhood experiences with females can cause a man's concept of the female gender to become distorted. Many with same-sex attraction develop views about women that are not accurate for women as a whole. For example, they may view all women as powerful, dominant, or controlling; or perhaps as demeaning, emasculating, and shaming. They may see them as needy and engulfing, manipulative and demanding. Or they may perceive women generally as being stupid, weak, or just more trouble than they're worth-moody, complaining, and whining.

On the other hand, they may idealize women, considering them to be more intelligent than men, unrealistically pure, or even sacred. They may look at women as protectors or providers. Or they may view women's roles and lives as preferable because they are easier or better suited for their own personality.

Unhealthy childhood experiences with females may also create distorted concepts of one's self in relation to women. A male with same-sex attraction may see himself as needy and weak in comparison with women, or perceive that he is undesirable, vulnerable, and inferior to women. He may feel small and incapable of handling the demands of an intimate opposite-sex relationship. On the other extreme, he may think he is superior to females-that he is far better than the "weaker" sex.

**Unhealthy childhood experiences with females may also create distorted concepts of one's self in relation to women.**

For many with same-sex attraction, females were the predominant influence in their lives growing up. Whether they perceived their relationships with females as loving or wounding, females were present and engaged. Often women acted as their main source of role modeling and companionship, while the men in their lives may have had little impact.

Men who grew up in such circumstances often become identified with women, experiencing them as resonant and familiar. If they have also come to see women's roles and lives as preferable, they may wish they were female. This may be especially true if gender shame disrupted their connection with their own masculine identity or turned them off to the idea of being male. If this combination of issues is strong enough, a man might come to see himself as "a woman stuck in a man's body." More commonly, he

probably has a clear recognition of his biological sex, but feels a much stronger sense of identification with the opposite sex.

Identification and overfamiliarity with females can greatly impact a developing boy's sense of genderedness. The term "genderedness" refers to the state or condition of having two sexes that are naturally distinct. In addition to anatomical distinctions, males and females differ in many other ways. For example, we differ in the ways we relate, experience emotion, and communicate; in our perceptions, thinking styles, and values. To develop a sense of genderedness, a boy must experience himself as masculine in ways that contrast with the femininity of girls and women. Being identified and overfamiliar with females washes out that contrast.

Distorted views of the female gender, together with distorted perceptions of himself in relation to females, can prevent a boy from developing a sense that girls, and later women, are complementary to his maleness. He may become unable to recognize the favorable relationship that can exist between the two sexes where the natural traits of each fulfill, balance, and refine the other. He may not perceive females as desirable or as having something valuable to contribute to him. And he may not experience himself as having something valuable to contribute to a woman. From this perspective, females would not seem attractive.

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Heterosexuality seems to depend on genderedness and complementarity. Men must see women as distinct from them-excitingly different, exotic, and mysterious-and as providing the opportunity for a mutually fulfilling and beneficial relationship. Most homosexual men are not sexually attracted to women, probably because they have experienced at least some of the issues described above. In contrast, we have noticed that homosexual men who have not experienced these issues often report attractions to females in their past or present life.

**Consider this statement from Daryl Bem, PhD, Professor of Psychology at Cornell University:**

“The central proposition of EBE [Exotic Becomes Erotic] theory is that individuals can become erotically attracted to a class of

individuals from whom they felt different during childhood...”

*Bem, Daryl, PhD. (2000). Exotic Becomes Erotic: Interpreting the Biological Correlates of Sexual Orientation. Archives of Sexual Behavior, vol. 29, No. 6.*

### 3. Feeling Incongruent With One’s Own Gender

**Summary:** Feeling incongruent with what a man believes his gender requires may create a psychologically unstable situation, resulting in the unconscious mind compensating through fixations or attractions toward males and masculinity.

Many homosexual men report that, during childhood, they saw themselves as being at odds or out-of-sync with what they believed a boy is supposed to be. Essentially, their perspective of other males was, “I am not like them and they are not like me—I am different.” We refer to this condition as “gender incongruity.” While most boys and men may occasionally feel like they don’t fully measure up to their masculine ideal, boys experiencing gender incongruity tend to focus on these thoughts extensively. They experience a pervasive sense of lacking in vital qualities or capacities they consider essential for masculinity. And they may believe there is no way for them to obtain or grow into these qualities or capacities.

Gender incongruity is a subjective experience, which means that it is based entirely on individual perspective. It is usually conscious, although some males may not be conscious of how incongruent they actually perceive themselves to be. It seems to be essential for all people to feel congruent with their own gender. Males need to see themselves as adequately matching the traits they believe are appropriate for men. And they need to feel capable of fulfilling the roles expected of males in their society.

When an individual feels incongruent with his gender, he may experience a painful conflict between what he thinks he must be and what he thinks he can be. The inability to resolve that

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situation might result in the unconscious mind compensating in the most direct way it can, perhaps by becoming intensely drawn to or fixated on males and masculinity in an unconscious attempt to somehow internalize it. We believe that many men with same-sex attraction are experiencing exactly that situation.

**Consider these statements from well-known scientists and mental health experts.**

“A history of gender identity pathology (including effeminacy and chronic extreme unmasculinity) is much more common among men who are predominantly or exclusively homosexual than among men who are predominantly or exclusively heterosexual.

The combined results of numerous investigations lead to the conclusion that childhood gender identity/gender role disturbances are associated with predominant or exclusive homosexuality in adulthood. Absence of such disturbance diminishes the likelihood that a boy will become a man who is exclusively or predominantly homosexual.”

*Friedman, Richard, MD. (1988). Male Homosexuality: A Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspective. Yale University Press. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“As our analyses demonstrated for both men and women, research has firmly established that homosexual subjects recall substantially more cross-sex-typed behavior in childhood than do heterosexual subjects....

[E]arly cross-gender behavior appears to be substantially more predictive of homosexuality in men than in women. Because a strong empirical link between childhood sex-typed behavior and sexual orientation has been established for men in both prospective and retrospective, it is likely to be genuine.”

*Bailey, J. Michael, PhD, and Zucker, Kenneth, PhD. (1995). Childhood Sex-Typed Behavior and Sexual*

*Orientation: A Conceptual Analysis*. Developmental Psychology, vol. 31, No. 1. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>

“Most sissies will grow up to be homosexuals, and most gay men were sissies as children.”

Despite the provocative and politically incorrect nature of that statement, it fits the evidence. In fact, it may be the most consistent, well-documented, and significant finding in the entire field of sexual-orientation research and perhaps in all of human psychology.”

*Hamer, Dean, PhD, and Copeland, Peter. (1994) The Science of Desire: The Search for the Gay Gene and the Biology of Behavior. Simon & Schuster. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“The most common reasons given by gay men and lesbians for having felt different from same-sex peers in childhood were sex-atypical preferences and behaviors in childhood—gender nonconformity. In fact, childhood gender conformity or nonconformity was not only the strongest but the only significant childhood predictor of later sexual orientation for both men and women.”

*Bem, Daryl, PhD. (2000). “Exotic Becomes Erotic: Interpreting the Biological Correlates of Sexual Orientation. Archives of Sexual Behavior, vol. 29, No. 6. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

#### **4. Problems In Relationships With Other Males**

**Summary:** During childhood, some boys disconnect from other

males due to negative experiences with males, negative stereotypes about males, and fear of being seen as strange. This leaves their normal needs for same-sex connection and bonding unmet, resulting in longings and cravings for male closeness.

Painful, frightening, or alienating experiences with father, brother, peers, and other males can lead boys to pull away from males generally, breaking or preventing normal same-sex bonds and creating a state of same-sex disaffiliation. This may have been caused by abuse, harassment, and bullying; through rejection, non-inclusion, and alienation from other males; or through a profound experience of mismatch with the males around him.

Complaints and criticisms by females about the males in a young boy's life can cause a boy to look down on those males, leading to negative stereotypes that alienate him from other males, and contributing to same-sex disaffiliation. Such stereotypes are easily perpetuated because the disaffiliated boy has little interaction with other males to disconfirm them.

Gender incongruity can also contribute to same-sex disaffiliation by causing a boy to avoid other males out of a sense of being different or strange. The boy may fear that if the other boys get to know him, they will see his strangeness and will reject him. Likewise, same-sex disaffiliation can reinforce gender incongruity since the less time the boy spends with other males, the fewer of their traits he will adopt. Gender incongruity and same-sex disaffiliation can become a mutually reinforcing negative cycle.

These kinds of negative experiences with males cause some boys to form unhealthy relationships with males in adulthood. We have observed four broad categories of unhealthy relationships: oppositional, detached, inauthentic, and needy.

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Boys who become oppositional respond to other males with rejection, anger or disgust, which is a defensive wall against reconnection. Boys who become detached tend to be disinterested, uninvolved, and distant from other males. Boys who develop inauthentic relationships tend to be anxious and superficial with other males, presenting a friendly false self that protects a

fearful self underneath. And boys who develop needy relationships often long to be taken care of, obsess about male intimacy, and may be dependent on other males for attention, affection, and approval.

But connection with others of one's own sex is a core need. So if a boy is disaffiliated from other males, his natural needs for same-sex connection, affection, affirmation, and resonance will go unmet. Unfulfilled needs typically transform into longings and cravings; unmet needs for same-sex affiliation thus become longings or cravings for male attention, closeness, and love.

**Consider the following statements from two psychiatrists.**

“Every child has a healthy need to identify positively with the parent of the same sex, have same-sex friendships, a positive body image and a confident sexual identity. Homosexual feelings can occur when these needs are not met appropriately.

The adolescent's unmet needs become entangled with emerging sexual feelings and produce same-sex attraction.”

*Fitzgibbons, Richard P., MD, letter to the Washington Times, Jan. 24, 1997. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“The following is one of the many developmental pathways that can lead to homosexuality, but a common one... [The boy] recalls a painful ‘mismatch’ between what he needed and longed for and what his father offered him. Perhaps most people would agree that his father was distinctly distant and ineffective... The absence of a happy, warm, and intimate closeness with his father led to the boy's pulling away in disappointment, ‘defensively detaching’ in order to protect himself....

Although he has ‘defensively detached’ from his father, the young boy still carries silently within him a terrible longing for the warmth, love, and encircling arms of the father he never had nor could

have... When puberty sets in, sexual urges—which can attach themselves to any object, especially in males—rise to the surface and combine with this already intense need for masculine intimacy and warmth. He begins to develop homosexual crushes...

As he matures (especially in our culture where early, extramarital sexual experiences are sanctioned and even encouraged), the youngster, now a teen, begins to experiment with homosexual activity... At some point, he gives in to his deep longings for love and begins to have voluntary homosexual experiences.”

*Satinover, Jeffrey, MD. (July 1995). The Complex Interaction of Genes and Environment: A Model For Homosexuality. Proceedings from the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality Annual Conference. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

## 5. Sexual Conditioning

**Summary:** Sexual desire can be conditioned through pairing specific stimuli with sexual arousal. Male-on-male sexual abuse and early exposure to male pornography may create or intensify homosexual arousal for some boys.

In 1901, Ivan Pavlov, a Soviet behavioral scientist, discovered that dogs could be conditioned to salivate in response to the ringing of a bell. Dogs normally salivate when they are given food, so Pavlov first paired the ringing of the bell with presenting food to the dog. After some time, he rang the bell without presenting the food and found that the dog still salivated. By associating the sound of the bell with food, Pavlov was able to transfer the physiological reaction of salivation from one stimulus (the food) to another stimulus (the bell). This process became known as “conditioned reflex” or “classical conditioning.”

Humans can become conditioned in much the same way, by creating strong associations between different stimuli. Most of us have experienced this phenomenon in such ways as associating a particular song with a specific

time or place in our lives, or associating a taste or smell with a person or experience from our past. Donald Hebb (1904-1985) advanced our understanding of this phenomenon with his research and theories about how the brain learns. He is known for the phrase, “neurons that fire together wire together,” which means that when different neural networks within the brain are fired at the same time, they create synaptic connections that can become permanent. According to his theory, this is how humans acquire all skills and knowledge.

**We believe it is possible to become conditioned to respond sexually to others of the same sex.**

We believe it is possible to become conditioned to respond sexually to others of the same sex. This can occur in at least three ways: through sexual abuse, childhood sex play, and pornography.

During male-on-male sexual abuse, boys are simultaneously exposed to male stimuli (for example, genitals, body, voice) and sexual stimulation. Likewise, during sexual experimentation and play with other boys, male stimuli and sexual stimulation are paired. Given that many boys who are sexually abused by other males or who experiment sexually with other boys grow up to be heterosexual, it is clear that sexual abuse does not always condition boys to homosexuality. Yet we have seen clear evidence that it sometimes does. This is particularly evident among the men with whom we have worked whose adult patterns of sexual interest and behavior exactly mirror their early sexual abuse or experimentation. Examples of this would be a man who is exclusively attracted to males who look and smell like the man who abused him, or a man who continues to seek out sexual situations like those in which he first experienced sexual pleasure with his neighborhood buddies.

The effect of pornography on young boys may be somewhat more direct. Pornography featuring men or boys places males in a sexual context. Some

**Pornography featuring men or boys places males in a sexual context.**

boys viewing this pornography might automatically respond with sexual feelings due to the presence of other predisposing factors in their lives, such as gender incongruity or same-sex disaffiliation. But it is possible that boys with no other predisposing factors might respond to the pornographic images with strong feelings of awe, wonder, curiosity, envy, or fear of getting caught. And it is possible that, in the highly sexualized context of the pornography, these boys might confuse these feelings with sexual arousal. Boys who view

pornography typically also masturbate while looking at it or while thinking about it afterward. This would cause even stronger associations between maleness and sexual feelings.

Once learned, pleasurable sexual activities are reinforced as boys continue to engage in them. Behaviors that cover up emotional distress are especially likely to be reinforced as boys resort to them again and again for relief. Men with whom we have worked often report that they have used pornography and homosexual behavior to turn off emotional pain and distress. Becoming sexually aroused by male images can cause a boy to believe, or confirm to him, that he is homosexual or gay. It may then become a learned part of his identity.

## 6. Sexual Abuse

**Summary:** In addition to its potential role in conditioning sexual arousal, sexual abuse can create or intensify gender incongruity, disaffiliation from other males, and—if the perpetrator is female—fear or hatred of women. It may also create repetitive patterns of compulsive sexual behavior.

Sexual abuse occurs when one person uses another for his or her own sexual gratification against their will or without their consent. It occurs when an older and more powerful child engages a younger or smaller child in sexual activity. And it occurs when an adult engages a minor in sexual activity or exposes them to sexually explicit material or language, with or without their consent.

Consent implies the ability and maturity to understand what is going on and the possible consequences of it. Since children do not really understand sexuality, they cannot give consent when an older person involves them in sexual behavior.

Some examples of sexual abuse include:

- Being exposed to sexually explicit talk
- Being exposed by another person to sexually explicit material in magazines, television and video, and on the internet

- Being exposed as a child to sexually stimulating behavior by older people, whether male or female
- Being exposed to nudity or to sexual behavior between other people, such as seeing relatives naked or seeing parents or others engage in sex
- Being touched intimately on the genitals or other parts of the body
- Being asked or forced to touch another person's genitals
- Being asked or forced to have sexual intercourse with another person

**Sexual abuse can contribute to gender incongruity.**

Sexual abuse can contribute to gender incongruity. Some boys who are sexually abused by other males wonder about their own sexuality. They know that males are supposed to enjoy having sex with females and so it becomes very confusing for them when a male seems to enjoy having sex with them. This is especially confusing if they became sexually aroused during the abuse. Most boys who are sexually abused experience tremendous feelings of guilt and shame. For some, that shame attacks their sense of masculinity, causing them to feel wrong as a boy.

Sexual abuse can contribute to same-sex disaffiliation. Some sexually abused boys become fearful of other males or angry and resentful toward them. They may lose trust in their father or an older brother for not protecting them. The depression, anxiety, shame, and low self-esteem often engendered by sexual abuse can cause them to isolate themselves from normal activities with peers. And their gender incongruity may compel them to avoid connection with other boys for fear of being seen as “queer.”

**Sexual abuse can contribute to same-sex disaffiliation.**

**Sexual abuse can lead to compulsive relational and behavioral patterns.**

Sexual abuse can lead to compulsive relational and behavioral patterns. Some individuals who have experienced traumatic events or relationships during childhood will unconsciously create circumstances in their adult lives that lead to very similar traumatic events or circumstances. Psychotherapists refer to these patterns as “repetition compulsions.” These patterns can form in response to sexual abuse, resulting in adult sexual behavior that mirrors the abuse. It is believed that repetition compulsions are an unconscious attempt

by adults to master or get control of childhood situations in which they had little or no control. It may also be an effort to resolve conflicting emotions around circumstances that elicited contradictory feelings, such as fear or shame and sexual pleasure.

While this pattern is not exclusive to individuals with same-sex attraction, we have observed this pattern in the sexual behavior of numerous individuals with whom we have worked.

If the sexual perpetrator is female, sexual abuse may create disinterest, disgust, fear, and hatred toward women. In our experience, blatant sexual abuse of boys by females occurs only occasionally.

**If the sexual perpetrator is female, sexual abuse may create disinterest, disgust, fear, and hatred toward women.**

More commonly, females sexually abuse boys in less obvious ways, such as having poor boundaries regarding modesty around the house—including dressing immodestly and leaving bathroom doors open—and having poor boundaries regarding sexual talk, such as mothers or sisters discussing their sexual relationships with a boy.

Consider the following comments by Helen Wilson, PhD, regarding findings from long-term study on the effects of sexual abuse.

“Findings from this investigation provide tentative support for a relationship between childhood sexual abuse and same sex sexual relationships, but this relationship appeared only for men. That is, men with histories of childhood sexual abuse were more likely than men in a control group to report same-sex sexual partnerships... [T]his evidence of a link between court-substantiated cases of childhood sexual abuse and same-sex partnerships reported by adult men 30 years later is a notable finding that adds to the literature on this topic....

However, the data available in this study did not provide information about when same-sex sexual attractions first emerged and whether this predated or followed the sexual abuse. We also do not know what characteristics associated with the abuse (e.g., frequency, intensity, duration) might account for the relationship with adult sexual partnerships. It is also important to note that very few participants reported exclusively same-sex sexual relationships.

Thus, it is possible that childhood sexual abuse increased the likelihood that men would experiment with both same- and opposite-sex partners....

While this prospective evidence linking childhood sexual abuse to same-sex sexual partnerships in men suggests an increased likelihood, these findings do not suggest that same-sex sexual orientation is caused by child abuse.”

*Wilson, Helen W., PhD, and Widom, Cathy Spatz, PhD. (Jan. 7, 2009). Does Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, or Neglect in Childhood Increase the Likelihood of Same-sex Sexual Relationships and Cohabitation? A Prospective 30-Year Follow-up. Archives of Sexual Behavior, vol. 39 (1). Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

## **7. Certain Biological and Physical Issues**

**Summary:** Research on direct biological and genetic causes of homosexuality is inconclusive. But our experience suggests that certain biological factors can have an important impact on a boy's sense of his masculinity and on his relationships with other males.

A tremendous amount of research has been conducted over the past 20 years attempting to link homosexuality to various genetic, hormonal, and neurological factors. To date, this research has raised interesting hypotheses, but failed to produce any concrete evidence about the causes of homosexuality. Commentary about this research can be found in this section, below.

Our observations of those with whom we have worked suggests that, while biological factors may not have a direct causal role in the development of same-sex attraction, they certainly contribute to the kinds of stressful life experiences we've discussed above, particularly gender incongruity and same-sex disaffiliation. Following are some key biological factors that often contribute to stress among those with same-sex attraction.

Genetic and physical traits and conditions that cause boys to feel different or to be singled out from their peers can interfere in their relationships with other boys, and can also cause the boy to feel incongruent with what he believes a boy is supposed to be. These conditions would typically cause boys to be singled out in negative ways—but sometimes also in positive ways. Examples of such conditions include:

- Having a physical deformity
- Being over- or under-weight
- Having high or low intelligence
- Concerns about penis size or being uncircumcised
- Having an unusual appearance, whether attractive or unattractive
- Experiencing puberty either later or earlier than the peer group

Physical traits and medical conditions that interfere with gender-typical activities, especially athletics, can similarly interfere with both same-sex affiliation and gender congruity. These can include:

- Having an atypical body size
- Having poor body coordination
- Lacking strength and endurance
- Experiencing poor or late-developing eye-hand coordination
- Experiencing illnesses or debilitating diseases
- Having physical disabilities

Temperaments that separate boys from their father, brothers, and male peers can block same-sex affiliation and foster feelings of gender incongruity. Temperaments are inborn personality traits that are observed from infancy and tend to be stable throughout life. For example, temperament can predispose boys to be:

- Avoidant of harm
- Uninterested in seeking adventure
- Sensitive and emotional

**A well-known theorist suggests that biology influences children's temperaments and their preferences for sex-atypical activities and peers, leading them to feel different from others of their sex. They later become attracted to what they are different from.**

“[Exotic becomes erotic theory] proposes that biological variables, such as genes, prenatal hormones, and brain neuroanatomy, do not code for sexual orientation per se but for childhood temperaments that influence a child's preferences for sex-typical or sex-atypical activities and peers. These preferences lead children to feel different from opposite- or same-sex peers—to perceive them as dissimilar, unfamiliar, and exotic. This in turn produced heightened nonspecific autonomic arousal that subsequently gets eroticized to that same class of dissimilar peers: Exotic becomes erotic.”

*Bem, Daryl J., PhD. (1996) Exotic Becomes Erotic: A Developmental Theory of Sexual Orientation. Psychological Review. Vol. 103. No. 2, 320-335.*

**Commentary from scientific literature shows that evidence is lacking for a simple genetic or biological explanation of homosexuality. Evidence does not support the hypothesis of a gay gene.**

“It's important to stress what I didn't find. I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn't show that gay men are born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay center in the brain.”

*LeVay, Simon, PhD. (March 1994). Sexual Brain. Discover. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“There is no one ‘gay’ gene. Sexual orientation is a complex trait, so it's not surprising that we found several DNA regions involved in its expression.

“Our best guess is that multiple genes, potentially interacting with environmental influences, explain differences in sexual orientation.

“Our study helps to establish that genes play an important role in determining whether a man is gay or heterosexual.”

*Mustanski, Brian S., PhD. (Jan. 27, 2005). University of Illinois news release on A Genomewide Scan of Male Sexual Orientation. Human Genetics, vol. 116. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“While some authors have speculated about the existence of ‘genes for homosexuality,’ genes in themselves cannot directly specify any behavior or cognitive schema. Instead, genes direct a particular pattern of RNA synthesis which in turn specifies the production of a particular protein.

“There are necessarily many intervening pathways between a gene and a specific behavior and even more intervening variables between a gene and a pattern that involves both thinking and behaving.

“The term ‘homosexual gene’ is, therefore, without meaning, unless one proposes that a particular gene, perhaps through a hormonal mechanism, organizes the brain specifically to support a homosexual orientation.”

*Byne, William, MD, PhD. (1995). Science and Belief: Psychobiological Research on Sexual Orientation. Journal of Homosexuality, vol. 28. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

**It is possible that hormones could affect sexuality through their impact on gender-typical traits. Some recent findings suggest this could be true in women.**

“Girls with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, for example, are exposed to high levels of adrenal androgens [hormones] prenatally. Some

research indicates that postnatally they show greater aggression, enhanced (i.e. masculine) visuospatial abilities, more masculine occupational preferences, and an increased rate of bisexual or homosexual sexual orientation in fantasy and/or behavior.”

*Alexander, Gerianne M. (2003). An Evolutionary Perspective of Sex-Typed Toy Preferences: Pink, Blue, and the Brain. Archives of Sexual Behavior, vol. 32, No 1. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

**But it would be inaccurate to believe that hormones have any direct link to adult sexual interests or orientation.**

“Studies of men and women who experienced prenatal defects in hormone metabolism have not found a concurrent increase in homosexual behavior.

“Overall, the data do not support a causal connection between hormones and human sexual orientation.”

*Banks, Amy, MD, and Gartrell, Nanette K., MD. (1995). Hormones and Sexual Orientation: A Questionable Link. Journal of Homosexuality, vol. 28 (3-4). Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“The dominant paradigm that generates support for biological theories of sexual orientation has profound conceptual flaws...

“The current consensus opinion is that no causal relationship exists between adult hormonal status and sexual orientation.

“Currently, the major impetus for speculation and research concerning an endocrinological basis for sexual orientation derives from animal studies... Such studies have established the prenatal hormonal hypothesis for sexual differentiation of the rodent brain...

“The problems inherent in using studies of mating behaviors in rodents...to formulate a theory of sexual orientation in humans are immense...

“Thus, the prenatal hormonal hypothesis as derived from animal studies cannot account for exclusively homosexual behavior in men with normal male genitalia.”

*Byne, William, MD, PhD. (1995). Science and Belief: Psychobiological Research on Sexual Orientation. Journal of Homosexuality, vol. 28 (2). Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

**Birth order has been investigated as a possible factor influencing homosexuality but without conclusive results.**

“The number of biological older brothers, including those not reared with the participant (but not the number of nonbiological older brothers), increases the probability of homosexuality in men. These results provide evidence that a prenatal mechanism, and not social and/or rearing factors, affects men’s sexual orientation development...

“If rearing or social factors associated with older male siblings underlies the fraternal birth-order effect, then the number of nonbiological older brothers should predict men’s sexual orientation, but they do not... If rearing or social factors underlie the fraternal birth-order effect, the number of biological older brothers with whom they were not reared should not predict men’s sexual orientation because they should have no impact on the sociosexual environment of their younger brothers. Yet, these brothers do predict men’s sexual orientation just as the number of biological older brothers with whom they were reared.

“These results support a prenatal [before birth] origin to sexual orientation development in men and indicate that the fraternal birth-order effect is probably the result of a maternal ‘memory’ for male gestations or births.”

*Bogaert, Anthony, PhD. (July 11, 2006). Biological Versus Nonbiological Older Brothers and Men's Sexual Orientation. The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 103. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

“In diverse samples and independent replications, homosexual men are found to have a greater number of older brothers than heterosexual men... [This] certainly does not provide a universal hypothesis for the origins of homosexuality since the majority of homosexual men do have this history and do not fit in this model.

“The hypothesis advanced in the above studies is that the late birth order, with more male siblings born earlier, could lead to a progressive immune response of the mother to androgens and/or Y-linked [male specific]... antigens which, by maternal transfer of these immune antibodies to the fetus, could impair brain masculinization of the fetus. However, why this mechanism would selectively impair only certain androgen-dependent processes, such as the brain programming, and not other, like formation of the genitalia, is not explained by this hypothesis, and not even addressed by the proponents. Nor does this theory explain why the majority of boys late in birth order do not become homosexual, even if the elder brother is homosexual...

“The biological explanation advanced for the fraternal birth order hypothesis lacks any experimental support.”

*Gooren, Louis, PhD, MD. (Nov. 2006). The Biology of Human Psychosexual Differentiation. Hormones and Behavior, 2006. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

**Research on brain structure suggests a possible link between homosexuality and “less masculinized” brains.**

But the research does not demonstrate that the less masculine brain structure itself is the direct cause of the

homosexual orientation. It is, however, conceivable that a male with a less masculinized brain might develop gender-atypical traits, leading to gender incongruity. This might be especially true if those around him accentuate his differences.

“A growing body of empirical literature suggests that the brains of gay males are less masculinized than those of heterosexual males, reflected in visual-spatial task performance — a measure of cerebral masculinization and one in which heterosexual males usually surpass females.

“Several studies report that the cognitive performance of gay males is more typical of heterosexual females than heterosexual males.

“Furthermore, the brain waves of gay males while performing verbal and spatial tasks are more similar to heterosexual females than males or significantly different from both.”

*Cohen, Kenneth M., PhD. (2002). Relationships Among Childhood Sex-Atypical Behavior, Spatial Ability, Handedness, and Sexual Orientation in Men. Archives of Sexual Behavior, vol. 31, No. 1. Obtained from <http://borngay.procon.org/>*

## **8. Certain Emotional and Psychological Problem**

**Summary:** Certain emotional and psychological issues are common in the backgrounds of homosexual men. These issues seem to intensify the effect of other life experiences, particularly gender incongruity, same-sex disaffiliation, sexual conditioning, and sexual abuse.

The psychological and emotional issues discussed in this section are very common in the backgrounds of the same-sex attraction men with whom we've worked. While some of these issues may develop as a result of homosexual feelings, we have also observed that often times these feelings predate the emergence of homosexuality.

Obsessiveness and ruminative thinking may amplify problems caused by other predisposing factors.

Obsessiveness and ruminative thinking may amplify problems caused by other predisposing factors. The conditions described below can all be grouped under the heading of obsessiveness and ruminative thinking. All of these have in common the tendency to fixate, perseverate, or stubbornly hold to a thought, belief, or way of being.

- **Perfectionism** is an internally generated demand for accuracy, order, flawlessness, or completion.
- **Rumination** is a tendency to focus on distressing subjects. It involves pessimism and worry, and dwelling on failures, negative possibilities, and consequences. Sometimes the mind feels forced or pressured by these thoughts as if there is no control. This is sometimes referred to as perseverative negative cognition (PNC).
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** is an anxiety disorder in which repetitive distressing thoughts create intense anxiety, leading to compulsive behaviors that are performed in an attempt to lessen the anxiety.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD)** is a rigid and generally perfectionistic style of thinking and living. It may involve extreme perfectionism, preoccupation with order, neatness, detail, or control. It tends to cause those who have it to seem inflexible and stubborn.

Our observations suggest that some type of obsessiveness is present in roughly two-thirds of the same-sex attracted men with whom we've worked. We believe that during childhood and adolescence, obsessive tendencies may have acted as an amplifier of other problems occurring in their lives. Unhealthy relationships with females and problems in relationships with other males might have seemed much greater for these boys. They might have perceived the differences between themselves and other males as being far greater, and far more problematic, than they really were.

Their natural and normal feelings of interest, curiosity, admiration, and envy about maleness and their needs for acceptance and approval from other males seem to have become a significant fixation for them. It is possible that this fixation may have reached a high during puberty, a time of great insecurity

for most young people. The co-occurrence of this fixation with the emergence of sexual feelings might have created a situation ripe for the pairing of interest in maleness with sexual feelings, leading to homosexual conditioning as described in the section on conditioned sexuality.

Shame can become attached to masculinity, creating what we have come to call “gender shame.”

Shame can become attached to masculinity, creating what we have come to call “gender shame.” This can happen in a variety of ways.

Some boys develop a belief that males are bad by hearing complaints about men from women who have been hurt by males. Repeatedly hearing such complaints can turn a boy against his own maleness and negatively color his view of other males, blocking his natural desire to emulate them. This would gradually deepen his disconnection from the world of men.

Some boys get the message that it is not acceptable for them to be male or that they are very bad at being male. This can come from a mother communicating to her son in blatant or subtle ways that she wishes he were a girl, that she sees him as a girl, or that she doesn’t want him to be or act like a boy. It can develop when sisters or other girls tease or humiliate him for acting like a boy. Boys in this situation may try to please those around them by abandoning their maleness. This message can also come from boys or men ridiculing or insulting his male traits, such as his body, voice, mannerisms, or lack of athleticism. This may cause the boy to resent, fear, or avoid other males.

And most significantly, gender shame can come from a boy’s harsh judgments about his own male attributes, particularly related to his body and athleticism. Some boys respond to this by becoming fixated on developing their masculine attributes, especially their physical attributes. Other boys may give up and ignore their bodies.

Depression and anxiety might contribute to the development of homosexuality if it interferes with a boy’s relationships with other males or causes gender incongruity. For example, a boy who is depressed may have little interest in socializing with other boys or engaging in the types of activities that are typical of boys, such as sports, rough play, and adventure. He might also pull away from his father and into his own world. A boy who

Depression and anxiety might contribute to the development of homosexuality if it interferes with a boy’s relationships with other males or causes gender incongruity.

is anxious might find it very difficult to be fully present and engaged in male-male relationships and male-typical activities. Social anxiety causes boys to withdraw from individual and group friendships. Performance anxiety makes it very difficult to do well in sports and other performance-based activities, which are the staple activities of boys and the most typical way in which they interact.

Growing up in these circumstances might prevent the boy from learning to relate and resonate with other boys and men, contributing to same-sex disaffiliation. Living life as an outsider might cause him to experience himself as different from other males, leading to or intensifying gender incongruity.

### **Hypothesis: Two Necessary and Sufficient Factors**

**Summary:** Given the frequency with which these eight kinds of life experiences occur in the backgrounds of men with SSA, it is possible that these experiences might influence the development of homosexuality by creating two conditions.

Human sexuality is complex and can be influenced by many variables leading to many potential outcomes. Our experience suggests that different sets of life experiences may lead to the presence or absence of heterosexuality versus the presence or absence of homosexuality. We believe the first two kinds of life experiences discussed above—unhealthy childhood relationships with females and distorted concepts of gender—may diminish or block a man’s capacity for opposite-sex attraction. And we believe that all eight kinds of life experiences discussed above may work in various combinations to set up two conditions that are necessary and sufficient for male homosexuality to emerge. These two essential conditions are:

#### **Condition 1: Situations in which males and maleness become a focus of intense interest and emotional arousal.**

Males and maleness may become a central focus of attention for boys during important developmental years.

Intense interest might be created when a boy experiences other boys or men as different, mysterious, or exotic. It might be created when a

boy's normal needs for attachment, attention, affection, strength, or protection from other males are left unmet. And it can arise as a result of various types of abandonment or abuse by other males. All of these situations may cause males and maleness to become and remain a central focus of attention for boys during important developmental years.

Most boys experience this type of intense interest in other males during certain years in childhood and adolescence, and do not develop homosexuality. But for some boys, these intense interests are laden with deep emotions, which may feel pleasurable but are more often wistful or painful.

These emotions vary, depending on what elicits them. When the intense interest arises from seeing other males as different or exotic, the emotions may include disgust, inferiority, envy, curiosity, wonder, awe, or a compelling urge to emulate. When the interest springs from unmet needs, the emotions may include longing, sadness, and loss. And when the interest is the result of trauma caused by abandonment or abuse, the emotions may include anxiety, fear, anger, hatred, horror, or shame.

**Condition 2: Experiences that connect the emotionally laden interest in males and maleness with feelings or impulses that are interpreted by the individual as sexual.**

The process of connecting sexual feelings to a particular thing is called "sexualization." Extensive research and clinical experience show that humans are capable of sexualizing not only other humans of all types and ages, but also objects and situations.

Our experience suggests that sexualization goes in the direction of intense emotional interest. The process of sexualization is biologically set to occur during puberty. Under normal circumstances, pubescent children sexualize others of their own age whom they experience—with great interest—as exotic in terms of gender. Most boys sexualize girls. Boys experiencing gender incongruity sexualize other boys.

Research and clinical experience show that humans are capable of sexualizing not only other humans of all types and ages, but also objects and situations.

But the sexualization process may be intercepted when intense emotional interest leads a boy's attention in another direction. For example, if a boy is experiencing unmet needs for attachment, affection, nurture, or protection

from other males—whether father, brother, or peers—the intense emotional interests resulting from those needs may be sexualized. If a boy is sexually abused, aspects of the abuse may become sexualized, including traits of the perpetrator, objects involved in the abuse, and the circumstances under which the abuse occurred. Or if a boy is exposed to male nudity—in a locker room or in pornography—in a way that elicits intense feelings of curiosity, wonder, anxiety, or even shame, that could become sexualized.

Once a type of person, an object, or a situation has become sexualized, the sexual arousal patterns involving that type of person, object, or situation will likely be reinforced by continued sexual behavior. In a very short period of time, these patterns can become fixed and enduring.

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## Are There Different Types of SSA?

**Summary:** Male homosexuality is diverse in terms of the cause, nature, and object of the attractions and desires. There seem to be five different types of attractions.

Understanding your type or types is very useful because it can illuminate the factors lying beneath your same-sex attraction and provide clarity about what may be helpful in fostering change. These types are not discrete—it is common for men to experience more than one type. For example, types 1 and 2 frequently coexist although one or the other often predominates. Sometimes, men with more than one type will experience one of the types as sexual and the other as a non-sexual desire or attraction.

## **Type 1: Desire for Masculinity**

## **Type 2: Desire for Male Connection**

## **Type 3: Age Fixation**

## **Type 4: Desire for Fathering**

## **Type 5: Everything Else**

### **Type 1: Desire for Masculinity**

Men with Type 1 attractions are drawn toward idealized masculine traits. Their desires center on interaction with men who possess such traits, whether that interaction involves visual or physical contact or fantasy. Below is a list of some of the idealized traits these men often mention to us:

- A masculine body: muscular physique, tallness, hairiness, a large penis, and other male-typical features
- Physical abilities: strength, athleticism, or handiness
- Personality characteristics: power, confidence, aggression, control, authority, rebelliousness, or being a “bad boy”
- Being naturally and effortlessly masculine or demonstrating an easy acceptance of one’s own masculinity

### **Type 2: Desire for Male Connection**

Men with Type 2 attractions tend to feel intense longings for an emotional bond with another male. These men may be relationally obsessive. They are often drawn to men in their own age group who have qualities they interpret as relational, such as kindness, friendliness, a warm smile, or a gentle voice and manner. The desires these men often mention to us include:

- Physical touch from another male or being held by him
- Companionship and emotional intimacy with another male; having an exclusive “best friendship”
- Giving and receiving attention, affection, and love
- Receiving comfort and support

- Feeling special, sought out, or included by an individual or group

### **Type 3: Age Fixation**

Men with Type 3 attractions feel intense desires for closeness and intimacy with boys who appear to be within a specific age range—usually either late boyhood or early manhood. The age range may be different for each man. The attractions toward boys tend to begin when the man is young, although they may not be sexualized at that time. As the man ages, his attractions remain fixed on boys of that same age.

### **Type 4: Desire for Fathering**

Men with Type 4 attractions typically feel intense desires for attachment, dependency, and emotional bonding with an older man whom they see as a father figure. They are often drawn to more mature men who exhibit traits that the man links to fatherhood, such as gray hair, wrinkles, a stout physique, hairiness, or whiskers. These men often describe desires for:

- Love and affection
- Protection and security
- Comfort and reassurance
- Physical closeness or being touched or held
- Being mentored or shown how to be a man
- Being taken care of by an older man

### **Type 5: Everything Else**

Type 5 includes all homosexual desires and behaviors that are not included in the other four categories, such as:

- Situational homosexuality—sex between males that is experimental, recreational, or due to unavailability of women
- [Conditioned homosexuality](#) created through pairing male stimuli with sexual arousal. This can be caused by male-on-male sexual abuse or early exposure to male pornography.
- Re-enacting childhood sexual abuse in desire, fantasy, and action. Attractions are toward men with traits that resemble the abuser.

- Paraphilias that don't fit within one of the other categories, such as sexual arousal from objects, situations, or body parts that are not in and of themselves erotic. These seem to have specific meaning to the individual based on associations or life experiences. They may be a sexualization of traumatic life experiences in childhood. They tend to be oriented toward a specific gender.