**Are People “Born Gay”?**

The following is a summary of the most widely reported research which some have claimed show a biological basis for homosexuality.

**Are There Differences In the Brains of Straight and Gay Men?**

In 1991, neuroscientist Simon LeVay published an article in [*Science*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_%28Journal%29) magazine which reported a difference in average size between the third [Interstitial](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/interstitial) Nucleus of the Anterior [Hypothalamus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypothalamus) ([INAH3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/INAH_3)) in the brains of heterosexual men and homosexual men: INAH3 was more than twice as large in heterosexual men as in homosexual men. The INAH3 size of homosexual men was the same as that of women. LeVay S (1991). “A difference in hypothalamic structure between homosexual and heterosexual men.” *Science, 253,* 1034-1037.

The media splashed the study on front pages and TV and radio broadcasts from coast to coast in the United States and England. Gay activists widely reported that LeVay had proved there was a biological basis for homosexuality. However LeVay himself warned that his work should not be so interpreted. "It’s important to stress what I didn’t find. I did not prove that homosexuality is [genetic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetics), 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.” <http://discovermagazine.com/1994/mar/sexandthebrain346/?searchterm=levay>.

Then in his 1996 book, LeVay again asserted that a variety of factors are likely to be involved in bringing an individual to become gay. “When a gay man, for example, says he was born gay, he generally means that he felt different from other boys at the earliest age he can remember. Sometimes the difference involved sexual feelings, but more commonly it involved some kind of gender-nonconformist or 'sex-atypical' traits--disliking rough-and-tumble play, for example--that were not explicitly sexual. These differences, which have been verified in a number of ways, suggest that sexual orientation is influenced by factors operating very early in life, but these factors could still consist of environmental forces such as parental treatment in the early postnatal period” Simon LeVay, *Queer Science*, MIT Press, 1996, p. 6.

What did Simon LeVay’s study prove?

“The facts are simple enough. One bundle of neurons in the hypothalamus (which regulates heart rate, sleep, hunger, and sex drive) was found to be nearly three times as large in the brains of the 16 heterosexual men studied by LeVey as it was in the brains of the 19 homosexual men. At first glance, that looks conclusive: an open-and-shut case for the genetic argument.

“But it is not that simple. It is questionable whether the portion of the hypothalamus LeVay studied (the INAH 3) can be accurately measured. It is smaller than a snowflake, and scientists are not in agreement as to how its size should be determined. According to *Newsweek*, “Measuring brain structures is notoriously difficult and controversial--neuroscientists cannot agree on whether the most meaningful gauge is the volume of the region [LeVay’s method] or its number of neurons.

“Further complicating matters is the sensitive nature of the hypothalamus itself. Does its size determine homosexuality, or does homosexuality determine its size? No one is sure. ‘You could postulate,’ says neurophysiologist Kenneth Klivington of the Salk Institute, ‘that brain change occurs throughout life as a consequence of experience.’ Joe Dallas, *Christianity Today,* June 22, 1992, pp. 21-22*.*

The study also had major problems, which LeVay himself readily admits. First, all 19 of his homosexual subjects died of complications associated with AIDS. The difference in the hypothalamus might have been caused by chemical changes in the brain as a response to AIDS. Dr. Byne argued in *Scientific American* that “[LeVay’s] inclusion of a few brains from heterosexual men with AIDS did not adequately address the fact that at the time of death virtually all men with AIDS have decreased testosterone levels as the result of the disease itself or the side effects of particular treatments. … Thus it is possible that the effects on the size of the INAH3 [hypothalamus] that he attributed to sexual orientation were actually caused by the hormonal abnormalities associated with AIDS.” E. Byne, “The Biological Evidence Challenged,” *Scientific American* (May 1994): 50-5.

In addition, six of the “heterosexual” men died of AIDS. LeVay admitted later that he didn’t actually know whether the subjects in his heterosexual sample were, indeed, heterosexual; all of these subjects were simply “presumed heterosexual.” Given that very few straight men in San Francisco were contracting AIDS at the time (and still aren’t), this was a wildly unscientific assumption.

Another weakness of LeVay’s study is that his sample included major “exceptions.” Three of the homosexuals had larger clusters of neurons than the mean size for the heterosexuals, and three of the heterosexuals had clusters smaller than the mean size for the homosexuals.

**Have Twins Studies Proved that Homosexuality is Entirely Genetic?**

In 1991, J. Michael Bailey and Richard C. Pillard published a study that examined identical and fraternal twin brothers and adopted brothers in an effort to establish a genetic link to homosexuality. Fifty-two percent of the identical twins were reportedly homosexual, while only 22 percent of fraternal twins fell into the same category. But since identical twins have identical genetic material, the fact that nearly half of the identical twins were heterosexual effectively refutes the idea that homosexuality has a genetic basis. J. Michael Bailey, Richard C. Pillard, “A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 48 (1991): 1089-96.

In 1993, Columbia University psychiatry professors Drs. William Byne and Bruce Parsons examined the most prominent “gay gene” studies on brain structure and on identical twins, and published the results in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*. They found numerous methodological flaws in all of the studies, and concluded that:

“There is no evidence at present to substantiate a biologic theory. … [T]he appeal of current biologic explanations for sexual orientation may derive more from dissatisfaction with the present status of psychosocial explanations than from a substantiating body of experimental data.” William Byne and Bruce Parsons, “Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised,” *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 50, March 1993: 228-239.

After he was roundly attacked by homosexual activists, who accused him of providing ammunition for conservatives to challenge the gay rights/civil rights comparison based on immutability, Byne denounced the “false dichotomy: Biology or Choice?” and stated that he was also skeptical of environmental theories of sexual orientation. He wrote: “There is no compelling evidence to support any singular psychosocial explanation,” and that he would never “imply that one consciously decides one’s sexual orientation.” Letter from William Byne to Dean Hamer, 2 July 1993, as quoted in Chandler Burr, *A Separate Creation: The Search for the Biological Origins of Sexual Orientation* (New York, New York: Hyperion, 1996), p. 81.

“Byne, a psychiatrist with a doctorate in biology, and Parsons (1993) looked carefully at other biochemical theories and found that the evidence for a causative connection just is not there. They also noted the actual data in the most widely quoted study, Bailey and Pillard's (1991) investigation of homosexuality in twins. In spite of what Bailey and Pillard claimed and the newspapers reported, if this study proves anything, it is that human homosexuality is not genetically predetermined. These are the critical data: Even identical twins (which means those with identical heredity) correlated between themselves only 52 percent for homosexuality--so other factors must affect matters; but even more critically, fraternal twins were concordant for homosexuality twice as often as were non-twin biological brothers (22 percent vs. 9 percent). From the genetic standpoint, those two figures should have been the same, since non-twin related siblings and fraternal twins form one genetic group. In other words, if the data mean anything, then twinship may be a factor, but genes cannot be.” Johanna Krout Tabin, Ph.D., “Clinically Based Thoughts About The Development Of Homosexuality” Source: Collected Papers from the NARTH Annual Conference, Saturday, 29 July 1995.

“This finding alone argues for the enormous importance of *nongenetic* factors influencing Homosexuality because … in order for something to be genetically *determined*, as opposed to merely influenced, the genetic heritability would need to approach 100 percent . . . *identical* twins reared together share more significant environmental influences than *nonidentical* twins reared together, and that narcissism, a key component of homosexuality, is more likely among identical twins who grow up with mirror images of themselves.” Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*, p. 85. (Italics in original.)

In his analysis of the medical evidence purportedly supporting a biological cause of homosexuality, Dr. Byne noted other twin studies:

“Without knowing what developmental experiences contribute to sexual orientation … the effects of common genes and common environments are difficult to disentangle. Resolving this issue requires studies of twins raised apart. E. Byne, “The Biological Evidence Challenged,” *Scientific American* (May 1994): 50-5

Other physicians have also criticized the study for overvaluing the genetic influence. T. Lidz, “A Reply to ‘A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation’” [letter], *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50 (1993): 240.

Dr. Byne’s arguments might lead some activists to label him a “homophobe.” He is, in reality, quite the contrary. Byne readily advocates societal acceptance of homosexuality and “gay rights,” but nevertheless concludes, “Most of the links in the chain of reasoning from biology to social policy [regarding homosexuality], do not hold up under scrutiny.” T. Lidz, “A Reply to ‘A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation’” [letter], *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50 (1993): 240.

“Bailey conducted another study in 1999, published in the March 2000 issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, which actually showed less possible genetic influence on homosexuality than the first twins study. He sent a questionnaire to the entire Australian Twin Registry. Only three pairs of identical male twins were both homosexual out of a total of 27 in which at least one was homosexual. Of the 16 fraternal male twins, none of the pairs was both homosexual. Bailey found similar results for lesbians.” Stanton L. Jones, “The Incredibly Shrinking Gay Gene,” *Christianity Today*, 4 October 1999, p. 53.

**Did Hamer Find the “Gay Gene?”**

In 1994 researcher Dean Hamer was widely quoted as “having discovered the gay gene.” However, he directly stated that he did not.

“The most important limitation of our research was that we didn’t isolate a ‘gay gene’; we only detected its presence through linkage. We narrowed the search to the neighborhood, the X chromosome—and even the block, Xq28—but we didn’t find the house . . . . If much of homosexuality is caused by environmental factors, or by a large number of interacting genes, Xq28 could account for as little as a few percent of the variation in male sexual orientation. The median range, taken from our linkage data and from the available twin and family studies, suggest that Xq28 plays some role in about 5 to 30 percent of gay men.” Dean Hamer & Peter Copeland, *The Science of Desire: The Search for the Gay Gene and the Biology of Behavior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 147, 145-6.

In 1999, several researchers tried to replicate Hamer’s findings and found no evidence of the supposed linkage. “Several lines of evidence have implicated genetic factors in homosexuality. The most compelling observation has been the reportof genetic linkage of male homosexuality to microsatellite markerson the X chromosome. This observation warranted further studyand confirmation. Sharing of alleles at position Xq28 was studiedin 52 gay male sibling pairs from Canadian families. Four markersat Xq28 were analyzed (DXS1113, BGN, Factor 8, and DXS1108). Alleleand haplotype sharing for these markers was not increased overexpectation. These results do not support an X-linked gene underlyingmale homosexuality.” G. Rice, C. Anderson, N. Risch & G. Ebers, “Male Homosexuality: Absence of Linkage to Microsatellite Markers at Xq28” *Science* (23 April 1999, Vol. 284), p. 665.

Moreover, when yet another group of researchers (Sanders, et al.) tried to replicate Hamer’s study, they too failed to find a genetic connection to homosexuality. Dean H. Hamer, George Rice, Neil Risch, and George Ebers, et al. “Genetics and Male Sexual Orientation” (Technical Comment), *Science* 285 (6 August 1999: 803a).

**Are Lesbian’s Ears Like Mens’?**

In 1998, Dennis McFadden and Edward G. Pasanen published a study that evaluated auditory systems. Specifically, the study considered differences in echo-like waveforms emitted from an inner ear structure of people with normal hearing. These waves are higher in women than in men, a factor often attributed to the level of a person’s exposure to androgen (a male hormone) in his or her early development as a fetus. McFadden and Pasanen. “Comparison of the auditory systems of heterosexuals and homosexuals: Click-evoked otoacoustic emissions” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science USA*, Vol. 95, pp. 2709-2713, March 1998.

In self-acknowledged lesbians, the waveforms ranged between those of men and those of heterosexual women. The researchers concluded that this suggests that female homosexuality could result from larger exposure to the male hormone androgen in the womb (homosexual men did not show the same variation). McFadden 2709.

The media eagerly jumped on this bandwagon. But even the researchers themselves did not draw definitive conclusions. In the published study, they pointed out that exposure to “intense sounds, certain drugs, and other manipulations” can lower the level of these auditory waveforms. “ Thus, it may be that something in the lifestyles of homosexual and bisexual females leads them to be exposed to one or more agents that have reduced the [waveforms], either temporarily or permanently.” McFadden 2712.

Moreover, even if the hearing differences were caused by an increased exposure to androgen in the womb, scientists would still be far from proving that this exposure is a cause of homosexuality—especially since the difference was not apparent in the male homosexual sample.

**Do Gay Men Have Female Neuroanatomy?**

In 1999, Dr. Qazi Rahman compiled a brief review of several studies purporting to show a link between neuroanatomy and sexual orientation. Qazi Rahman, “Comments on the Neuroanatomy of Human Sexual Orientation and Proposed Neuroendocrine Hypotheses,” *Journal of Contemporary Neurology*, The MIT Press, Vol. 1999, No. 2A

He wrote: “The emerging neuroanatomical account suggests that, in some key neural substrates, homosexual men show a trend toward female-typical neuroanatomy as compared to heterosexual men. Rahman, 2.

Rahman also said, “Lesbians excel at some tasks which favor heterosexual males.” As in the eye-blinking study, Rahman struck a cautionary note: “But is neuroendocrine differentiation a cause or a consequence of behavior? … In addition, the differential development posited may not be causal but correlational.”

Rahman noted that, “Differential reinforcements from inputs in the psychosocial milieu to these sex-atypical behaviors makes the ‘pre-homosexual child’ view the same sex as ‘exotic’ (i.e., different from one’s self), which later in puberty becomes the object of eroticization.” Rahman, 3.

However, Joseph Nicolosi warns, “As some developmental psychologists have observed, some children may be less inclined to exhibit classic gender role differences, and this may set them up for the type of reactions from peers (or even parents), such as rejection or teasing, that make them vulnerable to developing same-sex attraction. Numerous references to this phenomenon are reported throughout.” Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1991).

One glaring problem with Rahman’s article is that he uncritically cites many of the studies that were thoroughly debunked by researchers such as Columbia’s Byne and Parsons. These include studies by LeVay, Hamer, Allen, Gorski, Bailey and others.

Rahman summarizes his study this way:

“To conclude, it is important to illustrate that neurobiological differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals are by no means decisive. Nonetheless, the several independent findings of neuroanatomical differences in sex-atypical directions are not easily refutable. *[Editor’s note: Yes, they are. Byne and Parsons, among others, saw to that.]* Unfortunately, evidence currently available is limited and largely correlational in nature. Owing to this, it is not possible for alternative developmental processes associated with sexual orientation to be excluded.” Rahman, 3.

**Do Lesbians Have Longer Fingers?**

In March 2000, the media publicized a finger length study that indicated that lesbians had longer fingers than other women, perhaps because of greater exposure in the womb to androgen. Typically, both sexes’ index finger is slightly shorter than the ring finger—a difference that is seen more clearly on the right hand. In females, the ring finger and index finger are almost the same size, but in men the index finger is more noticeably shorter.

In this study, Berkeley’s Dr. Breedlove, who had in 1997 shown how sexual activity can change brain structure, found that homosexual women’s finger length had a tendency to follow the male pattern. But Breedlove cautioned about reading too much into the finding:

“There is no gene that forces a person to be straight or gay,” he told CNN. “… I believe there are many social and psychological, as well as biological, factors that make up sexual preference.” “Male hormone levels in womb may affect sexual orientation, study says,” CNN.com, health, 29 March 2000, (http://www.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/03/29/gay.fingers/index.html).

Dr. Jeffrey Satinover commented as follows on the study:

“A girl who develops before and into puberty with a ‘masculinized habitus’ (the result of excess maternal intrauterine androgen stimulated by a genetic condition in the *fetus*)—a stocky physique, facial hair, powerful muscles, a square jaw *and long fingers*—may suffer so much teasing and rejection by family and peers that she comes to think of herself as ‘not feminine’ and so will seek solace in the arms of women. Indeed, this an all-too-common pattern in the lives of ‘lesbians’ and illustrates exactly how a strong genetic ‘association’ can imply literally zero genetic causation whatsoever. It’s rather remarkable that the authors failed to remark on the support their study provided not for any genetic association with lesbianism, but rather for the genetic association to secondary sexual expression in *homo sapiens* that Vilain et al were only able to demonstrate in *mus musculus.* The attention paid to homosexuality in both cases, while ignoring straighforward sex, reflects the distinctly Orwellian effect that political correctness has on science: We now treat the differences between male and female as socially constructed and those between heterosexuality and homosexuality as innate and genetic.”Quoted by Robert Knight, “Born or Bred: Science Does Not Support the Claim That Homosexuality Is Genetic” http://www.cwfa.org/images/content/bornorbred.pdf

**Do Lesbians Blink Like Men?**

In October 2003, a team of English researchers announced that they had found “powerful new evidence that sexual orientation is ‘hard-wired’ in the human brain before birth.” “Sexual Orientation ‘hard-wired’ before birth – startling new evidence revealed in the blink of an eye,” press release, University of East London, England, 2 October 2003.

Dr. Qazi Rahman of the University of East London and Dr. Veena Kumari and Dr. Glenn Wilson of the Institute of Psychiatry said they found sex differences in the startle response – the eye blink in response to loud noises. Rahman & Kumari, 1096-1102.

The authors found that women had a lesser “prepulse inhibition of the human startle response (PPI),” that is, they blinked more readily than men, and that lesbians blinked less readily than other women. They used small samples, and, more significantly, found no difference between homosexual men and heterosexual men. Yet they gave the impression that their findings indicated that homosexuality is a pre-born condition.

“Because the startle response is known to be involuntary rather than learned, this strongly indicates that sexual orientation is largely determined before birth,” said a press release from the University of East London. Press release, “Sexual orientation ‘hard-wired’ before birth.”

Dr. Rahman said in the release, “These findings may well affect the way we as a society deal with sexuality and the issues surrounding sexual orientation.”

But the researchers themselves introduce some cautionary notes in the study: “Although prenatal factors may be possible precursors to the neurobehavioral profiles observed in lesbians and gay men, whether neural differences underlie sexual orientation per se, or are a consequence of homosexual or heterosexual behavior, is yet to be determined.” Press release, 1097.

They also write: “Neuroanatomical and neurophysiological variations between heterosexuals and homosexuals may be due either to biological factors or to the influence of learning.” Press release, 1099. The team concluded that: “Our results show, for the first time, that PPI relates to sexual orientation and that homosexual women show a robust cross-sex shift. Homosexual women showed a masculinized PPI that was no different from that of heterosexual men. … Homosexual men did not differ from heterosexual men.” Press release, 1098.

Dr. Halstead Harrison, an associate professor emeritus in the Atmospheric Science Department of the University of Washington, reviewed the study, noted the small sizes of the test groups (14 lesbians and 15 heterosexual women, and 15 each of homosexual and heterosexual men) and the statistical methods, and concluded: “Data presented by Rahman *et al.* do not confidently support their finding that homosexual women exhibit a male-type startled-blink reflex.” Halstead Harrison, “A Technical Comment on the paper, ‘Sexual Orientation-Related Differences in Prepulse Inhibition of the Human Startle Response,’” University of Washington Web site, 15 December 2003,

Harrison further stated that “no significant differences were detected.”

As far as the blink reflex being utterly innate or somewhat trainable, he responded to an interviewer, “Now, that’s an open question.” Telephone interview with Patrick Henry College senior and Culture & Family Institute intern Jeremy Sewall, 8 March 2004. Dr. Harrison also said he would have liked to have seen the complete data on the series of tests to see whether the subjects’ responses would change with repetition. This would indicate whether the PPI is entirely innate.

In his conclusion, he said: “This Comment should not be construed as falsifying the hypothesis that homosexual and heterosexual women display different prepulse startle-inhibition reflexes. That conjecture may turn out to be so, but the present data do not confidently support it.”

**Did UCLA Researchers Prove that Sexual Identity is Genetic?**

In October 2003, the journal *Molecular Brain Research* published a study by UCLA researchers indicating that sexual identity is genetic. Phoebe Dewing, Tao Shi, Steve Horvath and Eric Vilain, “Sexually dimorphic gene expression in mouse brain precedes gonadal differentiation,” *Molecular Brain Research*, Vol. 118, Issues 1-2, 21 October 2003: 82-90.

Reuters reported it this way: “Sexual identity is wired into the genes, which discounts the concept that homosexuality and transgender sexuality are a choice, California researchers reported.” Reuters, “Study says sexual identity is genetic,” 20 October 2003.

A number of other media outlets picked up on this theme, creating the impression that this study was yet one more piece of evidence for a genetic theory of homosexuality.

The trouble is, the study doesn’t say anything about homosexuality. All it does is support a widely accepted theory about hormones and gender. Here is Princeton Professor Dr. Jeffrey Satinover’s assessment:

“The research is a decent piece of basic science and confirms what geneticists have long known must be the case: That the hormonal milieu that causes sexual differentiation between males and females is itself determined by genes, in mice as in men. This comes as no surprise.

“But this research says absolutely nothing about homosexuality or transsexualism and any who claim it does are either ill-informed about genetics, or if not, are deliberately abusing their scientific knowledge and or credentials in the service of politics – in precisely the same way that Soviet-era geneticists such as Lysenko did – either in the naïve hope that distortion of the truth can produce a better society or out of fear for their career prospects. In either case they should be roundly rebuked for doing so.” E-mail correspondence with Robert Knight, 21 October 2003.

**Does Correlation Prove Genetic Causation?**

What is clear from all of the research to date is that there is correlation (that is, homosexuality tends to run in families) but there is no evidence of genetic determinism (causation). This has been summarized by Francis Collins, the former head of the Human Genome Project, widely acknowledged as one of the world’s foremost experts in the field of human genetics.

“An area of particularly strong public interest is the genetic basis of homosexuality. Evidence from twin studies does in fact support the conclusion that heritable factors play a role in male homosexuality. However, the likelihood that the identical twin of a homosexual male will also be gay is about 20% (compared with 2-4 percent of males in the general population), indicating that sexual orientation is genetically influenced but not hardwired by DNA, and that whatever genes are involved represent predispositions, not predeterminations.” Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006), p.260.

**The APA Reverses its View on Genetic Causation**

Recently the American Psychological Association reversed its view on whether sexual orientation is genetically determined. In 1998, the APA stated, “There is considerable recent evidence to suggest that biology, including genetic or inborn hormonal factors, play a significant role in a person's sexuality." http://www.onenewsnow.com/Culture/Default.aspx?id=528376

However in a current APA published booklet and on the APA official website, it now states: “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.” http://www.apa.org/topics/sorientation.html#whatcauses

**Other Professional Scientific Societies Also Deny Genetic Causation**

This current view of the APA is similar to the conclusions of other official professional societies. Here is a joint statement from the American Psychiatric Association and the National Association of Social Workers:

“Currently, there is no scientific consensus about the specific factors that cause an individual to become heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual – including possible biological, psychological, or social effects of the parents' sexual orientation.” [Case No. S147999 in the Supreme Court of the State of California, In re Marriage Cases Judicial Council Coordination Proceeding No. 4365, Application for leave to file brief amici curiae in support of the parties challenging the marriage exclusion, and brief amici curiae of the American Psychological Association, California Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, National Association of Social Workers, and National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter in support of the parties challenging the marriage exclusion (California amicus brief of APA, APA, & NASW)](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/highprofile/documents/Amer_Psychological_Assn_Amicus_Curiae_Brief.pdf).

“A variety of theories about the influences on sexual orientation have been proposed. Sexual orientation probably is not determined by any one factor but by a combination of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences. In recent decades, biologically based theories have been favored by experts. Although there continues to be controversy and uncertainty as to the genesis of the variety of human sexual orientations, there is no scientific evidence that abnormal parenting, sexual abuse, or other adverse life events influence sexual orientation.” Frankowski BL; American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence (June 2004). ["Sexual orientation and adolescents"](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/113/6/1827.long). *Pediatrics* **113** (6): 1827–32. [doi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_object_identifier):[10.1542/peds.113.6.1827](http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/peds.113.6.1827). [PMID](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PubMed_Identifier) [15173519](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15173519).

**Summary of Current Research by Knight**

“Determining whether something has a biological cause is difficult, and locating a specifically genetic link is even more so. The handful of studies that purportedly add up to incontestable ‘proof’ that homosexuals are ‘born that way’ are inconclusive at best and, as Dr. Rahman notes, ‘largely correlational in nature.’ In some cases, such as the twins studies, the evidence strongly indicates that early environment is more likely the dominant factor to have produced homosexual desires.

“As Dr. Satinover emphasizes, correlation does not mean something is causative. Basketball players are tall, so height correlates with playing basketball, he notes. But there is no “basketball-playing gene.” Efforts to turn some interesting correlations into causal factors have not been successful and yet have been misused to advance a political agenda.

“Perhaps the best way to describe the situation is this, as paraphrased from Dr. Satinover: Some people may be predisposed because of genetic, prenatal hormonal influences or other physical or brain differences to have personalities that make them vulnerable to the environmental factors that can elicit homosexual desires. So is homosexuality biological? Not in the way that popular media and homosexual activists have presented it.

“Extremely shy and artistic young boys, for instance, who are not affirmed in their masculinity by a caring father, might be at risk for homosexuality. It’s not because of a homosexual “gene,” but because of an interrupted process of achieving secure gender identity. This can make some boys who crave male affirmation an easy mark for seduction into homosexuality. A similar pattern can be seen in girls who don’t fit classic gender profiles, need feminine affirmation, and are targeted by lesbians who play upon the girls’ emotional needs.

“Such children’s vulnerability is all the more reason to protect them from early exposure to homosexual influences. The Boy Scouts of America, for instance, is right to screen out as troop leaders those men who desire other males sexually. The Scouts do so not out of bigotry, or a belief that all homosexual men molest boys. They do so out of genuine concern for the health and well-being of the boys in their charge, including those who might be sexually vulnerable. Americans for too long have been pummeled with the idea that people are “born gay.” The people who most need to hear the truth are those who mistakenly believe they have no chance themselves for change. It is both more compassionate and truthful to give them hope than to serve them up politically motivated, unproven creations like the ‘gay gene.’” Robert Knight, “Born or Bred: Science Does Not Support the Claim That Homosexuality Is Genetic” (Knight is director of the Culture & Family Institute.) http://www.cwfa.org/images/content/bornorbred.pdf

**Gay Activists Try to Bully Those Who Disagree**

Gay activists have attempted to suppress this scientific consensus through propaganda and even threats. Example: Robert Epstein, the editor of Psychology Today magazine was threatened because he asserted that some homosexuals have changed their orientation through psychological counseling.

“I bring these matters to your attention because of a threatening phone call I received a few weeks ago from a fellow psychologist. On page 78 of our last issue, PT ran a small ad for a book called *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality* by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., and his wife Linda. Nicolosi is a psychologist who specializes in trying to help unhappy gays become straight. “Apparently feeling that this rather modest contribution to the literature on homosexuality wasn't getting enough attention, the psychologist, who identified herself as a lesbian activist, called me at home on a Saturday to tell me that PT should not have run such a heinous ad, that she was speaking for "thousands" of gays who were going to boycott PT, "and worse," that Dr. Nicolosi was a "bigot," that no gay person had ever successfully become straight, that homosexuality was entirely determined by genes, and that sexual conversion therapy had been condemned by the American Psychological Association. I told her that the editorial department at PT has no connection whatsoever with the advertising department, but she was unimpressed. She subsequently posted messages on the Internet urging people to harass me at home (no one else ever did) and to send me complaint letters. In all, I received about 120 letters, many of which exemplified a bad game of Telephone: Some people complained about an anti-gay "article" PT had published; others referred to an anti-gay book I had published and people who weren't subscribers said they were dropping their subscriptions. Several writers suggested I was a "Nazi" and a "bigot," and one compared me with the Taliban.

“A surprising number of letters asserted that gays have a right to be rude or abusive because they themselves have been abused. Most echoed the same points that my caller had made. But my caller was way off base on key points. The APA has never condemned sexual conversion therapy but has merely issued cautionary statements, one of which reminds psychologists of their obligation to "respect the rights of others to hold values, attitudes and opinions that differ from [their] own"-an obligation from which my caller clearly feels exempt. Although homosexuality was removed from the DSM-the diagnostic manual used by therapists-as a mental disorder in 1973, all editions of the DSM have always listed a disorder characterized by "distress" over one's sexual orientation (DSM section 302.9).

“Both gays and straights have a right to seek treatment when they're unhappy with their sexual orientation, and some choose to try to change that orientation. It would be absurd to assert that only heterosexuals should have that right. Can gays change? Some people who wrote to me insisted that "orientation" is immutable, but behavior is certainly not, and it's common for people to ask therapists to help them suppress a wide variety of tendencies with possible genetic bases: compulsive shopping and gambling, drinking, drug use, aggressiveness, urges to have too much sex or sex with children and so on.

“A 2002 research review by Warren Throckmorton, Ph.D., published in an APA journal, suggests that sexual conversion therapy is at least sometimes successful. From this and other sources I've checked, I'd guess that such therapy is probably successful about a third of the time and that in perhaps another third of the cases, clients are unhappy or even angry about their failure to change. These figures might sound discouraging, but there are certainly many examples of clinical problems that resist change (e.g., agoraphobia and autism) or that produce angry outcomes after therapy (e.g., couples counseling or treatment for sexual abuse). Of greater importance is a new study by Robert Spitzer, M.D., of Columbia University, the man who headed the committee responsible for removing "homosexuality" from the DSM in 1973. After surveying 200 people who had remained "ex-gay" for at least five years-and even though he has been under tremendous pressure by gay activists to repudiate his findings-Spitzer has concluded that sexual conversion therapy can produce significant, positive and lasting changes.” “Am I Anti-Gay? You Be The Judge.” A letter from Editor-In-Chief, Robert Epstein *Psychology Today* Jan/Feb 2003.

**What If Future Research Indicates a Genetic Basis for Homosexuality?**

What would be a balanced, appropriate response if someone puts forward new “evidence” that seems to show a genetic basis for homosexuality? First, be careful to examine the research to see if it meets the rigorous standards of the best science. Second, be aware that what is never determines what is right. If it did there could be no ethics or morality. (There are people who genuinely want to have sex with little children or with animals. Does that fact that they do have that sexual orientation, automatically mean it is right and proper for them to engage in their desired behavior?) Saying that because something exists makes it morally right is what ethicists call the “is-ought fallacy.” http://www.iep.utm.edu/fallacy/#Is-Ought

**If the Research Is Inconclusive, Why Do the Media So Often Report that Homosexuality Is Entirely Biological?**

In every example considered in this paper, the pattern was the same. When the original optimistic research was first published, or sometimes before it even reached scientific publication, the media was quick to report, in glowing headlines, “New Evidence that Men Are Born Gay” or “Scientist Discovers Gay Gene,” etc. When later studies found differently, or when attempts to replicate the original study failed, there was no wide publicity, often no popular publicity at all. This may be due to a bias in the media toward the gay-activist agenda, fear of reprisal from gay-activist groups, or just the nature of news reporting: a “discovery” sounds like exciting news—a failure to discover something, or to replicate a previous discovery does not sound very exciting or newsworthy, a least in popular media.