

Is Sexual Orientation Fixed at Birth?

The best overall summary of most respected researchers is that homosexuality (like most other psychological conditions) is due to a combination of social, biological, and psychological factors.

Following are quotes from researchers in the field:

(1) From Dr. Dean Hamer, the "gay gene" researcher, and himself a gay man:

"Genes are hardware...the data of life's experiences are processed through the sexual software into the circuits of identity. I suspect the sexual software is a mixture of **both genes and environment**, in much the same way the software of a computer is a mixture of what's installed at the factory and what's added by the user."

--P. Copeland and D. Hamer (1994) *The Science of Desire*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

(2) From psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover, M.D.:

"Like all complex behavioral and mental states, homosexuality is...neither exclusively biological nor exclusively psychological, but results from an as-yet-difficult-to-quantitate mixture of genetic factors, intrauterine influences...postnatal environment (such as parent, sibling and cultural behavior), and a complex series of *repeatedly reinforced choices* occurring at critical phases of development."

--J. Satinover, M.D., *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (1996). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

(3) When "gay gene" researcher Dr. Dean Hamer was asked if homosexuality was rooted solely in biology, he replied:

"Absolutely not. From twin studies, we already know that half or more of the variability in sexual orientation is not inherited. Our studies try to pinpoint the genetic factors...*not negate the psychosocial factors.*"

--"New Evidence of a 'Gay Gene'," by Anastasia Toufexis, *Time*, November 13, 1995, vol. 146, Issue 20, p. 95.

(4) William Byne, a psychiatrist with a doctorate in biology, and Bruce Parsons (1993) carefully analyzed all the major biological studies of homosexuality. They found none that definitively supported a biological theory of causation. --W. Byne and B. Parsons, "Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 50, no.3.)

(5) Psychiatrists Friedman and Downey state that "a biopsychosocial model" best fits our knowledge of

causation, with various combinations of *temperament* and *environmental events* leading to homosexuality. They say:

"Despite recent neurobiological findings suggesting homosexuality is genetically-biologically determined, credible evidence is lacking for a biological model of homosexuality."

--R. Friedman, M.D. and J. Downey, M.D., *Journal of Neuropsychiatry*, vol. 5, No. 2, Spring 1993.

(6) From sociologist Steven Goldberg, Ph.D.:

"Virtually all of the evidence argues against there being a determinative physiological causal factor and I know of no researcher who believes that such a *determinative* factor exists...such factors play a *predisposing*, not a determinative role...I know of no one in the field who argues that homosexuality can be explained without reference to environmental factors."

Goldberg adds:

"Gay criticism has not addressed the classic family configuration"; it has merely "asserted away the considerable evidence" for the existence of family factors. Studies which attempt to disprove the existence of the classic family pattern in homosexuality are "convincing only to those with a *need* to believe."

--S. Goldberg (1994) *When Wish Replaces Thought: Why So Much of What You Believe is False*. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books.

(7) An article on genes and behavior in *Science* magazine says:

"...the interaction of genes and environment is much more complicated than the simple "violence genes" and intelligence genes" touted in the popular press. Indeed, renewed appreciation of environmental factors is one of the chief effects of the increased belief in genetics' effects on behavior. The same data that show the effects of genes also point to **the enormous influence of non-genetic factors**."

--C. Mann, "Genes and behavior," *Science* 264:1687 (1994), pp. 1686-1689.

(8) Among Jeffrey Satinover's conclusions in "The Gay Gene":

"(1) There is a genetic component to homosexuality, but 'component' is just a loose way of indicating genetic associations and linkages. 'Linkage' and 'association' do not mean 'causation.'

(2) There is no evidence that shows that homosexuality is genetic--**and none of the research itself claims there is**. Only the press and certain researchers do, when speaking in sound bites to the public."

--Jeffrey Satinover, M.D., *The Journal of Human Sexuality*, 1996, p.8.

(9) Says brain researcher Dr. Simon LeVay:

"At this point, the most widely held opinion [on causation of homosexuality] is that *multiple factors* play a role.

"In 1988, PFLAG member Tinkle Hake surveyed a number of well-known figures in the field about their views on homosexuality. She asked: 'Many observers believe that a person's sexual orientation is determined by one of more of the following factors: genetic, hormonal, psychological, or social. Based on today's state-of-the-art-science, what is your opinion?'

"The answers included the following: 'all of the above in concert' (Alan Bell), 'all of these variables' (Richard Green), 'multiple factors' (Gilbert Herdt), 'a combination of all the factors named' (Evelyn Hooker), 'all of these factors' (Judd Marmor), 'a combination of causes' (Richard Pillard), 'possibly genetic and hormonal, but juvenile sexual rehearsal play is particularly important' (John Money), and 'genetic and hormonal factors, and perhaps also some early childhood experiences' (James Weinrich)." (Page 273)

--Simon LeVay (1996), in *Queer Science*, published by MIT Press.

(10) The American Psychological Association says:

"Various theories have proposed differing sources for sexual orientation...However, many scientists share the view that sexual orientation is shaped for most people at an early age through complex interactions of *biological, psychological and social factors*."

--From the A.P.A.'s booklet, "Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality"

(11) The national organization P-FLAG ("Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays") offers a booklet prepared with the assistance of Dr. Clinton Anderson of the American Psychological Association. Entitled, "Why Ask Why? Addressing the Research on Homosexuality and Biology," the pamphlet says:

"To date, no researcher has claimed that genes can determine sexual orientation. At best, researchers believe that there may be a genetic component. No human behavior, let alone sexual behavior, has been connected to genetic markers to date...sexuality, like every other behavior, is undoubtedly influenced by both biological and societal factors."