

# Is homosexuality genetic or a choice essay sample



I have known Rachel since we were in third grade and she's been a close friend for most of that time. When we were in high school she told me that she was a lesbian and that she had known since we were children. She has tried dating men but doesn't feel the kind of attraction for them that she had and still has for women. In a conversation we had nearly two years ago she told me, " I'm almost jealous of you. Sometimes I wish I could be attracted to men, it would make my life so much easier.

That comment has stuck with me ever since. She does not have it easy as a lesbian in a society that looks down on her for being an openly gay woman. People make snide comments at her and for the longest time her mother absolutely refused to believe she was not straight, even going so far as to try setting her up with her friends sons hoping it would pull her out of her ' gay phase'. Rachel is not the only homosexual person I know and the others have had similar experiences due to their choices to come out of the closet.

One of them, Paul, was beaten up by a group of teenaged boys when they realized that he was, in their words, a fag. My friends choose to be open and out, but they did not and do not choose to be gay. In fact more often than not homosexuality is caused by genetic factors rather than it being a choice. According to some research there is a physical difference between the brains of homosexual men and women when compared to those of heterosexual men and women.

" In 1991, a Salk Institute neuroscientist, Dr. Simon LeVay, found striking differences in the brain anatomy of gay and non-gay men" (Bernstein 34). If there is a detectable and common difference between the brains of straight

and gay people then it is very possible that that is a determining factor in regard to sexuality. This research has been done more than once and has shown on multiple occasions that there are a variety of differences between them. “ In straight men, the right hemisphere is about two percent larger than the left hemisphere, on average, whereas in straight women the two hemispheres are the same size.

In gay people, it's the reverse: gay men have symmetrical hemispheres, and lesbians have a larger right hemisphere” (“ The Biology of Sexual Orientation”). The size is not the only difference between them. According to Dr. Simon LeVay, a neuroscientist well known for his research on the brain and sexuality, the levels of a certain group of cells in the hypothalamus known as INAH3 tend to be smaller in gay men than in straight men (“ The Biology of Sexual Orientation”).

Although his exact findings have not been replicated another group of scientists have found that the number of cells may be the same but the density in the brain of a gay man would be higher than that of a straight man (“ The Biology of Sexual Orientation”). Humans are not the only mammals to exhibit homosexual behavior, in many species of animals it is far from unheard of for same gender sexual contact to occur. In animals such as the Black Swan of Australia it is not uncommon for two males to form a lifelong partnership in which they build a nest, raise offspring, and even live out the remainder of their lives alone when one of them dies.

They do breed with females to produce eggs, but once she has laid them they chase her off and proceed to care for the eggs as if they were their own

(“ Black Swan”). That alone shows that “... homosexuality is a common and widespread phenomenon in the animal world. Not only short-lived sexual relationships, but even ... partnerships that may last a lifetime” (“ Against Nature? ”). If homosexual behavior not only happens but is common among many species of animals, then what makes it unnatural for humans?

On top of observations of gay swans in the wild, there have been studies done on domesticated sheep. Within this experiment the investigators tested the potentially gay rams by putting receptive females, receptive males, and other males in front of them to see which they mounted: “ The investigators hypothesized that gay rams would respond hormonally to receiver males in the same way straight males respond to receptive females. They were wrong. Gay males don’t think another male is female, and they don’t respond as if they did” (Roughgarden 140).

Many of these potentially gay rams did not respond to the hormones released by the receptive ewes placed before them and did not mount them, but instead mounted other rams. If the argument of homosexual animals is not convincing enough, one must also consider the possibility of genetics. There is research suggesting that certain genetic markers on the x-chromosome are associated with homosexuality: “ Using genetic mapping, the team found that a set of five genetic markers at the tip of the long arm of the X chromosome were identical in 33 of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers” (Journal Watch).

This does not positively conclude that a person will be gay if he or she has these markers, but it does suggest that there are genetic factors at play

rather than sexuality being merely a choice. Much of this research was done in 1993, and: “ The same year, a study of twins found a significantly higher correlation of sexual orientation between identical as opposed to fraternal twins” (Bernstein 34). Two people with the same genetic makeup are more likely to both be gay or both be straight than two people with similar but not quite identical genetics.

There is no choice to have feelings for someone of the same, or the opposite, sex. If there was a choice in the matter, then people would be able to change their sexuality at will without requiring therapy. Even a traumatic and deadly event will not necessarily change it. In 1988 Rebecca Wight and her partner Claudia Brenner were camping in the Appalachians. After a series of accidental meetings with a man named Stephen Roy Carr, he followed them to their camp and shot them as they prepared to make love. He later said it was because their lesbianism sent him into a rage.

Brenner was hit five times and Wight twice, Brenner survived but Wight did not (“ Rebecca Wight”). Claudia Brenner went on to write a book about the ordeal, but even nearly dying from an act of anti-gay violence did not change her attraction to women: “ Brenner has a regular life now... She has a new love, Dana Jacobsen, of San Francisco” (Valdes). Even after that deadly ordeal she is still a lesbian. She was nearly killed by someone who was trying to punish her for her sexuality, and yet it didn’t change. It is difficult to find something more compelling than that as evidence that sexuality is innate.

More proof of this is a survey of people who underwent sexual reorientation therapy: “ Of nearly 100 people surveyed, only 11% reported a move

towards heterosexuality. But no one in the study reports becoming fully heterosexual... even the 11% group “ did not report themselves to be without experience of homosexual arousal, and did not report heterosexual orientation to be unequivocal and uncomplicated” (Sanchez). Even after these people went through therapy to change their sexual orientation willingly, they still weren’t completely heterosexual. In fact they still had homosexual urges.

For gay men and women there are three vitally important choices. There is the choice of whether or not to act on their feelings in the first place, the choice of whether or not to come out as a homosexual man or woman, and whether or not they will accept themselves for who and what they are. For those who choose not to accept their natural orientation there is such a thing as sexual reorientation therapy, which can be effective in changing orientation. “ I myself take the view that homosexuality is a developmental disorder and is potentially preventable.

I see strong evidence for the ... position that homosexual behavior is rooted in a sense of gender-identity deficit, and representative of a drive to “ repair” that deficit” (“ What is Homosexuality? ”). There are therapists and doctors in the world who will try to treat homosexual men and women for what they consider a mental disorder or a developmental disorder, and in some cases a person may be able to help them change their orientation. “ Psychoanalytic theory held that [homosexuality] originated in early childhood, caused by a weak father and an overbearing mother.

Behaviorists thought that people learned sexual behavior, as they learn everything else, through reinforcement and punishment” (Berger 54). This theory is held by many, but not all, in the field of psychology, but is only one of many theories on the subject. There is also the flipside of that argument. Many doctors in the psychology do not subscribe to the nurture over nature theory: “ Many men and women are unhappy with their construction of their sexuality. It is of questionable ethics to try to convince them that they are ‘ wrong,’ and try to convert them to the therapist’s way of thinking” (“ What is Homosexuality? ).

There are a large number of professionals who believe that it is not ethical to try to convert a person from one sexuality to another. In fact there are those who don’t even believe that it is even possible: “ Citing a lack of firm evidence to suggest it can work, the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted a resolution yesterday telling mental health professionals to stop trying to help a client change their sexual orientation” (“ Psychologists Reject Gay Reorientation”).

Despite this, there are professionals who still write guides on how to ensure that a child turns out straight and others who will actually use preventative therapy to prevent children from growing up gay. Along with the evidence from geneticists and psychologists, there is also simple logic. Homosexuals face abuse, hatred, murder, and scorn in society. With the treatment they face in society there really is not a good reason for someone to make a conscious choice to be gay.

The number of hate crimes against homosexuals has gone up from 1, 171 in 2005 to 1, 415 in 2006 and rose again to 1, 460 in 2007 (Johnson), and those are only the United States statistics. The number of hate crimes against homosexual men and women has consistently risen in recent years, and with that particular type of crime on the rise it does not seem like it would be a lifestyle a person would willingly choose. In fact there are people all over the country who are gay but keep it a secret because they would rather lie to the people around them than face the abuse and insults reserved for open gays.

There is a player in the NFL, identified only as “ Steven Thompson” in the article, who is currently in the closet and playing football. He has seen firsthand the kind of treatment that open homosexuals receive, the quote contains offensive language: “ Why do those motherfuckers have to hold hands in public? ” Thompson said one teammate asked, referring to a couple at another table. “ We are in Fagville,” replied the quarterback” (Buzinski). He works among men who are shown as the toughest guys in America, spends time building up a straight man persona by dating women regularly and publicly.

He is so worried about revealed as a homosexual and losing his career in the NFL that he pursues fake relationships to cover up his trips to gay bars and relationships with gay men. Would he go through the trouble of fake relationships and lies if he could simply choose to be attracted to the women he dates? Doubtful. There is a popular theory among anti-gay groups that all homosexual men and women were sexually abused as children. This is false. “ A... study showed that gay and lesbian youth are much more likely to have experienced abuse than heterosexual youth.



61% have been physically abused and 40% have been sexually abused as opposed to 20% and 12% respectively" (" Child Abuse Statistics"). While there is a higher occurrence of sexual abuse among homosexual youth than among heterosexual youth, it is far from all of them. There is a theory that being a homosexual child actually contributes to the abuse instead of the other way around. " Being or feeling " different" can result in social isolation / exclusion, which in turn can lead to a child being more vulnerable to the instigation and continuation of abuse" (Katy).

As children many people who identify as homosexual later in life feel outcast and awkward, and this can easily lead to them being in situations where there is a higher likelihood of a molestation or a rape occurring. While this is not a theory talked about often, it is still a plausible explanation for the higher number of childhood sexual abuse in homosexuals than heterosexuals.

Homosexuality is not exclusive to the United States or only to a certain race. There are gay men and women in almost every country and nationality. The Sambia believed that boys were naturally girl like and would not develop manly qualities and sexual maturity unless they ingested semen. The culture required adolescents to fellate ... young boys after they were taken from their mothers at about age seven" (Whitehead). This is a culture in which homosexual acts are encouraged. The fact that the acts are with young boys is very questionable, but it is still culturally acceptable to engage in fellatio with other males. This behavior is not exclusive to the Sambia, but occurs within the Etoro and Keraki tribes as well.

As for the prevalence of homosexuality in other cultures, consider India: "... only 2% of the Indian population is exclusively homosexual, then the actual number might reach beyond 20 million as the population of India surpassed 1 billion in the 21st century" (Drescher). The potential homosexual population in India alone is staggering. While it may not be a widely accepted practice worldwide, homosexuality crosses all borders and is found on all populated continents.

However there are areas of the world without documented instances of homosexual behavior. ... in twenty-nine of seventy-nine cultures surveyed by Ford and Beach in 1952 homosexuality was rare or absent. It was very rare in the Siriono ... there were no prohibitions on homosexual relationships in that culture" (Whitehead) As previously stated, homosexuality has been found on all continents, but not in all cultures and tribes. There is a tribe in the New Guinea highlands, where the Sambia live, who have no homosexuality: " However, in another group of Dani ... homosexuality was totally unknown.

Missionaries report that when they were translating the Bible into Dani for this group, their tribal assistants ... were nonplused by references to homosexuality ... they did not understand the concept" (" Homosexuality"). Unlike the Sambia tribe they had no idea what references to homosexuality even meant when they ran across them through missionaries. Despite this, the number of tribes and cultures without any documented instances of homosexuality is much lower than the number that have it documented. After reviewing the evidence it is clear that homosexuality is not a chosen lifestyle, but is caused more by ... genetic factors and inherited traits.

There is plenty of evidence to be found on the subject and only a fraction of it was shown here. There are reasons for keeping sexual orientation hidden and there are people who seek to change it, but in the end it is not up to them but primarily up to predetermined traits and genetic characteristics. One day, with luck and more research, people like Rachel and Paul will not be looked down on for something that they did not choose. Until more research is done and yields undisputable proof, no argument will change the pre-set mind.