

Born That Way?

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Introduction

In this paper I would like to try and future-proof you, and forever show that in terms of Same-Sex Attraction (SSA), we are not born that way. It will deal mostly with the science and the numerous studies which seem to indicate we *are* born that way. The case we are not born that way is spelt out in much more detail in our book My Genes Made Me Do It! (sarcastic title – see www.mygenes.co.nz).

The case is more general than just for SSA. Most traits are produced by a complex mixture of genes, environment and chance, and are therefore ultimately changeable. It also seems that individual chance reactions are often to genetic factors or social factors.

The theological case therefore is that Jesus can indeed rescue us, even if only the science is considered. This paper therefore is a kind of cutting away the undergrowth only. And I never was fond of weeding.

In view of various official pronouncements and the general impression given by the media, it might seem that this paper is wildly wrong-headed and part of the lunatic fringe. But in academic circles the nature-nurture debate was settled 30 years ago with the conclusion that all traits, including homosexuality are the result of a complex mixture of factors, and except in rare cases like physical features (blue eyes, hereditary diseases, hair colour etc) we are not inevitably born that way. It is only the result of politics wanting to push the debate either towards genes (usually but not exclusively conservatives) or towards environment (usually liberals, but not in the present case), that anyone makes a strong case for an overwhelming influence of nature or nurture. So if ultimately pressed scientifically no-one will say there is an exclusive nature or nurture case, but try to argue it is so overwhelming it might as well be. We shall see that is not so for SSA.

Since 1973 the politics has grown extraordinarily intense for SSA. It is so bad that one of the original movers of the motion to declare SSA not a psychiatric disorder (Cummings), has written a book about the extremely bad effects of the political correctness. He found it difficult to get contributors for chapters in his book because they were very scared they would lose tenure or be strongly discriminated against in other ways, and this had happened to colleagues.

“The American Psychological Association has chosen ideology over sciencecensorship exists..... Even under the McCarthy era there was not the insidious sense of intellectual intimidation that currently exists under political correctness”
Wright & Cummings (2005)

This is an extraordinary statement and an enormous indictment of a professional scientific body. Worse than the McCarthy era?!!

So an announcement from the American Psychological Association has now only the weight of the word of a political figure.

However there are numerous studies which link or correlate SSA with something physiological, mental or anatomical. A short list is: Finger length studies, Pheromones, Startle reflex, Elder brother hypothesis, Prenatal hormones, Fluctuating asymmetry, Left-handedness. Surely with so many the cumulative effect must be overwhelming? And surely there are more to discover, making it even more overwhelming?

No.

In what follows I want to take two typical examples. The first seems a strong effect, but is a rather weak link, the second represents a finding which could not be repeated. These two types occur over and over again. The present examples are respectively the Blink Reflex and SSA links with genes.

Blink Reflex.

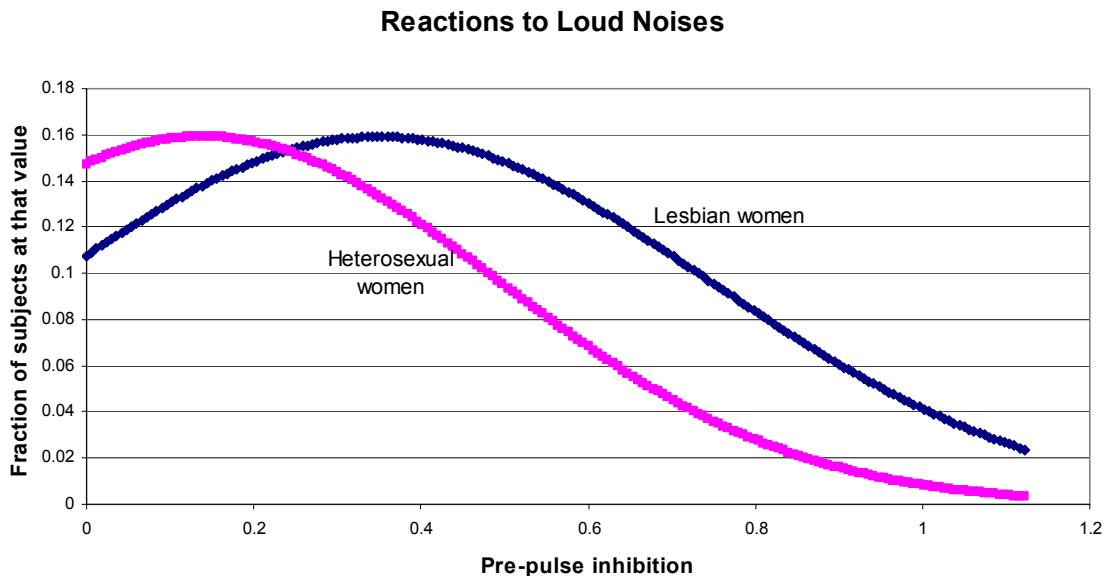


This research in the University of East London, has as its first author Qazi Rahman. It relies on the blink reflex. When there is a loud noise, you blink. Everyone does this and it happens from birth. If there is a softer sound before the loud noise, the subsequent blink is inhibited, and this is called “pre-pulse inhibition”. Men and women show very different reactions. Women continue to blink, but men blink much less, apparently figuring the risk is less, or “learning”.

Lesbian women also apparently learn, and blink much less than heterosexual women and much more like heterosexual men. The authors conclude that since the blink reflex is not a learned one, being present at birth, therefore the lesbian difference is also innate.

But to establish no learning after birth was involved, one would need to test new-born girls who eventually become lesbian, and no such study exists. In fact the very fact that pre-pulse inhibition exists shows that some type of learning after birth is possible.

Then we need to ask the question, even if there is a difference between lesbians and heterosexual women as a group, are there differences such that the two groups are completely separate, or is there an overlap?



I reconstructed the original data from the numbers in the paper and got the above graph. It shows there is much overlap between lesbians and heterosexual women. That is, for individuals, there can be found quite a number of heterosexual women who have more pre-pulse inhibition than most lesbians. This shows that you could not predict the sexual orientation of a woman merely from a test of this type, and therefore the effect for all practical purposes is weak. An individual is not inevitably diagnosable as lesbian from birth.

I have done numerous such analyses using data from many papers on many subjects and in all cases the effect is variable and weak. No measurement one can make on someone with SSA gives other than a rather ambiguous indication of their sexual orientation.

The lesson from this study is that it has not proven that the effect it measures is innate, and even if it were, it would not differentiate well- the effect is weak. If you see a new study in the media it will also be a weak effect. This is shown by identical twin studies which we consider in a minute.

Gay Genes?

In a series of papers published in 1993 and afterwards, Hamer



a gay scientist claimed to have found an association between SSA and a region on the X-Chromosome of males



However Rice and others in another research group could not reproduce this finding. Hamer and others in 2005 did a much more extensive search over all the human genome and could not find associations, which rather negated the first findings. They concluded they had been rather unlucky, and fooled by a chance occurrence.

This means that at present there is no evidence for a gay gene or gay genes in males. Some weak associations are likely to be found in the end, but the connections will likely be rather indirect.

This means your genes do not force you into SSA.

Twin Studies

These show once and for all that genetic and upbringing effects are rather small.

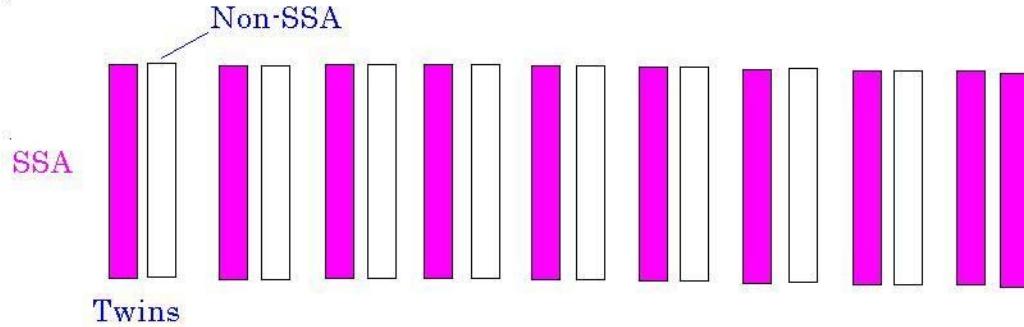
Identical twins have identical genes, and (mostly) identical upbringing. They are therefore a wonderful testbed for testing for genetic effects. To get the most value, a conventional twin study also looks at non-identical twins, who have the same upbringing, but only about half their genes in common. But in this paper I shall restrict our attention to identical twins, because they show us all we need to know.

One has to search hard among identical twin pairs to find pairs with at least one with SSA. For the last few years Australians have led the world in these studies with large twin registers, particularly in Queensland, and it is possible to find enough twins where one member has SSA. Now, what would you predict about the co-twin? He/she has identical genes, and identical upbringing. Does the cotwin have SSA? And how often?



The most prominent researcher is John Bailey from Northwestern University, who is a pro-gay researcher but has received much flak from the gay community.

Understanding the results has been complicated by the fact that in their published papers it has been necessary for good technical reasons to give rather inflated figures, necessary during the subsequent calculations. But from our point of view, the relevant statistic is – if one identical twin has SSA the other has SSA only 11% of the time.



They are mostly different. This shows that genes, similarities in womb environment, and upbringing which act on all the pairs, don't have much effect. Genes aren't to blame, but neither, mostly, are parents. Overwhelmingly important are chance effects. John Bailey interviewed discordant twin pairs and found that they had often perceived family situations very differently. It seems then, that erratically a young twin may react in different way to the same situation as his co-twin. A particular situation will mostly not produce SSA, but erratically may become vital to one twin and lead to SSA. This could be a reaction to family, or perceived features of their own body.

Note that these twin studies include all factors already known, but also *all factors yet to be discovered*. This is very unusual and remarkable, that a prediction about future research is possible. We have to say *The combined effects are weak*. It also follows that the effects being discovered at the rate of a few each year are also weak. The predominant factor is actually the erratic way twins react to them.

Here is a typical genetic effect:

- Boy is born with poor coordination (a genetic effect)
- He is bullied at school and hates masculinity
- He longs for male acceptance
- He has a sexual experience with an older boy, and experiences acceptance
- He confuses sex and acceptance
- He seeks male sex for the acceptance
- He develops more general SSA

But most boys with poor coordination do not develop SSA. Most boys who are bullied do not develop SSA. The effect is weak and indirect. Other effects are similar.

If a media report says “SSA is due to XYZ (a biological effect)” think “So is writing media reports.”

If a media report says homosexuality is determined by prenatal brain structure, that really means they have found a weak link, and the major cause is something else.

Innateness.

Is anyone actually born with a sexual orientation? Well, I don’t see toddlers rushing off to gay bars or nightclubs. Sexual orientations develop slowly over years and are not stable until adulthood. Many environmental factors come into play in the meantime.

Conclusion

Genes create a tendency, not a tyranny.

You can give your tendencies a feast or a famine.

Even if we did not chose consciously in the past, we can choose now, but might need to choose hundreds of times to reverse longstanding trends

People are not Born that Way, because identical twins differ. This applies to almost every trait you can think of.

Change is possible.

What does Jesus want to change in you?