

# Nature vs. Nurture: Which one Determines Sexuality?

---

Timothy Zebell  
March 18, 2014

““The phone rang off the hook with calls from reporters; there were TV cameramen lined up outside the lab; the mailbox and e-mail overflowed,’ Dean Hamer later remembered the reaction to his July, 1993 paper in the journal *Science*. ‘Rarely before have so many reacted so loudly to so little.’ Hamer’s paper—‘A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation’—had the modest ring of science, where change is often slow and incremental. But the underlying idea seemed to carry enormous implications: Homosexuality was not a choice—‘the wrong choice,’ as many religious and political leaders have demagogued on the issue. Instead, homosexuality was as much a biological fact as eye color.”<sup>1</sup> This was part of a Public Broadcasting Service report on the gay gene debate, and it is representative of the mainstream media’s coverage of what has been erroneously called “the gay gene.” For years, scientists have sought to discover a genetic cause for homosexuality that would substantiate the oft heard claim that homosexuals are born gay, and as such, have no choice regarding their behavior.

Certainly, the most renowned of these studies is that of Dr. Dean Hamer who, while with the National Cancer Institute, claimed to have found a genetic link to homosexuality. After studying 40 pairs of homosexual brothers, he found that 33 of them shared the same set of DNA sequences in the Xq28 region of the X chromosome. However, in 1995 Dr. Dean Hamer was accused by one of the study’s collaborators of selectively reporting his research and data. He was charged with research improprieties and was investigated by the National Institute of Health’s Federal Office of Research Integrity. The results of this study were never released, but Dr. Hamer was shortly thereafter transferred to another section, and it is believed by many that his study amounts to little more than pseudo-science.<sup>2</sup>

More importantly, Dr. Hamer’s results have never been reproduced. Rather, a 1999 study by the University of Western Ontario of 52 pairs of homosexual brothers found the genetic markers cited by Dr. Hamer in exactly half of the brother pairs, which is consistent with the laws of chance. It concluded that the results of Dr. Hamer’s study “did not support an X-linked gene underlying male homosexuality.”<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the media and gay activists continue to cite Dr. Hamer’s study as proof of a gay gene.

Interestingly enough, even Dr. Dean Hamer has admitted that his study did not prove that homosexuality is the result of genetic determinism, saying, “[T]here is a lot more than just genes going on.”<sup>4</sup> He believes that genes are a factor in determining homosexuality, but environmental

---

<sup>1</sup> “The ‘Gay Gene’ Debate.”

<sup>2</sup> Sorba, “The ‘Gay Gene’ Hoax.”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Diggs Jr., “The Health Risks of Gay Sex.”

influences are also an important factor.<sup>5</sup> This is necessarily true when one considers instances where one identical twin is gay, and the other is straight. Because they share identical DNA, if homosexuality were entirely determined by one's genes, then both twins would be either gay or straight in every instance. There could never be a case where one identical twin is gay and the other is straight. The mere fact that this is not uncommon disproves any notion that homosexuality might be entirely the result of a person's genetic composition.

This was also the conclusion of a 2014 study by Dr. J. Michael Bailey at Northwestern University. Despite the fact that many media reports touted this study as evidence of a gay gene that compels a person to exhibit homosexual behavior, Dr. Bailey announced, "Our findings suggest there may be genes at play—we found evidence for two sets that affect whether a man is gay or straight. But it is not completely determinative; there are certainly other environmental factors involved." He even admitted that environmental factors were likely to have the biggest impact on homosexuality.<sup>6</sup>

In all fairness, Dr. Bailey appears to have desired a different outcome from his study because he prefaced his findings with the contradictory declaration, "Sexual orientation has nothing to do with choice." This declaration was then followed by the admission, "But it is not completely determinative."<sup>7</sup> In other words, Dr. Bailey believes that sexual orientation is determinative—that it has nothing to do with choice—but the results of his study have proven that homosexuality is *not* completely determinative—that it is the result of both genetic and environmental factors.

A careful consideration of each scientific study supposedly proving the existence of a gay gene would result in a stack of scientifically disqualified studies and a general consensus that there is no genetic determinative cause for homosexuality. Even the decidedly pro-gay American Psychological Association stated in 2009:<sup>8</sup>

“

There are numerous theories about the origins of a person's sexual orientation; most scientists today agree that sexual orientation is most likely the result of a complex interaction of environmental, cognitive and biological factors. In most people, sexual orientation is shaped at an early age. There is also considerable recent evidence to suggest that biology, including genetic or inborn hormonal factors, play a significant role in a person's sexuality. In summary, it is important to recognize that there are probably many reasons for a person's sexual orientation and the reasons may be different for different people.

Likewise, the pro-gay American Psychiatric Association has said, "[T]o date there are no replicated scientific studies supporting any specific biological etiology for homosexuality."<sup>9</sup> Also, Dr. Neil Whitehead, after examining more than 10,000 scholarly papers and publications on the subject,

---

<sup>5</sup> Marlboro College, "Dean Hamer - Gays, God and Genes."

<sup>6</sup> Knapton, "Being Homosexual is Only Partly Due to Gay Gene, Research Finds."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *A Queer Thing Happened to America*, 201.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

concluded, “Geneticists, anthropologists, sociologists, endocrinologists, neuroanatomists, medical researchers into gender, and twin study researchers are in broad agreement about the role of genetics in homosexuality. Genes don’t make you do it. There is no genetic determinism, and genetic influence at most is minor.”<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the degree of influence that genetics may have compared to environmental factors, scientists vary in their assessments, crediting genes for 10–60% of the equation.<sup>11</sup> But this simply places homosexual orientation in the same category as many other orientations. Professor Warren Throckmorton explains:<sup>12</sup>

“

Putting the questionable figure in perspective lets *[sic]* look at other traits and the estimated percent of difference attributable to genetic factors according to existing research found on the American Psychological Association web site.

- \* Attitudes toward reading books - 55%
- \* Feelings about abortion on demand - 54%
- \* Feelings about roller coaster rides - 50%
- \* Attitudes towards the death penalty for murder - 50%
- \* Humility - 58%
- \* Likelihood to engage in casual sex - 49%
- \* Attitudes toward equality - 55%

Interestingly enough, every one of these things can be changed. A person can learn to enjoy reading books. A person can change his opinion regarding abortion. A person can become more or less humble over time. So why would we assume that homosexuality, which is no more genetically predetermined than these other things, cannot be changed? How is it that a person is born gay—end of story?

The reasons why the born gay argument remains so pervasive today despite the overwhelming evidence against it is because it is a well-calculated strategy designed to absolve homosexuals of all responsibility for their actions. This is not my opinion. Rather, it is a stated objective in the book *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 1990's*. Written by

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 202.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Harvard-trained gay activists Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen as a “practical agenda” to change American’s thinking about homosexuality, this book has proven to be incredibly successful.<sup>13</sup> These authors wrote that an important part of this agenda should be presenting homosexuals as having been born gay. They wrote, “We argue that, for all practical purposes, gays should be considered to have been born gay—even though sexual orientation, for most humans, seems to be the products of a complex interaction between innate predispositions and environmental factors during childhood and early adolescence. And since no choice is involved, gayness can be no more blameworthy than straightness.”<sup>14</sup>

In other words, these homosexual activists proposed intentionally misrepresenting the science and purposefully deceiving Americans in order to absolve homosexuals of their responsibility. But even if it could one day be proven that homosexuals are born with a gay gene, does being born with a genetic pre-disposition truly absolve someone of responsibility for his behavior?

Virtually every human behavior, orientation, or tendency involves some genetic component, and yet this does not justify or normalize these behaviors, orientations, and tendencies, nor does it mean that people with these genetic components should not try to change their behavior, orientations, and tendencies. As the pro-gay psychologists, Dr. J. Michael Bailey of Northwest University and Dr. Brian Mustanski of Indiana University rightly observed, “[N]o clear conclusions about the morality of a behavior can be made from the mere fact of biological causation, because all behavior is biologically caused.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Dr. Dean Hamer and Peter Copeland wrote in their book *The Science of Desire: The Gay Gene and the Biology of Behavior*, “In short, biology is amoral; it offers no help distinguishing between right and wrong. Only people, guided by their values and beliefs, can decide what is moral and what is not.”<sup>16</sup>

According to a 2010 *Nature* article, “Selfish dictators may owe their behavior partly to their genes, according to a study that claims to have found a genetic link to ruthlessness.”<sup>17</sup> Would we absolve Hitler of responsibility for his ruthless behavior if we discovered that he had a genetic pre-disposition to being ruthless? Of course not! But if Hitler’s behavior could not be condoned as normal and acceptable despite a genetic pre-disposition, then homosexual behavior also cannot be condoned as normal and acceptable simply because individuals may have a genetic pre-disposition.

Similarly, scientists have discovered possible genetic pre-dispositions to adultery, rape, violence, obesity, and even to being politically liberal.<sup>18</sup> Is anybody willing to accept adultery and rape as normal and acceptable simply because some people might be genetically pre-disposed to these behaviors? Or what about obesity? Should we celebrate and encourage over-eating because of a genetic pre-disposition to being obese? But if we do not accept and celebrate adultery, rape, and over-eating despite the genetic contribution to these behaviors, then why should we accept and celebrate homosexual behavior on the basis of a genetic component? When the gay activist’s logic

---

<sup>13</sup> Kirk, *After the Ball*, i.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *A Queer Thing*, 204.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 208–209.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 211–214.

is applied to other behaviors, it becomes evident that a person's biology cannot be our basis for determining the morality of any behavior. Instead, our morality is determined by our Creator.

Those behaviors and actions which are immoral or sinful are so because they fail to align themselves with the character and behavior of God. Our standard for all behavior is determined by our Creator. In [Leviticus 11:44](#), God commanded His people Israel, *"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy."* Also, in [verse 45](#) He said, *"For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."* Still again in [Leviticus 19:2](#), God commanded His people, *"Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."* These commands are then repeated to God's people the church, in [1 Peter 1:14-16](#), *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"*

God originally created mankind as holy creatures. Adam and Eve were without sin until they chose to rebel against God and to place their will above God's will. At that point, their nature was broken. No longer did their nature tend towards God. Now it was bent away from God, and this sinful nature was passed along to their offspring. This is the teaching of [Romans 5:12](#) which says, *"[S]in came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men."* Nevertheless, despite the fact that man was now born with a pre-disposition to sin, God continued to demand holiness. Never does God condone sinful behavior on the basis of biology. Instead, He calls man to overcome his temptations and to align his behavior with God's will. God's standard has never changed. When mankind possessed a sinless nature, God's standard was holiness, and when mankind rebelled and received a sinful nature, God's standard remained holiness.

With such a lofty standard, no person can succeed on his own. [James 2:10](#) teaches, *"[W]hoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it."* There is no room for error. A single sin permanently prevents a person from being holy through his own deeds, and [Romans 3:23](#) teaches that every person has sinned, *"[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Moreover, failure to be holy results in death. [Romans 6:23](#) says, *"For the wages of sin is death."* Not only will we die physically, we will also die spiritually. [Revelation 20:12-15](#) describes this spiritual death as a second death in which a person is eternally separated from having a right relationship with God and from fulfilling his purpose for existing:

“

*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Fortunately, [Romans 6:23](#) doesn't conclude with the statement, *"For the wages of sin is death."* If it did, we could have no hope but only despair because every one of us has sinned. But there is hope. [Romans 6:23](#) says, *"For the wages of sin is death, **but** the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (emphasis added). This free gift is forgiveness from our sins, and it is made possible through the ministry of Jesus Christ who, having lived a sinless life, paid the penalty of our sin with His own life. [John 3:16-18](#) says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*

Jesus is God's means of fixing our broken relationship with Him and forgiving our sin. Because Jesus lived a sinless life, He did not have to die, yet His love for man was so great that He chose to die a horrific death on a cross for any who would accept His sacrifice. However, being God, death could not hold Him, and He rose from the dead three days later. As such, He stands before God as an advocate for any who are willing to repent—which is a turning away from sinful behavior—and accept God's charge to live holy lives. Of course, until God redeems His creation and removes the curse of sin, we will struggle with our sinful natures, but God promises to give us the strength to overcome any and every temptation, and He promises to continue to forgive our failures if we seek His forgiveness.

Understanding this, [Romans 10:9-13](#) teaches us how to accept this free gift of God, *"[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"* Anyone who believes that Jesus is God, that He died as a substitute for our sins, and that He rose again from the dead can ask God for forgiveness and commit to living a life that aligns itself with God's holy character and behavior. Anyone who does this will receive God's forgiveness and salvation from sin. As [Romans 3:23-25](#) says, *"[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."*

Having received the free gift of salvation from God, the Christian is empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome all temptations—regardless of whether or not he may have a genetic pre-disposition toward it. [First Corinthians 10:13](#) says, *"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."* This is God's promise to every Christian. Whether it be homosexual inclinations, heterosexual temptations, anger, pride, gossip, bitterness, worry, or any other temptation, we are promised enough strength to overcome it if we so choose and if we will stand strong. As [James 4:7](#) says, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

Perhaps we would do well to question whether we have embraced our own form of the born gay argument. Do we excuse our own sinful behavior because it runs in the family? Some of us may come from broken and very troubled families with obvious sins. Others of us may come from

families with secret sins. In any case, a family heritage of anger issues, substance abuse, arrogance, violence, unfaithfulness, divorce, worry, etc. does not condone such behavior. Do we excuse our sin because it was such a strong part of our identity before becoming a Christian—it was our nature, and we reveled in it, but now we are finding it difficult to embrace a new nature and a new identity? Do we excuse our sin because it is common to our nationality or our ethnic group? Every group of people has its deficiencies which are embraced by those people and tolerated by the rest of the world. So, do we blame our faults on our Irish temper, our Dutch stinginess, our German stubbornness, our American independence, or any number of other national or ethnic proclivities?

Whatever form it may assume, we must guard ourselves against falling prey to the very arguments and excuses we are so quick to condemn in others. Born gay is merely one side of a multifaceted excuse that is common to all mankind. From the very beginning, man has sought to absolve himself of responsibility for his actions, but the brutal truth is that we alone are responsible for our behavior. Therefore, we would do well to heed the charge of [1 Timothy 6:11-15](#):

“

*But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time.*

# Works Cited

- Brown, Michael. *A Queer Thing Happened to America*. Concord: EqualTime Books, 2011.
- Diggs Jr., John. "The Health Risks of Gay Sex." *Corporate Research Council*, 2002, Reprinted by *Catholic Education Resource Center*. Accessed March 18, 2014.  
<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/homosexuality/ho0075.html>.
- Kirk, Marshall and Hunter Madsen. *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*. New York: Doubleday, 1989.
- Knapton, Sarah. "Being Homosexual is Only Partly Due to Gay Gene, Research Finds." *The Telegraph*, February 13, 2014. Accessed June 19, 2014.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/10637532/Being-homosexual-is-only-partly-due-to-gay-gene-research-finds.html>.
- Marlboro College. "Dean Hamer - Gays, God and Genes." YouTube video,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ol2D0X40Lts> (accessed June 19, 2014).
- Sorba, Ryan. "The 'Gay Gene' Hoax." *World Net Daily*, June 3, 2010. Accessed June 19, 2014.  
<http://www.wnd.com/2010/06/161549/>.
- "The 'Gay Gene' Debate." PBS: Frontline. Accessed March 18, 2014.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/genetics/>.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.