

No scientific basis for 'born gay' theory

By David Clarke Pruden

Although the simple "born gay" theory has faded from the science scene, activists continue to misrepresent scientific findings. When you assert that individuals are born gay and cannot change, people naturally jump to the conclusion that same-sex marriage is the only rational choice for same-sex attracted individuals.

However, the innate-immutable theory of homosexuality has no basis in science. The simplistic biological theory has been dismissed by *all* of the researchers whose studies have been cited to support the notion that homosexuality is so deeply compelled by biology that it cannot change.

Let's examine the words of just one of those often incorrectly cited as providing evidence for a "gay gene." Simon LeVay notes, "It is important to stress what I didn't find. I did not prove that homosexuality was genetic, or find a cause for being gay. I didn't show that gay men were born that way, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work."

A new research study by a University of Illinois team, which has screened the entire human genome, reported that there is no one gay gene. Writing in the journal *Human Genetics*, lead researcher Dr. Brian Mustanski noted that environmental factors were also likely to be involved.

Of the innate-immutable argument, Dr. Richard C. Friedman and Dr. Jennifer Downey, noted, "At clinical conferences one often hears . . . that homosexual orientation is fixed and unmodifiable. Neither assertion is true . . . The assertion that homosexuality is genetic is so reductionistic that it must be dismissed out of hand as a general principle of psychology."

And the fluidity of homosexual attractions is well-established. Dr. Ellen Schecter of the Fielding Institute studied women who had self-identified as lesbian for more than 10 years and who after age 30 were now in intimate relationships with men lasting a year or longer.

Even more prominent was the research by Robert Spitzer, the very psychiatrist who led the charge to remove homosexuality from the psychiatric manual. His study of 200 gay men and lesbian women who had undergone re-orientation therapy concluded: 44 percent of the women and 66 percent of the men had arrived at what he called "good heterosexual functioning" and 89 percent of the men and 95 percent of the women reported that they were bothered slightly or not at all by unwanted homosexual feelings.

Mainstream gay-affirming publications like *The Advocate* are changing their terminology to embrace the concept of fluid sexual attractions. Matt Foreman, of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, summarizes what the gay movement has done.

"We as a movement can take pride that we opened the door for young people to be much more fluid about sexuality, gender, gender roles, orientation and sexual behavior than any other generation in history. That's what the gay movement has contributed to society, and that's a tremendously good thing."

But is it? If the innate-immutable theory of homosexuality has no basis in science then why do so many activists still insist that individuals are born gay and cannot change? LeVay provided the answer. He notes ". . . people who think that gays and lesbians are born that way are more likely to support gay rights."

This is not to say that anyone chooses homosexual attractions nor do most of us choose many of the other challenges we face in life, but we *do* choose how we respond.

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