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FINAL DRAFT: IS HOMOSEXUALITY A CHOICE OR IS IT GENETIC?

Throughout history, many individuals have become accustomed to specific ideals due to their religion, culture and the environment they were raised in. A controversial topic that alarms numerous people is the concept of homosexuality. Being yourself and expressing your true emotions and love for someone is forbidden in several places. People are discriminated and judged against who they choose to love and some view it as a sin. The question of whether or not people are naturally born gay or they choose to have to this sexual preference has become common. Homosexuals do not choose to be gay, nor do they have the choice to. They develop personality and certain mannerisms as they grow up without having any outside influences which proves that many people are simply born gay. The article, "The Last Mile" a chapter from the book *The Gene* by Siddhartha Mukherjee, speaks on how homosexuality is genetic and there are scientific facts to prove it. Being completely expressive about their sexuality is a difficult task for many gay people. Religions, culture and family restrain many people from loving who they want to love. Breaking conformity and educating those who are close minded on the actual facts can help people become more comfortable with the idea of homosexuality and accept change.

The science behind the genetics of homosexuality has been explored and explained by several scientists. Scientists such as Dean Hamer, Bailey and Pillard all proposed a genetic explanation for homosexuality through the use of experiments. As mentioned before, being gay and allowing it to be known is controversial as it is. The “gay gene” itself brought up several discussions and questions about identity, genetics and choices. In the text, “Homosexuality: Born or Bred?” by Newsweek Staff, it states, “The Bailey-Pillard twin study had its own shortcomings. The numbers alone were impressive. The researchers found that of 56 identical twins, 52 percent were both gay, as against 22 percent of fraternal twins, who have somewhat weaker genetic bonds (5). The Bailey study was significant in establishing the connection between gay identities and genetics because it proved that sexual orientation is indeed inherited. It showed that homosexuality is inborn, not a choice. Since twins share the same DNA, it is more likely for both twins to be gay.

To further discover a more scientifically accurate descriptor of the “gay gene”, a researcher at the National Cancer Institute, Dean Hamer, took it upon himself to explore the genetics behind sexual identity. He began to conduct research on the biological basis of gay identity. Hamer needed a larger study in which it involved the sexual orientations of families over generations. Eventually, two developments came about, the Human Genome Project and AIDS. He later received funding from the NIH to conduct a study to find homosexually-related genes. Hamer’s experiment consisted of 114 gay men where he took tubes of their blood to find where the gay gene derived as well as closely observing their family trees. Furthering his research, Hamer noticed a pattern amongst the generations, which was one is most likely to be gay from their maternal side. This new finding led him to closely track the X chromosome. In the text, “The

Last Mile” a chapter from the book *The Gene* by Siddhartha Mukherjee, it states, “Hamer began to sequentially narrow the stretch to shorter and shorter regions of the X chromosome. He ran through a series of twenty-two markers along the entire length of the chromosome. Notably, of the forty gay siblings, Hamer found that 33 brothers shared a small stretch of the X chromosome called Xq28.” (377). This reveals that after closely analyzing the X chromosome, he found a stretch that they all had in common. It was the first genetic basis in sexual orientation and how it has been passed on. This marker later determined that homosexuality is not a choice, but it is genetic. This place on the gene, Xq28 would confirm a male’s sexual identity.

Sexual desire isn’t much of a choice but more of a natural inclination. Neural circuits in the opposite sexes sends signals that provokes one to seek a male or female. Many innovations and advances in the last decade have proved that male and female hormones provide different versions of the brain. In the article, “Pas de Deux of Sexuality Is Written in the Genes” by Nicholas Wade, the text states, “...the brain’s outer layer that performs much of its higher-level processing, are thicker in women. The hippocampus, where initial memories are formed, occupies a larger fraction of the female brain.” (2). This goes to show how specific parts of the brain influences the behavior of males and females. The difference between the functions of male and female brains has an effect on who they’re attracted to. Males desire women naturally whereas women get aroused by both females and males. This doesn’t specifically determine their sexual orientation however it shows how one can’t help who one is attracted to, one is not choosing who to love. Women’s preference can be unpredictable and their sexuality is more fluid than men.

Others may believe that homosexuality does not come naturally, but it is indeed a choice. Many factors come into play when it has to deal with being expressive about your sexual orientation. Religion and families determine whether or not one wants to pursue sexual desires. Environmental factors are also significant in a person's sexuality, proving that it is not solely a genetic or natural thing. In the text, "The Innate-Immutable Argument Finds No Basis in Science" by A. Dean Byrd, it states, "Homosexuality is not purely genetic...environmental factors play a role... Homosexuality is not 'normal.' On the contrary it is a challenge to the norm...Nature exists whether academics likes it or not...Our sexual bodies were designed for reproduction...No one is born gay...homosexuality is an adaptation, not an inborn trait"(3). This depicts how homosexuality isn't an inbred trait. One develops these feelings and emotions as they grow up. Some may adapt to their surroundings and obtain certain mannerisms that they were raised in.

However, the article "The Innate-Immutable Argument Finds No Basis in Science" is mistaken. The author A. Dean Byrd, was a psychologist who had a strong bias against homosexuals. He was conservative and religious. He also worked in a research organization that advocated sexual orientation change. His opinionated views on homosexuality led him to create an argument on the fact that it is a sexual orientation created by environmental factors and that it is reversible. In the text, it states, "What was most interesting was Dr. Spitzer's response to a journalist who inquired what he would do if his adolescent son revealed his homosexual attraction. Dr. Spitzer said that he hoped that his son would be interesting in changing and would get some help...there is ample evidence that homosexual attraction can be diminished and that changes can be made" (3). This depicts how wrong it is to believe that one can impose change

on an individual who most likely didn't ask for it. Changes should only be made if that person wants to change. Advocating a difference in sexual orientation is immoral and unfair to the person that loves differently. In addition to proving that homosexual is not inbred, a scientist known as Simon LeVay conducted a study where he scanned the brains of 41 cadavers, in which 19 of those were homosexual men. He located a tiny area in the brain, called the hypothalamus, that is believed to control sexual activity, was smaller in gay men than it was for heterosexual men. This clearly implied that homosexuality is definitely genetic and it is not a choice.

Homosexuality is completely inherited and it is a great possibility that many people can be born gay. An individual's mannerisms and persona may come upon them naturally at very early stages in their life. Families, however do tend to struggle with accepting it and coping with it. For example, in the article, "Homosexuality: Born or Bred?", the text states, "When he 'came out' to her and her husband at 17, one of her first reactions was to try to "negotiate" him out of his gayness." (9). This is the story of a mother who tried to force change upon her son solely because he liked men. One cannot choose how a person decides to love someone and people do not find any issues with breaking the norm. Some factors, like religion and culture, makes it difficult for people to fully flourish in their sexual orientation in fear of being judged against or possibly killed. Homosexuals shouldn't feel held back from being who they truly are just because people can't accept change.

In actuality, homosexuals shouldn't feel any less of a person just because a swarm of individuals are against their beliefs and who they choose to love. When it comes to homosexuality, genetics do play a huge role. Genetics are essential in the development of a person's sexual orientation solely because it has been scientifically proven and expressed by

several scientists like Dean Hamer and Simon LeVay. Significant changes in the brain and a specific gene define a person and justifies the reasoning behind the way they act. Change is normal and that is a concept society has to accept, especially in this day and age. No one should impose or force someone to convert into something they are not comfortable with simply to please the next individual. This is our reality and this is the world we live in, therefore people should be open to these new and diverse concepts, like homosexuality.

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