**THE SKEPTIC ARENA**

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**Why a Gay Gene isn’t Important to the Gay Rights Fight**

**by Steve Williams**

***Last week there came news that researchers may now be one step closer to finding the genetic basis for homosexuality in men,***

**Steve, scientists have already found that homosexuality can be influenced by a variety of genetic factors. What they haven't found is that homosexuality is *determined* by genetic factors.**

***but something about this attempt needs clearing up: namely, that it should not be something on which we hinge the gay rights fight. The study, by researchers at Northwestern University in Illinois, found two possible locations for genes that might be responsible for male homosexuality. The research is being treated as an important advance in the scientific understanding of what makes someone gay and while not conclusive proof, it has excited researchers and sparked new interest in the field.***

***Indeed, the theories involved in why homosexuality might occur are incredibly through [SIC] provoking. A leading theory suggests that homosexuals may serve to strengthen kin relationships, acting as satellite parents and extra guardians for offspring. Another theory currently in the spotlight suggests that a certain degree of homosexual affection may serve to bond family units, decrease infighting and in turn offer more protection and more chance of passing on the family’s genes.***

**Steve, you desperately search for excuses for gay people. When you do that, you play right into the hands of religious bigots. Gay people do not need an excuse ("born that way") because there is nothing wrong with being gay. It is religious people who need to find an excuse for their hate.**

**But we all know where that hate comes from: the most vile moral code ever written anywhere on Earth ... the Bible.**

***Indeed, researchers have been keen to stress that these kinds of results ”erode” the belief that homosexuality is a choice.***

**Steve, what is eroding the belief that homosexuality is a choice is the new wave of pseudoscientific nonsense that has recently become popular in an attempt to make excuses for gay people; excuses, by the way, that they don't need.**

***And indeed, discovering a genetic basis for sexuality of any kind should firmly dispel that myth,***

**Steve, the only "myth" that is being spread at the moment is the one you are promoting: that gays are "born that way."**

**The science doesn't support you Steve. You are hoping for a big scientific breakthrough as badly as Christians are waiting for the return of Jesus.**

**I wouldn't bet a nickel ... on either one.**

***but sadly what it should do and what it will do in a culture heavy with science denial on both sides of the political spectrum, are two very different things.***

**Steve, the only one in science denial here ... would be you. That's why you are banking everything on a desperate *future* discovery. This essay is nothing more than an attempt to provide yourself a safety net in case your future hopes fail to materialize.**

***It also fails to answer a larger quibble, and that is the unfair standard of proof that has been placed on homosexuality. There is a certain amount of audacity in suggesting that unless a gay gene can be found, then being gay is still open to be labeled a choice.***

**Steve, it doesn't matter whether or not they find your mythical gay gene. What matters is that your position (Determinism) has never withstood scientific scrutiny. That's why you are sitting there, plucking daisies while you wait and wait for the scientific proof ... that has never come.**

***Indeed, never has there been a “straight gene” located,***

**Steve, thanks for making my point for me. Since there is no evidence for a straight gene, what makes you think that there must evidence for a gay gene?**

***yet if I decided that all heterosexuals have simply made a choice to be so and that their sexuality still has to be proved with hard genetic data before I believe it, I would be looked on rather oddly.***

**Steve, heterosexuals may choose to have homosexual relations, or they may choose to have both at different times (bisexual relations). They may choose to return to only having intercourse with the opposite sex. Your beliefs have no way of reconciling these very real facts. So you are forced to either ignore them or to try and rationalize them away.**

**But freedom of choice can account for everything we see.**

***This is, however, what we’re asking of gay people despite massive amounts of anecdotal as well as scientific data to show that in most cases, it simply is not a choice.***

**No Steve, the scientific data do not show what you claim they do. Anecdotal data is useless, and if the scientific data showed what you claimed it did, we wouldn't be having this debate.**

***There’s also the question of where the threshold of proof lies and who controls that threshold.***

**Steve, those were the weasel words I was waiting for. Since the science hasn't gone your way, you start attacking the scientific methods themselves. You tore that page right out of the Creationist playbook.**

***It’s unlikely that we will find a single gene responsible for something as complex as sexuality — indeed, it’s likely that the genes that code for homosexuality will do other things (which explains why they have survived the unforgiving process of evolution) — and even if we did, it wouldn’t be the whole story. Environmental factors are likely to play a part in having these genes express themselves in particular ways, switching on the homosexuality trait when under certain conditions.***

**Steve, now you're starting to get the picture. It's too bad you didn't apply the brilliance of that last paragraph to the crap you wrote at the beginning of this essay.**

***This leaves us with a nagging question: at what point is enough enough? After the genetic basis for homosexuality is located,***

**Steve, the equivalent statement from Christians is "After Jesus gets back from Mt. Olympus ...."**

**Like them, you are banking on the future going your way, and from where science sits, you have about as much chance as Christians do.**

***will the Religious Right that clings to homosexuality being a choice then be allowed to shift the goalposts?***

**Steve, it isn't just the Religious Right that clings to homosexuality being a choice - so does science.**

**That's why it is a waste of time to set up your defenses in hopes of a future discovery. You don't need it. You should be attacking the Religious Right for their hate and bigotry. Because in either case, choice or not, they are dead wrong and their actions are anything but Christian.**

***Will they decide to disbelieve the facts, like they have with climate change or evolution, and instead place more stock in their argument that it’s nurture over nature and continue to maintain that, with the correct environmental factors at play, homosexuality can still be nipped in the bud?***

**Steve, homosexuality can be nipped in the bud if the person chooses to do so. The same is true of heterosexuality - just ask anyone who switched and they can tell you all about it. Or ask bisexuals who switch back and forth all the time.**

**Your bastardization of science cannot account for bisexuals because you have wagered all your onions on a false dichotomy.**

***It seems that no matter how irrefutable the proof, the Religious Right and their friends will continue to deny what the evidence shows.***

**Steve, you don't have irrefutable proof. If you had irrefutable proof you wouldn't be holding your breath, praying for a future discovery to prove you right.**

***As such, there’s nothing to be gained, then, in letting them set the agenda by their demanding genetic proof that homosexuality is not a choice, when in the first place, we already have the answers we need.***

**Steve, that's pretty much what I said. Their demands should be ignored because genetic proof is unnecessary. They are the ones who need to produce proof for why they are such assholes.**

***For instance, we have enough evidence to say that sexuality is probably an immutable characteristic that is formed very early on in development, and one that is beyond the choosing of most people.***

**Steve, your addition of the word "most" defeats your argument. If Determinism is true, and it is not a choice, then you can't use the word "most" but must use the word "all."**

**See the corner you just talked yourself into, Steve?**

***Furthermore, there is no evidence that by itself homosexuality or bisexuality (whether male or female) is harmful either as a psychological trait or when expressed in a relationship. It is not a psychological disorder to be attracted to the same sex, and all reputable medical bodies support that fact.***

**Steve, that only became true recently; so you might want to shelve that argument. A more accurate statement would have been, that reputable organizations *no longer* consider homosexuality to be a mental disorder.**

***These two are the fundamental issues at play and while specific details about homosexuality’s origins are still are [SIC] being argued, answers to those broader questions are already in.***

***So while the research into the science behind homosexuality is incredibly interesting, and I do believe necessary and important in an academic sense, it shouldn’t be treated as the holy grail for gay rights because to do so enables those opposed to LGBT equality to continue to set the agenda when, in reality, we’ve already moved far beyond their stubborn refusal of the facts.***

**Steve, if you go to my "About" page at the Skeptic Arena.com, and click on the link "What is my position on gay people?" you can read the scientific arguments that render your position false.**

**As I stated earlier, science supports the position that sexual preference can be *influenced* by genetics - it does not support the argument that sexual preference is *determined* by genetics.**

[**http://www.care2.com/causes/why-a-gay-gene-isnt-important-to-the-gay-rights-fight.html**](http://www.care2.com/causes/why-a-gay-gene-isnt-important-to-the-gay-rights-fight.html)

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**THE SCIENCE SEGMENT**

**Cure for sickle-cell in adults validated**

**Physicians have cured adult patients of sickle-cell disease using a unique procedure for stem cell transplantation from healthy, tissue-matched siblings.**

**The new technique eliminates the need for chemotherapy to prepare the patient to receive the transplanted cells and offers the prospect of cure for tens of thousands of adults suffering from sickle-cell disease.**

**Adults with sickle-cell disease are now living on average until about age 50 with blood transfusions and drugs to help with pain crises, but their quality of life can be very low. Now, with this chemotherapy-free transplant, they are curing adults with sickle-cell disease, and their quality of life improves vastly within just one month of the transplant. They are able to experience life without pain.**

**Sickle-cell disease is inherited. It primarily affects people of African descent, including about one in every 500 African-Americans born in the U.S. The defect causes the oxygen-carrying red blood cells to be crescent shaped, like a sickle. The misshapen cells deliver less oxygen to the body's tissues, causing severe pain and eventually stroke or organ damage.**

**Doctors have known for some time that bone marrow transplantation from a healthy donor can cure sickle-cell disease. But few adults were transplanted because high-dose chemotherapy was needed to kill off the patients' own blood-forming cells -- and their entire immune system, to prevent rejection of the transplanted cells, leaving patients open to infection.**

**In the new procedure, patients receive immunosuppressive drugs just before the transplant, along with a very low dose of total body irradiation -- a treatment much less harsh and with fewer potentially serious side effects than chemotherapy.**

**Next, donor cells from a healthy and tissue-matched sibling are transfused into the patient. Stem cells from the donor produce healthy new blood cells in the patient, eventually in sufficient quantity to eliminate symptoms. In many cases, sickle-cells can no longer be detected. Patients must continue to take immunosuppressant drugs for at least a year.**

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**FAMOUS QUOTES**

**Carl Sagan (no biography - previously quoted)**

**“Science is more than a body of knowledge.**

**It is a way of thinking;**

**a way of skeptically interrogating the universe**

**with a fine understanding of human fallibility.**

**If we are not able to ask skeptical questions,**

**to interrogate those who tell us that something is true,**

**to be skeptical of those in authority,**

**then, we are up for grabs for the next charlatan**

**(political or religious)**

**who comes rambling along.”**