Homophobia is Heritable, too

If homosexuality is learned, it's wrong, but if homophobia isn't, it's right?

PERCYPRIOR

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Encyclopedia Brittanica defines homophobia as the “culturally produced fear of or prejudice against homosexuals that sometimes manifests itself in legal restrictions in extreme cases, bullying or even violence against homosexuals (sometimes called bashing’).” This intrigues me because it resembles Wikipedia’s tendentious definit of acquired homosexuality, which was the inspiration for Bryan Caplan’s article.

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It reads:

> **Acquired homosexuality** is the discredited idea that homosexuality can be spre either through sexual "seduction" or "recruitment" by homosexuals or through exposure to media depictions.

Implicitly, the reasoning seems to be that in order for homosexuality to be free fro moral criticism, it must be innate, but in order for homophobia to deserve it, it mu be learned. A serviceable rule of thumb: if you’re on the political left, then there ar two—and only two—group differences which not only may be, but *must* be a resul genetics: one’s gender identity and sexual orientation.

The psychology of male homophobia probably goes back to evolution in the follow way: appearing to be gay when you aren't is a huge liability from the standpoint of reproduction, and seeming chummy with gay people makes one appear to be gay. making exaggerated displays of revulsion toward gay people is a way to signal that is very much not gay.

Men face greater competition for mates than do women—more men die without a partner than do women, and the average man is considered less sexually desirable the average woman than vice versa.* This is because women pay a higher cost for reproducing: they must expensively gestate a fetus within their bodies and risk dea in childbirth, whereas a man can simply impregnate her and disappear, never to fa the repercussions. In the evolutionary economy, sperm is cheap and plentiful, eggs uteruses are priceless. As a result, we should expect that the offer a man must mak a woman to convince her to have sex with him is more extravagant than what a wo must offer a man. (Supporting this prediction, Clarke & Hatfeld found that 75% of

accepted an unsolicited offer of sex with a random woman, while none of the wom did.)

The hypothesis that homophobia is a biological adaptation makes verifiable predictions:

1) Homophobia will be heritable; genetically identical twins reared apart will be m homophobic than fraternal twins reared apart, and adoptive children will be more homophobic than their adoptive siblings and parents if their biological families ar more homophobic. Using data from 4,688 twins, Verwej et al. (2008) report that:

> Genetic modelling showed that variation in homophobia scores could be explai by additive genetic (36%), shared environmental (18%) and unique environmenta factors (46%). However, corrections based on previous findings show that the sh environmental estimate may be almost entirely accounted for as extra additive genetic variance arising from assortative mating for homophobic attitudes. The results suggest that variation in attitudes toward homosexuality is substantially inherited, and that social environmental influences are relatively minor.

2) Men will be more homophobic than women because men face greater sexual competition than women and have a greater incentive to deflect an undesirable reputation. From the same article:

> Results show that, in accordance with literature, males have significantly more negative attitudes toward homosexuality than females and non-heterosexuals a less homophobic than heterosexuals.

3) Homophobia will spontaneously manifest itself in the absence of counter-conditioning, and it will be culturally ubiquitous, appearing independently in pre-Christian tribal societies. Wikipedia is of strange help here:

> In a 1976 study, Gwen Broude and Sarah Greene compared attitudes towards ar frequency of homosexuality in the ethnographic studies available in the Standa cross-cultural sample. They found that out of 42 communities: homosexuality w accepted or ignored in 9; 5 communities had no concept of homosexuality; 11

> considered it undesirable but did not set punishments, and 17 strongly disappr
> and punished. Of 70 communities, homosexuality was reported to be absent or
> in frequency in 41, and present or not uncommon in 29.

How tolerant of homosexuality was Ancient Greece? Less than you may have thou

> During these times, homosexuality was seen as normal and necessary…. Yet, wh
> two men of similar age shared a similar relationship, it was deemed taboo and,
> fact, perverse.

4) Homophobia will cause homosexuals to reproduce more often—more tolerant societies will have a lower homosexual fertility rate. This is because evolution will endow parents with a desire to see their kids have kids.

In the 1920s, gay men had to pair up with women and raise families to keep up appearances, even if they maintained a sexual double life shrouded in secrecy. I wo guess that the fertility of gay people has declined since then as our society has bec more tolerant, but I am having trouble finding time-series data on the fertility rate homosexuals. But for what it's worth, this survey found that only 8.1% of gay coupl from 2014-2016 were raising children, as opposed to about 40% of heterosexual couples. I would guess that most of those men are raising adoptive rather than biological children sired by surrogacy.

Anticipated objections:

> "Women find gay sexy too."

Do you think women are equally sexually attracted to men they know to be gay as are to men they know to be straight? There is evidence that women tend to find m masculine men attractive, and that homosexual men tend to be more effeminate (probably because homosexuality has something to do with the activational effects hormonal signaling during puberty). Moreover, there's evidence that people in gen are more attracted to people they consider prospective sexual partners and who th think are interested in them sexually.

> *The sexual marketplace isn't harder on men across the entire age span. Retirer homes are full of widowed women, and if any men end up there, they're *very* popular.

In a Pew Research study the disparity in singleness by sex is significant, but it doe depend on the point in the life span. This doesn't discount the evolutionary reasor though, because women have a longer life expectancy and post-menopausal wome incapable of reproducing. The expected result still holds: fertile men are much mo single than fertile women because there is more competition for fertile women tha for fertile men.

> Homosexuality is adaptive (otherwise, how would it have persisted for so long?) we shouldn't expect homophobia to be adaptive. From a Darwinian perspective should therefore be a matter of indifference whether one is seen as gay by their group.

You're missing my point that *appearing to be gay when you aren't* is a huge evolution disadvantage *even if* actually being a homosexual is advantageous. So, even if the g for homosexuality promote female fertility to a degree that offsets the loss in reproduction among males who bear those genes, men who don't have them face a huge incentive to not be misidentified by their sexual peer group as a gay person, a to exhibit the masculine qualities that women tend to find attractive.

I should also note that evolutionary explanation of homosexuality is a huge controversy in the scientific literature. Some think it is a modern phenomenon because there is little of it in primitive societies (that is, men who exclusively partı with other men), a result of epigenetic effects—modern gay genes may express themselves with gay results only in our unique environment, which is a far cry fro our ancestral evolutionary situation.

The kin-selection theory has been disconfirmed by recent evidence because gay m do not invest differently in their biological offspring (assuming they have them) th do heterosexual men, and there is vanishing evidence to recommend the proposal homosexuality is a clandestine reproductive strategy, whereby gay men use their

homosexuality as a foot-in-the-door for female companionship which will result i offspring.

(Indeed, this latter hypothesis hardly seems like an explanation of homosexuality a because it seems to presuppose that gay men lack exclusive sexual interest in men very fact it was intended to explain.)

Gay men have a lower rate of reproduction in modern societies, but the female relatives of gay men enjoy an advantage, suggesting that the genes which cause homosexual orientation in men cause greater fertility in women. That effect could strong enough to offset the harms to men, but again, the evidence is mixed and th jury is widely considered to be out on the question. (I refer you to David Buss's enlightening discussion of the evidence in his terrific textbook *Evolutionary Psych A New Approach*, Ch 5, P 147.)

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