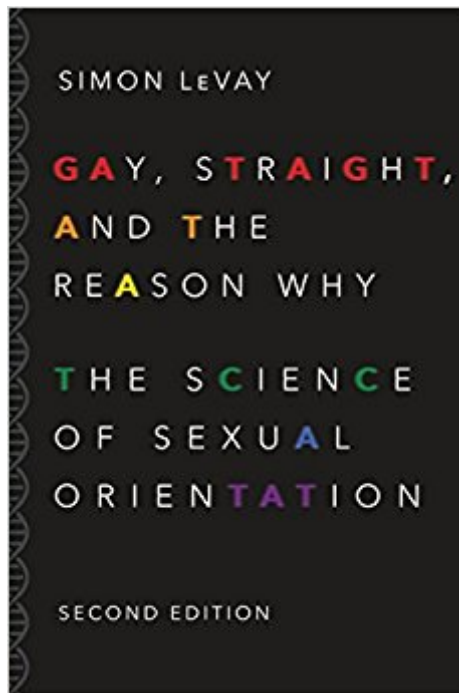




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Gay, Straight, And The Reason Why: The Science Of Sexual Orientation



Synopsis

What causes a child to grow up gay or straight? Neuroscientist Simon LeVay summarizes a wealth of scientific evidence that points to one inescapable conclusion: Sexual orientation results primarily from an interaction between genes, sex hormones, and the cells of the developing body and brain. LeVay takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of laboratories that specialize in genetics, endocrinology, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, evolutionary psychology, and family demographics. He describes, for instance, how researchers have manipulated the sex hormone levels of animals during development, causing them to mate preferentially with animals of their own gender. In this second edition, LeVay adds a chapter on bisexuality, reviews some uncommon forms of sexuality, and considers whether there could be a biological basis for subtypes of gay people such as "butch" and "femme" lesbians.

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Customer Reviews

The nature vs. nurture wars over the development of homosexuality have been pretty definitively decided in favor of nature. In this survey of what makes people gay, lesbian, bi, or straight, neuroscientist LeVay (When Science Goes Wrong) brings readers up-to-date on the current state of knowledge. Other recent books have covered much of the same territory, but LeVay's is the most comprehensive. He begins by tackling the seemingly simple question "What is sexual orientation?" As the book progresses, he discusses how gayness is not monolithic; rather, there seems to be different kinds of homosexuality. Some people claim to be able to identify gays using "gaydar," but LeVay says differences between straights and gays go beyond body language to include

visuospatial abilities (e.g., lesbians, like straight men, have better spatial abilities than straight women) and verbal fluency. He reviews current thinking on the role of genes and how testosterone levels may influence the fetus's development. LeVay comes close at times to dry recitation of research results, but although the book's chief appeal probably will be to professionals dealing with these issues, other interested readers will find it an informative and generally approachable read. 20 b&w line drawings. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Although the book's chief appeal probably will be to professionals dealing with these issues, other interested readers will find it an informative and generally approachable read." --Publishers Weekly

"Simon LeVay, a former Harvard neuroscientist, has written, *Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why: The Science of Sexual Orientation*, a comprehensive, engaging and occasionally quite funny look at the current state of the research on the topic." --Schuyler Velasco, Salon

"This book will serve both as a resource for researchers looking for what is yet unknown and what questions need further research and as a fascinating read for the educated layperson, who will be intrigued by some of the factors that may relate to homosexuality... Recommended." --Choice

"LeVay also does a nice job illustrating that the argument for sexual orientation as determined is not a singular cause-and-effect argument... Yet, it is important for scholars and clinicians alike across various paradigms to be aware of the research reviewed in *Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why*." --PsycCritiques

"Simon LeVay's book, *Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why*, offers an excellent review of scientific research on the causes and correlates of sexual orientation. It provides a clear and comprehensive summary of recent studies of sexual orientation- a review that should be useful to lay people and journalists as well as to professionals in the field. LeVay has a knack for describing complicated scientific topics- brain anatomy, behavior genetics, endocrinology, cognitive psychology- in straight-forward and easy-to-understand ways. He provides the reader with a good sense of where research on sexual orientation stands today, and where further research is needed." --Richard Lippa, *Sex Roles*

"The theory that sexual orientation has a biological basis receives support in neuroscientist Simon LeVay's book. Relating evidence from genetics, neuroscience and developmental biology, he suggests that prenatal interactions between hormones and the developing brain influence adult sexuality." --Nature

Read it for my science book discussion group. The average rating from the group was 3.5 out of 5. The main reason for the low grades is that the author cited many studies - and then gave examples

of counter results of those studies. Consequently, it was hard to determine any firm conclusions. Having said that, I like the writing style, and I did learn interesting facts about brain structure and function, possible genetic connections, and perhaps, epigenetic relationships. The subtitle: "The SCIENCE of Sexual Orientation" is a misnomer. There was very little science involved. I believe more study is needed. A follow-up book using first-person interviews might shed additional light on causes, emotions, thoughts, and experiences of gays in our society. As a non-gay person, I'd like to see better appreciation among all of us for ALL OF US.

I loved this book. I doubt it would be for everyone, however. It is very science driven and theoretical, which is what I wanted, but if you're looking for an entertaining read, this is not the book for you. The author does a great job of laying out the pervasive theories about sexuality development and cites the corresponding research - which is one of the reasons I really liked it. That being said, research is always open to interpretation to some degree but the author does a good job of presenting both sides of every theory (for and against). This book will not answer the question "what makes us gay or straight," but the author does a good job of presenting you with all of the circulating theories, no matter how ridiculous they may be. It is worth the read if you are yearning to learn of the varying theoretical and scientific hypotheses.

great resource

Comprehensive and convincing. I now know without a shadow of a doubt that homosexuality has nothing to do with choice.

LeVay writes in a way that makes the high level science of sexual orientation understandable for the non-technical crowd. I especially appreciate his attention to the social impact of the research that links gender traits to sexual orientation. Fascinating and illuminating. Highly recommended.

This book presents a lot of information in a manner that is accessible to non-scientists (although parts are challenging for younger college students). The diversity of topics is broad, so there are choices for class readings. It has been a great tool to bring a more scientifically grounded perspective to a non-science class.

Detailed, and addresses extensively biology of orientation

This is what I need to continue my research

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