

**GOING THE WILDE WAY.**  
**Homosexuality: Its impact on creativity and inclination towards  
creative pursuits.**

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***Abstract:** A preliminary effort was made to study the commonly held belief of homosexuals being more creative. Direct studies and literature from diverse fields was collected to identify the key approaches that have been taken to determine the impact of homosexuality on creativity. The few empirical studies done on their relationship and other factors like intelligence and spatial ability have been reviewed. The Sociobiological approach in the form of 'kin-selection theory' came closest to a logical construct of the causal link between homosexuality and creativity. The essence of psychological, psychosocial, biological and sociobiological approaches revealed without doubt that homosexuality is genetic and the link between homosexuality and creativity is partly biological and partly psychosocial. Both nature (the genes) and nurture (social marginalization and affect on personality traits) have an impact; not only on the relationship of the two variables but also on the degree by which homosexuality of an individual influences his (or her) creativity.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The association between homosexuality and creativity has been an intriguing and thought-provoking subject inviting immense speculation. The existence of homosexuality has been documented as far back as ancient Egypt and 2300 BC and a number of these have been famous poets, authors, painters, philosophers, sculptors and statesmen. Despite impressive lists of creative homosexuals being drawn, the impact of homosexuality on creativity is disputable. Even though the creative work of most homosexual artists is colored, molded, influenced and directed by the fact of their homosexuality, there is no denying that there are commonplace and non-creative homosexuals as there are literary geniuses who are heterosexual. If homosexuality is a causal factor for creativity than how does it work and impart homosexuals with a decided advantage over other heterosexuals? Does it affect some homosexuals more than others and thereby causes differential creativity even amongst homosexuals?

Simplistic explanations range from calling homosexual creativity as the alternate ultimate creative act to calling it an outcome of suppressed sexual desires and social oppression. It is often said that the ultimate creative act is to have a child and perhaps because homosexuals and lesbians are not obliged to have children, as this role is in no way expected of them, this lack of parental responsibility may offer tremendous creative impetus within the gay populace (Schutte 2001). But not all gay men and lesbian women are equally creative and there is more to the puzzle than just a re-direction of energies that were meant for child-rearing.

As we explore the literature and empirical work done to establish the relationship between homosexuality and creativity, our purpose is to analyze critically the mass of evidence and ideas present in various disciplines and understand their approach to the subject. There are of course certain limitations to this study, as there exists extensive literature and ideas on homosexuality and creativity separately but disciplinary studies focusing on their relationship are surprisingly few. With that in mind, this paper is composed of several sections. Definitions of homosexuality and creativity are presented at the outset to make sure that as we read along we are on common ground and are thinking about them in the same context. Thereafter are chronicled the few empirical studies relating creativity, intelligence and spatial ability to homosexuality. The psychological, sociological and sociobiological approaches to the subject are outlined next and this forms the interesting and vibrant core of ideas on which this paper is based. We endeavor to

bring all of it together and provide a holistic approach to understand our topic of interest. We end this study with the implications that any concrete findings of such a study could have and conclude with what future directions further studies in this field should take.

### **Homosexuality: Definition and origin of the word**

For the purpose of this study, let us at the outset define and describe two terms that you would come across innumerable times as we go along. The word “*Homosexuality*” first appeared in a brochure by an anonymous author in 1851 and he defined what he meant by the expression “homosexual” (Hirschfeld 2000). We understand *homosexuality as the sexual orientation of men towards male persons and of women towards female persons*. Frequently used terms in the literature of sex studies, such as homosexuality, pederasty, contrary sexual feeling, perversion and inversion, are only supposed to express either the direction of the drive or the psychosexual characteristic, but not, as is commonly assumed, some kind of sex act. Thus the sexual orientation of homosexuals is separate from individuals who can be classified as heterosexuals, pseudo-homosexuals<sup>1</sup> and transsexuals<sup>2</sup>. The word ‘Homosexuality’ has proved tenacious despite two other terms originating from distinguished individuals and staying on for a while in the second part of the nineteenth century. One of these expressions-*Contrary sexual feelings*- originates from the famous Berlin Professor of Psychiatry Carl Westphal; the other term originated with Ulrichs and he called it “Uranismus.” Apart from these a large number of derisive nicknames exist in every culture to refer to homosexuals (Hirschfeld 2000).

### **Creativity**

Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e. useful, adaptive concerning task constraints) (Sternberg 1999 p.3). Creativity requires the simultaneous presence of a number of traits (e.g. intelligence, perseverance, unconventionality, the ability to think in a particular manner)(Martindale 1999). While none of these traits are especially rare, what is uncommon is to find them all in the same person.

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals who demonstrate homosexual behavior only when they are not in contact or in close proximity of the members of the opposite sex.

<sup>2</sup> Transsexuals (Gender Dysphoria Syndrome) are individuals who do not identify with their biological gender. Some transsexuals are heterosexual.

## **Homosexuality and Creativity**

As discussed earlier, the association between homosexuality and creativity has long been an intriguing subject of speculation. A number of famous homosexuals have been involved in creative pursuits mainly arts (for our purpose arts would include painters, sculptors, writers, poets, actors and musicians). In most works by homosexual artists we can see how closely sexual disposition was interwoven with the personality that produced the work (Ruitenbeek 1967). There are a number of theories that have been propounded explaining the relationship between homosexuality and creativity. Since both homosexuality and creativity are understood to be complex phenomenon neither of these plausible explanations describe the relationship fully, but some of them do deserve the merit of discussion here. But before that we must discuss some of the few empirical studies that have been done in the field.

### ***Empirical Studies***

Though a subject of intense speculation, empirical studies on homosexuality and its relationship to creativity have been few and far between. Also the methodology of some of these has been questionable since it hasn't always been easy to get a large enough sample size. One of the earliest studies (Ellis 1959) comparing a group of homosexual patients in psychotherapy with a set of heterosexual patients, proved heterosexuals to be more creative than the homosexual patients. Also greater the degree of emotional disturbance of the homosexual patients the less creative they proved to be. The main critique of the study here throughout the literature has been use of psychotherapy patients as sample and the results therefore cannot be generalized, also creativity was judged based on a dictionary definition rather than performance or test data. A later study by George Domino (1977) included four groups of homosexuals (activists, social homosexuals, clients of a college counseling center, and artistic homosexuals) and four groups of control heterosexuals. The subjects were administered a battery of tests that included nine measures of aspects of creativity. In all cases where significant mean differences were obtained, homosexuals scored lower and there was no support for the contention that homosexuals are more creative.

Other studies have measured intelligence based on IQ levels, and one of the studies on women with high IQ tried to establish a reverse relationship (Demartino 1974). Measuring the

sexual attitudes, desires and experiences of women of high intelligence, it was found only 21% had ever had any lesbian experience. A comprehensive literature review by James Weinrich (1978), perhaps the only one, supports the hypothesis that homosexuals are relatively more intelligent as compared to control group of heterosexuals. Studying the relationship between various forms of non-reproduction (especially homosexuality) and intelligence as measured by IQ and other tests, Weinrich concluded that most studies found the more homosexual subject groups' scores (on intelligence tests) to be higher than those of the more heterosexual controls. All exceptions to this trend were concentrated in one subgroup: prisoners (who are known to have low IQ scores) and the more representative the sample studied, the clearer and more statistically significant was the superiority of intelligence of the more homosexual over the more heterosexual group. Also certain studies show a co-relation between homosexuality and education, especially in case of lesbians (Kinsey 1953). Since education is known to correlate strongly with IQ, a need to explore the possible relationship exists here.

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) approached a different line of investigation that might prove to be relevant. Collecting voluminous evidence on sex differences in spatial ability, they concluded that spatial ability is highest for *feminine* boys and *masculine* girls. If one assumes that femininity/masculinity in these children correlates with adult homosexuality, it would lend support to the belief of homosexuals being more creative. One of the relatively recent studies (Wilmott 1984) did not find any differences in IQ between 20 homosexual males, 20 heterosexual males and 20 females, but social differences in verbal and nonverbal ability were marked. Demb (1992) reviewing the literature to find whether 'gay men are artistic' (as is the commonly held belief) discovered the data that addressed the relationship between homosexuality and artistic expression to be decidedly scanty. The single article that addressed the subject indicated an inverse relationship contradicting the widely held but little studied impression of gay men being unusually artistically able.

Though we had set out to discover the relationship between homosexuality and creativity, direct empirical studies on the subject have been few and have used inconsistent definitions of creativity. Studies on intelligence have been more in number though diverse in their results. Intelligence is one of the traits for creativity and so is spatial ability (at least for artistic creativity), and if the parts were stronger, so would be the sum of the parts. We would include

studies on intelligence, smart behavior, spatial ability and creative output of homosexuals to discover whether homosexuals are more creative than heterosexuals or not. The various approaches that have been taken to establish correlations between homosexuality and creativity can be divided into Psychological, Psychosocial, Biological and Sociobiological approach. While some of these exist in literature as presented here, others have been drawn together from separate studies on homosexuality and creativity.

## **Psychological Approach**

### ***Homosexuality and Creativity as a form of madness***

Aristotle reportedly said, "no great genius was without a mixture of insanity" (Rothenberg 1990). Plato claimed that the poet in the throes of creation is mad. Plato's original formulation was that the poet's creation was the result of "divine madness" -- a possession by the Muses (Reisenbichler 1995). One reason for the traditional association of mental illness and creativity is that creative thought processes are unusual in structure. Creative experiences and descriptions of creative breakthroughs sometimes appear, on the surface, to be similar to abnormal ones (Rothenberg 1990). Recently, research has investigated the connection between bipolar disorder known as manic depression, and the creative process (Reisenbichler 1995). Creative individuals, especially poets, reported that their psychological and physiological states during periods of great creative productivity were very similar to those during a manic period. Poetic creativity especially has usually been linked with schizophrenia. This is in part because primary process cognition<sup>3</sup> has often been thought to operate prominently in both schizophrenia and the composing of poetry. The list of mad artists, scientists and writers in general is ambiguous but impressive (see appendix).

Homosexuality for long had been regarded as a mental illness or disorder. Until 1973, Homosexuality was on the list of mental disorders of American Psychiatric Association (Dean, 2001). However even until much later, the British Medical journal was still publishing articles on possible treatments including hormonal therapy, aversion therapy and most bizarrely therapy 'to mobilize the heterosexual elements'! A proposed causal agent of homosexuality has been the

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<sup>3</sup> The Primary process-secondary process continuum is the main dimension along which cognition varies. Primary process though is found in normal states such as dreaming and reverie, as well as in abnormal states such as psychosis and neurosis.

identity problem engendered by the enveloping mother and the absent father and we know about the Freudian concepts of Oedipal conflict <sup>4</sup> and castration anxiety <sup>4</sup>. Psychopathologists view homosexuals as suffering from a mental disorder with early roots in identifying with the opposite-sex parent, or they might have a more neurotic structure of phobia for the genitalia of the opposite sex. Supporting the viewpoint of Homosexuality like creativity being a form of madness is a large number of homosexual creative personalities reporting great creative productivity during periods of manic frenzy. Quoting from an essay on the great economist Keynes (who was homosexual throughout his lifetime):

"I feel little better than a lunatic this evening. It is just like three years ago--the same thing has happened. Feeling rather leisurely, I returned to my old essay on Babylonian and Greek weights. Last night, I went on working at it up to 2 o'clock: and today I went continuously from the time I got up until dinnertime. Extraordinary! Anyone else would think the subject very dull. Some charm must have been cast on it by a Babylonian magician. The result is I feel quite mad and silly."(Hession 1993)

But the majority of evidence today is against both creativity and homosexuality as a form of madness. Weisberg (1994) investigated several hypotheses about the relationship of creativity to manic depression and concluded that manic depression is not linked in any way to creativity, but that mood is linked to motivation. To the degree that mental illnesses affects mood, the individual's motivation for creative production will be affected. The manic frenzy that creative individuals, both homosexuals and otherwise have experienced, can be described as an instance of what the psychologist M. Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow"--a state of concentration so intense that the person experiences a loss of ego-boundaries. As far as homosexuality is concerned, Freud in his famous 1935 letter to the mother of an American homosexual insisted that it was not a sickness. In fact, one can argue that Freud considered homosexuality as the opposite of sickness; since in his view homosexual urges become pathogenic only when repressed. The person who acted on his homosexual impulses was in theory immune to neurosis, whereas those impulses became dangerous precisely when they were driven into the unconscious. Perhaps the best-known instance of the phenomenon is Freud's theory of paranoia, where paranoia is said to be caused by repressed homosexual desire (Dean 2001). Finally in 1992 the WHO deleted homosexuality from its list of mental disorders and the UK government followed suit in 1993.

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<sup>4</sup> Oedipus complex is the combination of unconscious fantasies of incest with the parent of the opposite sex with the jealousy and a death wish directed at the same-sex parent. In boys these sexual desires for the mother and the death wish towards the father are accompanied by fears of punishment by the father in the form of castration, known as castration anxiety.

There is a large amount of literature trying to prove that homosexuality and creativity are some form of madness and an equally large amount contradicting it. A review and an effort to correlate the two on this basis reveal that there is no real evidence of madness being a common causal factor and a possible link between Homosexuality and creativity.

### ***Homosexuality as a means for Creative growth***

Paul Rosenfels, an influential psychiatrist, has done much to assist the modern understanding of homosexuality in his 1971 monograph *Homosexuality: The Psychology of the Creative Process*. He broke with psychoanalysis in the 1940's and was the first American psychiatrist to defend homosexuality in print. Many pioneers of modern psychology did not see homosexuality as an aberration, indeed Freud himself in his "Letter to An American Mother" stated: ***"Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it can not be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of sexual functions produced by a certain arrest of sexual development"*** (Ruitenbeek 1967). Rosenfels went further ahead and applying his understanding to homosexuality proved that it could be a valid lifestyle which could involve real love and affection and was not just "an infantile" stage within the Freudian sequence of sexual development.

Rosenfels' work on the creative power of homosexuality was groundbreaking. While others were seeing abnormality; he was seeing an opportunity for growth and inner development. This opportunity for growth is central to the whole of Rosenfels' work which begins with the assumption that the goal of "civilized living is to reach a state of contentment and happiness." He argues that the individual must adapt and grow and this requires psychic energies, but adaptation does not exhaust them; there is a "psychic surplus." This "psychic surplus" overflow can be channeled into the service of psychological growth which is, for Rosenfels, the foundation of happiness. Psychological growth requires an "inner identity" on the part of each individual, and this identity involves two capacities: love and power. Since love and power are the basis of the quest for happiness, then romance and relationships are an integral part of our quest.

In Rosenfels complex understanding, Homosexuality contributes to a creative growth process since the homosexual lives closer to the real problems of human psychological development. The homosexual position evolves from a failure to reach heterosexual capacity in



the terms dictated by the society, and this kind of failure in making conformity work underlies all creative individuality whether homosexual or not. No one chooses to fail, but in meeting the challenges inherent in failure in a way that leads to personal growth, the individual is able to place the responsibility for his failure outside himself, and this enables him to start a personal journey into a psychological world where his assets and resources can find new levels of fulfillment. Any individual who can use failure as a basis of growth opens the door to an independent course in life. In sum, since homosexuals need to have greater survival and adaptive skills, their 'psychic surplus' is more and can be channelized towards their psychological growth leading to a more fulfilled and creative life.

Rosenfels work prevents us from classifying all homosexuals as creative on three accounts. Much like Maslow and Ernest Van Den Haag (Ruitenbeek 1967), Rosenfels uses the term "creative" to describe an attitude towards life and self rather than as a capacity to produce tangible creative work (a piece of art, poetry or a new discovery) or an idea and this is in direct contrast to our definition of creativity. Coming out of the narrow boundaries of definitions and presuming that our definition of creativity may not be all-encompassing and thus sufficient for the current purpose even when we re-look at his work, non-conformity to societal norms is the bases for a creative individual according to Rosenfels. This implies that all successfully non-conforming individuals could be called creative individuals, which takes the advantage away from homosexuals and does not establish homosexuality as the causal factor for creativity. Also the premise is solely from a psychological point of view, ignoring a large amount of biological and social arguments relevant in this context.

## **Psychosocial Approach**

### ***Creativity due to victimization of Homosexuals***

Homosexuals have been an oppressed group ever since their existence has been documented and they have been victimized by all possible groups: society, Lawmakers and Law enforcers, medical professionals and to a large extent by opportunistic blackmailers (Hirschfeld 2000). In Nazi Germany homosexuals were bracketed with the disabled and schizophrenics, and were subjected to compulsory sterilization; a curiously inappropriate and pointless punishment. Homosexuals had to wear uniforms with a pink triangle (a symbol of gay activism today) for

identification and were tortured in concentration camps. It is not known how many died as a result of gassing, neglect and medical torture (homosexuals were injected with male hormone testosterone to change their sexual orientation) and their persecution did not end in Germany even after WWII. At the same time the US Army and Navy described homosexuality as a "constitutional psychopathic state."

A psychosocial approach to the victimization and oppression of homosexuality may provide us with some link to creativity. Rothenberg (1990) states that with the possible exception of ancient Greek society in which bisexuality and homosexuality were widely accepted, homosexual persons often find themselves discriminated against or excluded and on the outside fringe of their society, a condition social scientists call being 'marginal'. This marginality seems to have something to do with a person's learning to tolerate ambiguity, project varying points of view, and strike out in new directions - factors that seem to play an important role in creative orientation and ability. According to him homosexuality has something to do with the creativity of certain individuals, but no basic relationship to creative capacity in general.

A study by Otis & Skinner (1996), using a large sample (N=1067) has shown a positive effect of victimization on mental well-being on lesbian and gay people. Other factors like self-esteem, social support and partner support also contributed to the effect of victimization on mental well being. Rhodes (1990) studying creativity (not specifically on homosexuals) has defined two constructs of creative motivation: *Deficiency creativity*, which is motivated by the need for acceptance and love, and can help an individual turn a deprived environment into a nurturing one; and *Being Creativity*, which is motivated by the higher level growth needs of self-actualization. Forms of deficiency creativity can result in a wide range of responses including anxiety, coping, insight, growth and eventual forms of *being creativity*. Given the history of oppression of homosexuals and based on the Otis & Skinner study, if we suppose homosexuals to be better equipped to positively channelize their energy, one could hypothesize that they would be able to achieve *being creativity* from *deficiency creativity* more effortlessly. While this could hypothetically describe the relationship between homosexuality and creativity, it only does it superficially and ignores important biological and other social facts. It appears that the link between homosexuality and creativity is not only a mere product of oppression, societal pressures and approvals; it also is a function of genetic selection and other factors. On the other hand, putting

our argument in the classic nature versus nurture mold, while genetic and biological factors have been found to play a role in creativity, some part of it must be dependent on 'nurture' or our 'learned behavior' later in life. This is the realm where we need to explore the role of victimization with other social influences on homosexual creativity.

### **Biological Approach**

#### ***Creativity and Homosexuality are inherited***

As yet undeveloped and unproven idea espoused by some scientists is that Homosexual behavior is simply inherited and it is due to a single homosexual gene. When it is seen alongside the myth of the creative genius, the possibility of a correlation cannot be ruled out completely. Research by Dr Dean Hamer of the United States National Cancer Institute in Bethesda has suggested that there may be a genetic cause for homosexuality. A 1993 published study suggested that 82% of homosexual men carried a marker Xq28 on the X chromosome. The X chromosome is the chromosome men inherit from their mothers. He was led to research this as he found that gay men have more gay cousins and other relatives on their mother's side. In 1995, Dr Hamer and colleagues from the University of Colorado and the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts, published the result of another experiment. They examined 32 pairs of exclusively or mainly gay brothers and found that 22 or 69% shared the Xq28 region. This research has since been questioned by an equally distinguished group of scientists lead by Dr George Ebers of the University of Western Ontario.

The evidence for a genetic basis of creativity is not very strong and the earlier belief that creativity runs in families has been challenged (Martindale 1999). The 'Biosocial theory of creativity' on the other hand proposes that creative genius are born that way and simplistically speaking it links creativity to madness and thereby explains it to be neuropathological. Also according to the theory, abnormal brains or neuropathology is inherited (Mizrach 2001). Since highly creative individuals are over represented among the relatives of schizophrenics, a direct genetic link has been a possibility (Jarvik & Chandvik (1973) in Martindale 1999) that has not been proven yet.

Creativity is known to induce physiological changes in the brain in the form of low levels of cortical activation, comparatively more right-than left-hemisphere activation and low-levels of

frontal-lobe activation (Martindale 1999). Since these traits are exhibited by creative people not in general but only while engaged in creative activity, the basis for creativity being the function of a fixed genetic make-up appears weak. Also since the genetic basis of homosexuality is as yet unproven, a simple biological co-relation does not seem to be reason enough.

### ***Hemispherical Activity: Creativity and Homosexuality***

There are reasons to believe that creativity could be related to differential activation of the right and left hemispheres of the brain, as well as to general level of cortical arousal. The right hemisphere operates in a primary process fashion whereas the left hemisphere operates in a secondary process fashion. Because creative people have more primary process cognition, they should show more right hemisphere activity as compared to left hemisphere, at least during periods of creative activity. A good deal of evidence suggests presence of brain centers necessary for reception and production of music, creating visual arts and production of mental images to be present on the right hemisphere. It has been proved that creative people rely more on right hemisphere than on the left mainly only during the creative process but not in general (Martindale 1999).

Generally speaking because of a unique characteristic of the brain, which involves crossover of major connections, the left-brain being dominant in most individuals means the right hand, foot and eye, are also dominant or preferred in most activities. There is a claim amongst left-handed individuals to be more creative due to greater dominance of the right hemisphere. Of interest, left-handedness is much more common in male homosexuals than in the general male population, suggesting that in some homosexuals at least, the right hemisphere is dominant. Both Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were gay and lefties and there is an attempt to draw such lists to prove homosexuals and lefties to be more creative (Monteagudo 2000).

Apart from a judgment based on hearsay about there being more left-handed homosexuals, the weak argument in the favor of the what we could christen as the *hemispherical theory* gets further weakened by evidence from extensive neuropsychological studies done over the years. It has been demonstrated that females as a group are very much "left brain" with strengths in the area of language functions. The average male brain, although proportionately larger, is highly specialized with less interconnecting pathways, and the average male is very

'right brained' with strengths in the area of visual-spatial activity, but less efficient overall. Neuropsychological studies assessing the biological aspects of brain function have shown that homosexual males have a shift in neuropsychological attributes that places them somewhere between heterosexual males and females. . Differences between homosexual and heterosexual males are reinforced by neuroanatomical studies of the brain. For example, an area of the brain called the corpus callosum, the main connecting area between the two great hemispheres of the brain appears to be larger in homosexual males than heterosexual males. So while interconnectivity between the two hemispheres might help homosexuals in deriving the greatest benefits (e.g. spatial ability from right-brain and linguistic ability from left-brain) from the two hemispheres and give them an advantage over both heterosexual males and females, it still does not prove greater right hemisphere activity though some support comes from the study of Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) as previously noted. Collecting voluminous evidence on sex differences in spatial ability, they concluded that spatial ability is highest for *feminine* boys and *masculine* girls. If one assumes that femininity or masculinity in these children correlates with adult homosexuality, it would lend support to the belief of homosexuals being more creative. Probably creativity tests with homosexuals to measure hemispherical activity during periods of high creativity may help take this testable and interesting hypothesis forward, which at the liberty of using an unscientific phrase seems intuitively plausible.

## **Sociobiological Approach**

### ***Kin-Selection Theory***

The most comprehensive and noticeable theory trying to prove the case of intelligent homosexuals (not creative homosexuals yet) comes from the fascinating realm of “sociobiology”- the study of human and animal behavior in terms of natural selection (Stein 1978). Sociobiology is a controversial discipline that tries to reassign much of human behavior to biology and according to it; the evidence for a genetic component of homosexuality is strong. The evidence comes from ethological studies of animal species, anthropological accounts of existence of homosexuality in diverse human societies and the strong statistical correlation in twin studies. If this is true, then it is essential to seek an evolutionary explanation for the appearance and

maintenance of homosexuality in humans and other animals, because genetically determined characteristics are the subject of natural selection (Kirsch 1982).

This presents a paradox: The criterion of evolutionary success is number of offspring (reproductive fitness) and consequently the continued representation of genetically determined traits in succeeding generations. How can homosexual behavior persist, as exclusive homosexuals cannot reproduce? By definition, natural selection ought to eliminate any gene predisposed towards such behavior. The paradox is explained by the '*kin-selection theory*' (Wilson 1975). An 'altruistic' or nonreproductive trait (such as homosexuality) can, it is theorized, survive if it tends to result in a large enough reproductive advantage for the close relatives of the individuals exhibiting it, since those relatives will naturally share many of the same genes, and some of them are likely to have (probably in a recessive state) the very gene or genes governing the trait in question. The process is called "kin selection," both because genetic inheritance goes through kin offspring, instead of directly, and because what is selected for are traits that tend to benefit an individuals' kin (Stein 1978).

Dr. Weinrich answers our question about homosexuality and intelligence within the parameters of the '*kin-selection theory*.' Wilson had associated intelligence with kin selection, postulating that one reason the vertebrates-whose degree of inter-relatedness is lower than that of certain less complex animals (e.g. ants)-began to evolve intelligence is that it facilitated kin selection. Intelligence helps one, both to recognize one's kin and to find the relatively most effective means to aid them in the struggle to survive and reproduce thus increasing one's own 'inclusive fitness.' This applies to the reproducing as well as the non-reproducing members of a population. Weinrich simply argues that it applies *more* to the non-reproducing ones. Homosexuals (and other non-reproductive types, such as transsexuals and asexuals) have a larger than usual 'inclusive-fitness deficit' to compensate for, so in order for their distinctive genes to survive they must, on average, manage to confer a larger than usual reproductive advantage on their kin-which following Wilson's postulate about what intelligence does, requires greater intelligence. In sum: whatever evolutionary pressures select for homosexuality *simultaneously* select for *smart* homosexuals.

The kin-selection theory is the only approach that does not take the isolationist view of a particular discipline and take a positive approach towards describing homosexuality. The

testability of the theory over time will prove its postulates, but since its purpose was to explain the existence of homosexuality rather than proving homosexuals to be more intelligent there are a few reservations to it. Intelligence as defined by Wilson for the 'kin-selection theory' could be completely dissimilar to the intelligence as measured by IQ tests. Also intelligence is only one component of creativity, a relatively smarter average homosexual cannot be automatically classified as a relatively more creative person also. What then could possibly be the relationship between homosexuality and creativity and if there is one, how can it be explained?

### **Holistic Viewpoint**

The study of Homosexuality, as happens with most complex phenomenon, has till date been somewhat akin to the classic story of the 'Blind men and the Elephant' with different disciplines viewing it from their own narrow perspectives. There has been a pre-occupation with studying the origin and existence of homosexuality, the treatment meted out to homosexuals in society and the main reasons underlying homophobia. As far as the relationship between Homosexuality and Creativity is concerned, it's been a subject where most studies have been speculative, sparking sporadic research interests. While this paper up till this point has identified some of those speculative theories and added to those speculations, there should be as one feels one overarching umbrella theory that should be able to describe the relationship, if that is, it does exist. Before we attempt to do that, there is a need to define what we mean by Homosexuality as a 'cause' or 'influence' on an individual's creativity. Rosenthal and Rosnow (in Martindale 1999) have argued that three criteria must be met before one can consider a causal relationship between two variables:

- a) Covariation: It concerns the degree to which X covaries with Y. If X and Y do not covary then they cannot possibly be causally related.
- b) Temporal Precedence: Temporal precedence is the idea that X must precede Y in time if it has to have a causal influence on it.
- c) Ruling out extraneous explanations-If we are able to conclude that X has a causal influence on Y we must be able to rule out alternative explanations-X and only X must cause Y.

So then what is the new paradigm that could establish homosexuality as a cause for greater creativity amongst homosexuals. Of course, the first assumption that we move forward with is that all homosexuals possess that basal level of creativity that heterosexuals possess and anything above (or possibly below) that level is a direct 'cause' or 'influence' of their homosexuality. That explains (c) and in a controlled experimental environment, one should be able to disregard other extraneous variables.

Now how does creativity covary with homosexuality? There is ample evidence of homosexuality being a behavior that is passed on genetically especially when one considers that approximately 4-10% of the adult population is homosexual (Paul 1982). Hutchinson suggested that the persistence of a gene for homosexuality might be explained by positing some special advantage for heterozygotes (Kirsch 1982). The presumption is that there is a gene determining sexual preference and there are two alleles (or alternative forms) of that gene that determine, in one case a disposition towards heterosexuality and in the other, towards homosexuality (see Primer of Genetics in Appendix for this genetic concept). Exclusive homosexuals or heterosexuals could carry a double dose of the corresponding allele; such individuals are called homozygotes. If the heterozygotes (individuals with both kinds of alleles) had increased fitness (that is left more offspring than did homozygotes), it would explain why the allele for homosexuality is maintained even though homosexuals are unfit (to reproduce).

Now assuming that certain level of creativity in all individuals is biologically determined and genetically induced (the idea of creativity being genetically-induced rather than genetic seems more plausible with our current understanding of genetics and what genes do), the two alleles of the gene determining sexual preference (one heterosexual and other homosexual) induce this biological component of creativity differentially. So exclusive homosexuals or heterosexuals would have different levels of biologically induced creativity, with the heterozygotes (with both kinds of alleles) somewhere in the middle and if the gene for homosexuality also causes enhanced creativity, then this is one of the advantages conferred on them for being carrier homosexuals. Some of the empirical studies as stated earlier do support this contention but there are results that point in the opposite direction too. Thus, the degree of creativity should covary with the level of homosexual allele in a person's genetic make-up but does it increase with increase in



homosexuality can only be determined with further studies in the field of cytogenetics and genetically-induced changes within our body.

What could support the long held belief of homosexuality increasing creativity is the non-biological or societal and individual dependent component of creativity. The level of creativity that all exclusive homosexuals have as compared to exclusive heterosexuals is as per our hypothesis different, but differences in creativity within homosexual groups can be explained on the basis of this partly non-biological (i.e. it is not genetically-induced but could still produce a physiological change in our body as an effect rather than a cause) component of creativity. Though this by no means is an exhaustive list of factors, two social and individual factors seem to impact creativity differentially even within homosexuals. The *degree of marginalization* due to non-conformity to societal norms and *individual personality types* are two main influencing factors on creativity amongst homosexuals.

The *degree of marginalization* not only impacts the homosexual personality traits like nonconformity, anxiety and emotional sensitivity but also offers a greater need for expression of one's feelings through an indirect creative outlet. The oppressed sexuality and the hidden truth are deeply intertwined with works of most homosexual creative geniuses and one can detect interplay between their sexuality and creativity (Ruitenbeek 1967). Thus, the greater the marginalization, more is the need to express hidden desires and feelings leading to enhanced creative potential.

The other factor is the individual personality traits of homosexuals that have an impact on their creativity. G.J. Feist (1999) in his essay on influence of personality on Artistic and Scientific Creativity list down various traits of artists and scientists. His systematic literature search has revealed the artistic personality to possess nonsocial traits like openness to experience, fantasy and imagination, impulsivity and lack of conscientiousness, anxiety, affective illness, emotional sensitivity and drive and ambition. They also possess social traits of norm doubting, nonconformity, introversion, aloofness and independence. On the other hand the scientific personality possesses nonsocial traits of openness to experience, flexibility of thought, drive, ambition and achievement and nonsocial traits of dominance, arrogance, hostility, autonomy, introversion and self-confidence. A search for personality traits of most famous and creative homosexuals reveals presence of a large number of artistic personality traits and low levels of

scientific personality traits like arrogance, hostility, and ability to thrive in highly competitive environment (Ruitenbeek 1967; Dynes 1992). The presence of large number of homosexuals in artistic circles even in contemporary times strongly supports the influence of personality traits on creativity.

So does our hypothesis fulfill the three criteria that we had set right at the beginning to establish a causal relationship between two variables. The differences between levels of creativity amongst homosexuals and heterosexuals would covary with the number of homosexual or heterosexual alleles a person has in his genetic make-up, just that whether homosexual alleles will enhance creativity or not, still needs to be proved. Also degree of creativity within homosexuals would vary according to the degree of marginalization they have been meted out. The proof for this comes from most of the earlier oppressed artists and writers who found most creative means to express themselves when they could not express their homosexuality openly. Also greater the presence of artistic personality traits amongst homosexuals, higher is the degree of creativity. This is supported by personality traits of some of the famous homosexual artists.

Also in all cases, between heterosexuals and homosexuals and amongst homosexuals, homosexuality temporally precedes creative output. Since we attribute homosexuality to a 'gene' it is a part of our genetic make-up, and creativity is either genetically induced (by the homosexual gene) or due to social or individual impact of homosexuality, implying that homosexuality definitely precedes any form of creativity. One should be able to disregard other extraneous variables in a controlled experimental environment, and can attempt to prove that homosexuality and homosexuality alone, working within the framework established above, is the cause for a certain component of creativity amongst homosexuals and carrier homosexuals. But there are certain limitations to our hypothesis of course; mainly the factors that we have chosen to describe differences in creativity amongst homosexuals, as they are by no means exhaustive. Also is there a homosexuality continuum within homosexuals that is manifested as different personality types or there are some extraneous variables that have been left unaccounted for. The issue of course is complex, and there is a greater likelihood of more hypotheses being proposed in the years to come. There are definitely more questions than answers available at present.

## **Implications**

Though with the current knowledge and reasoning it is tough to conclude whether homosexuals are more creative (or less creative) than heterosexuals, the possibility of course cannot be ruled out. If such a difference does exist, what would be the implications- Scientifically, socially and politically?

Scientifically, it may help in providing the precise reason for the selection of homosexuals and their evolution. If there is a case for increased creativity due to homosexuality, it may help in identifying other creative communities with similar physiological changes. The biological threat in case of there being lower levels of creativity in homosexuals (though the case for this is much weaker) and homosexuality being genetically determined, would be parents trying to select against homosexual babies if such a gene can be identified in the womb. The exact opposite would be in case homosexuals are proved to be more creative; there would be a chance for them to be 'selected for.' The misuse of science and 'eugenics' by the likes of Hitler is not too far back in history to completely rule out such implications in the future.

Socially, if the case for increased creativity were proved, the acceptance of homosexuals in the society could not only be tolerated but also welcomed. Their oppression and victimization at the hands of the majority should end with the proof of their superiority, though past experience has taught us that this is not always the case. The experiences of the Jews and the Chinese at the hands of white, Christian bigots should prove that it is perfectly possible to despise people you believe are smarter than you (Stein 1978). Thus, even if homosexuals are proved to be more creative and the facts become widely known and accepted, there may not be any discernible effects at all. For the homosexual community it could mean realization of their strengths and instead of self-doubt individuals would possess greater self-esteem. Identification of certain personality traits early in the life of children who behave homosexually, could lead to nurturing of creative talent and leading them to professions that would prove mutually beneficial. In case the opposite is proved correct, the impact would be much greater with a large number of religious and political critics strengthening their calls for gay bashing.

Politically, in case of a positive outcome to this entire debate, the case for homosexuals being treated at par with other communities would be strengthened. If they are proved to be more creative than their heterosexual counterparts, the prejudices that exist against them due to various

legislations will have to be repealed. It would only be a loss of various governments in the world to further marginalize a highly original and creative community.

### **Conclusions and future direction**

At the risk of repetition, it has to be reiterated that there is no single and simple answer to this seemingly straightforward question. The common impression that most people carry of gay men (and to some extent lesbian women) is one that considers them to be smart, individualistic, charming, aesthetically able and creative. This impression is further strengthened by the presence of a large number of homosexuals in visual and performing arts. While the ‘myth’ about gay creativity keeps getting stronger, the lack of any real interest in proving it leaves us with fragments of isolated studies from different disciplines. Also, most studies are still trying to prove homosexual behavior as ‘normal’ and as ‘natural’ as heterosexuals and trying to bring homosexuals into the mainstream. Any study that tries to prove homosexuals as ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’ (which definitely a study like the present one would do) would again lead to the isolation of homosexuals.

Though there is no real hope for research interest burgeoning in this field in the recent future, the amalgamation of current fragmented studies has led us through some interesting ideas. A multi-disciplinary approach is the only way to answer the question and some of the concepts outlined earlier hold greater promise. Two biological factors: The evolution of homosexuality and its natural selection & the physiological changes in the brain would prove most critical in providing a biological proof for the relationship between creativity and homosexuality. Is creativity one of the advantages that homosexuals confer on heterozygotes leading to their ‘natural selection’? Is the homosexual brain better coordinated and more efficient than either heterosexual male or female brain? These are the questions that any empirical study correlating the two variables should strive to find answers to.

The sociological and psychological factors have to be an integral part of any such study too. A comparison with other marginalized communities rather than just control group heterosexuals, would help understand the effect of social pressures and victimization on homosexuals vis-à-vis other oppressed groups and heterosexuals. This will help in determining any other extraneous variables that may have an impact on creativity of homosexuals. Up till now

there has been a concentration of studies on homosexuals in arts that may have given us a biased opinion of their creative abilities. A systemic search in the fields of liberal arts, Sciences, Communication, Architecture and Engineering might lead to unexpected results and help us establish true personality traits of homosexuals with varying levels of creativity. The role which sexuality *per se* plays in forming individual character would be closely linked to any new findings.

There is not sufficient proof of a definite association between creativity and homosexuality yet but there remains the fact of the recurrence of great literary and artistic figures whose homosexuality played a significant role in their lives and markedly affected the character of their work. Increasing interest in, and research on, homosexuality will increase our understanding of the relationship between creativity and homosexuality.

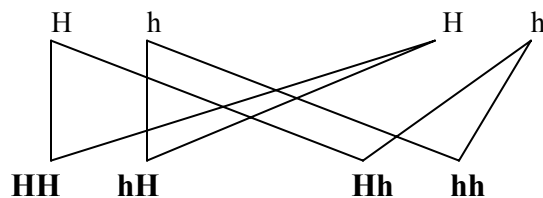
## APPENDIX

### A PRIMER OF GENETICS

Every genetically determined characteristic has its ultimate physical basis in a fragment of the long, twisty molecule known as DNA, located somewhere on the chromosomes which are found in the nuclei of living cells. Each individual has two rather similar sets of chromosomes in each cell, except in the eggs or sperm, where special cell division halves the number of chromosomes to one representative of each pair. Thus, at fertilization the normal double number is re-established: One set is contributed by the father's sperm and one by the mother's egg. Since every person has two of each kind of chromosome, he or she also has two 'doses' of each gene, which may be exactly alike or somewhat different. Alternative forms of the same gene are known as alleles, and are the reason for variation in some traits, such as eye color, which is genetically determined to be blue or brown. If the alleles received from the mother and the father are same, an individual is said to be **homozygous**; for an eye color gene there are two kinds of homozygotes: double-blue or double-brown. But if the contributions of parents are unlike, the offspring is said to be **heterozygous**. For many familiar traits like eye color, one allele-in this case that determining brown pigment-is expressed at the expense of the other. Thus, a heterozygous person has brown eyes; there are three genetic combinations, but only two visible results. Now we can see how exclusive heterosexuals or homosexuals are **homozygous** and the heterozygotes (with both homo and heterosexual alleles) despite of being lets say carrier homosexuals, manifest themselves as heterosexuals.

***Diagrammatic representation of possible outcomes of a cross between heterosexual male and female with a gay gene:***

(Heterosexual Male with Gay gene) **Hh** X **Hh** (Heterosexual Female with Gay gene)



HH=(Homozygous Heterosexual)

Hh/hH=(Heterozygous Carrier Homosexual but behaviorally heterosexual)

hh=(Homozygous Homosexual)

## APPENDIX

### CREATIVITY HURTS

*Few Immensely Famous Creative Individuals who also suffered from mental problems.*

<u>Artists</u>	<u>Scientists</u>	<u>Writers</u>
<b>Vincent van Gogh</b> 1853-1890, self-taught Dutch painter, breakdown and institutionalization 1888, suicide 1890	<b>Isaac Newton</b> English physicist and mathematician, 1642 - 1727, famous especially for the development of calculus, Newton suffered a number of serious nervous breakdowns	<b>Johannes Hölderlin</b> 1770-1843, 1802 first signs of mental disturbance, 2 years sick at home, institutionalized and later released as incurable, cared for by a carpenter couple until his death
<b>Edward Munch</b> 1863-1944, Norwegian painter, psychotic genius, used paint directly as therapy	<b>Composers</b>	<b>August Strindberg</b> Swedish playwright and novelist, 1849 - 1912, childhood marked by emotional insecurity, poverty and religious fanaticism, became addicted to alcohol, increasing mental instability caused his religious conversion
<b>Camille Claudel</b> 1864 - 1943, gifted French sculptor, companion of Rodin, committed to an asylum by force in 1913 where she remained until her death	<b>Robert Schumann</b> 1810-1856 German composer, since 1850 suffered from depression and hallucination	<b>Guy de Maupassant</b> 1850-1893, French writer, since 1891 increasing mental disorder
	<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>Virginia Woolf</b> 1882-1941, British writer, continuously fighting depression, suicide attempts (1904, 1913) and repeated breakdowns, committed suicide in '41
	<b>Friedrich Nietzsche</b> 1844 - 1900, German philosopher, breakdown in 1889 then institutionalization for one year, attended by mother and sister until his death	<b>Sylvia Plath</b> 1932-1963, American writer and poet, suffered from severe depressions and committed suicide in 1963

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