

LGBT : A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract

There is a growing global acceptance of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people, collectively called by its acronym: LGBT. Opposition towards this group is considered as undemocratic and against basic human rights. LGBT supporters and sympathizers considered their banishment to the fringes of society as a form of discrimination and societal victimization of those whom society considered as against human norms. It has been argued that homosexual practitioners are born with sexual desires towards members of their own gender. They are trapped by their biological and neurological makeups and thus cannot help from being homosexuals. It is not a choice but rather an enforced situation. This article proved that there is no conclusive evidence that homosexuality is dictated by biology and that researches done so far to prove otherwise are either inadequate or failed to unearth such link. Even if heredity has some role in determining homosexual orientation or a person, it is at a low end and can be overcome with education and therapy. In fact, studies have shown that homosexual tendency can be reduced significantly with the right therapy. This article also argued that though Islam acknowledges the existence of homosexuality, Islam does not condone it and in fact offers solution to the problem.

Keywords: homosexual, lesbian, gay, transsexual, bisexual, heredity, DNA

It was a balmy Saturday night on the 30th of June 2012. Fifteen thousand people had gathered at Hong Lim Park. At the emcee's prompt, the crowd who came mostly in pink clothes and had already been entertained by a number of celebrities and performers shone their pink torches to the sky. The sight, captured by an aerial photographer, was the talk of the town for several weeks. It was a Pink Dot event, the fourth since 2009. Its objective is to support LGBTs' right to love whomever they wish.

LGBT is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Homosexuality, the commonly accepted word that defines the tendency for male to male sexual preference, has been expanded to include those whose sexual orientations are either towards their own gender or towards both. Male homosexuals, also known as gays, female homosexuals, the lesbians, are those who favour sex with the same gender rather than with opposite gender. On the other hand, those whose preferences are towards both genders are bisexuals.

Like normal people, gays, lesbians and bisexuals are generally comfortable with the genders they are born with. The only difference is their unnatural sexual orientation. Transgender people however are not comfortable with their gender. They feel that they belong to members of the opposite sex but are trapped biologically in the wrong gender. They are more incline to sex change operation. In this, they become the walking poster for the LGBTs since people can easily identify a cross-dressing male or female than gays and lesbians who outwardly look normal and who restrict their homosexual activities behind close doors.

The Pink Dot event was meant to support them. It would not be surprising if the vast majority of those who attended the event came from the LGBT group. But what made tongues wag was the substantial attendance from normal heterosexual people. They came because they either knew someone who belongs to the LGBT group and thus want to give the group moral support, or simply demanding the government to be more open and accepting.

Homosexuality and Legal Code

In a secular environment such as Singapore, religious opinions play second fiddle to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹. LGBTs and their supporters and sympathizers cannot accept the condemnation heaped on the LGBTs due to their sexual preference. They viewed it as an attempt to trample universal human rights, never mind the universal religious condemnation of such act. In the words of Ellen Wittlinger:

¹ See: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml> (last viewed on 11/11/2012)

People changed lots of other personal things all the time. They dyed their hair and dieted themselves to near death. They took steroids to build muscles and got breast implants and nose jobs so they'd resemble their favourite movie stars. They changed names and majors and jobs and husbands and wives. They changed religions and political parties. They moved across the country or the world — even changed nationalities. Why was gender the one sacred thing we weren't supposed to change? Who made that rule?²

Singapore, being a British colony in the past, owed many of its legislation to its former master. Many of its penal code are echoes of original British law for the commonwealth. Take Section 377A of the Penal Code for example that outlaws homosexuality. The Section reads as follow:

Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years.³

LGBTs and their supporters argued that this Section is outdated. In this age of liberty and freedom, the Section is at best trampling human's right, and at worst an intrusion into the private activities of two individuals in the sanctity of their bedroom. The Section, therefore, should be repealed. Petitions had been submitted to that purpose, but to no avail. The Singapore government is not inclined to decriminalise homosexuality. Vast majority of Singaporeans are normal heterosexual people who disapprove homosexuality. And any enactment of law must reflect the wish of the majority and harmony of the country. Only two former British colonies have decided to legitimise homosexuality; Australia and Hong Kong. Britain has long decriminalised homosexuality.

It is interesting to note that though Section 377A makes homosexuality a crime punishable with imprisonment, the statement of the Section explicitly mentions male person. In other words, the Section does not criminalise female homosexuality (the lesbians) and gender change (transgender).

Scientific basis for homosexuality

Sympathizers of LGBTs often quote several scientific studies that seem to suggest that homosexual orientation is genetic. Homosexual people, they argued, are helpless in their unnatural sexual preference. They cannot change it. It is in their genes.

² See: <http://lgbtquotes.tumblr.com/> (last viewed on 11/11/2012)

³ See: <http://statutes.agc.gov.sg> (last viewed on 11/11/2012)

But let us examine those purported scientific studies. There are five studies thought to be in support of homosexuality:

- 1) post-mortem study of brain structures
- 2) Xq28 gene study of the long arm of the X chromosome
- 3) CYP19 (Aromatase) gene study
- 4) homosexuality trend in the animal kingdom
- 5) Australian twin study, done in 2000

In 1991, Simon LeVay, did a post-mortem study of 41 middle-aged individuals. 19 of them were presumed homosexual males, 9 heterosexual females and 16 heterosexual males. LeVay discovered that a region in the hypothalamus part of the brain, called INAH-3, in heterosexual males was two times bigger than those in heterosexual females and homosexual males.

Does this indicate that homosexual males have the same sexual preference as heterosexual females? And that homosexual males, like women, cannot help but fall in love with men? If the answer is yes, than stopping homosexual males from loving other males will be as impossible as stopping women from falling in love with men.

Upon scrutiny, however, the study was not able to give a decisive conclusion on the link between brain structure and homosexuality. There are five reasons for that:

- 1) The sample size was very small. The study was based on just 41 middle-aged subjects. Results obtained from such a small sample size cannot be conclusive and in no way indicative of the general population.
- 2) The sexual orientation of the subjects could not be verified scientifically. The subjects were only presumed to be heterosexual males, females and homosexual males. No exhaustive interviews were done prior to their death to ascertain beyond any doubt on their sexual orientation.
- 3) Some of the subjects died from AIDS. The possibility of AIDS virus influencing the result cannot be ruled out.
- 4) Instead of counting the number of neurons in the region of INAH-3, the LeVay measured the structure's volume. However, in another similar study, it was discovered that although INAH-3 occupies a smaller region in homosexual male's brain than heterosexual males, the number of neurons were the same in both.

- 5) If there is link between the size of INAH-3 and the sexual preference of the subject, then it cannot be concluded that its size influences homosexual tendency. It might be the other way round, that homosexuality caused the region to increase in volume.

In light of these, Levay himself was quoted saying:

“I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay. I didn’t show that gay men are ‘born that way’, the most common mistake people make in interpreting my work. Nor did I locate a gay centre in the brain – INAH-3 is less likely to be the sole gay nucleus of the brain than part of a chain of nuclei engaged in men and women’s sexual behaviour. My work is just a hint in that direction – a spur, I hope, to future work.” (*Nimmons, 1994: 13-15.*)

The second scientific study purported in support of genetic inheritance of homosexuality is the Xq28 gene study of the long arm of the X chromosome. The study was done by molecular geneticist Dean Hamer and his colleagues at the National Cancer Institute, USA, in the early 1990s. They announced that there is a possible genetic link between homosexuality and Xq28 marker. In 1995, geneticist Stella Hu and her colleagues did a DNA linkage analyses of two series of families that contained either two gay brothers or two lesbian sisters and heterosexual siblings. The scientists claimed to have found a linkage between Xq28 marker in the gay families but not in lesbian families.

However, many other studies contradicted the link between Xq28 marker and homosexuality. The final nail in the coffin of such link came from Hammer and his colleagues themselves when they conducted another study that was more comprehensive, covering 456 individuals from 146 families with two or more gay brothers. The study did not find any linkage between Xq48 markers and homosexuality.

Similarly, the study on CYP19 genes failed to produce any genetic link to homosexuality. CYP19 genes are responsible in the conversion of male sex hormone (androgen) to female sex hormone (estrogen).

Nevertheless, those in support of homosexuality claim that the behaviour is not against nature. They cited rampant homosexuality in the animal kingdom.

In actual fact, the sexual orientations of animals are more varied than just homosexuality. There are animals that are asexual, that is they can reproduce without the existence of members of the opposite sex. Starfish is a common example. Cut one of its limb, and it will grow into a complete starfish.

However, it is undeniable that observations have been made of animals, especially mammals, mounting members of its own gender. From dogs to elephants to giraffes, both males and females. Does it not support the contention of the LGBTs that homosexuality is natural and part of life?

On the contrary. Homosexuality in humans cannot be based on the actions of animals displaying homosexual acts. Homosexuality in humans, as claimed by the LGBTs, is based on love. If there is no love, the sexual act is rape, pure and simple.

In the animal kingdom, we have absolutely no definite data to equate the act of homosexuality among them to feelings of love. We can deduce, but even then the deduction is biased since it is coloured by human perception and psychology. Animal psychology is definitely different than human psychology.

In addition, it has been observed that some of the homosexual activities displayed by some animals, like giraffes for instance, are territorial in nature, and not because of wanting to mate specifically. And in many instances, homosexuality in the animal kingdom occurs in less than half of the population. Some even as low as 10%. Some acts of bonding and love among members of the same sex in the animal kingdom were even perceived as homosexual acts. For example, some male dolphins have been observed to sidle up another male dolphin and put their snouts in the air hole of the other. This act is entirely non-sexual in nature and yet reported as homosexual activity of dolphins.

We can then discount the homosexual activities in the animal kingdom as the basis of the natural state of homosexuality among humans. If we accept such contention, we might as well accept the tendency of animals to kill the offspring of another male when they want to father their own offsprings, and apply it to humans. A father thus killing the children of their wives who conceived them from another male will be considered as the natural aspect of humanity since there is a basis of such action among animals. Ultimately, it degrades the function of higher thinking faculty in humans.

Putting the animal kingdom aside, the question remains. Is there any link between hereditary and homosexuality? Imagine a pair of identical twins living apart from young and raised in totally different environments. Yet both of them become homosexuals. Does it not indicate that genes might play a role in their sexual orientation?

Several studies were carried out to determine such a link. The most comprehensive was done in Australia in 2000. Called the Australian Twin Study, a total of 1,981 pairs of identical twins were surveyed. Their mean age was 31 with a standard deviation of 8 years.

It was concluded that genes contribute a mere 26% for male homosexuals and 43% for female homosexuals. In other words, environmental factors play a great role in defining the sexual orientation of gays and lesbians. In gays, environmental factors are as high as 74% and in lesbians, 57%.

There is then some link between heredity and homosexuality. The conclusion being that yes, there is some truth in the claim that homosexuals cannot help themselves from falling in love with members of their own sex.

But it should be highlighted that the Australian twin studies pointed out that hereditary played a minor role. The sexual orientation of gays and lesbians are shaped more by their environment. In fact studies after studies revealed that women who went through physical and sexual abuse have higher tendency to become lesbians. And in men, those who were constantly molested by other men are significantly more prone to become homosexuals. One study indicates that 46% of males who are homosexuals were molested by other males sometime in their past.

Treating the homosexuals

Homosexuals should not resign themselves to fate. Far from accepting homosexuality as a new way of life in this modern age and upholding their rights to have same-sex marriage, homosexuality can actually be avoided and even treated.

Studies indicate that intelligence is 25% hereditary and 75% from environment. And yet, we spent enormous amount of money, time and efforts on the 75% environmental aspect. On the other hand, if the Australian Twin Study is to be accepted, homosexuality is 26% hereditary for male homosexuals. And yet, very little effort was spent on the 74% environmental aspect so that homosexuals can be educated and avoid homosexuality.

Of course, it can be argued that it is unfair for homosexuals to be educated so that they suppress the tendency towards homosexuality and avoid the act altogether. If this argument is to be accepted, then it is equally unfair to educate someone born with low intelligence because the percentage of hereditary in intelligence and homosexuality is almost the same.

Low intelligence due to hereditary can be overcome as much as the tendency for homosexuality can be overcome.

And if the tendency was not suppressed and the homosexuals were not educated early in their life, it is still not too late to treat homosexuals.

In 2003, RL Spitzer conducted a landmark study of 200 individuals who professed that they lead homosexual life. 85% of males and 80% of females indicated that life as a gay and lesbian was not emotionally satisfying. They were then exposed to different types of therapy. 47% of them indicated that they preferred mental health professionals over others. Compared to just 25% who preferred pastoral (religious) counseling.

A survey was then done for both pre and post therapy. The result is as follow:

Measure	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Heterosexual sex at least a few time a month	52	95
Emotional satisfaction with heterosexual relationship at least 8 on a 1-10 scale (from worst to best)	14	80
Physical satisfaction with a heterosexual sex at least 8 on a 1-10 scale (from worst to best)	25	89

The study indicates clearly that sexual orientation of gays and lesbians can be changed. In fact, the change comes easier as the subject age. Left on his or her own, a homosexual has a higher tendency to leave the homosexual world as he or she gets old.

The conclusion being that even though gene may have a factor in orientating the sexual preference of a person early in life, it is the environmental factors that fully propelled one to be a committed homosexual. But even so, homosexuality is an abnormality that can be reversed.

Islamic wisdoms

Therein we find the wisdoms in Islam on the subject of homosexuality. Islam acknowledges the tendency for some people to become homosexual. With acknowledgment, comes action. Islam nips the problem from the bud. Prevention in Islam is better than cure.

The Prophet s.a.w absolutely forbade cross-dressing, even though it is for fun. Cross-dressing can be part of the environmental factors that may push someone with homosexual tendency to be a full fledged gay or lesbian. In a ḥadīth reported by al-Bukhari by way of narration from Ibn ‘Abbās who said: The Prophet P.B.U.H. cursed men who imitate women, and women who imitate men.

In another ḥadīth reported by Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasā’i, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Ḥibbān, Abū Hurairah said: The Prophet P.B.U.H. cursed men and women who cross-dressed.

And in another ḥadīth reported by Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī by way of narration from ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ who said: I heard the Prophet P.B.U.H.said: “It is not among us women who imitate men and men who imitate women”.

There is a difference however in the case of hermaphrodite. These are people who possess the genitals of both genders. Islam is most understanding and forgiving. It is not their fault to be born with two fully functional or semi functional genitals. In resolving their problem, scholars mentioned several ways in determining which is the dominant gender. And chromosomal testing is not one of them.

Chromosomal testing is not conclusive. Although males have XY chromosomes on the 23rd pair, and females have XX chromosomes, there are instances of males having two X chromosomes and females having three X chromosomes. There are even males who possess three X chromosome.

Scholars mentioned that if a hermaphrodite has wet dreams and ejaculate from the male organ, then he is a male. If she has a period, then she is a female. This is when both genitals seem to function fully. But generally, one can determine from young which of the gender is dominant through behaviour and through the structure of both genitals.

If however in rare instances that both genitals function fully in adulthood, then the person has the choice to be one of the gender and not both. The person can experience living as both male and female before deciding which of the gender appeals to him more emotionally. In this regard, an operation to remove one the genitals so that the person can function fully as a male or female is permitted. This is not the case of changing God’s creation which is forbidden in Islam.

Conclusion

LGBT’s claim of the natural state of homosexuality is based on flawed studies. Homosexuality can be prevented and can be changed. People displaying homosexual tendency can be educated.

The fact that homosexuals are more prone to depression is a proof that homosexuality is not natural. Using animal behaviour to justify homosexuality is scientifically unsound. Humans are different in having a higher thinking cortex of the brain than members of the animal kingdom.

Islam outlaws homosexuality since it is not natural. In fact, the first instances of homosexuality recorded in the Qur’an are the deeds of the people of Lut. And in them we see the terrible consequences of not repenting from such deeds.

However, Islam accepts the inert homosexual tendency in humans. However, far from condoning such inclination, Islam nips the behaviour from the bud. Even the playful act of cross-dressing and imitating the manner and talk of members of the opposite sex is not allowed, even though it may not lead to homosexuality. Prevention in Islam is better than cure.

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