

## Sexual Misinformation Disorder: Understanding and Treating the Madness of the Moment

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### Introduction:

The concept of “natural, fixed and immutable sexual orientation” has been refuted by scientific study after study.

In 2016, *The New Atlantis* published research from a team of Johns Hopkins psychiatrists and epidemiologists who sought an “up-to-date explanation of research — from the biological, psychological, and social sciences — related to sexual orientation and gender identity”. Their key finding was the “*the understanding of sexual orientation as an innate, biologically fixed property of human beings — the idea that people are “born that way” — is not supported by scientific evidence.*”<sup>1</sup>

In 2019, the prestigious journal *Science* published the most comprehensive study of its kind to conclude that there is no “gay gene”.<sup>2</sup>

Many philosophers, social scientists and legal scholars have also found systematic flaws in the research assumptions and methodologies of studies, which claim to show some link between biology and sexual preference. For example, already back in 1999, Edward Stein Ph.D., Associate Professor of Law at the Benjamin Cordozo School of Law wrote in his book, *The Mismeasure of Desire: The Science, Theory and Ethics of Sexual Orientation*, “*The studies that are the backbone of the emerging research program are far from conclusive... The strong claims frequently made on behalf of this program are overblown.*”<sup>3</sup>

In my experience, when critical information like this is presented to religious individuals and communities, however, a common reaction is to then quickly state, “Then people with same-sex attractions should stop acting out and get married to the opposite sex,” or “Then people should just marry heterosexually and push through their lack of interest and excitement”.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, “Executive Summary,” *Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences*, *The New Atlantis*, Number 50, (Fall 2016) pp. 7-9.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Ganna *et al.*, *Large-scale GWAS reveals insights into the genetic architecture of same-sex sexual behavior*. *Science* 365, eaat7693(2019).DOI:[10.1126/science.aat7693](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aat7693)

<sup>3</sup> Edward Stein, *The Mismeasure of Desire: The Science, Theory and Ethics of Sexual Orientation*. Oxford (1999) p191

But it isn't so simple. Many people report very powerful sexual urges for different kinds of same-sex situations, in ways that pale in comparison to their feelings with the opposite sex. Those feelings don't just go away when you tell them that they aren't actually gay or that the whole idea of being "inherently gay" is scientifically flawed. Others, who do not necessarily have powerful same-sex drives, still report feeling a certain disinterest, or even dread, of heterosexual relationships in ways that are different from how their same-gendered peers feel. Individuals like these are unlikely to "just get married" unless they have a different theory—other than "I'm gay"—to explain these patterns, and unless they are given actual solutions to help them change these patterns.

This brief summary is meant to do just that. To provide other terms and theories that can *rationaly explain the kinds of relationship and sexual patterns that lead people to avoid, dread, doubt or delay heterosexual relationships.*

I will try to accomplish this by providing concise scientific answers to *five specific but central questions* that will help shed more light on some of these patterns, without resorting to any kind of identity-labelling or canned psychoanalytic theorizing. From my years of experience treating religious clients and teaching rabbis and therapists, it is truly these five questions that religious individuals and communities are often seeking the most clarity on. And in the absence of having access to the answers, they are likely to remain confused, or to gravitate to the most accessible possible explanation and lifestyle, even if it comes with a grave personal cost.

- 1. If "natural sexual orientation" is not an accurate term of belief, why then are so many people rigidly attached to it, even if they have no personal connection to this issue? Can everyone be wrong, including highly intelligent people, psychologists and even many devoutly religious people? Why is intelligent society so suspicious of anyone – rabbi, therapist or philosopher – who challenges these beliefs and who offers a different understanding?**

According to Carl Trueman Ph.D., professor of biblical and religious studies at Grove City College who writes about the secular culture's rapid adoption of radical sexual and gender beliefs, the LGBTQ movement has been an especially persuasive and shape-shifting force because it *has piggy-packed onto several centuries-in-the-making cultural developments, which have completely redefined how society views tradition, ethics and sexuality.*

According to Trueman, these developments have been introduced and popularized by the most articulate intellectuals, artists and tastemakers of each cultural era, and include changes such as:

- a) the replacement of abstract religious ethics, seen as outdated, exploitative and arbitrary, with man-made ethics,
- b) the idea that people can just know their authentic identity through their thoughts and feelings,

- c) seeing self-actualization as a more important virtue than self-restraint and conformism to a higher ideal,
- d) seeing our sexual feelings as the most important part of a person's Self or identity,
- e) society's exalting of "victims" who are seen as inherently virtuous no matter their actions and seeing economic/cultural/political elites as inherently oppressive,
- f) seeing "the new" or "the disruptive" as intrinsically better than "the old", which is often devalued and,
- g) the idea of a "virtual community", where people can easily go beyond the physical confines of their community and traditions to get their natural needs met for belonging, power, independence, recognition and admiration etc.

While each of these items demand a much more thorough explanation and reading of the books *Strange New World* (2002) and *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (2020), Trueman's basic thesis is useful for our purposes here in knowing that it is only by recognizing these seven, and possibly more, broader cultural changes, that we can begin to understand how it is no longer socially acceptable for an outsider to merely just *tolerate* public homosexual behavior, but how they *must actively affirm and welcome such behavior*, even in the most traditional and religiously sacred of spaces.

**2. If "sexual orientation" is a socially-constructed identity label that is not naturally fixed, stable and immutable, why universally, and in almost all cultures of the world since the beginning of time, do people seek out opposite sex intimacy and marriage? Aren't most people "ingrained heterosexuals" while a minority are "ingrained homosexuals"?**

Based on a simple reading of biblical stories, commandments and laws, combined with some established social-science theories, it seems much more likely that sexual energy is inherently aimless. It is culture and family who teach us how, where and when to channel this. And in most cultures since the beginning of time, socialization follows biology and the very practical family structure. That is why people are seamlessly encouraged to seek opposite-sex partnerships and then *discouraged* from seeking same-sex partnerships. For example, in most cultures and religions, children learn to see heterosexual marriage as a developmental milestone and as a meaningful, celebratory rite of passage. But this doesn't mean that other sexual relationships are abnormal or unnatural.

The Bible's prohibiting a very wide variety of non-heterosexual and non-marital sexual relationships attests to the fact that if it were not for family, society and religious prohibitions, our sexual energy could be channeled in any number of ways.

Though sexual energy is inherently aimless, psychologists like Anne Stirling Hastings in her book *Reclaiming Healthy Sexual Energy* (2009), writes about some specific "rules" for how it gets activated. A person's sexual energy can get activated, for example, when they see another person projecting out their own sexual energy through their dress, gestures, words and

movements. In that case sexual energy can get quickly activated in way that sometimes feels out of our control.

A second type of sexual activation can happen when there is physical and emotional closeness between any two people—of the same or opposite gender. Other factors can make this attraction more likely and more intense such as repeat exposure, an openness to having such a relationship, mutual admiration, joint moments of joy and laughter and being vulnerable with one another.

In most cultures, two people of the same gender will learn from an early age to avoid or put more boundaries around their intimacy in order to preempt sexual feelings. This explains why people with a strong internal sense of taboo around homosexual relationships, will tend to actually feel *more* comfortable with same-sex physical and emotional connection. And it explains why two people of the same gender can feel heightened sexual interest when the interpersonal boundaries are too relaxed. In our culture, where homosexual imagery is rampant and where the shame that typically imbues such behaviors has almost vanished, same-sex behavior is becoming much more common, especially in religious gender-segregated schools.

**3. If sexual orientation is not a naturally fixed, stable and immutable construct, how else can we explain those who report powerful same-sex attractions, or any other type of non-heterosexual attraction? Why do some prefer same-sex intimate relationships?**

As we explained, sexual energy is inherently aimless, so we cannot say that other types of sexual desire and relationships are abnormal or unnatural. They may go against our social conditioning, but they are not anymore unnatural than heterosexual activity.

What is unnatural or abnormal, however, is when people report a childhood-based, recurring, intense, specific and part-object (acronym CRISP) arousal reaction to any type of “stimuli”, such a body part, hair, physique, garment, personality type or idiosyncratic interaction, with a stranger of *either the same or opposite sex*, with whom they are *not* intimately connected to.

In the psychological literature, this reaction is called a *sexual script*<sup>4</sup>, or as I prefer to call it, a *lust-trigger* and is only problematic: (a) if the person unfairly compares this potent and immediate part-object arousal with their feelings in actual intimate relationships with real partners which are more slow to develop and which fluctuate depending on the context or (b) if the person develops an unhealthy fixation or addiction to pursuing arousal with such stimuli. Considering the “highs” that these triggers generate, many people can continue to pursue this arousal as a kind of drug to help them self-medicate feelings of stress and frustration.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Park, *Imprinted Sexual Fantasies. A New Key for Sexology* (Existential Books, 2008)

Of course, these lust-triggers, whether of the same-sex or opposite-sex, have nothing to do with a person's hardwiring or "sexual orientation". Modern psychology has many tools to help people understand how and why these lust-triggers develop in childhood. In most cases, they are created by a child's subconscious as a kind of *fantasy coping strategy* that helps them manage their difficult reality. Qualified therapists who "diagnose" these triggers as signs of being inherently gay or straight, are often missing the point—and misleading their clients. Instead, they can give people meaningful tools to help them reduce their emotional dependency on these triggers if that is their issue.

Even if the person is addicted to their lust-triggers, however, they are not exceptions to the "rules of attraction" described above where any two people can develop feelings of longing and desire for one another when some predictable criteria are met such as repeat physical and emotional closeness.

A different and increasingly common situation is where males, much more than females, are introduced from a young age to lustful casual same-sex behavior in peers. In that case repeated exposure and acting-out can hook them onto this behavior like a "drug" that they return to over and over again for distraction, escape, meaning and stress relief. Especially as they enter puberty through their teens, their sexual energy lies "just under the surface" almost as if it is waiting to be stimulated by a lustful image of event. The same-sex aspect of the behavior then is *merely a product of their situations and the kinds of sexual experiences that are immediately accessible to them.*

The fact that they do not have these same lustful arousing reactions to the opposite sex, can frequently confuse people. "Am I gay? Why am I not aroused by people who I see or interact with?" This pattern, however, is not that different from someone who develops an alcohol addiction problem because they were exposed to it from a young age, but who then report no interest in smoking cigarettes. Or to use a more benign example, why some people who have special memories about apple picking from a young age, will not be as immediately excited when presented with a new fruit later in life, at least until they try it over and over again and develop a taste for it.

These individuals typically need to understand how lust became "coupled" with attractive people of the same gender from an early age and how they might continue to use this lust as a way of self-medicating other life frustrations. Furthermore, it is helpful to reassure such people that they are not inherently gay, and that they, of course, can develop romantic and sexual interest with a person of the opposite sex (because they are a human being) but only if there is a dating/intimate relationship/sexual context and only if there is "personality chemistry" with such a person. Other factors like being vulnerable, sharing fun times, repeat exposure and verbal affection can also help to enhance romantic and sexual feelings. But overpowering and immediate lust-feelings are not typically felt with real people with whom we are in a close relationship, whether of the same or opposite sex.

**4. If sexual orientation is not a naturally fixed, stable and immutable construct, how else can we explain those who report an absence of romantic interest and attraction in the opposite sex? If they are not “inherently gay”, how else can psychology and common-sense explain this?**

Contrary to what secular culture leads us to believe, there are many common-sense ways to explain such experiences. For example, *many people* are not necessarily excited or romantically and sexually drawn to the opposite sex, at least until they are in an actual intimate relationship. And just because a person is actively dating or searching for a mate, doesn't necessarily mean that their main motivation is romantic excitement and sexual need. So often this is a normal feeling that society makes people feel unnecessarily bad about.

Sometimes, people are too in their heads, too anxious or overwhelmed in their life, or are simply not dating the right types of people or not going to the right types of places that would foster a good connection.

If people have very strong “lust-triggers” to anyone or anything other than the opposite-sex, they may be misled to expect the same highly potent and immediate arousal response with a normal date or relationship partner. They might judge their hypersexual lust-trigger arousal as normal and see their more nuanced or fluctuating desires in real relationships as “the problem that needs to be fixed.”

Another interesting situation that I have several times is when a person is firmly convinced that they are “inherently gay” – even if they are not publicly living a gay lifestyle and have no intention of doing so—will still have a hard time *being psychologically open* to a heterosexual relationship, even if in theory they are trying. In this case, their identity could act as an almost physical barrier to their connection.

**5. What explains the huge shifts in young people identifying themselves as gay or lesbian, irrespective of their “sexual and relationship literacy” and irrespective of their sexual interests, and even when they have no relationship and sexual experience?**

In a recent study (Gallup 2024) of sexual identity in the US, 30% of female respondents between 18 and 26 self-identified as LGBTQ. In the Ivy League colleges, the numbers are even higher for both men and women. At Brown University, a 2023 study showed that nearly 40% of the students identified as such. Probably the best explanation is the same one that explains how any society or massive group of people can adopt beliefs or behaviors that are irrational or even dangerous: “herd mentality” and our natural desire to conform to what is seen as fashionable and “cool”.

There may be other possible reasons. For example, I've met men and women who really believed that they were “inherently and immutably gay or lesbian” simply because of a crush

they had on a friend. The culture is leading people to consider same-sex feelings and behaviors as so unusual, that its presence must be a sign of being inherently different and “gay”.

Additionally, because the definition of being gay or being lesbian is so unspecific, it has increasingly cast a wider net, drawing in people who are not necessarily confused about their sexual or gender feelings, but *who are emotionally deprived of their basic social needs such as belonging, recognition, power, independence, life-purpose and admiration*, needs that they are led to see the LBGQTQ+ identity and community fulfilling in a meaningful and lasting way.

Several young adult men and women whom I worked with, for example, insisted that they were “inherently gay” just on the basis of finding some of their same-sex peers to be attractive. Only a few had any actual intimate relationship or sexual experience. How did this make sense? Only after learning more about their backgrounds, did I see what was happening. Many of them suffered with long histories of feeling socially excluded or being called “weird” by their peer groups and communities. They couldn’t feel belonging from within, and so found it quickly from without, mainly through social-media. Some felt overly controlled by their parents and religious expectations from a very young age. As young adults they took great pleasure in finally taking control by rejecting their family traditions and insisting on their own rules of conduct, even if people didn’t like it.

These are the same underlying issues that propel young adults to define themselves by and throw themselves into any type of pro-social or anti-social movement. But with the LGBTQ+ movement, the “cause” that they are joining tends to be an empty self-serving one, with no greater purpose than to validate itself, affirm people’s “right” to behave as they please and defy authority while creating great social disruption. Also, unlike other prosocial and antisocial groups that young people might latch onto, the LGBTQ+ movement tells people “who they are at their core”, making it especially difficult to reconsider such an identity when it no longer serves their needs. Further, it is not uncommon for gay identified people and groups to be harshly critical, guiltting and unforgiving when a fellow “gay member” considers “leaving the lifestyle” to pursue a heterosexual life and family.

There are other possible explanations, but the large percentages of people adopting these terms, at younger and younger ages, and in both secular and religious communities, is enough to tell us that an irrational trend is very much afoot.

Hopefully by becoming more educated about the scientific and psychological issues involved in these issues, Judeo-Christian faith-based communities can arm themselves with more tools to try and stop, or at least quell, the ongoing madness.