

The (epi)genetics of homosexuality

Although scientists have spent the last few decades scouring our genome for a “gay gene,” William Rice, Urban Friberg, and Sergey Gavrilets suggest in *The Quarterly Review of Biology* that homosexuality may have its roots in epigenetics, rather than in genetics.

Much of what we know about homosexuality suggests that it is not simply a result of direct genetic inheritance. Instead, the researchers suggest, epigenetic inheritance via “epi-marks” might be responsible for sexual orientation. Epi-marks are physical changes in our genetic material (such as chemical modification or changes in DNA packaging proteins) that regulate gene activity without actually changing the sequence of bases.

As Rice, Friberg, and Gavrilets note, the inheritance of homosexuality doesn’t appear to be as simple as a “gay gene.” But for now, we simply don’t know what factors contribute to homosexuality in humans or in most other species. While epigenetics may help us understand homosexuality one day, we’re not there yet.

Additional Resources:

- [“Scientists claim that homosexuality is not genetic — but it arises in the womb,”](#) io9
- [“New Insight into the \(Epi\)Genetic Roots of Homosexuality,”](#) TIME

View the original article here: [What we know—and don’t know—about the biology of homosexuality](#)