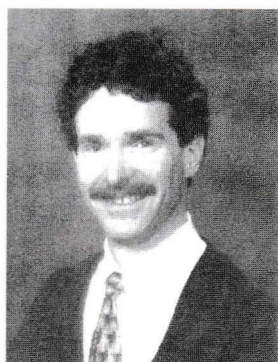


Questions and Answers about Same-Sex Attractions



Peter Rudegear, M.A.

In this issue, psychologist Peter Rudegear of West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania answers our readers' questions.

Q. *My daughter would like to marry and have a traditional family life. She feels some attraction to men, but every time she dates a man, she misses the "soul mate" bond she has when dating females. Why does she feel this way? What can she do to change?*

A. First, there is every reason to be hopeful because your daughter does experience attraction to men, and hopes to marry.

Usually, it is possible to identify an area of emotional pain or conflict which causes the same-sex attractions.

In women, the most common factor influencing homosexual attractions is a mistrust of male love. This lack of trust or safe feeling with those of the opposite sex usually results from hurts with the father or with other important males, or from observing the father mistreat the mother.

Since trust is necessary for complete self-giving, it would be important to determine whether your daughter becomes fearful in a dating relationship, and then reacts by retreating into female relationships in which she feels safer.

The second most common cause of same-sex attractions in women is a weak feminine identity. This can originate from a lack of warmth in the mother relationship, rejection by female peers when young, or a negative body image.

Both mistrust of male love and a weak feminine identity can be treated successfully. I would suggest that you explore these issues with her and recommend that she pursue therapy.

Q. *My daughter went away to a women's college seeming to be just like any other girl. But when she came home after the first year, she had become a militant feminist and a lesbian. Now I've found out that there is a large lesbian contingent at this school.*

At my request, Mary saw a psychologist, and he told me that in the process of "consolidating their feminine

identities," many women go through a lesbian stage. I can't believe this is good for her.

A. I agree that supporting homosexual behavior in a young woman in college is not in her best interest.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant emotional difficulties of those in the homosexual lifestyle including widespread promiscuity, substance abuse disorders, depression and hopelessness, and an inability to maintain commitment in a relationship. These studies are well documented in *Straight and Narrow* by Thomas Schmidt (Intervarsity Press, 1995) which I would recommend she read.

Homosexual attractions and behaviors arise in most individuals from a number of emotional conflicts. Your description of your daughter as a militant feminist and lesbian would raise the clinical issue of the possible role of anger in her life. Emotional hurts regularly give rise to both sadness and anger, and the anger can emerge strongly in a person's life even many years after a particular trauma.

I would suggest that you explore with a therapist first, and later with your daughter, any hurts and anger which she may have with men who may have disappointed her in a major way including her father, male relatives and peers, and with women also.

Q. *My 11-year-old son is different from other boys—more social, more sensitive, and more serious. We seem to have the same nature, and we've always been close. His father could never quite figure out how to relate to him, although he tried. I can see that my son has trouble making friendships with other boys, and he is often left out. My heart breaks for my son, but as a mother, what can I do? Will he be homosexual?*

A. Boys who are teased and rejected by their peers need special attention and help to cope with this pain, especially from their fathers. Peer ridicule leads to the development of loneliness, sadness, anger, and a weak masculine identity. The lack of eye-hand coordination which interferes with the ability to play sports, is one of the major reasons for peer rejection of boys in childhood. Since many fathers bond with their sons mainly through sports, fathers such as your husband regularly struggle with how best to relate to such boys.

Your son will not necessarily develop same-sex attractions later in his life. However, most males with

homosexual attractions report peer rejection and isolation when young, and many did not feel close to their fathers.

I recommend that your husband seek ways to bond with your son other than through sports, and that he try to find areas of common interest with him. Also, he should regularly affirm his masculine identity and minimize the role

of sports in masculinity.

Also, you and your husband should consider therapy to help strengthen the father-son relationship, to improve your son's masculine identity, and to help him cope with the pain of peer rejection.

The New Finger-Length Study on Lesbians

by Neil Whitehead, Ph.D.

<https://mygenes.co.nz/index.html>

A recent study found that lesbians are slightly more likely than heterosexual women to have male-type finger length patterns. Although the correlation was only slight, and although the researchers could not explain why some heterosexual women also had the same finger pattern, the study was quickly hailed as further evidence that homosexually-oriented people are "born that way."

Neil Whitehead, author of My Genes Made Me Do It! responds to the evidence.

In an article in *Science*, Williams et al.¹ report on a study which measured finger lengths in heterosexuals, homosexuals and lesbians. They found that certain finger-length ratios in lesbians are significantly less than such ratios in female heterosexuals. This suggested a biological basis to lesbianism, with the further implication that sexual-reorientation therapy for lesbians would be difficult or impossible.

However, this claim is significantly misleading. I report on this study because it is already in the popular press, and has been widely misinterpreted.

The Findings

Williams et al. compared the two ratios by a statistical test. They used a large number of interviewees. In such circumstances, although the mean finger lengths may be statistically different, they are often so close that it is not practically useful to say the difference is significant. That is what has happened in the present case.

The original normal distributions can be reconstructed from the researchers' data, and the results are shown in Figure 1. (With its two large overlapping curves, Figure 1 assumes that we are comparing an equal number of heterosexual

women and lesbians).

There is obviously a very large overlap in the two populations, and although the two means may be statistically different, **the difference is only 1%** — which is a small effect, and not diagnostically useful.

Within Figure 1 is also given the expected distribution of finger lengths for lesbians, assuming a United States nationwide prevalence of 1.7% (which includes bisexual lesbians).²

For any finger-length ratio chosen, the lesbians in the population at large are outnumbered by their heterosexual counterparts by approximately 60:1.

Figure 1 shows that there are large numbers of heterosexual women who have much more "masculine" finger-length ratios than most lesbians, but this is not considered by the researchers to be related to their sexual orientation.

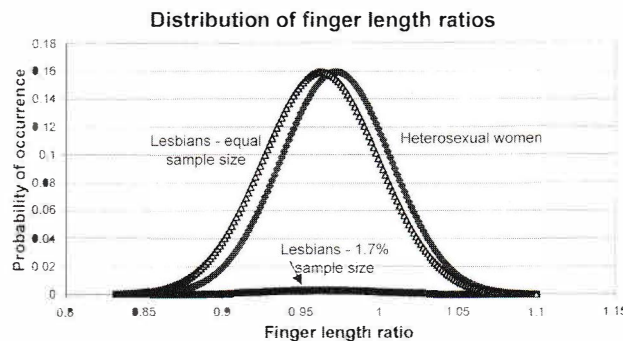


Figure 1. Distribution of finger length ratios

Prenatal Androgen Exposure and Masculinity

Williams et al. invoke the idea of very high prenatal androgen levels (for which there is very scant evidence) to explain the difference in mean finger lengths which they find. But if this is indeed an explanation, it must rarely affect sexual orientation. This study is rather similar to many other reported links between homosexuality and some biologically based phenomena. Although statistical connections may be shown, only a small percentage of subjects with that biological feature actually consider themselves to be homosexual.

References

1. Williams, T.J., Pepitone, M.E., Christensen, S.E., Cooke, B.M., Huberman, A.D., Breedlove, N.J., Breedlove, T. J., Jordan, C.L. & Breedlove, S.M. (2000): *Nature* 404, 455-456 (2000).
2. Whitehead, N.E. & Whitehead, B.K. (1999) *My Genes Made Me Do It!* Huntington House, Lafayette, Louisiana.