# Nature or nurture? What makes us queer



In a recent opinion piece published by Charles M. Blow, the columnist delves into the complexities surrounding the origins and expressions of queer identities and challenges the common belief that sexual orientation is solely a product of biological determinism. Mr. Blow's piece, entitled "People Say Queer People Are Born That Way. It’s More Complicated," posits that while biology might have a role, the identification and expression of sexual orientation are significantly influenced by individual choices and societal factors.

However, this assertion has not gone unchallenged. A reader, identifying himself as a gay man and one who aligns with a cultural stereotype of same-gender attraction manifesting long before puberty, has expressed strong objections to Mr. Blow's perspective. In a letter to the editor, the reader underscores the significant role of genetics in determining sexual orientation, backing his argument with reference to studies on identical twins. According to research, there is a greater than 50 percent likelihood of both twins being same-gender-attracted if one is, a stark contrast to the general population and indicative of a substantial genetic component.

The reader criticises Mr. Blow's claim that the identification and expression of queer attractions are merely choices. He fears that such a simplification fosters a dangerous narrative for those who perceive LGBTQ+ identities as unhealthy lifestyle choices that can be legislated against, drawing a parallel to public smoking bans. The reader poignantly recounts his own silent struggles, marked by fear of losing his job, family, and personal freedom in a society that he feels does not fully accept him.

The discourse presented by Mr. Blow is not an isolated one but reflects an ongoing and broader conversation about the origins of sexual orientation. It underscores the tension between biological determinism and the influence of cultural and environmental factors. While Mr. Blow aims to add depth to the discussion by highlighting the role of societal context and individual agency, the response highlights an equally important narrative: the innate aspect of queer identities as evidenced by scientific research.

The exchange exemplifies the multifaceted nature of human sexuality and the personal and societal struggles intertwined with it. The reader's lived experiences and the scientific data he presents offer a compelling counterpoint, underscoring the necessity of acknowledging the complex interplay of genetic, environmental, and individual factors in the discourse surrounding sexual orientation.

This dialogue illustrates the broader implications for public policy and societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Acknowledging the genetic components of sexual orientation alongside the visible societal influences contributes to a more nuanced understanding, one that might foster greater acceptance and inform more empathetic and inclusive policies. For readers and policymakers alike, the conversation between Mr. Blow and his respondent underscores the importance of a balanced and comprehensive exploration of the origins and expressions of queer identities.