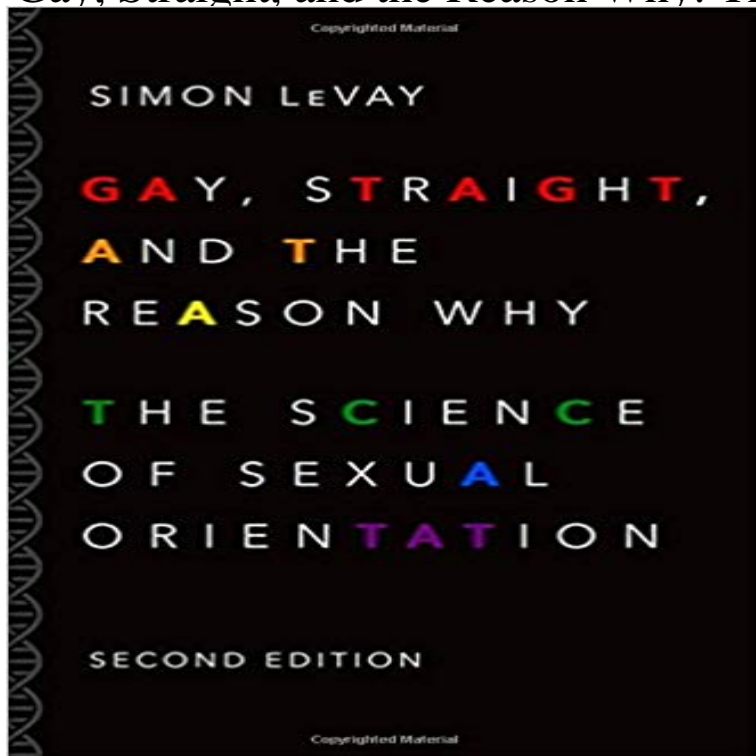


Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why: The Science of Sexual Orientation



What causes a child to grow up gay or straight? In this book, neuroscientist Simon LeVay summarizes a wealth of scientific evidence that points to one inescapable conclusion: Sexual orientation results primarily from an interaction between genes, sex hormones, and the cells of the developing body and brain. LeVay helped create this field in 1991 with a much-publicized study in *Science*, where he reported on a difference in the brain structure between gay and straight men. Since then, an entire scientific discipline has sprung up around the quest for a biological explanation of sexual orientation. In this book, LeVay provides a clear explanation of where the science stands today, taking the reader on a whirlwind tour of laboratories that specialize in genetics, endocrinology, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, evolutionary psychology, and family demographics. He describes, for instance, how researchers have manipulated the sex hormone levels of animals during development, causing them to mate preferentially with animals of their own gender. LeVay also reports on the prevalence of homosexual behavior among wild animals, ranging from Graylag geese to the Bonobo chimpanzee. In this revised edition LeVay broadens his horizons. He adds a new chapter on bisexuality, reviews some uncommon forms of sexuality such as asexuality and pedophilia, and considers whether there could be a biological basis for subtypes of gay people such as butch and femme lesbians. Although many details remain unresolved, the general conclusion is quite clear: A person's sexual orientation arises in large part from biological processes that are already underway before birth.

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