

Genetic engineering poses a dilemma

To the Editor:

One can profoundly change the behavior of an animal by changing a single gene. I refer of course to the article (*Tennessean*, Aug. 19) entitled "Genetic experiment turns mice from loners to lovers." Genetic "tinkering" at Emory's Primate Research Center reportedly turns "philandering, aloof male mice into creatures of solid family values..."

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The public should not be at all surprised that animal behavior can be linked to specific genes, or that some male rodents are "notorious playboys" while others are "obsessively monogamous." Diversity exists in nature.

I do, however, pity those on the religious/political right, for they may eventually find themselves in a considerable quandary. Should they advocate genetic engineering to produce behaviors which are acceptable to them or must they accept genetic (behavioral) diversity as God's apparent intention?

After all, genes for same-sex sexual behavior have already been identified in fruit flies. If similar genes/gene combinations are found to control such behavior in humans, should we engineer ("fix") the faulty genes and thereby the behavior many deem unacceptable?

Think of the benefits to society. We'd have no more country songs about unfaithful mates. We'd no longer have to resort to gay bashing. Everyone could serve in the military, for there would be nothing to ask and nothing to tell. Every boy could become an Eagle Scout without causing a controversy. What a wonderful world it will be!

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