

Getting It Straight

What the Research Shows about Homosexuality

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Getting It Straight: What the Research Shows about
Homosexuality

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Introduction

What This Book Is Not

This is not a book about religion or morality

I mention that only because in discussions about homosexuality, religion (usually portrayed as rigid, intolerant, and outdated) and morality (usually portrayed as utterly arbitrary) are often assumed to be the only possible reasons anyone could have for expressing the slightest disapproval of homosexual behavior.

Facts, science, and scholarship, on the other hand, are often assumed to be firmly on the side of those who would treat homosexuality as simply a normal and healthy variant of human sexuality.

These assumptions are false. One of the purposes of this book is to prove that they are false.

That is not to say that the Family Research Council takes no position regarding the theology or morality of homosexuality. Most major religions of the world have condemned homosexual acts. In particular, the Judeo-Christian tradition, as expressed in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, stands firmly against homosexual practices. And even apart from any special divine revelation, we believe that the fundamental nature of humanity as male and female (natural law) argues against accepting homosexual acts as either normal or moral. But that is not the subject of this book.

This is also not a book about public policy

Many of the debates about homosexuality in American public life today revolve around specific public policy questions. Was the Supreme Court

right to declare sodomy laws unconstitutional? Should “hate crimes” against homosexuals be punished more severely than other violent crimes? Should homosexuals be legally protected from “discrimination” in housing and employment? Should public schools teach “tolerance” of homosexual behavior? Should same-sex couples be allowed to legally marry?

This book offers no answers to any of these questions. Again, that is not to say that the Family Research Council has no position on these issues—on the contrary, we are actively engaged in every one of these debates (and we believe the answer is “no” to all of the above). We also believe that bringing moral and religious values to bear on public policy decisions is no violation of the “separation of church and state.” But public policy, like religion and morality, is also not the subject of this book.

What This Book Is

Instead, this is a book about what I mentioned above: facts, science, and scholarship.

We are certainly concerned about the gains homosexuals have made in winning the affirmation, celebration, and subsidization of relationships that we believe are harmful and wrong. But the particular concern that motivates this book is our conviction that many of those gains have come, quite simply, at the expense of the truth.

In other words, much of what “everyone now knows” about homosexuality is simply false. And in many cases, those misconceptions have been deliberately promoted by pro-homosexual activists in order to advance their social and political agenda.

Myths about homosexuality

Here are some key misconceptions—we might even call them “myths”—that this book seeks to dispel:

- “*People are born gay.*” If this were true, it would advance the idea that sexual orientation is an innate characteristic, like race; that homosexuals, like African Americans, should be legally protected against “discrimination;” and that disapproval of homosexuality should be as socially stigmatized as racism. However, it is not true. The research

shows no convincing evidence that anyone is “born gay” and suggests instead that homosexuality results from a complex mix of developmental factors.

- *“10 percent of the population is gay.”* If this were true, it would support the notion that “gay people are everywhere,” a significant part of every social institution in the country, and thus commonplace, normal, and nothing to fear. However, it is not true. The research clearly shows that a very small percentage of the population (less than three percent) identify themselves as homosexuals.
- *“Homosexuals are seriously disadvantaged by discrimination.”* If this were true, it would support the notion that homosexuals need special protections under the law. However, by two of the most common measures of social disadvantage—education and income—it is not true. The research shows that homosexuals actually have significant higher levels of educational attainment than the general public, while the findings on homosexual incomes are, at worst, mixed.
- *“Homosexuality is harmless.”* If this were true, it would support the notion that government has no reason to penalize or otherwise disadvantage people who engage in homosexual behavior. However, it is not true. The research clearly shows that homosexual behavior specifically, and a homosexual lifestyle generally, are associated with serious threats to the physical and mental health of those who engage in them and, by extension, to public health.
- *“Children raised by homosexuals suffer no harm.”* If this were true, it would support the notion that even the most distinctively heterosexual institutions of our society—the family and marriage itself—should be open to homosexuals on an equal basis. However, it is not true. The research shows clearly that children do best when raised by a married mother and father and that the homosexual lifestyle is unstable. Research specifically on homosexual parents has been fraught with methodological problems, but such research as there is nevertheless does show differences in the children of homosexuals that should raise concern.
- *“Homosexuals are no more likely to molest children than heterosexuals are.”* If this were true, it would support the notion that homosexuals should be allowed to work with children as schoolteachers, Boy Scout leaders, and Big Brothers or Big Sisters. However, it is not

true. The research clearly shows that same-sex child sexual abuse (mostly men molesting boys) occurs at rates far higher than adult homosexual behavior, and it strongly suggests that many of those abusers are homosexual in their adult orientation as well.

“Getting It Straight”

The title of this book is, of course, a play on words. “Gay” and “straight” have come to be the colloquial synonyms for “homosexual” and “heterosexual” (more on that in a moment). “Getting it straight,” on the other hand, is an expression that means getting the truth, getting the facts, getting them accurately, and getting them without bias. It is our belief that this is precisely what has not happened with respect to homosexuality. Instead, from several of the major institutions of our society (the news media, the entertainment media, and academia), we have gotten a message that is not “straight,” but is skewed and biased in a particular direction—a “pro-gay” direction. For too long, we have been “getting it gay,” and thus inaccurately; the time has come for “getting it straight,” meaning accurately.

If the public (including the media and public officials) can come to a more accurate understanding of what the research shows about homosexuality, it will not necessarily dictate a particular response or resolve the debates about the issue. But it will, we hope, create a more level playing field and provide a more rational basis for future decisions.

Some notes on style

This book is intended primarily as a reference work, not a monograph to be read from beginning to end. It thus relies heavily on bullet points, distinct factual findings, and at some points a question-and-answer format, rather than employing long passages of narrative prose. It also uses extensive quotations from the original sources.

We have chosen to cite the sources directly in the text, rather than using footnotes or endnotes. Although normal academic and publishing style would not require this, we wanted to make it as easy as possible for the reader to see the source of each fact we are citing without the effort of looking it up. We also want readers to be able to evaluate for themselves, on the spot, the credibility of the source for each claim. We are confident this approach will make clear that this book does consist of “what the research shows,” and not merely our own opinions.

The reader may note that we have primarily (outside of the title) used the terms “homosexual” and heterosexual,” rather than the now-common terms “gay” or “straight.” The reasons for this approach are stated well by one of our key sources of research:

- “We have used the terms homosexuality and same-gender sex or sexuality interchangeably....We mean these terms to be taken as descriptive of specific partnerships, practices, or feelings. ...Gay and lesbian as alternative terms referring to sexual patterns have the disadvantage of being associated with a particular historical moment and social (and often political) self-identification. The latter involves issues such as participation in a community and culture that are beyond the current research and its primary focus on the sexual.”

Edward O. Laumann, John H. Gagnon, Robert T. Michael, and Stuart Michaels, *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), footnote 1, 283.

The above reflects the pattern we use in most of this book. When we use the term “homosexual” as a noun, we are referring to a person who actively engages in sexual relations with persons of the same sex and who explicitly prefers such relations to heterosexual ones. When we use the term “homosexuality,” we are usually referring to the practice of engaging in overt sexual acts with persons of the same sex. Homosexuality as a “sexual orientation,” meaning the mere psychological state of experiencing sexual attractions toward people of the same sex even in the absence of any overt sexual acts, is relevant only to the chapter on “What Causes Homosexuality,” wherein we address the psychological origins of such attractions.

Who should use this book

This book should be a prime first reference for anyone who wants or needs accurate information about homosexuality. Specifically, we hope that journalists, elected officials, teachers, professors, clergy, grassroots activists, and other policy makers and cultural leaders will keep a copy close at hand and refer to it often. You will be able to count on the accuracy of the facts and quotations supplied herein, even if you disagree with our position on the issues.

Other resources

Those interested in a reasoned argument in support of our position on these

questions are invited to read or order our publications at our website at www.frc.org. I also highly recommend a book on the subject, *Dark Obsession: The Tragedy and Threat of the Homosexual Lifestyle* (Broadman and Holman, 2003), by FRC's own Senior Fellow for Marriage and Family Studies (and co-editor of this work), Timothy J. Dailey.

This book is a companion volume to, and in certain respects modeled after, another publication: *The Family Portrait: A Compilation of Data, Research and Public Opinion on the Family* (Washington: Family Research Council, 2002). These two books constitute the flagship publications of FRC's new Center for Marriage and Family Studies, and our intention is to issue updated editions of each approximately once every two years. Look for the second edition of *The Family Portrait* later in 2004.

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