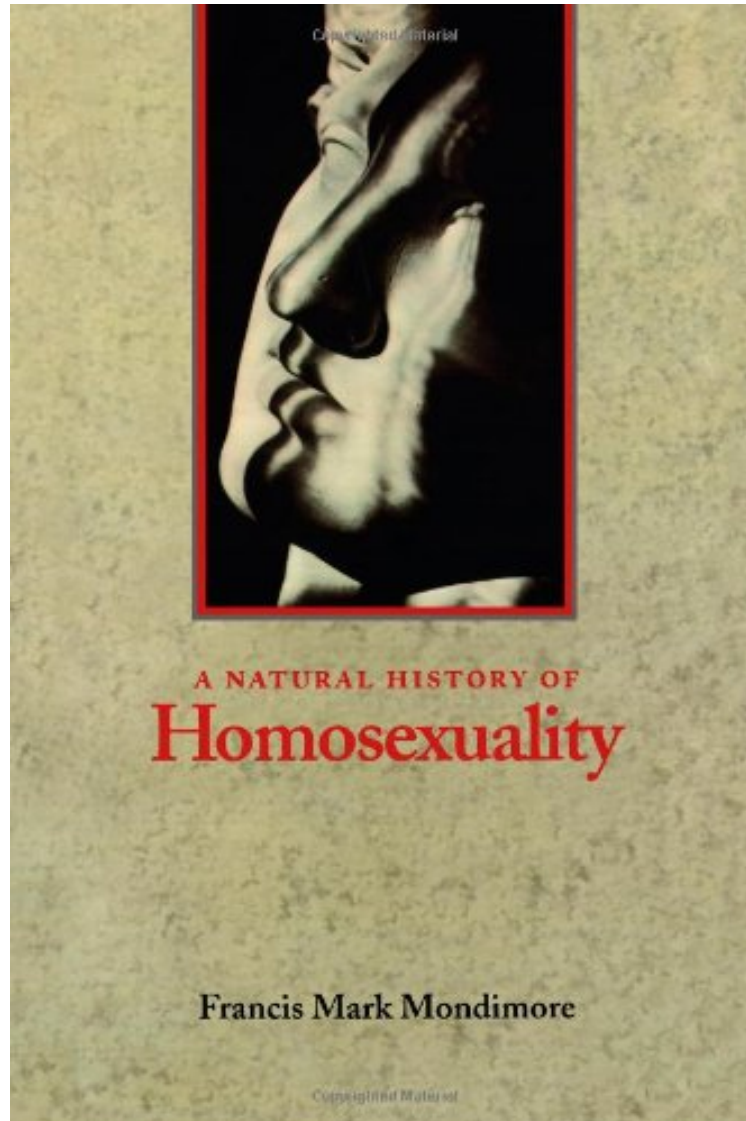


(Library ebook) A Natural History of Homosexuality

A Natural History of Homosexuality

Francis Mark Mondimore

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Francis Mark Mondimore : A Natural History of Homosexuality before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Natural History of Homosexuality:

17 of 21 people found the following review helpful. The Best General Work on Homosexuality I've Encountered By Penny Duff As a lesbian fascinated with lesbian and gay studies and history--and having participated in the making of

some of it--I was more than interested in reading Dr. Mondimore's book. What I found was a book with overall balance, an excellent general source of information. I would recommend this book highly to heterosexuals, especially family members striving to deal with the homosexuality of a loved one. I would recommend it to the lesbian or gay seeking a better, broad-based understanding of themselves, their history, and the things which shape and influence them. Above all, I would recommend it to the person or group harboring an antihomosexual prejudice, be it from religious, cultural, or personal beliefs. There are some criticisms of the book: his treatment of lesbianism and the particular issues affecting gay women is, for the most part, shallow. Granted, there is not as much material available, but there is more than he utilized. Whether from a desire not to offend or from other motivations, his record of the last 30 years of gay history is shallow, as is the discussion of groups vigorously opposing homosexuals, such as the "religious right". It would not have been difficult to employ more depth, particularly since these things impact and will continue to affect the civil rights, health, and well-being of the literally millions of homosexual women and men in this country. Greater stress on what is happening today is needed. The theological issues impacting the civil rights of the entire gay community are not really addressed, although the scholarship which leads to persecution of the gay community by religious groups is profoundly flawed and resource materials readily available. These criticisms being understood, I would nevertheless highly recommend this book to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, as a basic work which should be in any balanced library.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An agreeable discovery of facts

By J. Madrigal I've just finished reading Dr. Mondimore's book. Since I am more familiar with literature and the arts there was a large spectrum I was quite ignorant of. I am Mexican and even though I was quite aware that the Aztecs really hated what we now call homosexuality, I was pretty ignorant of other other views of this phenomenon in other pre-Hispanic cultures. Dr. Mondimore's book covers such a huge range of aspects (history, history of mentalities, medicine, psychology, sociology, politics) that I became sort of dizzy at the end. Nevertheless the author delivers all his stuff in such a lively way that once I started reading, I had great pains at stop reading. For me the book was illuminating.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars

By Michael Tachet Useful for my doctoral dissertation.

A terrible sin, a gift from the gods, a mental illness, a natural human variation over the centuries people have defined homosexuality in all of these ways. Since the word homosexual was coined in 1869, many scientists in a variety of fields have sought to understand same-sex intimacy. Drawing on recent insights in biology and genetics, psychiatrist Francis Mondimore set out to explore the complex landscape of sexual orientation. The result is *A Natural History of Homosexuality*, a generous work that synthesizes research in biology, history, psychology, and politics to explain how homosexuality has been understood and defined from ancient times until the present. Mondimore narrates tales of love and courage as well as discrimination and bigotry in settings as diverse as ancient Greece and Victorian England, early America and fin de siècle Vienna. He also tells fascinating stories about societies which accepted, incorporated, or institutionalized homosexuality into mainstream culture, stories illustrating that same-sex eroticism was often accepted as a normal aspect of human sexuality. In twentieth-century America, researchers first recognized that homosexuality might not be "pathological" when Alfred Kinsey and Evelyn Hooker conducted the first studies of sexuality not biased by preconceived notions of "normal" sexual behavior. After exploring sexual development in the human fetus, Mondimore reviews current biological research into the nature of sexual orientation and examines recent scientific findings on the role of heredity and hormones, as well as Simon LeVay's 1991 brain studies. He then turns to a very important focus: on people and their individual experiences. He explores "what happens between childhood and adulthood in an individual that makes him or her come to identify himself or herself as having a sexual orientation." He also explains our current understanding of bisexuality and the transgender phenomena of transsexualism and transvestism. Finally, Mondimore analyzes the circumstances of such prominent scandals as the anti-homosexual trials of Oscar Wilde and Philip von Eulenberg, and recounts the Nazi persecution of homosexuals during the Holocaust. This far-reaching discussion includes a description of the ex-gay ministries and reparative therapy as well as the Stonewall riots and AIDS, ending with the emergence of gay pride and community. "The preponderance of the scientific evidence is converging on a view which homosexual people have had of themselves for as long as any had the courage to record it," writes Mondimore. "Homosexuality is a natural, abiding, normal sexuality for some people. It is not a disease state, not simply a behavior, and not subject to change." "Thoughtful and readable. Dr. Mondimore tells us an enormous amount about homosexuality in a lively manner. This book belongs on the bookshelf of anyone who wants to be informed about this important subject." Richard A. Isay, M.D., clinical professor of psychiatry, Cornell University Medical College, and author of *Becoming Gay: The Journey to Self-Acceptance*

From Publishers Weekly It takes courage to add yet another title to the plethora of current titles about homosexuality, but Mondimore, a practicing psychiatrist from Charlotte, N.C., offers a valuably balanced study written in clear language. Above all, he has no axes to grind. Too often, bookshop shelves offer works written only for an inner circle of gay readers, but the present study is expressly meant for those not in the know on subjects like the historical persecution of gays, the psychology and biology of homosexuality, social issues like "stigma management" and even

the thorny problems of transsexualism and transvestitism. Mondimore notes that, in dozens of American states, anti-homosexuality laws are still on the books; he points out, too, that Germany has never paid reparations to the 50,000 gays put into concentration camps for extermination by the Nazis along with Jews and gypsies. This humane text does, however, offer some hope, such as in an amusing photo of a 1965 gay rights march in front of the White House, where men and women looking like anyone's relatives in formal dress picketed with signs like "Fifteen Million homosexuals protest Federal Treatment." At its best, Dr. Mondimore's new book reflects this kind of courage. Illustrations.

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Mondimore, a psychiatrist and author of *Depression, the Mood Disease* (LJ 4/1/90), adds this unique and thoughtful study of the growing number of titles on the subject of homosexuality. Much of the information here is not groundbreaking (see Simon LeVay's *Queer Science: The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality*, LJ 7/96), yet what is unique is the author's ability to distill a vast array of data to create cogent, readable prose. Written in four parts (sexual histories, sexual biology, sexual identities, and sexual politics), the book offers readers an unbiased examination of evidence suggesting that homosexuality is a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and environmental factors and that it has existed across cultures and throughout history. Given the current level of discourse in our culture on this issue, Mondimore adds an important, and reasonable, voice to the mix, and his work deserves wide readership. Well recommended for both public and academic libraries.

—Karen Duff, Boston P.L. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A book of special value to youth in search of sexual self-affirmation." (John Money, author of *Gay, Straight, and In-Between*) "An often well-researched and warmly presented book." (Journal of the American Medical Association) "Expressly meant for those not in the know on subjects like the historical persecution of gays, the psychology and biology of homosexuality, social issues like 'stigma management,' and even the thorny problems of transsexualism and transvestitism... A valuably balanced study written in clear language." (Publishers Weekly)

"Mondimore, a psychiatrist and author of *Depression, the Mood Disease*, adds this unique and thoughtful study of the growing number of titles on the subject of Homosexuality... what is unique is the author's ability to distill a vast array of data to create cogent, readable prose... Given the current level of discourse in our culture on this issue, Mondimore adds an important and reasonable, voice to the mix, and his work deserves wide readership." (Library Journal)

"This book is informative, concise, simple to read, and an excellent resource book." (Rev. Dale Pritchard Ph.D. Lambda Book Report)

"This book will serve as an excellent introduction for students. The practicing physician can recommend it to patients... Dr. Mondimore has packed an impressive amount of information into 250 pages; the result is the best overall presentation of homosexuality that I have seen." (Richard Pillard, M.D. The New England Journal of Medicine)