

(Get free) The New Gay Teenager (Adolescent Lives)

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Ritch C. Savin-Williams

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Ritch C. Savin-Williams : The New Gay Teenager (Adolescent Lives) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Gay Teenager (Adolescent Lives):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Definitely not just about gay/lesbian/bi teens....By David C. Young
As a therapist working with high-risk teens for several decades, I've been puzzled by how few gay teens I've seen. And in my routine questioning of teens about all aspects of their lives, I've had few responses to questions about sexuality, other than, "straight". I've rather thought that, perhaps, this might be accounted for by gay-les-bi teens

seeking help within a "gay-les-bi" agency, combined with Colorado Springs' reputation for homophobia. But most teens with whom I speak over a longer time mention friends who are gay-les-bi (though not trans) -- and this has been true for about ten years. But given what I've read, and still read, in "research" and the news, about "high suicide rates" and extreme bullying -- all of which I took to be the norm -- I stayed a bit puzzled as to why I wasn't seeing gay-les-bi teens. "The New Gay Teenager", especially in combination with Savin-Williams' earlier book, ...And Then I Became Gay: Young Men's Stories, gave me a better "norm" of what was happening developmentally with gay-les-bi teens, and equally important, with all my young clients regardless of their sexual fantasies, attractions, behaviors and identities. This stands the developmental history I was taught on its head, and not just in terms of sex sexuality. Savin-Williams and the research he cites presents all development, not just gay-les-bi-trans sexual development, in what I suspect is becoming a more contemporary and realistic light. The emphasis isn't on fitting kids into categories, sexual or developmental, but what Savin-Williams calls differential developmental trajectories. That cumbersome term means that sexual categories, and any "standard" developmental categories, are becoming more more irrelevant in the face of individual exploration and discovery. Teens, of course, both want to fit in and want to stand out -- a difficult balance at an awkward, ever-changing, often-confusing and increasingly plural developmental stage in an awkward, ever-changing, often-confusing and increasingly plural society, culture and world. Savin-Williams gives us a research-based look at one developmental aspect and one group that isn't so clearly a group anymore, at least in terms of self-identity. OK, that was confusing, but perhaps discussing some of the book's findings will clarify this as well as show, at least in part, its implications for why, I believe, this book is helpful for more than just gay-les-bi teens. "The New Gay Teenager" is filled with what, in 2007, was the most-recent research, along with thoughtful caveats on the limitations of that research. Savin-Williams' correctives include: 1. Teens, including gay-les-bi teens, are more like each other, both in their similarities AND in their diversities, their individualities, than they are "like" a single sexual category. Certainly this fits in the seeming, not reluctance but disinterest current teens have in identifying themselves by their sexual fantasies, attractions and behaviors. Said another way, gay-les-bi teens don't think of themselves, primarily in those categories, and increasingly, it appears, they're more like other teens than "like" themselves as a separate group. As Savin-Williams writes, "The fact is, the lives of most same-sex-attracted teenagers are not exceptional either in their pathology or their resiliency. Rather, they are ordinary. Gay adolescents have the same developmental concerns, assets, and liabilities as heterosexual adolescents. This unnoteworthy banality might well be their greatest asset." This leads to a different kind of research needed, one more geared to diversity and individuality than to similarity and "always-shared" developmental milestones. This leads to a research based less on "standard questions" than on listening carefully and at-length to individual stories and their particular meanings. 2. Teens today have a different take on sexual fantasies, attractions, behaviors and identities, both among themselves and between themselves. Again, Savin-Williams writes, "Sexual diversity is becoming normalized, and the gay-straight divide is becoming blurred. Straight teens are acting, looking, and becoming gayish, and an expansive array of nonstraight teens is becoming visible. These young people are more apt to say things like "Why won't my parents let me go to the concert?" and "If I take chemistry, how will that affect my grade point average?" than "I'm gay, I'm gay, oh my, what am I going to do?" 3. Not only do we see a diversity within "sexual minority" teens and an approach to sexuality among teens overall that is rapidly evolving, research on teen sexuality is terribly flawed, including (to me surprisingly) that many teens reject any sexuality labels and, especially, that we lack sexual developmental research with "straight teens". Sexually, we're not really sure what is "normal" for US teens, gay-les-bi or straight, now or even in the past. This is not to say that Savin-Williams turns a blind eye toward the viciousness which at least some gay-les-bi teens face and its serious consequences: "Nothing I have stated in this book justifies neglect of gay young people who suffer and entertain thoughts of suicide because of their sexuality. I am willing to believe that this reality might have been more characteristic of earlier generations than it is today. But whatever motivation might prompt us to sensationalize the fate of gay teens or represent them as heroic survivors, it's not scientifically valid now, and it was not scientifically valid in years past." As a personal note about someone who came of age in the 1950s 1960s in small-town, rural midwestern America: I didn't hear the word "gay" until well into college. Our community then, looking back on it, made labels far more characteristic of an earlier period, one more based on gender norms. (Savin-Williams, who was born a year before me, discusses gender norms in this book, and the part they play now.) In other words, there were "regular boys" and boys (and men) who were seen as "effeminate". I don't recall them being much teased (though I may have missed that), but they certainly had a place in our community, including in our churches. No one doubted "they were born that way", in that effeminate men in their later years, generally unmarried, were known, by those in our fairly stable community, to have "always been that way". And they were accepted, part of community life, generally, not set apart. While we didn't know or inquire into their sexual lives, we didn't know or inquire into anyone's sexual lives. That just wasn't our business. This meant, as a therapist, when I found myself asked to counsel gay-les-bi individuals because other therapists weren't comfortable with sexual issues and I, as someone who had treated families with incest, I didn't know where or how to start. As a good University of Chicago grad, I checked out the research in three areas: psychology (and there wasn't much of use then), history (and there was only a bit, but a VERY challenging bit), and anthropology. What I read left me really wondering about our supposedly "scientific" and

"universal" sexual categories. It was clear that, in general, sexual behaviors and attractions appeared in "straight" and in "gay-les-bi" forms. But how this worked itself out, within cultures and individuals, was enormously diverse, and certainly it generally didn't fit well into categories of mid-20th c. Western scientific sexual identities. This, plus my background, led me to be cautious and to listen to what the person in front of me was saying about himself/herself and his/her world. Which turns out, evidently, to have been the right approach. (For books that helped me absorb this diversity, via history and anthropology, see, for example, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, and more recently, *Homosexualities (Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture)*. Note the preponderance of UofC Press. *grins*) So for those working with teens, not just gay-les-bi teens, and especially for those who, like me, came of age well before our 21st century, I heartily recommend Ritch Savin-Williams' book. A note: I bought the Kindle edition. It was on only so-so experience, as I like to highlight a lot in my professional reading. This created drastic slow-downs toward the end of the book, adding maybe a third to the time that I'd have normally taken to read the book. Supposedly, reading threads on say that there are ways around it. I tried to ask on the threads, and to figure this out on my own. I heard nothing from the threads; I was completely unable to work around this. If you don't highlight much, I doubt this would be a problem. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Jury out on *New Gay Teenager* By Sharon I haven't had time to get into the book, other than the first 3 or 4 chapters. It is kind of overwhelming when I don't understand gay relationships to begin with. I wanted the book to let me know what a teen is going through coming out to family, and the public and how, as family, we can make it easier. I certainly haven't given the book a chance to address that yet, if it does. So far, I read that most girls have no hang up with this issue or at least are more comfortable with being gay. But teen boys do, which I am witnessing for myself. I am just getting into the area of medical study of genes, environment, families, etc.. that MAY influence gayness. No scientific proofs yet. I do know that the one thing that helps most is Unconditional Love for the person. 2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Great book! By Chiaect This product arrived on time and in great condition. The book itself has been quite insightful, especially in my field. I work with teens, so this book provided great examples on some of the issues that plague them. I would highly recommend this seller and book!

Gay, straight, bisexual: how much does sexual orientation matter to a teenager's mental health or sense of identity? In this down-to-earth book, filled with the voices of young people speaking for themselves, Ritch Savin-Williams argues that the standard image of gay youth presented by mental health researchers--as depressed, isolated, drug-dependent, even suicidal--may have been exaggerated even twenty years ago, and is far from accurate today. *The New Gay Teenager* gives us a refreshing and frequently controversial introduction to confident, competent, upbeat teenagers with same-sex desires, who worry more about the chemistry test or their curfew than they do about their sexuality. What does "gay" mean, when some adolescents who have had sexual encounters with those of their own sex don't consider themselves gay, when some who consider themselves gay have had sex with the opposite sex, and when many have never had sex at all? What counts as "having sex," anyway? Teenagers (unlike social science researchers) are not especially interested in neatly categorizing their sexual orientation. In fact, Savin-Williams learns, teenagers may think a lot about sex, but they don't think that sexuality is the most important thing about them. And adults, he advises, shouldn't think so either.