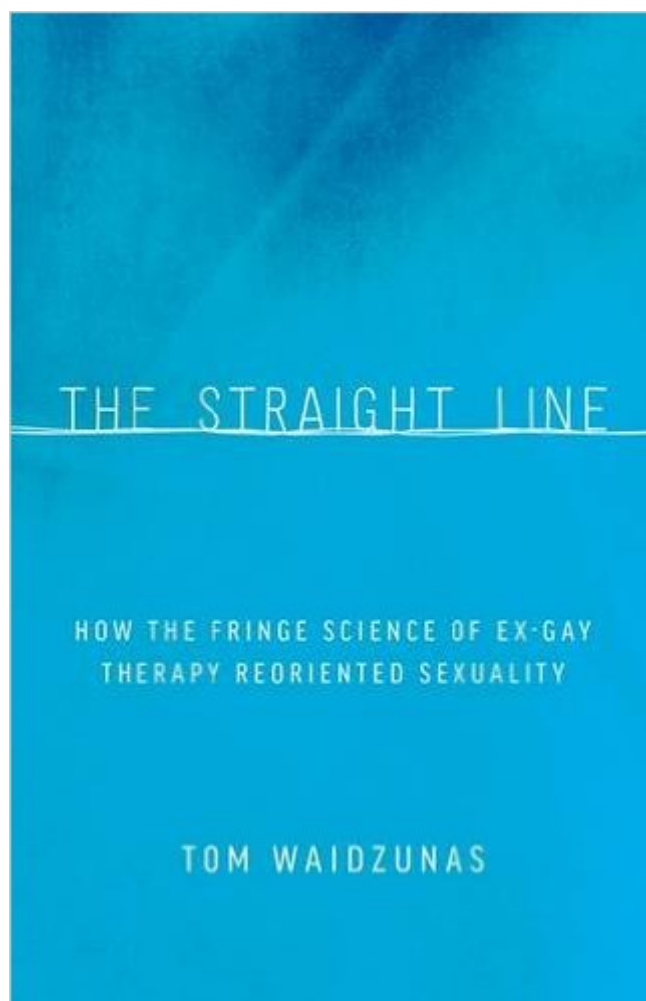


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The Straight Line: How The Fringe Science Of Ex-Gay Therapy Reoriented Sexuality



Synopsis

To be taken seriously, therapies that claim to "cure" homosexuality wrap themselves in lab coats. Even though the fit is bad, and such therapies and their theorists now inhabit the scientific fringe, the science of sexuality has made some adjustments, too, Tom Waidzunas tells us in this provocative work. Intervening in the politics of sexuality and science, *The Straight Line* argues that scientific definitions of sexual orientation do not merely reflect the results of investigations into human nature, but rather emerge through a process of social negotiation between opposing groups. The demedicalization of homosexuality and the discrediting of reparative therapies, ex-gay ministries, and reorientation research have, Waidzunas contends, required scientists to enforce key boundaries around scientific expertise and research methods. Drawing on extensive participant observation at conferences for ex-gays, reorientation therapists, mainstream psychologists, and survivors of ex-gay therapy, as well as interviews with experts and activists, *The Straight Line* traces reorientation debates in the United States from the 1950s to the present, following homosexuality therapies from the mainstream to the margins. As the ex-gay movement has become increasingly transnational in recent years, Waidzunas turns to Uganda, where ideas about the scientific nature of homosexuality influenced the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014. While most studies treat the ex-gay movement as a religious phenomenon, this book looks at how the movement, in its attempts to establish legitimacy, has engaged with scientific institutions, shaping virulent anti-gay public policy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ex-gay/reparative/conversion therapy organisations and practices have been focus of mine for over fifteen years now as I've lead the charge to see an end of these practices in Australia. During this time I've read extensively on the topic both for and against as well as kept up with the endless media frenzies that have occurred with scandals when ex-gay leaders or new research emerged, supposedly proving people can change from gay to straight. I wondered what additional things I could learn from Tom Waidzun's 'The Straight Line'. One thing that stands out immediately is the depth of research the author has gone into to create this work. It's impressive. Following his theme of the changing 'straight line' (when a person is or is not gay) gives a fresh approach as well. Commencing with the mental health professionals approach post war (1948-1972) we are taken on the journey through gay affirmative therapy in tandem with ex-gay organisations and practitioners along with the rise of the ex-gay survivor movement and its impact. One of the things I enjoyed most was the section on Uganda. The proposed Anti-homosexual Bill or the Kill the Gays Bill, as it has become known, is covered in depth. Most LGBT people globally would be aware of this controversy that lingered on for several years (2009-2014). The authors on the ground research in Uganda is invaluable and most of all insightful. Most of us were getting westernised perceptions through the media and gay rights organisations but Waidzun takes us right into the thick of the battle interviewing key players. Most westerners saw this as a human rights issue but as the author reveals it was an historical, political, religious and cultural minefield. Valuable lessons can be learned just from this section.

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