

New Book Sets the Record Straight on Gender Roles and Homosexuality

Scared Straight Reveals A Lot About Who We Are

Review By Ian Drew

Society has gotten a bad rap by many, especially those seeking to blame it for all of their own personal ills. In *Scared Straight*, author Robert Minor investigates what makes up our collective tick, and he does it in a way that makes sense.

While this book is probably more appropriate as a syllabus requirement in a college sociology course, it can make for entertaining reading for those who can break away from the best of Oprah's Book Club for a moment or two.

Without relying too heavily on scientific evidence, Minor discusses how gay/straight roles are defined, as well as the traditional roles of masculinity and femininity. This guy is clearly a professor, but what is a little unexpected is the fact that he teaches religious studies.

It is indicated in the first chapter, which concerns the Bible's use in modern times and how it cannot be used for any literal translation of our own intended morality. He asserts that the Bible is often manipulated by the proverbial marionette strings of whoever intends to use it. In the middle of this, he brilliantly points out that the Bible

talks much more about the evils of being a loan officer or lawyer than ever being a run-of-the-mill sodomite.

Minor then goes on to tell us how gender identity is forced upon us by everything from our education system to Madison Avenue. He compiles a list of reasons (or chapters) that demonstrate how society forces our gender roles upon us from such an early age that it becomes impossible to even question them as anything other than reality.

Though Minor's arguments stand up to

*In Minor's World,
The sky is only blue
if you choose to see
it that way and both
the chicken and the
egg can come first.*

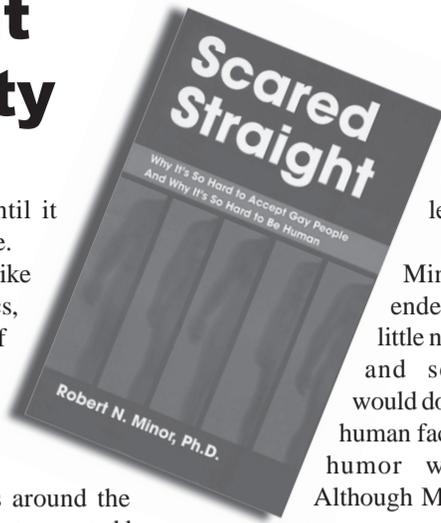
reason, he does this by subjecting the reader to the philosophical theory of absolute reality. In short, there is no absolute reality because just about everything can be

questioned enough until it becomes unanswerable.

In Minor's world, like that of most academics, the sky is only blue if you choose to see it that way, and both the chicken and the egg can come first.

The book centers around the idea that gay men are not accepted because they challenge the deeply ingrained ideas of masculinity that are too firm to budge. Similarly, lesbians are much too in control of their own sexuality to be considered real woman. Minor demonstrates the fear factor behind homophobia that causes people to either reject homosexuals or hide their own sexuality in order to more closely conform to the status quo.

All of this offers an in-depth analysis of our own conformity. What Minor fails to analyze is the fact that most of us choose not to be our full, flowering selves because we simply don't want the attention. Though he would probably read into this as avoiding our true selves in favor of conformity, it has more to do with, like a character in Jack



London's *Call of the Wild*, the chief ambition of simply wanting to be left alone.

What would make Minor's book a little more endearing to the reader is a little narrative flavor. Some first and second-hand accounts would do nicely here to put a more human face on his theories. A little humor wouldn't hurt either.

Although Minor unfolds the state of our mores well, it is just a little dry for general reading. For nice analyses of both the way things are and ought to be, though, there is nothing to be afraid of here.

None of this is meant to imply that Minor's discussion in *Scared Straight* is not well supported. It is just to say that it becomes very easy to blame things on society because no answer — except a very large and open-ended one — is needed.

By the end of the book, Minor is asking for a recall of all of society's ideals. Although it would certainly be nice to invert the civilized world's thinking a little, it is also, quite frankly, just too much work.

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