



# **An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society**

*Jennifer Terry*

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# An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society

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Drawing on original research from medical texts, psychiatric case histories, pioneering statistical surveys, first-person accounts, legal cases, sensationalist journalism, and legislative debates, Jennifer Terry has written a nuanced and textured history of how the century-old obsession with homosexuality is deeply tied to changing American anxieties about social and sexual order in the modern age.

Terry's overarching argument is compelling: that homosexuality served as a marker of the "abnormal" against which malleable, tenuous, and often contradictory concepts of the "normal" were defined. One of the few histories to take into consideration homosexuality in both women and men, Terry's work also stands out in its refusal to erase the agency of people classified as abnormal. She documents the myriad ways that gays, lesbians, and other sexual minorities have coauthored, resisted, and transformed the most powerful and authoritative modern truths about sex. Proposing this history as a "useable past," *An American Obsession* is an indispensable contribution to the study of American cultural history.

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