

Lefties in our Midst-Myths, Facts, and Pfantasies
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I. Introduction (Show Slide 1- Title)

Hello everyone! It's a pleasure to be with you this afternoon. I see some people I know, and you've all given me a cordial welcome, so even though I'm not a regular speech giver these days--especially not on Sunday afternoons-- I feel pretty relaxed.

I Googled the title of this talk, and saw books entitled "Gorillas in Our Midst", "Strangers in our Midst," "Angels in our Midst," and even "Christ in Our Midst," but Google as I might, I couldn't find a book on "Lefties in Our Midst."

But I can assure you there are *lefties among us* (It takes one to know one) - and so the title of this talk *is* legitimate.

II. So Who Are These Lefties? (Slide 2- So Who Are These People)

So, who are these lefties? Do any of these phrases describe the lefties you know? (You do know some, don't you?), Well, stay tuned, and we'll find out.

III. Even In The Presidency?

Since there *are* lefties moving among us, it would seem that some might have found their way to the highest office in our land, the Presidency of the United States. So let's start at the top.

Can any of you name a president of the United States who was/is left-handed?(Show Slide 3- 8 Presidents)

If you named any of these guys, you are spot on. They are the last 8 left-handed presidents, and for what it's worth, these guys weren't just any old lefties.

- Garfield could write a sentence in Greek with his left hand, while at the same time in Latin with his right hand.

- Truman was a natural left-hander who taught himself to write right-handed.
- Reagan announced that he was switched from left to right by strict school-teachers when he was young, but was really left-handed. He slapped Angie Dickinson with his left hand in the film "The Killers," which is what a lefty would do.
- And Ford said, "For as long as I can remember, I have been left-handed sitting down and right-handed standing up." Not sure what he was lying down or chewing gum.

Doesn't knowing these things about lefty *Presidents* make you even more curious regarding what ordinary left-handers are all about?

IV. Time for A Poll-

To satisfy my curiosity, I would like to conduct a poll of this group, and I've asked (Introducer) to help me with the data.

Between you and me, I think (Introducer) currently has connections with Price Waterhouse, but you can still trust him.

May I see the hands of those of you who are left handed?
(Calculate percentage)

So only 11% of the people in this room are left-handed?
How amazing is this? It's one side or the other- just as easy to choose the left as to choose the right. Why wouldn't it be 50-50?

These ponderings are a great segue into 8 important questions.

V. Eight Questions You've Always Wanted to Ask About Handedness (Show Slide 4- Eight Questions)

When I started out to answer these questions, the first article I read on the internet blatantly asserted that a lot of stuff about left-handers on the net was "exaggerated, over-generalized, cherry-picked and even romanticized,"

To test this, I tried to check out the assertion I'd heard that all polar bears (and Al Gore) are left-handed. Finding *everything from soup to nuts* on this proved to me that the article was right.

Not wanting to be labeled a “romanticizing cherry-picker” I assure you that I used sources other than just the internet to answer these 8 questions.

Only 11% of our group is left-handers. Would this be true for the world? This suggests the first of the eight questions,

Q-1 What Percent Of The World's Population Is Left-Handed, And Why? (Slide 5 Q-1)

Percent of Lefties in the world- It is generally accepted that 10-15% of the world's population is left-handed. I'll use 12% in this talk. However, a country's percentages vary depending on how hard they try to change lefties into righties.

Also, the best estimate is that there are 5 left-handed men for every 4 left handed women, even though some say its 2-1. In this group it was _ to _. (Slide 6 Four Women, 5 men) *Not sure it was worth getting my friends together* for this picture to illustrate that, however.

Why Are Most of Us Right-Handed? (Show slide 7-Nobody knows)

Strange as it may seem it is still a mystery why most of us are right handed. Very simply, *“nobody knows for sure.”*

But some theories have been proposed.

The Battle Theory (Show slide 8- Battle Theory)-

One theory was that early humans, when fighting, held their shield with their left hand over their heart to protect it, and wielded their spear with their right hand...thus the beginning of evolution toward strong preference for the right hand.

Sounds like a pretty good theory, don't you think? *Can I get you to buy into it?*

This theory ignores the fact that there was evidence of right-hand dominance long before the spear and shield were invented!

The Big Bang Theory (Show slide 8- Big Bang Theory)

In 92% of the people, the left-brain hemisphere controls the language and fine motor skills functions.

Because the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body, most of these people, but not all, are right-handed.

But why is the language/fine motor skills center usually in the left hemisphere of the brain? The Big Bang theory suggests that:

*A genetic Big Bang occurred around 200,000 years ago- at that time, as the ancient human brain was evolving, a **single random genetic mutation** pushed the language/small motor skills center to the left hemisphere.*

So we could be a random mutation away from it being just the opposite, and most people being left-handers. Hmm, Wouldn't that have been interesting!

Sometimes when a group in society is small, and somewhat out of the mainstream, we develop prejudice against them. Is this true about lefties? This suggests Q 2

Q-2 Are We Prejudiced Against Lefties? (Show slide 9- Q-2)

Right and Left In The Bible-

When his grandmother asked Bobby the Kindergartner, "Did you know that God painted this beautiful winter scene just for you," little Bobby said, "Yes, God did it and he did it left handed." When asked to explain, he said, "we learned at Sunday School last week that Jesus *sits* on God's *right* hand!" (See Hebrews 12:2)

Clearly Christianity is strongly biased toward the right hand. It is the right hand that gives the blessing and makes the sign of the cross. (*Missed opportunity*. The Left hand is closest to heart)

You can find more than 150 positive biblical references to the right-hand and more than 25 negative biblical references to the left-hand, including Ecclesiastes 10:2 (NIV) ! **(Show Slide 10- Ecclesiastes 10-2)** “The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left.”

And yes, even the devil is pictured as left-handed, and you *know*, he baptizes people with his left hand, **(Slide 10- Left-Handed Devil)**

Societal Words - (Slide 11 Societal Words, Attitudes)

To check the role of *words* in negatively stereotyping left-handers, I looked up the meanings of the word for “left” in several countries.

A typical example was the French word for “left”- “gauche” –which means clumsy, weak or useless. The German word for left, “linkish”, means about the same, and this repeats in many countries of the world.

Societal Attitudes-

In several middle-east countries, even today, the right hand is to only be used for tasks above the waist, and the left hand only for those below- reinforcing the idea that “right” is clean and “left” is unclean.

And, closer to home, an Oklahoma kindergarten teacher in 2015 told a student to stop writing with his left hand because that’s the one Satan uses- and she called left-handers evil, unlucky, and sinister.

Things like this, help us see that prejudice toward the left hand is not just a thing of the distant past.

So are there other things in our society about left-handers that we should take with a grain of salt? This suggests the 3rd question.

Q-3 Are there myths about left-handers that need to be debunked? (Slide 12 Myths to be Put To Rest)

A myth is defined as "a widely held but false belief or idea," and myths about left-handers abound in our society. Let's tackle a few of them.

The "Right Mind" myth- For example, maybe you have seen this interesting sign somewhere. (Slide 13 Myths 1- Right Brain/Left Brain)

"As the right side of your brain controls the left side of the body, then only left handed people are in their right mind."

The sign sounds good, but researchers say it is definitely **bogus**, and here's why.

1. Most brain functions are carried out by both brain halves working together, doing different things or the same thing differently.

A left-hander doesn't sit around using his/her right brain to be creative while the right-hander sits around using his/her left brain to be logical.

(Slide 14 100 people chart)

2. Of the 12 left-handers out of 100 people, only 4 are right brained.
(Only about a third of left-handers are right-brained)

3. Of the 88 right-handers out of 100 people, 4 are right-brained or both.
(There are as many right handers as left handers out of a hundred that are right-brained.)

If left-handers have a creative bent, it's not so much that they are right brained, but rather that *their brains are wired to work a little differently.*

(Slide 15 Brain Wiring)

With their wiring less strict and confined, brain activity is generated in unexpected places, and they seem to be able to toggle between both sides of their brains a little more easily.

The Lefties Die Young Myth- (Slide 16 Myth 2 LHs die young)
Because of the unpredictability of left-hander's brains, it was once thought

that lefties were susceptible to a number of neurological diseases that would cause them to die young.

However, this myth was debunked by Dr. Michael Peters at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada in 2006, and scientists now generally accept that being a rightie or leftie has zero affect on lifespan.

But research has shown that lefties *are* more likely to have Periodic Limb Movement Disorder and are affected more by fear and related Post Traumatic Stress Disorders, among other things. So nobody's perfect.

The Lefties Have a Higher Average IQ Myth- (Slide 17 Myth 3 Higher IQ) Studies have shown that an unexpected number of left-handers have an IQ over 140, and that lefties excel in divergent thinking.

With this information, people infer that left-handers have a higher average IQ than right-handers. But not so!

A study involving a large number of people in England concluded that the average IQ of both left-handers and right-handers was right around 109.

So the bottom line seems to be that since lefties and righties have the same *average* IQ and a few more left-handers have *higher* IQs, it would follow that more left-handers have *lower* IQs also. No free lunch.

The Left-Handedness is Largely Genetic Myth- (Slide 18 Myth 4-Genetic)

If we know about eye color of the parents and grandparents, we can predict with fairly high probability the eye color of their child.

But we can't do this with handedness. Scientists believe that up to 40 different genes contribute to left-handedness, and even then, the inheritability of handedness is only about 24% of the total cause for someone being left-handed. (Environment, womb conditions, mother's age, societal pressures, all contribute)

The chances of parents having a left-handed child are: Two right handed parents, 9%; Left handed father, 12%; Left handed mother, 19%; and two left handed parents, 26%.

So its not that easy. Handedness has a complex inheritance/developmental pattern.

The “Everyone is Born Left-Handed- They Change to Right Handers After Their First Sin” Myth- **(Slide 19 Myth 5 Born LH)** this sign describes the myth. After much reading and study, I can assure you that the experts know that this is patently not true. Rather, I think most of them believe that it is after the 2nd sin.

With differences in the wiring of lefty brains, and the resulting possibilities for creativity, people want to know about famous lefties. This suggests question 4.

Q-4 What About Famous Left-Handers? (Slide 20 Famous Lefties)

Yes, there are some. Let’s take a look at three well known ones.

Three Well Known Famous Lefties- (Slide 21 Three well known lefties) Among the richest woman in the world, Oprah Winfrey (Entertainment), and the richest man in the world, Bill Gates (Creator of Microsoft), are both left-handed, as was Steve Jobs, the co-creator of Apple.

And as for other famous left-handers, **I Thought You Would Never Ask. (Slide 22 I thought you’d never ask)** I have an exclusive for you! **(Slide 23 Phares’s Pfantasies)** Phares’s Pfantasies have never been divulged to anyone in a church community. Here at CUMC will be a famous first! However, some of you don’t know me very well, so you have to agree that you won’t let these Phantasiess totally define what kind of guy I am. Enjoy. **(Slides,24,25,,26, 27,28 All Pfantasies)**

Another Side of the Story- (Slide 29 Another Side) Well, this is impressive. But before we get too enamored with all the successful left-handers, recall that in the myths section I said “right-handers don’t sit around being logical while left-handers sit

around being creative. They both do both, perhaps in different ways.

So, we could undoubtedly compile a list of famous right-handers that is just as impressive in what they do as a list of lefties made from my “pfantasies.” Here is a start!

And, it is also instructive to take a look at some perhaps not so savory people who were either left-handed or right handed. What a notorious crew! **Slide 30: Left Handed Bad Guys**

While we are a little bit on the dark side, lets take a look at question 5.

Q-5 What About Left-Handed Conspiracy Theories And Left-Handed News Events

(Slide 31 What about Left-Handed Conspiracy Theories & Left-Handed News Events?)

What would we do without another conspiracy theory?

Some people believe ‘em all. Where do you stand? Well, here goes!

A US Leadership Conspiracy- (Slide 32 A left-handed Leadership Conspiracy) Anyway, with 5 left-handed U.S. Presidents out of the last 8, there has been rumblings about a Left-Handed Leadership Conspiracy in our government.

In 1992, all three of the presidential candidates (Bush, Clinton, Perot) were left-handed, and in 2008, both presidential candidates (McCain, Obama) were left-handed.

And to emphasize all this, in 20 out of the last 28 years the U.S. has had left handed presidents. (George HW Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama)

And if the questionable claim that Al Gore is left-handed were true, and had he won the Supreme Court determined 2000 election, we would have had leftie presidents in 28 out of the last 28 years, and this “leftist plot to control the white house” gets even more interesting to conspiracy lovers.

To top it all off, the mathematical chance of having 5 out of the last 8 presidents be left-handed is pretty slim (~1 out of 10,000)

Maybe, as one conspiracy guy said, “there’s something going on here.”

A Left-Handed Tax-Advantage News Event- (Slide 33-A Left-Handed Tax-Advantage News Event)

In January, 2016, a magazine article, “Left-Handed People Now Eligible for Disability” was widely circulated on Facebook.

The article announced that Congress had passed the Justice for Dexterously Challenged Act (JDC Act), and it had been signed by lefty President Obama.

Of approximately 33 million Left-Handed Americans, only those who suffer from “Extreme Left-Handed Disorder” (ELHD) were indicated as eligible

It was all a sham, of course, but thousands of left-handers inquired how they could sign up! (Maybe the ones with the lower IQs)

Q-6 Are Our Animal Friends Mostly Right-Handed Like Us?

What About Dogs and Cats? -(Slide 34 Animal Friends)

I suspect you are wondering if your dog or cat experiences prejudice because of the paw he or she prefers.

How many of you have a right pawed dog or cat? How many have a left pawed dog or cat? How many have an ambidextrous dog or cat? How many don’t know?

Well, unlike humans, studies have shown that dogs and cats are about 50-50 in their paw preference... So not much room for prejudice there. Most other animals are 50-50 too, with the exception of parrots and red kangaroos, which are almost all lefties.

. Q-7 How Inconvenient Is It To Be A Left-Hander in Today’s World?

Slide 35: How Inconvenient?

I think it's fair to say that most right-handers haven't given a lot of thought to things in our world made exclusively for them. Let me show you a couple of examples of what I mean. (Introduce my "lovely assistant.")

(Slide 36 Made Exclusively for Right-Handers)

(Demonstrate lefty use of righty can-opener, measuring cup)

Inconveniences- Other things that plague lefties are:

(Slide 37 Some Things Inconvenient for Lefties)

Using scissors, shifting a car, writing in a spiral notebook or 3 ring binder, buttoning buttons, using a zipper, or sitting at a dining table next to a right-hander. All these things, taken together, can be a real hassle.

Also, it was reported that using a tool meant for a right-handed person kills 2500 left-handed people a year.

But, as usual, there is another side of the story.

Conveniences- **(Slide 38 Some Things Convenient for Lefties)** Back to baseball, we all know the advantage a left handed batter has in getting a quick start on a run to first base.

And the AA driving school found that 57% of left-handers pass their driving test the first time, compared to 47% of right-handers.

In one-on-one competition, like tennis and boxing, the element of surprise gives lefties an advantage, and lefties are a little better at video games, and can adjust more easily to seeing underwater.

On a QWERTY keyboard there are 1447 English words typed solely with the left hand, while only 187 are typed solely with the right hand.

Whoopie! Not big deal conveniences, but you see what I mean.

My Experience-

I always read about the lefty inconveniences with some amusement. Nobody ever tried to convert me to be right-handed, or even mentioned it for that matter. As for using scissors, right handed desks, or coping with underwear, I never gave it a second thought. If it required doing right-handed, I just did it right handed- and that was that.

I can honestly say that the only time I ever felt really inconvenienced as a left-hander was in sports, which I loved.

In baseball, I was desperate to play 2nd base. But as a lefty, that was not to be.

My Golf PE class at ISU had no left-handed clubs. So I had to learn to play right-handed, and played that way for two years before I found some lefty clubs, and switched.

But all in all, I somehow felt kind of important being a left-hander, and had a very happy left-handed life.

Q-8 So, What's the bottom line re these Lefties?

Let's Summarize Some Things We've Learned...

So regarding these lefties, what the heck is the bottom line? Here is a quick summary of some of the things we've learned about them...

(Side 39 What's the Final Bottom Line?)

But lefties are so darned interesting, its hard to give it up. So I succumb to the temptation and give you "6 More Interesting Facts about Lefties"

Slide 40: 6 more interesting Facts about Lefties

Six More Interesting Facts About Lefties

So, How can we deal with them?

When all is darn near said and done, here's finally what can be said and done.

- There are still more therapy sessions available than you would believe designed to change lefties to righties.
- And you can still find people in the world who try to knock the "left" out of people.
- Nevertheless, lefties are a strong group that has survived and thrived, with 400,000 new ones born in U.S. each year.
- It appears that Left-Handers are not going to be an endangered species, so why not humor them?

_Slide 41: What's the Positive Take?_____

In conclusion, I suggest the following:

When August 13th (International Left-Handers Day) comes around (**Slide 42 Left Handers Day**), invite all your leftie friends out to a party in Left Hand, West Virginia (pop 500).

Get them all a gift, like a left-handed can opener. Then bake a cake with a left-handed measuring cup, and celebrate the day!

Popular culture would have you believe that logical, methodical and analytical people are left-brain dominant, while the creative and artistic types are right-brain dominant. Trouble is, science never really supported this notion.

Now, scientists at the University of Utah have debunked the myth with an analysis of more than 1,000 brains. They found no evidence that people preferentially use their left or right brain. All of the study participants — and no doubt the scientists — were using their entire brain equally, throughout the course of the experiment.

"divergent thinking," or the ability to generate new ideas based on existing information.

convergent thinking, which involves applying existing knowledge and rules to come up with a correct answer. Participants had to indicate which word in a series didn't fit the pattern — and righties performed slightly better.

That's according to 1995 research by psychologist Stanley Coren, which was cited more recently in a New Yorker article.

This different brain wiring may explain why Psychological studies have shown that left-handers are better at "divergent thinking," (the ability to generate new ideas based on existing information) and righties are better at "convergent *thinking*,' (*applying existing knowledge and rules to come up with a correct answer*)