Affinity

MOULEDOUX | BLAND
LEGRAND | BRACKETT
ATTORNEYS AT LAW, NEW ORLEANS

Volume 2, Issue 8 August 13, 2022

By: Alan Brackett

The Struggles for Southpaws

"Handedness" is an individual's preferential use of one hand, commonly referred to as their dominant hand, due to it being stronger, faster or more dexterous. Handedness usually refers to the hand with which one writes, although since most everyone (at least in the United States) is now an adept typist, the significance of handedness related to writing may decline with time. Right-handedness is indeed dominant world-wide. About 90% of the human population are right hand dominant.

Because the vast majority of the world population is right-handed, most devices are designed for use by right-handed people, making their use by left-handed people more difficult. From scissors to car cup holders—there are far too many examples of simple devices designed for right handers that are challenging for left handers. No doubt you are scrolling through this article using a computer mouse, which was most decidedly designed for the right-handed. Virtually everything in the world is designed for the convenience of the right-handed, and while left-handers have learned to adapt, even the simple task of navigating a web page, or swiping a credit card through an electronic card reader, takes a different skill set for those who are "southpaw" by nature.

I was raised in a family of five children. My mother and one of my sisters, along with me, were left-handed. We sat in a row at the dinner table throughout my childhood, so that our left elbows wouldn't inconvenience the right-handers in our family (whose table manners weren't ideal to begin with).

Societally, left handers were coached in an effort to make them right-handed. Anyone who attended elementary school before 1975 was no doubt subject to a teacher's (or nun's, for the parochially educated) ruler slapping their left hand to try to force them to write with their right hand. This is still the case in China, where students are prohibited from using their left hands to write in school.

Right-Handed Discrimination?

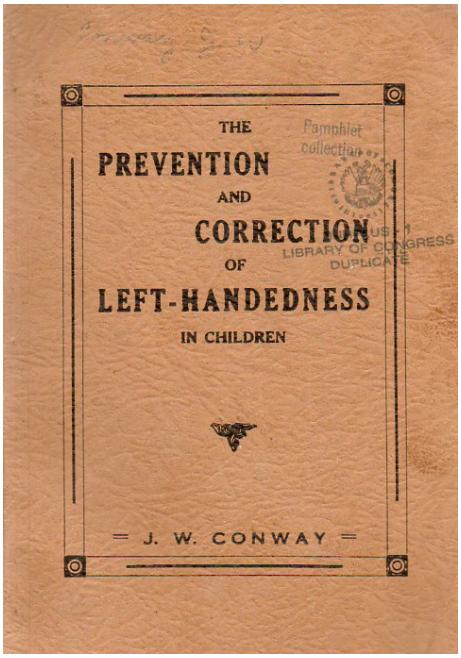
The word *sinister*, meaning evil or dark, comes from the Latin word meaning "on the left side." The association of "left" with "evil" is likely because of the dominance of right-handed people.

This is long-standing in history. For example, in the Christian faith, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, with no mention of who might be seated on God's left side.

A "left-handed compliment" is a criticism couched as a compliment, or a compliment with two meanings, one of which is unflattering to the receiver. *"You look so…comfortable today!"*

Studies show left-handers' brains are structured differently from right-handers' in ways that can allow them to process language, spatial relations and emotions in more diverse and usually more creative ways. A larger number of left-handers than right-handers are gifted in music and math. Genetics play a part. Men are 23% more likely to be left-handed.

Some studies examining the relationship between handedness and sexual orientation have reported that a disproportionate minority of homosexual people are left-handed. However, a study has shown that men whose gender identity doesn't align with their sex at birth are twice as likely to be left-handed.



Research has shown there is no significant correlation between handedness and earnings for the general population. However, among college-educated people, left-handers earn 10-15% more than right-handers. However, right-handed people on average live nine years longer than left handers.

There is an impressive list of famous left-handers. Presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush, Gerald Ford, Harry Truman and James Garfield were all southpaws. In the British Royal family, Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles, Prince William, and Prince George all write with their left hands, as did Queen Victoria and Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Winston Churchill was a leftie, as was Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Mother Teresa, Babe Ruth, Neil Armstrong, Napoleon Bonaparte, Julius Caesar, Aristotle, and Joan of Arc.

The arts and letters are heavily left-handed, from Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Mozart, to Oprah Winfrey, Paul McCartney, Angelina Jolie, Keanu Reeves, Lady Gaga, Hugh Jackman, Julia Roberts, Emma Thompson, Annie Lennox, Spike Lee, Seth Rogan, Celine Dion, Morgan Freeman, David Bowie, Judy Garland, Jimi Hendrix, Ringo Starr, Lewis Carroll, Charles Chaplin, and Kurt Cobain. Creativity certainly leans left.

International Left-Handers Day is held annually every August 13th, having been created in 1992 and this year celebrating its 30th anniversary. It is designed to celebrate the uniqueness of left-handers. So, as you scroll to the end of this article, keep in mind that for 10% of us, that's more complicated than it is for the majority of you.