



Youth in the Crosshairs

THE THIRD WAVE OF EX-GAY ACTIVISM

by Jason Cianciotto and Sean Cahill

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Executive Summary

The potential risks of “reparative therapy” are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior...

—American Psychiatric Association¹

[My parents] tell me that there is something psychologically wrong with me....I’m a big screw-up to them, who isn’t on the path God wants me to be on. So I’m sitting here in tears...and I can’t help it.

—Zachary Stark

Sixteen-year-old forced by his parents to attend
“Refuge,” an ex-gay program for teens²

INTRODUCTION

For almost three decades, the ex-gay movement has been claiming that gay men, lesbians and bisexuals can become heterosexual through “reparative therapy” or “conversion therapy.” Despite the fact that the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973, ex-gay programs operate under the premise that homosexuality is a mental illness. Over the past few years, however, the ex-gay movement has adopted a new approach — targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth with both “preventive” measures and conversion. (Although many targeted for “conversion” are undoubtedly bisexual, the ex-gay movement largely ignores bisexuality, positing a strict gay-straight binary.)

For example, in the summer of 2005 16-year-old Zachary Stark wrote in a Web log (a “blog”) about his parents’ forcing him to attend Refuge, an ex-gay outpatient program for adolescents age 13-18 sponsored by an organization named Love In Action (LIA). Public outcry and media attention focused on Zach’s story led the state of Tennessee to investigate allegations of child abuse at Refuge.³ While it found no evidence of child abuse, the state did open a new investigation based on concerns that Refuge was

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1. American Psychiatric Association. (1998, December 11). APA position statement on psychiatric treatment and sexual orientation. December 11, 1998. Arlington, VA: Author. Cited in American Psychiatric Association. (2000, May). COPP position statement on therapies focused on attempts to change sexual orientation (reparative or conversion therapies). Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved February 13, 2006. http://www.psych.org/psych_pract/copptherapyaddendum83100.cfm
 2. Gouras, M. (2005, June 23). DCS opens investigation into group working with gay teens. Associated Press.
 3. Ibid.



providing mental health services without proper licensure.⁴ In February 2006, 17-year-old DJ Butler also reported that his parents forced him to attend LIA's Refuge program. According to Butler, his father drove him to LIA's facilities in handcuffs.⁵

LIA is one of many ex-gay organizations with new programs specifically targeted at youth, for example:

- Exodus International, which claims to include over 170 ex-gay programs in 17 countries, called the launch of its Exodus Youth teen program one of its most significant accomplishments of 2002.⁶ In 2005, Exodus launched Groundswell, a traveling ex-gay conference for youth.⁷
- In a 2002 newsletter titled "Can Homosexuality Be Treated and Prevented?" Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, warned about "prehomosexuality" in children. Dobson told parents that even if their sons are not "effeminate" and their daughters are not "masculinized," they may still be in danger of becoming gay or lesbian and should see a "professional."⁸
- Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, co-founder of the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuals (NARTH), published *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality* in 2002, in which he describes his experience providing conversion therapy to a five-year-old "prehomosexual" boy named "Stevie."⁹

One father drove his 17-year-old son to an ex-gay program in handcuffs.

Ex-gay organizations and their evangelical Christian right allies are not just limiting their outreach to youth who may be lesbian, gay or bisexual. Heterosexual youth in schools are also being recruited to spread the message that homosexuality is a treatable condition. For example, in 2005, an evangelical Christian legal group named the Alliance Defense Fund sponsored the first annual "Day of Truth," which it established "to counter the promotion of the homosexual agenda" in schools. According to ADF, more than 1,100 students from over 350 schools participated.¹⁰

We frame this focus of programming and resources toward youth and parents as a "third wave of ex-gay activism." The first wave began in 1973 with the founding of the first conversion therapy treatment program in San Francisco.¹¹ During the first wave, the message that sexual orientation could be changed became inextricably linked to the "special rights" argument used by leaders of the new religious right to oppose equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans.¹² The second wave of ex-gay activism began

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4. Associated Press. (2005, July 13). State reviews Christian counseling group. Advocate.com. Retrieved August 15, 2005, from http://advocate.com/news_detail.asp?id=18740
 5. Popper, B. (2006, February 10). Love in court: Gay-to-straight ministry and the state go to court. *Memphis Flyer*. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.memphisflyer.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A12034>
 6. Griffith, K. (2005, August 15). Brainwashed no more, *Advocate*. Retrieved February 14, 2006, from http://www.advocate.com/currentstory1_w.asp?id=19583
 7. Exodus International. (n.d.). Groundswell conference. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://groundswell2006.org/groundswell/index.htm>
 8. Dobson, J. (2002, June). Dr. Dobson's Newsletter: Can homosexuality be treated and prevented? Focus on the Family. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.family.org/docstudy/newsletters/a0021043.cfm>
 9. Nicolosi, J. & Nicolosi, L. A. (2002). *A parent's guide to preventing homosexuality*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
 10. Alliance Defense Fund. (n.d.). Day of truth. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/actions/Default.aspx?mid=410&cid=3308>
 11. Pennington, S. (1989) *Ex-gays? There are none*. Hawthorne, CA: Lambda Christian Fellowship, p. 35. Cited in, Besen, W. R. (2003) *Anything but straight: Unmasking the scandals and lies behind the ex-gay myth*. New York: Harrington Park Press.
 12. Khan, S. (1998, October 1). *Calculated compassion: How the ex-gay movement serves the right's attack on democracy*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, Political Research Associates and Equal Partners in Faith. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/calccomp.pdf>



in 1998 when John and Anne Paulk, two self-proclaimed ex-gays who married each other, appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* claiming that homosexuals can heal themselves of their “lifestyle choice.”¹³ The second wave ended after John Paulk was caught in a Washington, D.C. gay bar and was forced to resign from his positions at Exodus International and Focus on the Family.¹⁴

After the story about Zach Stark broke in the mainstream media in the summer of 2005, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force started researching ex-gay programs and activities specifically targeted at youth. Our findings led us to conclude that this new, third wave of ex-gay activism focuses less on “curing” adults of homosexuality and more on preventing its development by targeting parents, children, and adolescents. Whether through counseling programs like Refuge or through traveling ex-gay conferences like Focus on the Family’s Love Won Out, ex-gay programs are recommending that parents commit their children to treatment even if it is against their children’s wishes. These coordinated campaigns targeting youth warrant a response, as the stakes could not be higher.

The third wave of ex-gay activism focuses less on “curing” adults of homosexuality and more on preventing its development by targeting parents, children, and adolescents.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY’S LOVE WON OUT CONFERENCE: A REPORT FROM BOSTON, OCTOBER 29, 2005

In order to better understand ex-gay leaders’ understandings and analyses of sexual orientation and the ex-gay movement’s role in the larger anti-gay movement, Policy Institute Director Sean Cahill attended Focus on the Family’s Love Won Out conference in Boston on October 29, 2005. This was the first-ever ex-gay Love Won Out (LWO) conference in New England. Focus on the Family’s state affiliate, the Massachusetts Family Institute, is a leader of efforts to repeal same-sex marriage in the Bay State, the only state in which it is legal.

Building on the May 2005 report by Cynthia Burack and Jyl Josephson on a 2004 LWO conference in Minneapolis, this latest report examines the “etiological,” or disease-metaphor narratives underlying the ex-gay movement’s understanding of the causes of homosexuality. While anti-gay leaders have long portrayed homosexuality as a malign choice, LWO speakers portray it as the result of 1) dysfunctional relationships between parents and children, especially between fathers and sons and mothers and daughters, and 2) child sexual abuse. They also claim that there is an intrinsic link between homosexuality and pedophilia, and that children raised by lesbian and gay parents are disadvantaged due to their parents’ sexuality and/or gender.

These speakers present research in support of their claims. However, this “research” is not published in respected, peer-reviewed academic journals. In fact, the consensus within the scientific and professional communities involved (psychology, child welfare, etc.) is that such anti-gay claims are false.

13. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2005, Spring). The thirty years war: A timeline of the anti-gay movement. *The Intelligence Report*. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=523&printable=1>

14. Besen, W. R. (2003) *Anything but straight: Unmasking the scandals and lies behind the ex-gay myth*. New York: Harrington Park Press.



The ex-gay movement relies heavily on archaic gender stereotypes. Ex-gays who stop “living in homosexuality” prove their newfound heterosexuality through adherence to rigid gender behaviors. Some LWO speakers portrayed gay activists as a vast threat to freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, as akin to Nazis. The media, schools, professional organizations such as the American Psychiatric Association, and the government were portrayed as having been taken over by “special interests,” i.e. gay activists. In contrast, ex-gay activists and therapists were depicted as brave dissenters from conventional wisdom and political correctness.

DOES CONVERSION THERAPY WORK? IT DEPENDS ON THE DEFINITION OF “CHANGE”

The slogan, “change is possible,” has long been a part of advertisements used by Exodus International. However, analysis of the statements made by ex-gay programs and their leaders reveals a shifting definition of what it means to “change.” For example, Rev. John Smid, director of Love In Action, says “There isn’t a cure for homosexuality.”¹⁵ Ex-gay leaders also have yet to come up with a consistent and verifiable number of how many individuals have actually been changed. The number has ranged from the hundreds to the hundreds of thousands. The shifting definition of the word “change,” along with the lack of consistent and verifiable numbers of people who have actually been changed, are important developments in the third wave of ex-gay activism. They also raise an important question:

If ex-gay leaders are recommending that parents take the drastic step of forcing their children to attend conversion therapy, is there any peer-reviewed social science research that supports the efficacy of their programs?

THE DEBATE OVER THE 2003 SPITZER STUDY ON THE EFFICACY OF CONVERSION THERAPIES

A study by renowned psychiatrist Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, published in 2003 in the journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior*,¹⁶ renewed the debate about conversion therapy, particularly among members of the psychological and psychiatric communities. The study has also been enthusiastically seized upon by ex-gay leaders and the evangelical Christian right as *the* evidence that sexual orientation is changeable. However, analysis of Spitzer’s study by his peers revealed significant problems with its methodology and interpretations.

In contrast to the lack of support for the claims made by ex-gay and evangelical Christian leaders about conversion therapy, there is a growing body of research confirming the harm conversion

There is a growing body of research confirming the harm conversion therapy causes, as well as the ethical violations committed by practitioners of conversion therapy.

15. Feyerick, D. (2005, July 28).

16. Spitzer, R. L. (2003). Can some gay men and lesbians change their sexual orientation? 200 participants reporting a change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* v32 (5). 403-417



therapy causes, as well as the ethical violations committed by practitioners of conversion therapy. These findings have significant implications, particularly for youth who are forced to attend conversion therapy by their parents.

A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF OVER 200 CONSUMERS OF CONVERSION THERAPY

The need for empirical research data from large-scale studies designed to assess the experiences of conversion therapy clients, including any harm that resulted from treatment, prompted two psychologists, Dr. Ariel Shidlo and Dr. Michael Schroeder, to embark on a seven-year project to collect and publish interview data from consumers of conversion therapy. The article summarizing Shidlo and Schroeder's findings, "Changing Sexual Orientation: A Consumer's Report," was published in 2002 in *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, a peer-reviewed journal published by the American Psychological Association.¹⁷

Shidlo and Schroeder surveyed 202 individuals who had participated in conversion therapy. Twenty-six (13 percent) of the study participants reported believing that they successfully changed post treatment (self-perceived success), but only eight individuals reported that they were not experiencing "slips" or needed to frequently use coping mechanisms in order to control their same-sex behavior or attractions. Of those eight, seven were providers of ex-gay counseling and four out of those seven actually had paid positions as ex-gay counselors.¹⁸

Of the 176 participants in the self-perceived failure group, 155 reported significant long-term harm from conversion.¹⁹ The following is a summary of the harm experienced by those study participants:

Of 202 people who had undergone conversion therapy, only eight reported "changing" to heterosexuality without still experiencing "slips" in thought or behavior.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

Many participants reported depression, some to the point of wanting or attempting to commit suicide. Many also reported that the false and defamatory information provided by their therapists about homosexuality harmed their self-esteem. A number of conversion therapists and patients attributed some, if not all, of the negative experiences and life events of the patient to homosexuality, which lead to the false belief that when a patient changed his/her sexual orientation, these other problems would also disappear. Male participants reported sexual dysfunction, including impotence. Finally, the 18 participants who were forced to endure aversive conditioning, a form of behavioral therapy where an attractive stimulus is paired with a noxious stimulus in order to elicit a negative reaction to a particular stimulus, in this case, same-sex

Eighteen participants experienced electric shock therapy, emetics to induce vomiting, and/or "covert sensitization."

17. Shidlo, A & Schroeder, M. (2002). Changing sexual orientation: A consumer's report. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33(3), 249-259.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid. p. 254.



attraction,²⁰ experienced extremely disturbing and disruptive images in their mind. The interventions experienced by these 18 study participants included electric shock therapy, the use of an inhalable or injectable emetic to induce vomiting, and the use of “covert sensitization,” “a form of behavior therapy in which an undesirable behavior is paired with an unpleasant image in order to eliminate that behavior.”²¹

SOCIAL AND INTERPERSONAL HARM

Many participants complained that conversion therapy harmed their relationships with family and friends, particularly with their parents. This was due, in part, to the fact that they were told by their therapist to blame their parents for their homosexuality. Participants also reported loneliness and the loss of opportunities to commit to long-term relationships with same-sex partners with whom they were in love. This occurred for some because their therapists instructed them to break off those relationships. When they started conversion therapy, many study participants were also told to end their relationships with their lesbian and gay friends. Similar loss occurred when those participants ended conversion therapy and left their ex-gay community. Finally the years spent in conversion therapy, for some more than a decade, delayed a number of experiences including intimate relationships and the development of social skills. According to one participant, “It preserved the false notion that sexual orientation could be changed and added more years to my time in the closet. I lost a lot of my life as a result of this.”²²

“I lost a lot of my life
as a result of this.”
— Survivor of
conversion therapy

SPIRITUAL HARM

One hundred and thirty-three (66 percent) participants considered themselves to be religious.²³ Those in the perceived failure category reported a negative impact on their beliefs, including a complete loss of faith, a sense of betrayal by their religious leaders, anger at the therapists who told them God was ashamed of them in the first place, and excommunication from their churches.

ETHICAL CONCERNS RAISED BY CONVERSION THERAPY

Along with the harm caused by conversion therapy programs, there are broad ethical concerns that need to be addressed. Unlike many organizations and individuals who offer counseling and mental health treatment services, the majority of ex-gay programs market themselves as religious ministries and are therefore not governed or overseen by professional associations, licensing boards, state departments of health or other bureaucracies. This is particularly troublesome for ex-gay teen programs like Refuge, which may be providing services to clients against their will, as reported by Zach Stark and DJ Butler.

20. *Psychology Matters*. (n.d.). Glossary. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.psychologymatters.org/glossary.html>

21. *Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders*. (n.d.). Covert sensitization. Author. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.minddisorders.com/Br-Del/Covert-sensitization.html>

22. Ibid.

23. Schidlo, A. & Schroeder, M. (2002). p. 250.

In the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Haldeman summarized ethical concerns raised by a number of therapists and researchers, concluding that psychologists fail to uphold the dignity and welfare of their patients in conversion therapy because those treatments are predicated on the devaluation of homosexual identity and behavior.²⁴ According to Haldeman, there would be no conversion therapy in the first place if not for the assumption that homosexuals are mentally ill and require treatment.²⁵ This is contrary to the positions taken by nearly every major medical and mental health association, representing 477,000 professionals.²⁶

Based on the experiences of 202 former conversion therapy patients collected for their consumer's report, Schroeder and Shidlo reported the following ethical concerns and violations:

- **Lack of informed consent:** Many conversion therapists provided “false and prejudicial” information disguised as science to prospective clients in order to convince them that they needed treatment.²⁷
- **Use of religion in therapy:** More research is needed on when it is ethical for a therapist to use religion, including the threat of religious consequences (e.g. going to hell or living outside of God's will) to convince clients that they need to change their sexual orientation.²⁸
- **Lack of pre-termination counseling:** Many clients who failed to change their sexual orientation were not provided with proper assistance to help them after their treatment. Clients blamed themselves and/or were even blamed by their therapists for their failure to change, and were not provided with help to deal with the significant internalized homophobia that results from being indoctrinated into the belief that homosexuality is a psychological disorder.²⁹
- **Lack of information about negative side-effects:** Many conversion therapists failed to inform their clients about the possible harmful side-effect of conversion therapy. It is the therapist's responsibility to fully inform the client of potential side-effects, and to engage the client in follow-up discussion about those side-effects throughout the course of treatment.³⁰

For decades, former conversion therapy clients have been sharing their stories of pain, frustration, depression, internalized hatred and other forms of life-altering harm that resulted from trying to change their sexual orientation, something that has not been considered a mental illness for over 30 years. With their consumer study, Shidlo and Schroeder have added to the preponderance of evidence against conversion therapy, and have paved the way for much needed studies that could provide additional quantitative data. In the interim, ex-gay leaders and their evangelical Christian right allies continue to tout the “success” of their programs and the “hundreds of thousands” of ex-gays who allegedly exist as evidence that sexual orientation is a choice. The peer-reviewed research presented by Haldeman, Shidlo and Schroeder, and other respected researchers tells a much different story.

24. Haldeman, D. C. (1994). The practice and ethics of sexual orientation conversion therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62(2), 221-227.

25. Ibid. pp. 225-226.

26. The American Psychiatric Association, (2005, August 15).

27. Schroeder, M. & Shidlo, A. (2001). p. 159.

28. Ibid. pp. 159-160.

29. Ibid. p. 160

30. Ibid. pp. 160-162.



CONCLUSION

Founded in 1973, Love in Action has the dubious distinction of being not only the nation's first ex-gay program, but also the first to draw national attention to the focus on youth in the third wave of ex-gay activism over 30 years later. Young people are now being used as ammunition in the evangelical Christian and political right-wing's war against equality for LGBT Americans. Ex-gay organizations, in particular, have taken what used to be an intensely personal process (coming out to one's self, friends and family) and have created dedicated programs and conferences that link the personal lives of young people to battles over same-sex marriage and the election of conservative political leaders.

Homosexuality is not a mental illness. There is a growing body of evidence that conversion therapy not only does not work, but also can be extremely harmful, resulting in depression, social isolation from family and friends, low self-esteem, internalized homophobia, and even attempted suicide. There is also a growing body of ethical concerns raised by the provision of conversion therapy.

In light of this research, Nicolosi's story about providing therapy to 5-year-old "Stevie" to treat his "prehomosexuality" is extremely disturbing, as are the experiences of Zach Stark and DJ Butler, who were forced by their parents to attend Love in Action's ex-gay teen program. However, we believe it is important not to demonize parents for their decisions to send their children to conversion therapy programs. Joe Stark's statement — that he sent his son Zach to the program because he was afraid Zach would die by the age of 30 if he was gay — revealed an important and tragic reality of the third wave of ex-gay activism: *Parents are being lied to by ex-gay and religious leaders they trust.*

Ex-gay and evangelical Christian right leaders are instructing parents to do something more likely to harm than help their sons and daughters.

In books, through the advertisements of ex-gay programs and at traveling political road shows like Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference, parents are being told that homosexuality is a mental illness, caused primarily by their inability to parent properly, which can be cured through conversion therapy. This is presented to parents as fact even though homosexuality is *not* a mental illness and conversion therapy is opposed by nearly every medical and mental health professional association.

Parents are told that if their sons and daughters are in the "homosexual lifestyle," they are destined to lead short lives characterized by depression, anger, substance abuse and domestically violent relationships. This information is presented as fact even though it is based on flawed, ideologically driven "research" that has either not been published in respected, peer-reviewed academic journals, or has been produced by people like Paul Cameron, who was kicked out of the American Psychological Association and publicly condemned by the American Sociological Association for producing bogus research.

Most parents would do anything in their power to protect their children from harm and to help ensure they lead the longest and healthiest lives possible. Sadly, ex-gay and evangelical Christian right leaders are instructing parents to do something more likely to harm than help their sons and daughters.



If ex-gay programs and conversion therapists are advocating and providing a service that is unethical and harmful, what can be done to protect people, particularly minors?

According to Hayley Gorenberg, deputy legal director at Lambda Legal, there are a variety of legal theories — depending upon the facts and circumstances of the particular case — under which ex-gay programs and conversion therapy practitioners could be shut down and even held liable for the harm they cause to clients. There could be standing to sue based on malpractice, consumer fraud, false advertising, contract, or child abuse and neglect laws for minors forced to attend an ex-gay program.³¹

If former conversion therapy clients feel they have been harmed by their therapist or ex-gay program, it is important that they contact an attorney who can help them as soon as possible. Statutes of limitation vary by state, and if individuals wait too long to contact an attorney, they may be unable to take any legal action. Lambda Legal staffs a telephone legal help desk in each of its regional offices. More information is available at www.lambdalegal.org. Lambda has also setup a hotline for youth at 1-800-LGBTEEN.

There are a variety of legal theories under which ex-gay programs and conversion therapy practitioners could be shut down and even held liable for the harm they cause to clients.

31. Telephone interview with Hayley Gorenberg, Deputy Legal Director of Lambda Legal. (2005, February 17).



Introduction

The potential risks of “reparative therapy” are great, including depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior, since therapist alignment with societal prejudices against homosexuality may reinforce self-hatred already experienced by the patient. Many patients who have undergone reparative therapy report that they were inaccurately told that homosexuals are lonely, unhappy individuals who never achieve acceptance or satisfaction. The possibility that the person might achieve happiness and satisfying interpersonal relationships as a gay man or lesbian is not presented, nor are the alternative approaches to dealing with the effects of societal stigmatization discussed.

—American Psychiatric Association

Position statement on psychiatric treatment and sexual orientation³²

[My parents] tell me that there is something psychologically wrong with me.... I’m a big screw-up to them, who isn’t on the path God wants me to be on. So I’m sitting here in tears...and I can’t help it.

—Zachary Stark

Sixteen-year-old forced by his parents to attend “Refuge,”
an ex-gay program for teens³³

For almost three decades, the ex-gay movement has been claiming that gay men, lesbians and bisexuals can become heterosexual through “reparative therapy” or “conversion therapy.” Despite the fact that the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973, ex-gay programs operate under the premise that homosexuality is a mental illness. Over the past few years, however, the ex-gay movement has adopted a new approach — targeting lesbian, gay and bisexual youth with both “preventive” measures and conversion.

For example, on June 22, 2005, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS) began investigating allegations of child abuse at Refuge, an ex-gay outpatient program for adolescents age 13-18 sponsored by an organization named Love In Action (LIA).³⁴ Refuge claims to “minister to adolescents struggling with broken and addictive behaviors such as pornography, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, and

32. American Psychiatric Association. (1998, December 11). APA position statement on psychiatric treatment and sexual orientation. December 11, 1998. Arlington, VA: Author. Cited in American Psychiatric Association. (2000, May). COPP position statement on therapies focused on attempts to change sexual orientation (reparative or conversion therapies). Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved February 13, 2006, http://www.psych.org/psych_pract/copptherapyaddendum83100.cfm

33. Gouras, M. (2005, June 23). DCS opens investigation into group working with gay teens. Associated Press.

34. Melzer, E. (2005, June 23). Tennessee investigates ex-gay camp. *Southern Voice*. Retrieved June 24, 2005 from http://www.sovo.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=1264



homosexuality.”³⁵ On June 27, 2005, the state reported that it found no evidence of child abuse at Refuge. However, on July 11, 2005, the state opened a new investigation into the program amid allegations that Refuge was providing counseling services without proper licensure.³⁶ These developments led to widespread media attention by national media outlets including *The New York Times*, CNN and National Public Radio (NPR), and renewed public awareness of the controversy surrounding ex-gay programs and conversion therapy.

What are these ex-gay teen programs and why would parents take the drastic step of forcing their children to attend one?

LOVE IN ACTION: QUESTIONS OF ABUSE AND PRACTICING WITHOUT A LICENSE AT AN EX-GAY PROGRAM FOR TEENS

Founded in the summer of 2002, Love in Action’s Refuge program offers a two-week conversion therapy program for \$2,000, a six-week program for \$4,500, and a weekly follow-up program for \$100 per session (lodging is not included). According to the 26-page application, which requires a \$100 application fee:

The adolescent attends group meetings and one-on-one sessions at the Love In Action International, Inc. campus office from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, for two weeks. During these hours participants interact with residential clients, assess their own recovery needs, and develop positive recovery skills. Parent or guardian participation is expected through attending joint sessions with the adolescent as well as private sessions with the Refuge participant’s staff worker.³⁷

Along with gathering the basic demographics of prospective clients, the application asks:

- Whether the applicant has ever been involved in the occult
- How often the applicant engages in “sexual sin” with another person
- Which of a variety of sexually-related activities the applicant has been involved with, including “Sadomasochism,” “Anonymous sex,” “Mannish/boyish attire,” and “Drag/Cross-dressing”

KEY DEFINITIONS

Conversion therapy:

Psychological treatment and/or spiritual counseling designed to change a person’s sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual to heterosexual. Some conversion therapy practitioners focus more on preventing same-sex sexual thoughts and behavior rather than actually changing a client’s sexual orientation. Conversion therapy practitioners believe that homosexuality is a mental disorder. This “disease model” is often inextricably linked to religious beliefs that homosexuality is unnatural.

Ex-gay:

Someone who, often after attending an ex-gay program, believes that he or she has either changed his or her sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual to heterosexual, or has been able to significantly diminish his or her same-sex attractions.

35. Love In Action International, Inc. (n.d.). Refuge basics. Memphis, TN: Author. Retrieved February 13, 2006, from <http://www.asafeplace.org/default.aspx?pid=1>

36. Associated Press. (2005, July 13). State reviews Christian counseling group. Advocate.com. Retrieved August 15, 2005, from http://advocate.com/news_detail.asp?id=18740

37. Love in Action International, Inc. (2005, August 22). Refuge application. Author. p. 1. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.sitewrench.com/MediaLoader/FileLoad.aspx?cid=140&mid=32>



- Whether the applicant has been involved with the “‘pro-gay’ movement” or has settled questions in his or her mind about “‘pro-gay’ theology”³⁸

The applicant must also provide a one- to two-page typed biography that includes his/her “past sexual involvement and/or struggles (please speak in general, not graphic terms).”³⁹ The applicant and his/her parents must also submit two references they have known for at least six months (male applicants can only submit references completed by other males). And, of course, since this program is specifically for minors, the applicant and his/her parents must sign a consent and release of liability form.

The Tennessee DCS was alerted to potential problems at Refuge after a 16-year-old named Zachary Stark wrote in a Web log (a “blog”) about his parents’ forcing him to attend the program. In an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), Zach’s father Joe Stark said he did the right thing when he forced his son to attend the program:

We felt very good about Zach coming here [to Refuge]...to let him see for himself the destructive lifestyle, what he has to face in the future, and to give him some options that society doesn’t give him today.... statistics say that by the age of 30 he could either have AIDS or be dead.⁴⁰

“We felt very good about Zach coming here [to Refuge] statistics say that by the age of 30 he could either have AIDS or be dead.”

Joe Stark’s concern is not surprising given that ex-gay leaders and “researchers” falsely claim that homosexuality is a mental disorder caused by parental deficiencies and is likely to lead to a miserable life and early death for his son.⁴¹ “Statistics” like the one cited by Joe Stark often come from anti-gay “researchers” who produce biased and methodologically-flawed studies. For example, *The Lifespan of Homosexuals*, which claims that most homosexuals will die by the age of 43, was written by Paul Cameron, who was expelled from the American Psychological Association in 1983 for misrepresenting the work of others and for using unsound methodology in his own studies.⁴²

Cameron based the findings for his lifespan study solely on obituaries published in gay and lesbian newspapers at the height of the AIDS crisis, hardly a source of representative data on gay Americans. As illustrated in one article criticizing Cameron’s study, even if only half of the gay male population stays HIV negative and lives to an average age of 75, an average overall lifespan of 43 would require that gay men with AIDS die at the implausible age of 11.⁴³ Additionally, “outness” correlates with age; many older men may be homosexuals but not “out” enough to want their obituaries published in gay newspapers. Cameron’s work is viewed as suspect by many in the legal profession as well. In his written opinion in *Baker v. Wade* (1985), Judge Buchmeyer of the U.S. District Court of Dallas, referring to Cameron’s sworn testimony that homosexuals are more likely to abuse children than heterosexuals, concluded that Cameron “...has himself made misrepresentations to this Court” and that “[t]here has been no fraud or misrepresentations except by Dr. Cameron.”⁴⁴

38. Ibid. p. 5.

39. Ibid. p. 13.

40. Brandt, D. (2005, July 15). Father of gay teen sent to “ex-gay” camp comes forward. 365Gay.com. Retrieved July 15, 2005, from <http://www.365gay.com/newscon05/07/071405exGay.htm>

41. Johnson, A. (2005, July 1). Alternative view says homosexuals can change. MSNBC.com. Retrieved July 5, 2005, from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8379954/>

42. Pietrzyk, M. E. (1994, October 3). Paul Cameron, professional sham. *The New Republic*. Retrieved July 29, 2005, from http://www.familyresearchinst.org/NewRepublic100394_pietrzyk.html

43. Olson, W. (1997, December 19). William Bennett, gays and the truth. *Slate Magazine*.

44. *Baker v. Wade*, 106 Federal Rules Decisions 526 N.D. Texas, 1985. Page 536.



Cameron and his son now run the Family Research Institute, a right-wing think tank designated a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2004.⁴⁵ In a recent *Boston Globe* article about the work of right-wing think tanks, Cameron explained that his research is meant to warn that gays, lesbians and those sympathetic to them are “death marketers:”

I am not sure how long they will take to destroy the US from within, but sufficiently weakened, the US will probably fall to another state before that occurs.... Those of us at [the Family Research Institute] are determined to do our best to oppose these death activists. As you see, the Internet has given us far more clout than our limited budget and efforts could otherwise hope for.⁴⁶

Despite Cameron’s lack of credibility, his work is often cited by right-wing politicians and evangelical Christian leaders to support their anti-gay positions. For example, in a June 2002 newsletter titled “Can homosexuality be treated and prevented” Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family claims that homosexuals have a “shorter lifespan” and references an article written by former Secretary of Education William Bennett in which Bennett references Cameron’s lifespan study.⁴⁷

Sadly many parents are misled by bogus statistics cited by religious leaders they trust like Dobson. On the surface, it may be easy for some to be critical of Joe Stark for forcing his son to attend an ex-gay teen program. However, it is clear that Joe believes he is doing something necessary to save his son’s life. The manipulation of parents based on flawed, ideologically-motivated research, which leads them to do things that are actually harmful to their children, is a real tragedy.

Zach Stark is not the only youth to recently report being forced to attend a conversion therapy program. In February 2006, 17-year-old DJ Butler reported that his parents forced him to attend LIA’s Refuge program in October 2005. According to Butler, his father drove him in handcuffs to LIA’s facilities in Memphis. “The people at LIA saw me get out of the car in handcuffs,” said Butler, and his counselor at LIA told him, “If you leave I’ll call the cops, and they’ll come and pick you up and take you to a juvenile delinquent center.”⁴⁸ According to Butler, while he was in the program his father obtained a prescription for Prozac for him, and his counselors told him that he needed “some kind of pick-me-up.” Butler claims that LIA staff administered the medication “on occasion.”⁴⁹

The fact that, according to Butler, LIA staff gave him medication and significantly restricted his freedom at LIA’s facilities is critical. In the application for the Refuge program, the release of liability form clearly states that “this program is not a substitute for psychiatric treatment, psychotherapy, or professional therapeutic counseling.”⁵⁰ While the initial investigation by the state, prompted by media attention to Zach Stark’s story, found no evidence of child abuse, in late 2005 the state did begin a second investigation after it determined that LIA was a “supportive living facility” that was dispensing medication and

45. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2004). Active U.S. hate groups in 2004: Colorado. Author. Retrieved February 20, 2006, from <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/map/hate.jsp?S=CO&m=3>

46. Kranish, M. (2005, July 31). Belief drives research agenda of new think tanks, *The Boston Globe*. p. A1.

47. Dobson, J. (2002, June). Dr. Dobson’s newsletter: Can homosexuality be treated and prevented? Focus on the Family. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.family.org/docstudy/newsletters/a0021043.cfm>

48. Popper, B. (2006, February 10). Love in court: Gay-to-straight ministry and the state go to court. *Memphis Flyer*. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.memphisflyer.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A12034>

49. Ibid.

50. Love in Action International, Inc. (2005, August 22).



requiring clients to stay on the premises without a proper license. Consequently, the state ordered LIA to stop offering these services. In response, LIA is suing the state, claiming that as a not-for-profit, faith-based ministry, it does not fall under the jurisdiction of the state. At a court hearing in early February 2006, the state declared the case “closed” and that it did not want to pursue any further action against LIA.⁵¹

Zach, DJ and their families are not alone in their experiences. For example, Larry Marshall, a resident of Florida, also forced his teenage son Ben to attend the Refuge program. According to Marshall, “I had enough. And as a parent, I felt with my beliefs and my rights, this is the way it’s gonna be.”⁵² Katie Frick’s parents sent her to an Exodus International conference when she was 17, which began a two-year struggle to accept her sexual orientation. Now, 21 years old, completely “out,” and an active member of the gay-affirming Metropolitan Community Church, Katie warns, “They [ex-gay programs] are destroying people.”⁵³

“[Ex-gay programs] are
destroying people.”
— Katie Frick,
21, survivor of
conversion therapy

EXODUS INTERNATIONAL: REACHING OUT TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF EX-GAY LEADERS

The rise in the number of youth who report attending ex-gay programs is not surprising. Over the past few years, ex-gay leaders and other right-wing evangelical Christian organizations have been creating new ministries and advertisements to attract adolescents struggling with their sexual orientation. They are also specifically marketing to the parents of young teenagers struggling with their sexual orientation, heterosexual youth who have gay or lesbian friends, and the children of gay parents. For example, officials at Exodus International, which was founded in 1976 and claims to include over 170 ex-gay ministries in 17 countries, called the launch of its teen program—Exodus Youth—one of its most significant accomplishments of 2002.⁵⁴ According to Exodus Youth’s Web site, “Exodus Youth exists to help young people who are questioning their sexual identity and struggling with same-sex attraction...Exodus affirms that reorientation of same-sex attraction is possible.”⁵⁵ Exodus Youth asks visitors to its Web site to imagine:

... a large nationwide network of safe redemptive church communities and youth ministries who are teaching healthy sexual identity and can help confused and same-sex attracted young people.

... a wide range of resources for helping youth develop a healthy sexual identity.

... conferences that train youth pastors and youth ministers in ministry to the same-sex attracted.

51. Popper, B. (2006, February 10).

52. Feyerick, D. (2005, July 28). Going Straight. CNN. Retrieved February 13, 2006, from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/050727/pzn.01.html>

53. Griffith, K. (2005, August 15). Brainwashed no more. *Advocate*. Retrieved February 14, 2006, from http://www.advocate.com/currentstory1_w.asp?id=19583

54. Griffith, K. (2005, August 15).

55. Exodus International. (n.d.). EY information. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://exodusyouth.net/youth/information.html>



... a strong and well-publicized referral network that connects struggling youth with the people and resources that can help them overcome.⁵⁶

Exodus is doing more than just imagining. Exodus Youth's Web site includes a page with resources just for youth pastors, including a video clip in which David Underwood, a youth pastor in Portland, Ore., talks about "the virtue of truth and tolerance...in this whole issue of homosexuality and gender identity." Underwood goes on to describe an opportunity he had to help a young girl in his youth group named Shannon who talked about her gay friend, "and the challenge she has to love this guy, big time, but also uphold God's word and God's standard."⁵⁷ What is that standard?

...EXODUS cites homosexual tendencies as one of many disorders that beset fallen humanity. Choosing to resolve these tendencies through homosexual behavior, taking on a homosexual identity, and involvement in the homosexual lifestyle is considered destructive...⁵⁸

Exodus Youth's Web site also includes resources specifically for the children of gay parents, offering answers to questions like, "How can I reconcile my faith in God with my parents' homosexuality?" and "How can I offer support to my parent who is suffering with HIV/AIDS, while at the same time trying to deal with the pain of losing him/her?"⁵⁹ The latter question is an example of a common message of ex-gay programs, which is that most homosexuals either have HIV or will become infected in the future. What is new and disturbing, is this effort to specifically market that message to the children of lesbian, gay and bisexual parents.

In 2005, Exodus launched Groundswell, a half-day conference for youth pastors, campus ministers and students, proclaiming "Our students deserve to know the truth about homosexuality."⁶⁰ In an initial review of the Groundswell Web site, we found that Exodus was planning three conferences in 2005 in Orlando, Fla.; Seattle, Wash.; and Boston, Mass. However, we could only find press clips for the Seattle conference, which occurred on October 27, 2005. Prior to the conference, an article in the *Seattle Times* warned, "An 'ex-gay' Christian ministry is coming to Seattle later this month with a new agenda—to reach gay teens."⁶¹ Concern over what it called "exploitation of youth to persecute peers" prompted a coalition of groups to organize a press conference to speak out against Groundswell. According to Barb Clark-Elliott, President of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG) Seattle:

Groundswell argues that issues of concern to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) young people and their supporters have no place in our schools, or that we are trying to promote an agenda. I have to ask, just who is it that has an agenda here? Their position ignores the fact that GLBT issues are already very much present in the form of rampant anti-GLBT hostility that has long been imbedded in our schools and sadly, considered perfectly acceptable. Well, it is not. Rather than foster responsible and compassionate attention to this problem, Groundswell wants to pit

56. Ibid.

57. Exodus International. (n.d.). A message to youth pastors. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://exodusyouth.net/youth/video/ypastor100.wmv>

58. Exodus International. (n.d.). About us. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from http://www.exodus.to/about_exodus_policy.shtml

59. Exodus International. (n.d.). Children of gay parents. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from http://exodusyouth.net/youth/child_gay_parent.html

60. Exodus International. (n.d.). Groundswell conference. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://groundswell2006.org/groundswell/index.htm>

61 Tu, J. I. (2005, October 14). "Ex-gay" effort aimed at teens. *The Seattle Times*. p. B2.



our youth against each other with the backing of powerful anti-gay organizations.⁶²

In 2006, Exodus is planning Groundswell conferences in Columbus, Ga.; Franklin, Tenn.; and in Maine. Exodus is also marketing a special program at its 2006 Annual Freedom Conference just for youth called “xScape!” which includes a specific programming track at the conference, a ropes challenge course, and a paint ball course. Exodus is even offering youth-specific housing at the conference.⁶³

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY: IS YOUR CHILD SUFFERING FROM “PREHOMOSEXUALITY?”

In 2003, Focus on the Family (FOF), a \$135 million per year religious right behemoth, spent \$10.2 million on anti-LGBT programs, including its ex-gay conference “Love Won Out” and its fight against marriage equality.⁶⁴ More recently, FOF launched “Focus on Your Child,” a Web site that advised parents on how to “Help boys become men, and girls become women.” On a page titled “Is My Child Becoming Homosexual?” the site encouraged parents to seek professional help if their child exhibits symptoms of “gender confusion.” FOF warned that no age is too young for a child to receive conversion therapy treatment: “If your child has already reached puberty, change is difficult.”⁶⁵ According to FOF, evidence of gender confusion or doubt in boys age five to 11 may include:

- A strong feeling that they are “different” from other boys.
- A tendency to cry easily, be less athletic, and dislike the roughhousing that other boys enjoy.
- A persistent preference to play female roles in make-believe play.
- A strong preference to spend time in the company of girls and participate in their games and other pastimes.
- A susceptibility to be bullied by other boys, who may tease them unmercifully and call them “queer,” “fag” and “gay.”
- A tendency to walk, talk, dress and even “think” effeminately.



“I think it's a big mistake for people... to say that homosexuality is chosen. It usually isn't.”
— Dr. James Dobson,
Focus on the Family

62. Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays. (2005, October 26). PFLAG Seattle and allies expose exploitation of youth to persecute peers. Author. Retrieved February 27, 2006, from <http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=555>

63. Exodus International. (n.d.). Youth and young adults (children see below). Author. Retrieved February 17, 2006, from <http://www.exodusfreedom.org/freedom/Youth.cfm>

64. Ibid.

65. Focus on the Family. (n.d.). Is my child becoming a homosexual? Author. Retrieved June 24, 2005, from <http://www.focusonyourchild.com/develop/art1/A0000684.html>; In the summer of 2005, this section of Focus on the Family's website garnered public attention and scrutiny and was subsequently removed. However, its content and the original URL it referenced on Focus on the Family's website is replicated on a number of websites; See, for example, Winship, K. (2005, November 5). Rough play. Retrieved February 14, 2006, from <http://home.earthlink.net/~ggsurplus/homosexuality.html>; Boucher, T. (2005, August 16). Is your kid gay? Retrieved February 14, 2006, from <http://www.timboucher.com/journal/2005/08/16/is-your-kid-gay/>; Hughes, J. (2005, August 9). Is my child becoming homosexual? Retrieved February 14, 2006, from http://hughesforamerica.typepad.com/hughes_for_america/2005/08/christian_talib_1.html



- A repeatedly stated desire to be—or insistence that he is—a girl.⁶⁶

What leads to this “gender confusion” in young boys? The answer, at least according to statements made by Dr. James Dobson, FOF’s chairman and a child development psychologist, is not very clear. When asked by Larry King in a CNN interview aired in March 2002 if people choose to be gay, Dobson replied, “Oh, I don’t, no. I think it’s a big mistake for people, uninformed people, to say that homosexuality is chosen. It usually isn’t.” However, in response to a follow-up question Dobson also said, “It isn’t chosen, but it’s not genetic, either.”⁶⁷ This interview prompted Dobson to dedicate his June 2002 newsletter to explaining his beliefs on the origin of homosexuality in children. Dobson’s explanation primarily consists of an excerpt from his book, *Bringing Up Boys*, in which he responds to a letter he received from a 13-year-old boy named Mark.⁶⁸

In his letter, Mark says he has listened to some of Dobson’s audio tapes on adolescence and wonders if he has a serious problem:

...I’m afraid I have a little sodomy in me. It was very hard for me to write what I just did. I don’t want to be homosexual but I’m afraid, very afraid. That was hard to write too. Let me explain further.... Through my higher grades in school (I’m in seventh grade) kids have always called me names (gay, fag etc.), and made fun of me. It’s been hard. I have masturbated (I guess) but gone too far.... I’m afraid if I am not straight (that’s much easier to write) I will go to hell. I don’t want to be not straight. I don’t try to be not straight. I love God and want to go to heaven. If something is wrong with me, I want to get rid of it. Please help me.⁶⁹

Dobson does not cite or refer to a single piece of peer-reviewed, academic research to support the “prehomosexuality” theory or diagnosis.

Dobson uses Mark’s letter to introduce the theory of “prehomosexuality” in children, and he describes a number of reasons why he believes that children are neither born with this “condition” nor choose it for themselves. Rather, Dobson explains, it develops primarily out of parenting deficiencies and the breakdown of the family. It is important to note that Dobson does not cite or refer to a single piece of peer-reviewed, academic research to support the “prehomosexuality” theory or diagnosis. This is not surprising given that it is not a real diagnosis or mental disorder. In fact, a search for “prehomosexuality” on the websites of the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics did not produce a single document or reference to the word.

What does Dobson use to support his warning to parents about “prehomosexuality” in their children? Another lengthy excerpt included in his newsletter from a book titled *A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*, written by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, president of the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuals (NARTH). At the end of the newsletter, Dobson advises parents:

If you as a parent have an effeminate boy or a masculinized girl, I urge you to get a copy [*A Parent’s Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*] and then seek immediate

66. Ibid.

67. CNN Larry King Live. (2002, March 7). Transcript: Interview with Dr. James Dobson. CNN. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0203/07/lkl.00.html>

68. Dobson, J. (2002, June). Dr. Dobson’s newsletter: Can homosexuality be treated and prevented? Focus on the Family. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.family.org/docstudy/newsletters/a0021043.cfm>

69. Ibid.



professional help. Be very careful whom you consult, however.... Given the direction the mental-health profession has gone, most secular psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors would, I believe, take the wrong approach—telling your child that he is homosexual and needs to accept that fact.... That is exactly what you and your son don't need!... When deciding to seek that help, however, you must be aware that for many pre-homosexual boys, the signs may be more subtle, such as an inability to bond with same-sex peers, feeling different and inferior, or a discomfort with one's gender. Sometimes a visit with a professional is needed just to determine whether or not a child is at risk.⁷⁰

According to FOF, Dobson's radio broadcasts are heard by 220 million people per day around the world.⁷¹ Millions of parents have been warned by the man often considered the "grandfather" of the evangelical Christian movement that even if their sons are not "effeminate" and their daughters are not "masculinized," they may still be in danger of becoming gay or lesbian and should see a "professional," which, according to Dobson, excludes the millions of licensed psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors who do not share his and NARTH's discredited theories. The relationship between FOF and NARTH, and the important role it plays in the ex-gay movement's strategy to reach out to youth and parents, cannot be understated.

As we explain in more detail later in this report in the section on the Love Won Out conference that took place in Boston in October 2005, while anti-gay leaders regularly claim homosexuality is a choice, at ex-gay conferences it is presented as a condition or predisposition caused by dysfunctional parent-child relationships and child sexual abuse. Still, anti-gay leaders do not see a contradiction in holding on to both views as once. The Traditional Values Coalition's Lou Sheldon recently wrote:

In fact, no one is born "gay." Gays, lesbian, bisexuals, and transgenders...are generally people who have suffered either emotional trauma or sexual abuse early in life and whose same-sex attractions in a large number of cases are actually the result of coping mechanisms compounded by inappropriate erotic stimulation during adolescence.... the one certainty is that homosexuality is a choice that can be overcome and reversed, as many ex-gays...will attest.⁷²

NARTH: PROVIDING THERAPY TO A FIVE-YEAR-OLD "PREHOMOSEXUAL"

In *A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality*, Nicolosi recounts what he claims to be the true story of his experience providing conversion therapy to address "prehomosexuality" in a five-year-old boy named "Stevie," which began when Stevie's mother contacted Nicolosi after seeing him on a television talk show. Nicolosi dramatically recalls his initial conversation with Stevie's mom:

"Doctor, you were describing my son Stevie. He's a beautiful little boy, a special child. But Stevie's fascinated with little girl things....In fact, he just loves the colors

70. Ibid.

71. Focus on the Family. (n.d.). Dr. James C. Dobson. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.family.org/welcome/bios/A0022947.cfm>

72. Sheldon, L. P. (2005). *The agenda: The homosexual plan to change America*. Lake Mary, FL: FrontLine. p. 6.



pink and red. He even...well, plays with Barbie dolls and...dances around the house on tiptoes like a ballerina....You were describing my son to a T, Dr. Nicolosi. And if you're right, then Stevie will grow up—." Then she hesitated, as if afraid to say the word. "He'll be gay. That's what you said. And to be honest, that's why I called you." Her voice began to quaver. "Doctor, *will* my son grow up gay?"⁷³

Nicolosi uses this story to introduce his discredited theories on the origin of homosexuality in children.⁷⁴ By arguing that there is no such thing as a gay child or gay teen, Nicolosi blames the "distant/busy/insensitive" father or the "over-bearing/dependent/hypersensitive" mother for their child's "prehomosexuality." Without citing any peer-reviewed academic research to support it, Nicolosi claims that there is a 75 percent chance that young children who exhibit "gender nonconformity" like Stevie will grow up to be homosexual, bisexual, or transgender.⁷⁵

According to Nicolosi, "[w]hile mothers make boys, fathers make men.... If a father wants his son to grow up straight, he has to break the mother-son bond that is proper to infancy but not in the boy's best interest afterward."⁷⁶ To treat a prehomosexual boy, Nicolosi recommends that a father play "rough-and-tumble games, [teach] his son how to throw and catch, [pound] a wooden peg into a hole, and [take] the son with him in the shower" to help ensure that his son accepts his "maleness."⁷⁷ Nicolosi makes these claims despite the objection of every major medical and mental health professional association.⁷⁸

Nicolosi co-founded NARTH in 1992 as a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to affirming a complementary, male-female model of gender and sexuality. Despite its lack of professional credibility, NARTH plays a critical role in the ex-gay movement as the lead organization advocating for secular conversion therapy. NARTH claims that its membership includes psychiatrists, psychologists, certified social workers, and other behavioral scientists, as well as laymen in fields including law, religion, and education.⁷⁹ NARTH proclaims its duty is to respond to the mental-health professions' refusal to open itself up to socio-political diversity by advocating another view of sexuality and gender and by providing psychological understanding of the cause, treatment and behavior patterns associated with homosexuality.⁸⁰

While NARTH provides ex-gay leaders with research it cites as confirmation that it is possible to change one's sexual orientation, most of that research is not published in respected, peer-reviewed academic journals. NARTH's theories on homosexuality and the research it produces to support them is discussed in more detail in a later section of this report.

To treat a "prehomosexual" boy, Nicolosi recommends that a father play "rough-and-tumble games, [teach] his son how to throw and catch, [pound] a wooden peg into a hole, and [take] the son with him in the shower" to help ensure that his son accepts his "maleness."

73. Nicolosi, J. & Nicolosi, L. A. (2002). *A parent's guide to preventing homosexuality*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. pp. 20-21.

74. See, for example, Drescher, J. (2001). I'm your handyman: A history of reparative therapies. In A. Shidlo, M. Schroeder & J. Drescher (eds.), *Sexual conversion therapy: Ethical, clinical and research perspectives*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Medical Press, pp. 17-18, 20-21.

75. Nicolosi, J. & Nicolosi, L. A. (2002). p. 21.

76. Nicolosi, J. & Nicolosi, L. A. (2002).

77. Ibid.

78. Heller, M. (1998, November 19). Getting straight; An Encino psychologist claims he can teach unhappy gays to be well-adjusted breeders. But critics say he's a homophobe and his methods are a joke. *New Times Los Angeles*.

79. National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality. (2004, September 19). Our purpose. Author. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.narth.com/menus/statement.html>

80. Ibid.



PFOX AND THE ALLIANCE DEFENSE FUND: TEACHING STUDENTS ABOUT EX-GAYS AND HOW TO OPPOSE THE “HOMOSEXUAL AGENDA”

NARTH's role in providing a secular foundation for the advocacy of conversion therapy is vital to another ex-gay organization that has played a prominent role in reaching out to youth and parents. Founded in 1998, Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX), which unashamedly borrows from the advocacy model created by Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), is a national organization that claims to support families “touched by homosexuality.” It also claims to advocate for the ex-gay community and educate the public about sexual orientation. According to its website, PFOX “promotes an inclusive environment for the ex-gay community, and works to eliminate negative perceptions and discrimination against former homosexuals and lesbians.”⁸¹

PFOX garnered national media attention in early 2005 when it sponsored billboard advertisements in Virginia and Maryland claiming that “Ex-Gays prove change is possible.” In response to the ad campaign, Dan Furmansky, executive director of Equality Maryland, said, “...they use this messaging to try to deny rights to gay individuals and their families and to prey upon young people grappling with their sexual orientation and to push them potentially one step closer to suicide.”⁸²

In May 2005, PFOX, along with an organization named Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum, took its message directly to schools as the co-plaintiff in a lawsuit against the Montgomery County, Maryland school district, which it claimed was implementing an anti-ex-gay sex education curriculum.⁸³ PFOX was represented by Liberty Counsel, “a nonprofit litigation, education and policy organization dedicated to advancing religious freedom, the sanctity of human life and the traditional family.”⁸⁴ In his opinion, Judge Alexander William Jr. cited elements of the proposed curriculum that he ruled were biased against ex-gays, such as the claim that “[t]rying to change one's sexual response to straight or gay is usually unsuccessful,” and that “[i]n fact, it is often societal homophobia that forces people to attempt to change.”⁸⁵ As a result of the ruling, the school board was forced to alter its sex education curriculum, and even included a representative from PFOX on the committee charged with finding a replacement.⁸⁶

This kind of direct action in schools is an increasingly popular strategy employed by the ex-gay movement. An additional example is the creation of the “Day of Truth” by another evangelical Christian legal group named the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF). ADF sponsored the first Day of Truth in 2005⁸⁷ in response to the “Day of Silence,” which was created in 1996 as “a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize

81. Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays. (2004). What is PFOX and who are ex-gays? Author. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.pfox.org/asp/newsman/templates/newstemplate2.asp?articleid=121&zoneid=12>

82. Parish, W. (2005, January 19). Billboard sparks debate, *The Gazette*. Retrieved August 9, 2005, from http://www.equalitymaryland.org/News_2005/News2005.01.19.htm

83. Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays. (2005, May 6). Judge rules in favor of ex-gay group. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.pfox.org/asp/newsman/templates/newstemplate.asp?articleid=220&zoneid=2>

84. Liberty Counsel. (n.d.). About Liberty Counsel. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.lc.org/aboutus.html>

85. Cited in Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays. (2005, May 6).

86. Aratani, L. (2005, July 14). Robust competition for a say in revising health curriculum. *The Washington Post*. p. T06.

87. Alliance Defense Fund. (n.d.). Day of truth. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/actions/Default.aspx?mid=410&cid=3308>



and protest the discrimination and harassment—in effect, the silencing—experienced by LGBT students and their allies.”⁸⁸

In preparation for its April 27, 2006, Day of Truth activities, which occurs the day after the Day of Silence, ADF has set up a Web site where students can watch a music video featuring spokesman Chase Harper, an all-American-looking high school student who explains how students can reach out to their gay and lesbian peers by “speaking the truth in love.”⁸⁹ ADF offers T-shirts for students to wear on the Day of Truth, and also encourages them to pass out cards to other students that say:

I am speaking the Truth to break the silence.
Silence isn’t freedom. It’s a constraint.
Truth tolerates open discussion, because the Truth emerges when healthy discourse is allowed.
By proclaiming the Truth in love, hurts will be halted, hearts will be healed, and lives will be saved.⁹⁰

ADF does not explicitly state what its meaning of the word “truth” is in this context. The organization simply declares that the event “was established to counter the promotion of the homosexual agenda and express an opposing viewpoint from a Christian perspective.”⁹¹ According to ADF, in 2005 more than 1,100 students from over 350 schools participated.⁹²

WHAT DOES THIS REPORT INCLUDE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The information included in this introduction was a summary of the new activities of the ex-gay movement we have been tracking over the past few years. We believe that this focus of programming and resources targeting youth and parents, which we are calling the “third wave of ex-gay activism,” represents a coordinated strategy that will, at the very least, lead to more youth having experiences similar to Zach Stark and DJ Butler. In the third wave, heterosexual youth and parents, as well as LGBT youth, are caught in the crossfire, used as pawns in the broader right-wing strategy to oppose legal and social equality for LGBT people and their families.

We frame this focus of programming and resources toward youth and parents as a “third wave of ex-gay activism.” The first wave began in 1973 with the founding of the first conversion therapy treatment program in San Francisco.⁹³ During the first wave, the

The third wave of ex-gay activism focuses less on “curing” adults of homosexuality and more on preventing its development by targeting parents, children, and adolescents.

88. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. (n.d.). Day of silence. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.dayofsilence.org>

89. Alliance Defense Fund. (n.d.). Watch the Day of Truth video. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from http://www.adfmedia.org/DOT_fullscreen.wmv

90. Alliance Defense Fund. (n.d.). Learn about it. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.dayoftruth.org/about/default.aspx>

91. Ibid.

92. Alliance Defense Fund. (n.d.). Day of truth. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/actions/Default.aspx?mid=410&cid=3308>

93. Pennington, S. (1989) *Ex-gays? There are none*. Hawthorne, CA: Lambda Christian Fellowship, p. 35. Cited in, Besen, W. R. (2003) *Anything but straight: Unmasking the scandals and lies behind the ex-gay myth*. New York: Harrington Park Press.



message that sexual orientation could be changed became inextricably linked to the “special rights” argument used by leaders of the new religious right to oppose equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans.⁹⁴ The second wave of ex-gay activism began in 1998 when John and Anne Paulk, two self-proclaimed ex-gays who married each other, appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* claiming that homosexuals can heal themselves of their “lifestyle choice.”⁹⁵ The second wave ended after John Paulk was caught in a Washington, D.C. gay bar and was forced to resign from his positions at Exodus International and Focus on the Family.⁹⁶

After the story about Zach Stark broke in the mainstream media in the summer of 2005, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force started researching ex-gay programs and activities specifically targeted at youth. Our findings, summarized earlier, led us to conclude that this new, third wave of ex-gay activism focuses less on “curing” adults of homosexuality and more on preventing its development by targeting parents, children, and adolescents. Whether through counseling programs like Refuge or through traveling ex-gay conferences like Focus on the Family’s Love Won Out, ex-gay programs are recommending that parents commit their children to treatment even if it is against their children’s wishes. These coordinated campaigns targeting youth warrant a response, as the stakes could not be higher.

While the body of peer-reviewed research on the efficacy, ethics and harm caused by conversion therapy has grown significantly since we released our first report on ex-gay activism in 1998, it has largely circulated among academics and the relatively few LGBT activists who focus primarily on this issue. Consequently, when the mainstream media actually pay attention to stories like the experiences of Zach and DJ at Refuge, debate focuses on abstract themes of “truth” and “religious freedom,” rather than on the best available scientific knowledge and data on conversion therapy. Efforts to appear “fair and balanced,” have enabled ex-gay leaders to appear on national television news programs touting the existence of “hundreds of thousands” of ex-gays as justification for denying equal rights to LGBT Americans and families. To date, the media have largely given ex-gay leaders and their evangelical Christian allies a free pass to make these claims absent the backing of peer-reviewed research and the support of any major medical and mental health professional association.

This report provides a brief summary of the history and background of ex-gay programs and how they have been used by the political and religious right to support the “special rights” argument used to deny social and legal equality to LGBT Americans. Given the influence of Focus on the Family and its traveling ex-gay conference, Love Won Out, we also include a more detailed analysis of the assumptions, etiological narratives and proposed solutions to homosexuality presented at the conference. This is based on

When the mainstream media actually pay attention to stories like the experiences of Zach and DJ at Refuge, debate focuses on abstract themes of “truth” and “religious freedom,” rather than on the best available scientific knowledge and data on conversion therapy.

94. Khan, S. (1998, October 1). *Calculated compassion: How the ex-gay movement serves the right’s attack on democracy*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute, Political Research Associates and Equal Partners in Faith. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/calccomp.pdf>

95. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2005, Spring). The thirty years war: A timeline of the anti-gay movement. *The Intelligence Report*. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=523&printable=1>

96. Besen, W. R. (2003). *Anything but straight: Unmasking the scandals and lies behind the ex-gay myth*. New York: Harrington Park Press.



the experiences of five gay and lesbian activists who attended the October 2005 Love Won Out conference in Boston, Mass. This is followed by a review and analysis of the statements made by prominent ex-gay and anti-LGBT religious leaders about the efficacy of their conversion therapy programs and claims about the number of ex-gays they have produced.

We then provide an analysis of the 2003 study authored by Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, which is often cited by anti-LGBT organizations and leaders as *the* definitive scientific proof that individuals can change their sexual orientation. This is followed by a summary of an important study by Dr. Ariel Shidlo and Dr. Michael Schroeder analyzing the harm and ethical violations reported by 202 consumers of sexual orientation conversion therapies. We conclude by suggesting the next steps that can be taken to protect youth from the third wave of ex-gay activism, including any legal liability ex-gay programs and conversion therapists may face for any harm caused to clients.

A NOTE ABOUT BISEXUALITY AND THE EX-GAY MOVEMENT

The groundbreaking ad on the next page was published in 1998 in the *Washington Blade* and *Bay Windows*, among other newspapers and Web sites, the same year public debate over conversion therapy erupted after ex-gay leaders John and Anne Paulk appeared on the cover of *Newsweek*. According to Lani Ka'ahumanu, longtime bisexual activist and pioneer, the ad speaks to "the big bisexual elephant in the room," the fact that many people targeted by ex-gay programs, and perhaps even showcased as examples of the success of conversion therapy, are in fact bisexual.

Dr. Doug Haldeman, a member of the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association, explains how bisexuals and bisexuality are often overlooked in conversion therapy research. Writing about a study on sexual orientation change conducted by famous sex researchers Masters and Johnson in 1979, Haldeman concludes:

Masters and Johnson's "homosexual" sample, in fact, may not be "homosexual" in orientation at all. Of 54 subjects, only 9 (17%) identified themselves as a Kinsey 5 or 6 (exclusively homosexual). The other 45

subjects (83%) ranged from 2 to 4 on the Kinsey scale (predominantly heterosexual to bisexual).... It is likely that rather than "converting" or "reverting" homosexuals to heterosexuality, Masters and Johnson were really strengthening heterosexual responsiveness in people with already established bisexual repertoires.⁹⁷

Bisexuality is still largely ignored by ex-gay leaders. For example, at the 2005 Love Won Out ex-gay conference in Boston ex-lesbian Melissa Fryrear stated that "women's sexuality is fluid," but that "we don't see this in men's sexuality." A couple of speakers also mentioned that bisexuality among women in college was "trendy" at the moment. However, the possibility that many of those who allegedly became ex-gay are really bisexuals suppressing their same-sex desires is never considered.

Ka'ahumanu warns that bisexual people are perhaps most vulnerable to the messages of ex-gay programs. They can be manipulated by guilt and shame to betray their same-sex feelings and suppress them in favor of their attractions for the opposite sex.⁹⁸

97. Haldeman, D. (1991). Sexual orientation conversion therapy for gay men and lesbians: A scientific examination. In J. Gonisorek & J. Weinrich (Eds.), *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. p. 155.

98. Ka'ahumanu, L. (1998, December 29). Personal communication to *Advocate* magazine.



Toward a new national discussion of sexual orientation.



If you really love someone, you'll tell them the truth.

The Christian Coalition, Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America, and the American Family Association (partial list) used this slogan in recently published anti-gay ads claiming to have cured homosexuals of their behavior. The ensuing debates on morality, genetics or unlearning behavior all miss an important point — we have the right to love whomever we choose. The truth is, human sexuality is far richer and more multifaceted than we're taught to believe. The truth is that neither science, nor politics, nor religion can yet define the genesis of sexual orientation. Most likely each of us is a complex mix of nature and nurture.

The truth is, many people are bisexual.

Bisexual people have the capacity for emotional, romantic, loving and/or physical attraction to more than one gender. Some of these so-called ex-gays are undoubtedly bisexual. Bisexuals can choose to be open to the full range of possibilities, but our bisexuality is the potential, not the requirement, for involvement with more than one gender. Some bisexual people choose to be in committed monogamous relationships; some choose other forms of relationships and commitments. Heterosexual and homosexual people also make these choices.

Bisexuals come from all cultures, all religious and spiritual beliefs, all sizes and abilities, all social strata and walks of life. Some of us are just like you. Some of us are nothing like you. But we are bound together by one important factor: we believe in the freedom to love whom we choose.

The truth is, love is about honor and respect for yourself and others.

The truth is, these "ex-gay" ads sow hatred and intolerance. These organizations are seeking to define sexuality, gender, and family solely in their own image. It is an offense to the human spirit for any group to impose their beliefs as the one true way and to tell people to reject and hate themselves and each other because they do not fit a certain mold. That is not love.

Love, between people who care for each other regardless of the genders involved, is an important family value that strengthens our society and enriches all our lives. Love is an essential part of life and a celebration of the human spirit. The truth is that the families we create, in whatever form, are precious and entitled to respect and to equal protection under the law.

The truth is, love makes a family.

As human beings we are born with the right and ability to love, to change and to choose as we grow. We must all have the option to choose to get married or not. We must all have the right to have and to raise children or not. All our relationships and families must be equally valued. We must have the right to walk down the street holding hands without the threat of violence. We must have the right to live, to work and love without fear of discrimination of any sort. We must have the right to make our own moral and ethical decisions based on our own personal integrity.

THE TRUTH IS, ALL OF US — BISEXUAL, LESBIAN, GAY, TRANSGENDER — DESERVE THE RIGHT TO LOVE WHOM WE CHOOSE.

In the public interest, this message has been sponsored by the following organizations (partial list), representing the views of millions of Americans.

Anything That Moves magazine
www.anythingthatmoves.com

BiNetUSA
www.binetusa.org

Bisexual Resource Center
www.biresource.org

FTM, International
tstgmen@best.com

Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund
victoryf@aol.com

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network
www.glsen.org

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
www.glaad.org

GenderPAC
www.Gpac.org

International Gay & Lesbian
Human Rights Commission
www.iglhrc.org

Intersexed Society of North America
www.isna.org

LLEGO: The Nat'l Latina/o Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual & Transgender Organization
AquiLGBT@LLEGO.ORG

Nat'l Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum
NBLGLF@aol.com

Nat'l Center for Lesbian Rights
info@NCLRights.org

Nat'l Gay & Lesbian Task Force
www.nglftf.org

Nat'l Youth Advocacy Coalition
NYOUTHAC@aol.com

Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians & Gays
(202) 638-4200



History and background

For over 25 years, the ex-gay movement has operated as part of the evangelical Christian right. Within the last decade, however, some on the Christian right realized that excessively vitriolic condemnation of homosexuals was not the best political strategy. Evidence of this change in rhetoric can be seen in statements made by Jerry Falwell, who claimed that the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were caused in part by homosexuals.⁹⁹ Four years later, at a conference hosted by Exodus International, Falwell compared allowing a child to identify as gay with allowing children to play on the interstate—an equally hurtful comment couched in compassion.¹⁰⁰ As scholar/activist Wayne Besen clarifies, “The argument has shifted from ‘You’re harming society’ to ‘You’re harming yourselves.’”¹⁰¹

“The argument has shifted from ‘You’re harming society’ to ‘You’re harming yourselves.’”
— Wayne Besen

By embracing the ex-gay movement and reframing their attack on homosexuality in gentler terms, the Christian right acquired the cover to promote a reactionary agenda that attempts to deny LGBT people any legal rights and protections, including nondiscrimination laws and services for the same-sex partners of victims of the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Furthermore, the “love the sinner, hate the sin” rhetoric enables the Christian right to be more appealing to moderate voters who do not consider themselves to be homophobic but feel uncomfortable about the “gay lifestyle.”

Robert Knight, director of the Culture & Family Institute, an affiliate of Concerned Women for America, provided insight into the logic of ex-gay programs during a “Marriage Matters” debate with Lara Schwartz of the Human Rights Campaign:

The “gay marriage” debate is being driven by the idea that there is a “gay identity.” Nobody is born “gay.” When homosexuals complain that they are being denied rights, what they’re really talking about is that they want to acquire the same status that marriage has in the law because of the uniqueness of marriage. In other words, they are trying to apply something unique in marriage to other relationships that don’t offer society the same benefits.¹⁰²

An August 2005 *Washington Post* article notes how the growing influence of

99. Media Matters (2004, November 29). On *Meet the Press*, Falwell lied about post-9-11 remarks and divorce rate. Author. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://mediamatters.org/items/200411290008>

100. Melzer, E. (2005, July 25). Falwell backs ‘reorientation therapy’ for gay, questioning teens. *Southern Voice*. Retrieved July 26, 2005 from http://www.southernvoice.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=1745

101. Boodman, S. G. (2005, August 16). Vowing to set the world straight. *The Washington Post*. p. HE01. Retrieved August 16, 2005, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/15/AR2005081501022.html?sub=AR>

102. Concerned Women for America. (2004, December 6). Robert Knight vs. Lara Schwartz: A debate: Marriage matters. Author. Retrieved July 29, 2005, from <http://www.cwfa.org/articledisplay.asp?id=6959&department=CFI&categoryid=family>



religious conservatives and the national debate over LGBT rights has revived interest in conversion therapy. According to Dr. Jack Drescher, chair of the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues, "Reparative therapy is the laetrile of mental health," referring to the fraudulent cure for cancer that was banned in the 1970s.¹⁰³ Today, the ex-gay movement has grown to include publishing enterprises, psychological treatment, residential facilities, support groups, and activities such as conferences that claim to deliver support and information to gay and lesbian people and their families.¹⁰⁴

While the concentrated focus on youth and parents is a new development of what we call the third wave of ex-gay activism, the overall social and political agenda of ex-gay organizations remains the same: to turn back the clock to a time when homosexuality was considered a disease and to oppose any and all legal protections for LGBT people. The following is a brief history of what we categorize as the first and second waves of the ex-gay movement, followed by a more detailed description of the third wave.

The overall social and political agenda of ex-gay organizations is to turn back the clock to a time when homosexuality was considered a disease and to oppose any and all legal protections for LGBT people.

THE FIRST WAVE OF EX-GAY ACTIVISM: 1973-1997

The first wave of ex-gay activism began shortly after the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the DSM in 1973, with the founding of Love In Action (LIA)—the first residential conversion therapy program.¹⁰⁵

John Evans and the Rev. Kent Philpott formed LIA with different visions in mind. For Evans, a gay artist, LIA would minister to gay people and nurture their spirituality. On the other hand, Philpott envisioned a ministry that saved homosexuals from going to hell by helping them change their sexual orientation.¹⁰⁶ In the end, Philpott's vision won out and LIA became the nation's first ex-gay ministry.

Philpott's controversial book, *The Third Sex*, was written to support the notion that change was possible and led to the formation of other ex-gay programs. In 1976, two ex-gay counselors, Gary Cooper and Michael Busse, organized a conference for other ex-gays to meet and network. The meeting gave rise to Exodus International, an umbrella organization that is now the world's largest ex-gay ministry providing information and referrals. However, Cooper and Busse, like many ex-gay leaders who followed, eventually left the ministry and accepted their homosexuality. They fell in love, and married each other in 1982.¹⁰⁷

Although ex-gay programs were relatively small and obscure during the first wave, they arose in conjunction with the birth of the modern conservative political and religious

103. Boodman, S. G. (2005, August 16).

104. Burack, C. & Josephson, J. (2005, May). *A report from "Love Won Out: Addressing, understanding, and preventing homosexuality. Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 18, 2004."* New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.

105. Pennington, S. (1989) *Ex-gays? There are none*. Hawthorne, CA: Lambda Christian Fellowship, p. 35. Cited in, Besen, W. R. (2003) *Anything but straight: Unmasking the scandals and lies behind the ex-gay myth*. New York: Harrington Park Press.

106. Besen, W. R. (2003).

107. Many same-sex couples married in progressive churches and synagogues, or held secular or spiritual commitment ceremonies prior to the legalization of civil marriage for same-sex couples in Massachusetts in 2004.



right movement. For example, in 1977 Anita Bryant led the “Save Our Children” campaign in Florida, successfully overturning a sexual orientation nondiscrimination law by equating gay rights with special protections for “people who sleep with St. Bernards and nail-biters.”¹⁰⁸ The Rev. Jerry Falwell formed the Moral Majority in 1979 and began to attack equality for gay men and lesbians as “special rights.”

Around the same time, Pat Robertson, who would go on to claim that feminists encourage women to “leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians,”¹⁰⁹ took over the 700 Club televangelist satellite network. In 1989, Rep. Bill Dannemeyer (R-CA) published his landmark anti-gay tome, *Shadow in the Land: Homosexuality in America*, which called lesbians and gay men “the ultimate enemy.”¹¹⁰ Dr. Jack Drescher, Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, explains the reasoning behind the special rights argument used by anti-gay political and religious leaders: “That homosexuality may be innate bolsters the argument for gay rights. And that’s what the religious right is fighting against.”¹¹¹

In the late 1980s, the anti-gay political and religious leaders became increasingly successful at using ballot measures at the state level and legislation at the federal level to deny equal rights to lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans, and to repeal existing laws granting those protections.¹¹² For example, in 1992, Colorado voters—based on a “special rights” argument—approved Amendment 2, which overturned municipal laws protecting lesbians, gay men and bisexuals from discrimination.¹¹³ The law, however, was eventually found to be unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.¹¹⁴

In 1977 Anita Bryant led the “Save Our Children” campaign in Florida, successfully overturning a sexual orientation nondiscrimination law by equating gay rights with special protections for “people who sleep with St. Bernards and nail-biters.”

THE SECOND WAVE OF EX-GAY ACTIVISM: 1998-2002

The second wave began in summer 1998 when John and Anne Paulk, two self-proclaimed ex-gays who married each other, gained national media attention by appearing in full-page ads in major newspapers across the country. On the cover of *Newsweek* they promoted the claim that homosexuals can heal themselves of their “lifestyle choice,” under the headline “Gay for Life?”¹¹⁵ While the Paulks and other ex-gay leaders asserted they were acting out of love, the organizations they were affiliated with were actively pursuing a political agenda to deny and rollback legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation. For example, Janet Folger, then director of the Center for Reclaiming America for Christ said, “It’s preposterous, trying to take an inborn

108. Dizon, K. (2004, July 27). With the presidential campaign heating up, celebrities are taking sides – and sometimes sponsors and audiences are not amused. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. p. E1.

109. English, B. (1992, September 14). Dire “effects” of feminism. *The Boston Globe*. p. 17.

110. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2005, Spring).

111. Benjamin, M. (2005, July 18). Turning off gays. *Salon.com*. Retrieved July 18, 2005, from <http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2005/07/18/ungay/index.html>

112. Khan, S. (1998, October 1).

113. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2005, Spring).

114. *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620 (1996).

115. Southern Poverty Law Center. (2005, Spring).



characteristic [race] and relate it to the behavior of homosexuality. There are thousands of former homosexuals. That cuts into the premise that gays need special rights.”¹¹⁶

Later that same year, the Task Force Policy Institute released one of the first comprehensive analyses of ex-gay programs and their broader political agenda: *Calculated Compassion: How the Ex-Gay Movement Serves the Right's Attack on Democracy*.¹¹⁷ The report concluded that the ex-gay movement is characterized by the following recurring themes:

- Leaders of the ex-gay movement claim that people are not born homosexual because homosexuality is a mistake, and God, in whose image all people are created, does not make mistakes.
- Homosexuality usually stems from not having the “correct” relationship and bonding with the same-sex parent.
- Childhood sexual abuse and molestation causes homosexuality. Ex-gay leaders believe that, especially for girls, sexual abuse can be a significant factor in their future identification as lesbians.¹¹⁸

The report also argued that the growing prominence of the ex-gay movement in the late 1990s was the result of a strategic, coordinated and well-funded shift within the Christian right based on the need to soften its homophobic rhetoric. The movement adopted a “family values” agenda, which emphasized traditional gender roles and the submission of wives and children to fathers as heads of the family. Furthermore, by picking on a group of people for whom the general public often shows little sympathy, organizers of the Christian right found a profitable target, a symbol of the so-called liberal attack on the traditional family.¹¹⁹

On September 19, 2000, John Paulk was photographed leaving a gay bar in Washington, D.C. At the time, Paulk was both the manager of Focus on the Family’s homosexuality and gender division and board chair of Exodus International. Although he claimed that he was just using the restroom, he was removed as the board chair at Exodus only two weeks later. Similarly, Focus on the Family forced a humiliating public apology and continually downsized his role until he resigned in April 2003.¹²⁰ With the demise of leaders like Paulk, the ex-gay movement went back into the “closet” in search of new leadership and direction.

This period of re-grouping would be short-lived, however, as ex-gay leaders like Alan Chambers and John Smid quickly filled this leadership vacuum. The message of ex-gay programs became an integral component of the Christian right’s plan as the

In the late 1990s the movement adopted a “family values” agenda, which emphasized traditional gender roles and the submission of wives and children to fathers as heads of the family.



Alan Chambers,
Exodus International

116. Davis, J. D. (2000, July 22) Gays, blacks rally against shared foes. *Sun-Sentinel*. p. 1D.

117. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/calccomp.pdf>

118. Khan, S. (1998).

119. Diamond, S. (1998). *Not by politics alone: The enduring influence of the Christian right*. New York: Guilford Press. Cited in Kahn, S. (1998).

120. Besen, W.R. (2003).



issue of same-sex marriage rose to the forefront of the political agenda during the 2004 presidential election. Alan Sears, President of the Alliance Defense Fund, acknowledged this approach in his book *The Homosexual Agenda*:

Once marriage is redefined for same-sex partners, it opens the Pandora's Box to be redefined for any assortment of individuals. After all, if two men or two women have the right to be married, why not two men and three women, or two men, one woman, and a dog and a chimpanzee?¹²¹

Sears, like many anti-gay leaders, presents his opposition to same-sex marriage using the slippery slope argument. Dahlia Lithwick, senior editor at *Slate*, replies,

The problem with the slippery slope argument is that it depends on inexact, and sometimes hysterical, comparisons. Most of us can agree, for instance, that all the shriekings about gay marriage opening the door to incest with children and pedophilia are inapposite [inappropriate]. These things are illegal because they cause irreversible harms...and produce a tangible victim.¹²²

On September 19, 2000, ex-gay leader John Paulk was photographed leaving a gay bar in Washington, D.C.

THE THIRD WAVE OF EX-GAY ACTIVISM: 2003 TO THE PRESENT

The third wave of ex-gay activism exploded in response to the legal momentum building behind same-sex marriage in general and two judicial decisions in particular: the June 2003 Supreme Court *Lawrence v. Texas* decision, which legalized private and consensual relations between two people of the same-sex, and the November 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* decision, which enabled the state of Massachusetts to become the first to legalize same-sex marriage. Following their mantra of “love the sinner, hate the sin” the leaders of the ex-gay organizations began framing their opposition to same-sex marriage as an extension of their “love” for homosexuals. For example, Exodus International President Alan Chambers said,

Same-sex marriage is a bad idea and it's a bad idea for this reason...for those who are involved in homosexuality, the journey to freedom is already incredibly difficult without adding to it the fact that same-sex marriage would bring legal matters to this. People like me who find freedom or who are looking for freedom don't need one more obstacle in their way. And I believe same-sex marriage would be just that.¹²³

Drescher notes that this line of thinking can be traced back to ex-gay pioneer Dr. Charles

121. Sears, A. E. & Osten, C. J. (2003). *The homosexual agenda: Exposing the principal threat to religious freedom today*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers. Cited in Alexander, S. (2004, June 13). Book review of *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing The Principal Threat To Religious Freedom Today*. IntellectualConservative.com. Retrieved February 15, 2006, from <http://www.intellectualconservative.com/article3520.html>

122. Lithwick, D. (2004, May 19). Slippery slope: The maddening “slippery slope” argument against gay marriage. *Slate.com*. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://www.slate.com/id/2100824/>

123. Light on the Hill. (n.d.). *CHURCH CLIP - How should the church respond to homosexuals? Watch the Powerful Testimony of former homosexual Alan Chambers, President of Exodus International*. Coral Ridge Ministries. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://dvstudios.sitestream.com/Test/vvv-exodus-1000k.wmv>



Socarides, who argued that social opprobrium must be reinforced if gay men and women are to be motivated to change their homosexual orientations.¹²⁴ In his article “I’m Your Handyman: A History of Reparative Therapies,” Drescher describes how this mixing of science and politics came about:

The evolution of one branch of psychoanalytic theory into an anti-homosexual political movement illustrates the permeability of boundaries between clinical issues and political ones. In their open support of anti-gay legislation, reparative therapists have moved from the traditional psychoanalytic center and have been embraced by conservative religion and political forces opposed to homosexuality.¹²⁵

While the work of Socarides and other conversion therapy proponents has been rejected by the psychoanalytic mainstream, their theories are an integral component of ex-gay programs, including the “Love Won Out” conferences sponsored by the national evangelical Christian organization Focus on the Family.

In May 2005, the Task Force Policy Institute released a report by two political science and women’s studies professors—Cynthia Burack of Ohio State University and Jyl J. Josephson of Rutgers University-Newark—who attended a Love Won Out conference in Minneapolis, Minn. The authors observed a number of people who appeared to be parents who were bringing their teenage children to the conference in an apparent attempt to change their children’s sexual orientation. This direct targeting of youth is the most troubling development of the third wave of ex-gay activism. Whether through counseling programs like Refuge or education-based initiatives like PFOX, ex-gay programs are recommending that parents commit their children to treatment even if it is against their child’s wishes. According to Melissa Fryrear, gender issues analyst for Focus on the Family, “The largest group of people who come are parents who have a son or daughter living homosexually.”¹²⁶

The direct targeting of youth is the most troubling development of the third wave of ex-gay activism

Burack and Josephson noted conflicting messages targeted at parents. For example, despite speakers’ rhetoric about not blaming parents, homosexuality was referred to as “compensation for the lack of appropriate or fulfilling relationships between a child and his or her same-sex parent.” Speakers portrayed those living the homosexual “lifestyle” as “unhappy, in pain, defensive, broken, and enraged” and in need of love and compassion. However, they also warned that compassion should not be extended to those who refuse to renounce their same-sex attractions or who embrace a public *identity* as lesbian or gay. Speakers also presented strategies for resisting the gay community’s attempts at recognition and full civil rights, but made no mention of the ex-gay movement’s broader political agenda.¹²⁷

The central message of the ex-gay movement and its application to the political and policy debate over equal rights for LGBT people has remained consistent from the first wave through the present. As the Task Force’s 1998 report *Calculated Compassion* concludes:

124. Drescher, J. (2001). I’m your handyman: A history of reparative therapies. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*. 5(3/4), 5-24.

125. Ibid

126. Jacobs, E. (2005, August 11). Ex-gay movement plans Boston confab. *Bay Windows*. Retrieved August 11, 2005, from <http://www.baywindows.com/media/paper328/news/2005/08/11/News/ExGay.Movement.Plans.Boston.Confab-966568.shtml>

127. Burack, C. & Josephson, J. (2004, September).



While publicly portraying itself as a haven for “hope and healing for homosexuals,” the ex-gay movement serves as camouflage for a retooled and reinvigorated assault by the Christian Right on the legal protections against discrimination for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. Furthermore, the ex-gay movement is an integral part of a broader right-wing movement that poses a grave threat to democracy and diversity in the US.¹²⁸

On July 30, 2005, former ex-gay pioneer Evans sent a letter to current LIA Director John Smid saying, “In the past 30 years since leaving the ‘ex-gay’ ministry I have seen nothing but shattered lives, depression and even suicide among those connected with the ‘ex-gay’ movement.”¹²⁹ Additionally, many former clients have spoken out on the harmful effect ex-gay programs have had on their lives. For example, 46-year-old Catherine Wulfensmith said she attempted suicide several times after reparative therapy failed. “I bought it hook, line and sinker,” she said. “If you don’t change, what are you left with?”¹³⁰

All of these factors—a resurgence in organizations offering conversion therapy, new misleading “research,” and a coordinated campaign targeting youth—warrant a response, as the stakes could not be higher.

“In the past 30 years since leaving the ‘ex-gay’ ministry I have seen nothing but shattered lives, depression and even suicide among those connected with the ‘ex-gay’ movement.”
— John Evans,
co-founder,
Love In Action

128. Khan, S. (1998).

129. Buhl, L. (2005, August 1). Former leader condemns “ex-gay” work. *PlanetOut Network*. Retrieved August 2, 2005, from <http://www.planetout.com/news/article-print.html?2005/08/01/2>

130. Boodman, S.G. (2005, August 16).



Focus on the Family's *Love Won Out* conference: A report from Boston, October 29, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Focus on the Family (FOF), the nation's largest evangelical Christian advocacy group and one of the largest anti-gay organizations, sponsors "Love Won Out" ex-gay conferences approximately four times a year in different cities across the U.S. On October 29, 2005, Love Won Out came to Boston, Mass. for the first time. In order to better understand the views and beliefs of ex-gay leaders, Task Force Policy Institute Director Sean Cahill attended the conference, along with four local lesbian and gay activists: Arthur Lipkin, board member of the MassEquality Education Fund, a pro-gay marriage coalition in Massachusetts; Rev. Irene Monroe, a student at Harvard Divinity School and columnist for *In Newsweekly*, a local LGBT newspaper; Pam Chamberlain, research analyst at Political Research Associates; and Alex Hivoltz-Jiminez, a theology student at Boston University. This group attended plenary sessions together and then split up so they could attend as many individual workshops as possible.

STRUCTURE OF THIS SECTION

This chapter describes in great detail claims put forth at the Love Won Out (LWO) conference in Boston in October 2005. It documents this movement's shift from "curing" homosexuality among adults to "preventing" homosexuality by targeting parents, children and adolescents. It examines the significance of the holding of this first-ever ex-gay conference in New England, and the links between Love Won Out's religion-based anti-gay message and anti-gay politics in Massachusetts. It examines a key internal contradiction: the ex-gay movement says publicly that homosexuality is a choice, yet at Love Won Out speakers present homosexuality as a condition caused by dysfunctional parent-child relationships and child sexual abuse.

Another contradiction is the tension between the ex-gay movement's pseudoscientific analyses of homosexuality and the consensus within the academic and scientific communities that homosexuality is not pathological, that there is no intrinsic link with pedophilia, and that children of lesbian and gay parents are not disadvantaged relative to their peers. The reliance of ex-gay pseudoscience on archaic, stereotypical gender roles is also examined. Finally, a few other major themes and claims are examined—that gay rights activists are similar to the Nazis, that gay rights threaten religious freedom, and that "God will require the blood of the State at the foot of the conscience of the State," i.e. the Church.. We interpret this to mean that Christians are obliged to challenge sin, especially in the face of perceived intimidation by gay activists and institutions they have "taken over." If the church does not hold the state accountable for its mistakes, then God will exercise his wrath, not only against "some gay activists," but against everyone, including church members who fail in their obligation to confront sin.



A NOTE ON LANGUAGE: HOMOSEXUALS, GAY ACTIVISTS, “LIVING IN HOMOSEXUALITY,” AND BISEXUALITY

Ex-gay activists make a strong distinction between people “living in homosexuality” and gay rights activists. In a welcoming note in the conference program, Dr. James Dobson, Focus on the Family founder and chairman, wrote, “We want to share the truth that there is freedom from homosexuality. In fact, there is hope for anyone who believes in the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.” In a later note titled “Heterosexuality and homosexuality,” conference attendees were told, “Focus on the Family calls all people to sincerely love and understand those involved in homosexuality” and that “homosexuals are entitled to the same basic rights as other citizens.” Nonetheless, Focus on the Family denounced “the activist movement that seeks to gain special privileges and protected minority status for the homosexual community.”¹³¹

Many conference speakers made a similar distinction between those “struggling with homosexuality” and “gay activists” advocating sexual orientation nondiscrimination laws, partner recognition, and other policies.

The first major speaker of the day, Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., said, “There is no such thing as a homosexual. He [the male homosexual] was born to be heterosexual. His true nature is heterosexual. He may have a homosexual problem but he is not a homosexual. God didn’t create heterosexuals and homosexuals—two kinds of people. [If he did] he would be throwing natural law out the window.” Other speakers stressed this point, stating that some people “lived in homosexuality” and could “come out of homosexuality.”

Like Nicolosi, most speakers largely ignored bisexuals and bisexuality. Ex-lesbian Melissa Fryrear stated that “women’s sexuality is fluid,” but that “we don’t see this in men’s sexuality.” The possibility that many of those who became “ex-gays” were really bisexuals suppressing their same-sex desires was never considered. While homosexuality was frequently described as a gender identity disorder, transgender people were largely ignored.

All but one speaker—Melissa Fryrear—were men. All of the speakers were white. Most of the male speakers mentioned their wives and children, in one case when one of the speakers was introducing himself. In other instances bios in the conference program mentioned the speakers’ wives and children prominently. This included both the ex-gay speakers who had married women, and heterosexual speakers like Dr.

“There is no such thing as a homosexual.... He may have a homosexual problem but he is not a homosexual.”

— Dr. Joseph Nicolosi,
president, NARTH

The possibility that many of those who became “ex-gays” were really bisexuals suppressing their same-sex desires was never considered. While homosexuality was frequently described as a gender identity disorder, transgender people were largely ignored.

131. Evangelical Christian groups deliberately mischaracterize sexual orientation nondiscrimination laws as “special rights,” even though that concept is legally meaningless. See Goldberg, S. (1995). Civil rights, special rights and our rights. C. Berlet. (ed.). *Eyes right! Challenging the right wing backlash*. Boston: South End Press. p.111. By pursuing this tactic, these groups reinforce misconceptions about civil rights and nondiscrimination laws. As Scott Nakagawa points out, by contending that gay people are not eligible for “minority status and all the privileges thereof,” right-wing groups imply that “legitimate minorities,” such as people of color, receive “special privileges” because of their minority status. This suggests not only that equal rights for people of color are not actually rights, but also that people of color receive these privileges because of their status as people of color, not because of their experience with pervasive discrimination. Manipulating the concept of civil rights in this way avoids acknowledging, first and foremost, that people of color face pervasive discrimination. It also re-categorizes “civil equality” from an entitlement to a privilege. See Nakagawa, S. (1995). Race, religion and the right. In C. Berlet (ed.). *Eyes right! Challenging the right wing backlash*. Boston: South End Press. pp. 279-282.



Nicolosi and Dr. Bill Meier: Slide projections of ex-gay speakers' wives and children elicited applause whenever they were shown. While this may make sense at a conference sponsored by a self-proclaimed "family values" organization, it also seemed that some speakers were wielding their children and wives as proof of their heterosexuality, whether recent or life-long.

As noted in the introduction, Burack and Josephson attended and wrote about a Love Won Out conference in Minneapolis that preceded the Boston Love Won Out Conference by 13 months. Apparently this conference held by FOF in four locations around the country each year is highly programmed and scripted. The list of speakers at the Boston conference was nearly identical to that at the Minneapolis conference, and very little time was allowed for questions and answers. We noticed frequent striking similarities to the arguments made at the Minneapolis conference a year earlier; in some instances speakers used the exact same language as in Minnesota.

STATE OF SIEGE: A TENSE DAY OF PROTEST

FOF announced that it was holding the conference at Boston's historic Tremont Temple Church months in advance. Conference organizers claimed that the host church had been subject to threats and protests on a regular basis leading up to the conference. In fact, local gay and progressive leaders said they had tried to talk the church out of hosting the event due to FOF's right-wing agenda and Tremont Temple Church's proud past as the first free and integrated church in the US.¹³² Among those who spoke there are Charles Dickens and Abraham Lincoln. Frederick Douglass tried to give a speech there in 1860 but was chased out by a mob.¹³³

Saturday, October 29, 2005, was cold. A light snow fell for much of the day. The conference started at 8AM, so we arrived at about 7:30AM. Conference organizers announced that 800 people from 19 states were in attendance. While many were from Massachusetts and other New England states, others traveled from the Midwest and mid-Atlantic states to attend. Judging by what we saw and heard in the plenaries and workshops, the overwhelming majority of attendees were white, evangelical Christians and stalwart opponents of same-sex marriage and other policies protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, such as nondiscrimination laws and gay-affirmative anti-bullying initiatives. Some of the 800 people in attendance at the Boston conference were adolescents and young adults. Many were parents. When late in the day we noticed a few black women in attendance, we were informed that "eight individuals, volunteers from Ethiopia, have been praying on their knees since 7AM for the success of this conference." The women stood up before the overwhelming white group of conference attendees and were applauded.

All day during the conference, a couple dozen mostly young protesters stood in front of the church, chanting their opposition to its message and methods. Around midday, at least 1,000 protesters who had gathered in Boston to rally against the Iraq war walked over from the nearby Boston Common and rallied against the ex-gay conference. At

132. Pendleton, R. (n.d.). A note from our pastor. Tremont Temple Church. Retrieved February 28, 2006, from <http://www.tremonttemple.org/Pastor.htm>

133. Museum of Afro-American History. (n.d.). Site 14: The African meeting house: 46 Joy St. Boston: Author. Retrieved February 28, 2006, from <http://www.afroammuseum.org/site14.htm>



the morning's first session Mike Haley, director of Gender Issues at FOF, warned that "6,000 anti-war protesters" would be coming by at midday. Organizers warned conference attendees not to leave the building during breaks or at lunch time; instead, in a break from the original schedule, lunch would be provided to conference attendees for free. This warning, coupled with the row of police standing in front of the Tremont Temple Church entrance created a sense of being under siege from Boston's notorious secular humanists, leftists and "homosexual militants," as FOF often describes gay rights activists.

Haley claimed that, "This conference has been protested regularly more than any other conference we've had." Kris Mineau, director of the Massachusetts Family Institute, a Focus on the Family affiliate, said, "It's been protests for weeks upon weeks upon weeks in front of the Tremont Baptist Church."

While Haley welcomed all attendees, including even "gay activist[s] angry with Focus on the Family's view on this issue," he warned potential disrupters that they would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law: "it's against federal law to interfere with a religious event," Haley warned. "We will consider legal action" against anyone who disrupts the conference, he said.

Love Won Out staff and volunteers apparently had a very broad definition of "disruption" and a low degree of tolerance for any disagreement. Just prior to making the warning against interfering with a religious event, Haley warned gay activists that while they were welcome to stay, they would be ejected if they were seen approaching conference attendees and handing them pro-gay literature. Arthur Lipkin was blocked from entering by a security guard until he threw away leaflets about his book *Beyond Diversity Day: A Q&A on Gay and Lesbian Issues in Schools*. (He managed to hide a copy of the book and gave it to Dick Carpenter, a conference presenter, later in the day.)

At one point a video showed a young girl standing in front of her class talking about how much she loved her two mothers on Mother's Day. The point of the video was apparently to show the extent to which gay issues are discussed in schools, in this case in the context of talking about one's parents. When two apparently gay-supportive attendees sitting a couple of rows in front of us clapped after the girl read her essay, a Love Won Out usher/security volunteer moved and stood at the end of the row in which the men sat. While the usher did not evict the men, the move was clearly intimidating.

We observed another young man who was clearly upset at the things being said throughout the conference from the podium in the large church that held several hundred people for the plenary sessions. His reaction was frequently to shake his head, to mutter inaudibly under his breath, or to sigh. About halfway through the day he was forced to leave, even though we had not witnessed him doing anything truly disruptive beyond disagreeing, clearly but quietly, with what was being said from the podium.

Mike Haley warned potential disrupters that they would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law: "it's against federal law to interfere with a religious event.... We will consider legal action" against anyone who disrupts the conference.



A RELIGIOUS EVENT AND A POLITICAL EVENT

In apparent conflict with Haley's claim that the conference was a religious event and therefore protected under federal laws guaranteeing the free exercise of religion, several speakers made explicitly political statements in support of or in opposition to specific policies, a ballot question, and political candidates.

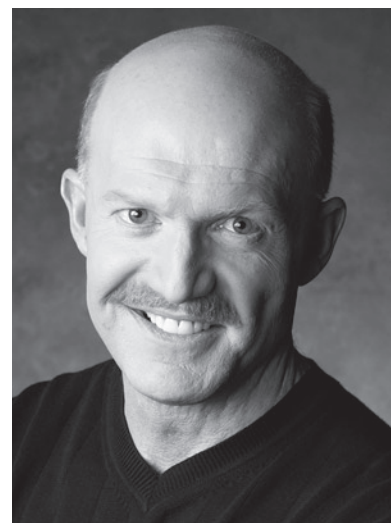
Dr. Bill Meier, vice president and psychologist in residence at Focus on the Family, told a workshop titled "Straight thinking on gay marriage" that "We have friends in the national government. Senator Sam Brownback [R-Kan.], he might even run for president. I like him." Meier also mentioned Sens. Rick Santorum (R-Penn.) and Tom Coburn (R-Okla.). "They believe in God," he concluded. "We should support these folks." In an April 2003 interview with the Associated Press, Santorum compared same-sex relations to "man on child, man on dog" couplings.¹³⁴ At a Republican meeting in spring 2004, Coburn called "the gay agenda...the greatest threat to our freedom that we face today."¹³⁵

After Meier spoke Kris Mineau urged people to sign the petition to place a question on the ballot in 2008 to ban same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. He also encouraged Massachusetts residents in attendance to "take the petition to your church."

Just before the final sermon/lecture in the plenary hall, Mineau again urged attendees to help collect signatures to get an anti-marriage state constitutional amendment place on the ballot in 2008. "Please get the word out," Mineau urged. "There are only 20 days left" in which to gather signatures.¹³⁶

The Rev. Joe Dallas, who gave the final lecture/sermon, said to laughter, "My wife and I, we are unapologetically part of that vast right wing conspiracy, and we are proud of it." Dick Carpenter, Ph.D., encouraged attendees to oppose safe schools initiatives and demand equal time for anti-gay views in schools that allowed gay-straight alliances and anti-homophobia programming. (This reminded some of us of right-wing efforts to obtain equal time for "intelligent design" alongside the teaching of evolution.)

One speaker also urged opposition to gay and lesbian parenting. Dr. Meier warned that "unfortunately in the majority of states homosexual adoption is fully legal. If marriage is legalized in other states, you will see an explosion of same-sex parenting like we've never seen before." Meier claimed, without providing any evidence, that "social welfare agencies, oftentimes they favor homosexual couples over heterosexual couples." In fact, currently



"If marriage is legalized in other states, you will see an explosion of same-sex parenting like we've never seen before.... social welfare agencies, oftentimes they favor homosexual couples over heterosexual couples."
— Dr. Bill Meier,
Focus on the Family

134. Associated Press interview, April 7, 2003, reprinted in National Gay and Lesbian Task Force press release, April 23, 2003, available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/media/release.cfm?releaseID=534>.

135. Schlesinger, R. (2004, September 13). Medicine man. *Salon.com*. Retrieved February 28, 2006, from http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2004/09/13/coburn/index_np.html?x

136. The anti-gay marriage state constitutional amendment received more than enough signatures to appear on the ballot, although many people whose signatures appear on the nomination papers claim that they were duped into signing the papers. Legal challenges are currently ongoing.



seven states restrict adoption or foster parenting by homosexuals and/or same-sex couples.¹³⁷ Judges still frequently favor heterosexual parents over gay or bisexual parents in custody disputes. And 2000 Census data show that a third of female same-sex couples and more than a fifth of male same-sex couples are already raising children.¹³⁸

CONTEXT: FOCUS ON THE FAMILY'S KEY ROLE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MARRIAGE IN MASSACHUSETTS

The Boston conference was Focus on the Family's 36th "Love Won Out" conference since 1998. FOF's decision to hold its first ex-gay conference in the liberal state of Massachusetts was symbolically loaded. Massachusetts is the only state in which marriage is legal for same-sex couples. It was the second state to pass a sexual orientation nondiscrimination law (in 1989) and has been a leader promoting policies to protect gay and lesbian youth from discrimination and harassment in schools. Many of Massachusetts' pro-gay initiatives were supported by former Gov. William Weld, a socially liberal, pro-choice and pro-gay Republican. The Republican Party in Massachusetts and New England has a long tradition of liberalism on issues of sexual orientation, reproductive choice, race, the environment and other issues. The all-Democrat Massachusetts congressional delegation is among the most liberal and pro-gay in the country.

Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference is important because it is a key tactic in the larger political project of the largest anti-gay, Christian right organization in the country, and the largest player in the fight against same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Family Institute, the lead organization promoting a ballot measure to repeal same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, is a state affiliate of Focus on the Family. Colorado Springs, Colo.-based Focus on the Family has an annual budget of \$130 million and more than 1,000 employees. It is by far the largest Christian right group in the U.S. Only the Massachusetts Catholic Conference (the four Roman Catholic archdioceses in Massachusetts) rivals Focus on the Family's size and influence in the battle against marriage equality in Massachusetts.

Anti-gay politics is a cash cow for right-wing organizations, and opposition to homosexuality is a common theme in their fundraising letters. A 2003 study found that these organizations outspend the top gay and lesbian civil rights groups by a margin of 4 to 1 (\$217 million vs. \$54 million respectively on 2002).¹³⁹

AN "ETIOLOGY" OF MALE HOMOSEXUALITY

Following a brief introduction by ex-gay Mike Haley, director of gender issues at Focus on the Family, Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., gave a lecture on "the condition of male

137. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. (2006, January). Adoption laws in the U.S. Author. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/AdoptionLaws.pdf>

138. Simmons, T. & O'Connell, M. (2003, February). *Married-couple and unmarried partner households: 2000*. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-5.pdf>

139. Cahill, S., Cianciotto, J. & Colvin, R. (2003). "Marriage Protection Week" sponsors: Are they really interested in "building strong and healthy marriages?" National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/MarriageProtectionWeek.pdf>



homosexuality.” Nicolosi heads the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), directs a psychological clinic for men seeking to stop being homosexual, and touts his membership in the American Psychological Association in the conference program book. Although he didn’t use the term, Nicolosi’s analysis of what causes homosexuality takes the form of an etiology, i.e., “the cause or origin of a disease.” Nicolosi portrayed homosexuality as a pathological condition caused by dysfunction in parent-child relationships and child sexual abuse.

Nicolosi portrayed homosexuality as a pathological condition caused by dysfunction in parent-child relationships and child sexual abuse.

DYSFUNCTIONAL PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS, NOT CHOICE, ONE OF TWO KEY CAUSES OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Anti-gay leaders often claim that homosexuality is a choice. They stress the difference between sexual orientation and race, which one cannot choose. While many, perhaps most, gay and lesbian people do not consider being gay a choice, anti-gay activists claim that homosexuality is a malign choice and that it should not be “rewarded” by government recognition in any way, including something as basic as employment nondiscrimination laws.¹⁴⁰

Yet the messages projected at the Love Won Out (LWO) conference in Boston October 29, 2005, were at odds with this “choice” claim. In fact, LWO speakers largely argued that a proclivity to act homosexually was a condition created in children by two factors: dysfunctional relationships between parents and children, particularly between a same-sex parent and a child (i.e. between a father and a son, or between a mother and a daughter), and child sexual abuse.

While Nicolosi and other speakers stressed that “this is not about blame,” they warned fathers and mothers to be vigilant regarding their relationships with their children, particularly their children of the same sex (i.e. fathers with sons, mothers with daughters).



ABOVE ALL ELSE, AVOID HAIRSPRAY

Nicolosi’s “etiology” of homosexuality is based on very simplistic and even anachronistic gender stereotypes. Here are key excerpts from his presentation:

[Homosexuality is]...not a sexual problem but a gender identity problem...Homosexuality is a psychological condition, a masculine inferiority, a striving to connect....if the father is distant, detached, unavailable he will be rejected, and the boy will become ashamed of his masculine condition. If you know any homosexual men they don’t have good relations with their fathers...Anticipatory shame is the foundation of homosexuality. He [the youth at risk of homosexuality] goes back to his mother. He’s easily hurt, slighted, defensive. Does this sound familiar? [some audience members nod in agreement.] He’s in anticipation of being shamed... [Homosexuality is caused by]

“We tell fathers, ‘If you don’t hug your son, some other man will.’”
— Dr. Joseph Nicolosi,
conversion therapist

140. Hardisty, J. (1999). *Mobilizing resentment: Conservative resurgence from the John Birch Society to The Promise Keepers*. Boston: Beacon Press. p. 112.



...poor communication between the mother and the father, especially at the time of the gender identity phase [1 ½ to 3 years old]. The mother and son have a special understanding. The father is guarded, ill at ease, hostile [around his young son]... fathers, we don't like to hold infants, we don't know what to do with them. Even if a father drops his son and cracks his head, at least he'll be straight. Homosexual men are not relaxed, comfortable around other men. We tell fathers, "If you don't hug your son, some other man will."

Nicolosi's speech was accompanied by a diagram in which the mother is "overly emotionally involved, dominant, strong personality," the father is "quiet, withdrawn, nonexpressive and/or hostile," and the son "temperamentally shy, timid, introverted, artistic, imaginative." Boys who develop the "gender identity disorder" that, in Nicolosi's view, constitutes homosexuality have "poor peer relationships" with other boys, "no boy friends," and are envious of other boys while in their pre-homosexual, "latency phase" from age 5 to 12. He described a boy staring out the kitchen window while spending time with his mother and grandmother. "He wants to play football, engage in physicality, but can't... He never gets dirty when he goes out and plays. His mother parts his hair and puts on hairspray."

Nicolosi portrayed homosexual men as permanent children, stuck in a childhood or adolescent developmental phase:

In adulthood the gay man wants to break that good little boy mold. He wants to be transgressive. You walk into a gay bar and it looks like a bunch of men who want to be bad boys.

Nicolosi portrayed homosexuality as a substitute for emotional connections with other men, which homosexual men are incapable of and were incapable of as children and adolescents. "You're not a sexual pervert," he said he told men living in homosexuality. "You're looking for male bonding, which you deserve. They [gay men] know that gay sex does not satisfy" that emotional need, Nicolosi said. "When they make an emotional connection with other men, their homosexuality disappears."

Nicolosi said that the "perennial gay fantasy" is to "find the ultimate masculine man to have sex with me." However, Nicolosi said that the gay man finds that other homosexually active men also have a masculinity deficit. This leads to "disillusionment" and "promiscuity." "The essence of homosexuality is always the quest for the unavailable man, the new guy. Homosexuality is an eroticized envy: 'I want that masculinity for myself.'" He said this is arousing because homosexuals are ashamed of their bodies, and therefore of their masculinity.

In addition to portraying homosexuality as stemming from the lack of a strong relationship with one's father, masculinity, self-esteem and good relationships with one's same-sex peers, Nicolosi posited a strong link between psychological pathology, social pathologies, and homosexuality. Claiming that homosexual males "sexualize" their "aggression," he said, "They'll take that aggression and turn it against themselves

"He never gets dirty when he goes out and plays. His mother parts his hair and puts on hairspray."
— Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, describing a "prehomosexual" boy

Nicolosi portrayed homosexual men as permanent children, stuck in a childhood or adolescent development phase.



in self-defeating ways...alcohol abuse, drug abuse, more depression...suicide attempts, on and on.”

THE ALLEGED CENTRALITY OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALE HOMOSEXUALITY

Nicolosi was one of several speakers who alleged that, along with dysfunctional father-son and mother-daughter relationships, child sexual abuse was another major cause of homosexuality. He claimed that “one third of my homosexual clients report sexual abuse by older men or boys.” Nicolosi then noted that “gay activists are more likely to lobby for lower age of consent” laws. The claim of an intrinsic link between homosexuality and pedophilia is frequently made by anti-gay activists.

In fact, gay rights groups support reasonable and equitable age of consent laws that treat opposite-sex relations the same as same-sex relations. Many age of consent laws are much lower for heterosexual relations and higher for homosexual relations. Gay activists do not support child sexual abuse.

Nicolosi finished by listing possible warning signs that a child is “at-risk” for homosexuality:

Be concerned about boys who are:

- Showing signs of gender-identity confusion (If your boy puts on a dress, chances are he’s a homosexual.)
- Lonely
- Feeling like they don’t fit in
- Alienated from male peers
- Lacking close relationship with their fathers

AN “ETIOLOGY” OF THE ORIGINS OF FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY

Melissa Fryrear gave a talk similar to Nicolosi’s in many respects about the origins of female homosexuality. She also afforded a key role to dysfunction in parent-daughter relationships and child sexual abuse. “At its core lesbianism is not about sex,” she said. “It’s about connecting emotionally with another woman. It’s not sexual at its core.” Fryrear also addressed issues of parental “blame” in the development of homosexuality among children and adolescents:

The relationship with mom *may* play a role in the development of lesbianism. We are at no point implying mom and dad are to blame for their child’s homosexuality. I am never implying that the mother or father don’t love their daughter. I’m implying that she [the daughter] might not have perceived their love. Because of real or perceived hurt, daughters pull away from mom,...[something Fryrear called “defensive detachment.”]

Fryrear described a typology of dysfunctional mothers, including “dispassionate,” “doormat,” “manipulative,” “domineering,” “my-best-friend,” and “self-consumed.” The common theme was that “core [emotional] needs are not met,” leading to “detachment” and “estrangement” by daughters.



Fryrear also attributed a great deal of significance to fathers' interactions with their daughters:

The father must be physically, emotionally in the home for protection, attention, adoration and support. This helps instill a sense of worth, a value in the fact that she is a girl (because he is male). He teaches her how to interact with the male gender.

When a father is not available and supportive of his daughter, Fryrear said, this can cause a girl to become detached and estranged, making her at risk for lesbianism. Fryrear associated stereotypical notions of gender with heterosexuality and homosexuality. For example, she told the story of a girl who tried wearing makeup, whose father's reaction was, "Who hit you in the eyes?" Fryrear intoned ominously, "She never wore makeup again," implying that the girl became a lesbian in reaction to her father's statement.

As a result of dysfunction in the relationship between either or both parents, "the daughter will develop an insecurity in her sense of worth," Fryrear said. "She may also be inhibited from effectively relating to men."

"When I lived as a lesbian I was very butch, mannish. I still have a lot of work to do. It was protection from men, my armor," Fryrear said. She also attributed her "living as a lesbian" to her susceptibility to cultural factors. "I was influenced by my exposure to feminism and the positive references to lesbians in the mainstream media." Later in the day, in a second plenary lecture, Fryrear attributed her homosexuality to her dysfunctional relationship with her mother: "I sought to fill what I perceived as a lack of maternal love in my heart with a relationship with a woman."

Like Nicolosi, Fryrear also attributed a central role to child sexual abuse in the development of female homosexuality. "I've worked with ex-homosexuals, and I have never met one woman who had not been sexually violated in her life. I've never met one man," she said, who was "living homosexually" who had not been sexually abused as a child.

"Sexual abuse among lesbians is incredibly high," Fryrear said. She cited a book, *Restoring Sexual Identity: Hope for Women Who Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction*, written by Anne Paulk. Anne is the ex-lesbian wife of John Paulk, the former ex-gay spokesperson for Focus on the Family who was caught in a gay bar in Washington, D.C., in 2000. According to Fryrear, in the book, Anne Paulk cites the results of a survey she conducted, which purportedly found that 91 percent of lesbians experienced some form of abuse while growing up and 66 percent were sexually abused as children. Additionally, Paulk claims that of those lesbians who were molested, 85 percent were sexually violated by a male and 17 percent were sexually violated by a female. The book was published in 2003 by Harvest House Publishers, whose mission is "To glorify God by providing high-quality books and products that affirm biblical values, help people grow spiritually strong, and proclaim Jesus Christ as the answer to every human need."¹⁴¹



"I've worked with ex-homosexuals, and I have never met one woman who had not been sexually violated in her life."
— Melissa Fryrear,
Focus on the Family

141. Harvest House Publishers (n.d.). About us. Author. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com/about_us.cfm



Both ex-gays who gave “testimony” about their conversion from homosexuality—Mike Haley and Melissa Fryrear—said they were molested as children. They and other speakers said at various times that one-third to nearly all homosexuals were molested as children, claims that are not backed up by credible social science research. They also falsely portrayed gay people as in favor of lowering age of consent laws, as incapable of raising healthy children, and as threats to children. One speaker compared gay couples marrying to adults marrying children.

PSEUDOSCIENCE POSING AS SCIENCE

The tension between an argument allegedly based on science and the dismissal of the science professions as having been taken over by “special interests,” i.e., homosexual activists

Love Won Out organizers claim their message is not one of hate toward homosexuals but one of love. Ex-gay speaker Mike Haley said, “We love everyone equally.” They posit homosexuality as a social problem that needs to be solved. Their solution is their conservative variant of evangelical Christianity; if homosexuals become born-again Christians, they argue, they can be “cured” of homosexuality.¹⁴² But Love Won Out’s analysis of homosexuality and the alleged threat posed to society by homosexuality and legal equality for gay people is filled with untrue stereotypes that are reckless and dangerous. Among the most egregious claims made are that there is an intrinsic link between homosexuality and pedophilia, and that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are hurt by their parents’ sexuality and/or gender. These claims were presented as backed by social science research, even though the research shows otherwise, as noted below.

Cynthia Burack and Jyl Josephson, in their May 2005 report on the Minneapolis Love Won Out conference, noted the striking tension between speakers who based their analysis of the causes of homosexuality and how to “prevent” it on alleged scientific research, and the frequent denunciations of the science and professional research establishments as having been taken over by “special interests,” i.e. homosexual activists.

This tension was frequently on display at the Boston Love Won Out conference in October 2005. Speakers presented research findings that have not been published in peer-reviewed, academic journals. These findings related to the role of child sexual abuse in the development of homosexuality and the impact of being raised by gay or lesbian parents on children. The one large-scale study purporting to show gays are more likely to experience child sexual abuse has serious methodological problems (see below: *The problem with research on child sexual abuse and sexual orientation: the 2001 archives of sexual behavior study*)

Claims that there is an intrinsic link between homosexuality and pedophilia are based on severely flawed research studies that cannot withstand the scrutiny needed to be published



Mike Haley,
Focus on the Family

142. Speakers often spoke as though all of the 800 or so conference attendees, as well as all Americans, are evangelical Protestant Christian.



in peer-reviewed academic journals, and go against the findings of the psychological, medical, and child advocacy communities. In presenting gay people as a threat to children, Love Won Out speakers ignored a substantial body of peer-reviewed, academic research that shows there is no intrinsic link between pedophilia and homosexuality, that gay people are not more likely to sexually abuse children than are heterosexuals, and that children of gay parents are not disadvantaged relative to their peers.¹⁴³

The American Academy of Pediatrics,¹⁴⁴ the American Medical Association,¹⁴⁵ the American Academy of Family Physicians,¹⁴⁶ and many other professional and scientific organizations have concluded that a person's sexual orientation has no correlation to parenting skills, and that children of gay and lesbian parents are not disadvantaged relative to their peers.¹⁴⁷

PROBLEMS WITH THE RESEARCH OF NICOLOSI, FRYREAR, AND ANNE PAULK

Dr. Nicolosi and Melissa Fryrear presented themselves as experts on child sexual development, psychology, gender identity, and sexuality. Yet Fryrear has a Master of Divinity degree, not an advanced degree in social science. She has published no research in peer-reviewed, academic journals, based on a search of EBSCO Host/Academic Search Premier, a database of 3,600 academic journals, including hundreds in psychology and social sciences, and ProQuest, a database of 3,800 journals, also including the leading psychology and social science journals.¹⁴⁸ Fryrear quoted—in support of her claim that two-thirds of lesbians were molested as children, and nearly one in five of them by females—Anne Paulk's study, which we mentioned earlier. However, searches of EBSCO Host/Academic Search Premier and ProQuest found no peer-reviewed academic journal articles written by Anne Paulk.

Even though Nicolosi presented himself as a credentialed psychologist and relied heavily on research in his presentation, we could find no original research that he has published in peer-reviewed, academic journals.

Even though Nicolosi presented himself as a credentialed psychologist and relied heavily on research in his presentation, we could find no original research that he has published in peer-reviewed, academic journals. A search of EBSCO Host/Academic Search Premier found that he published

143. Holmes, W. C., & Slap, G. B. (1998). Sexual abuse of boys: Definitions, prevalence, correlates, sequelae and management. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 280(21), 1855–1862; Stevenson, M. R. (2000). Public policy, homosexuality and the sexual coercion of children. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality*, 12(4), 8; A review of 352 medical records of children evaluated for sexual abuse during a 12-month period at a Denver children's hospital found that less than 1 percent had been abused by a gay man or a lesbian. Of 269 adult perpetrators of child abuse identified among the 352 cases of abuse, only two were gay or lesbian. The vast majority of the children in the study (82 percent) "were suspected of being abused by a man or a woman who was, or had been, in a heterosexual relationship with a relative of the child." And the review concluded that in this sample, "a child's risk of being molested by his or her relative's heterosexual partner is over 100 times greater than [the risk of being molested] by someone who might be identifiable as being homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual." Jenny, C. & Roesler, T. A. (1994). Are children at risk for sexual abuse by homosexuals? *Pediatrics*, 94(1), 44. In an earlier study of convicted male child molesters in Massachusetts, none of the 175 men were found to have an exclusively homosexual adult sexual orientation or to be primarily attracted to other adult men. Groth, A. N. & Birnbaum, H. J. (1978). Adult sexual orientation and attraction to underage persons. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 7(3), 175–181; For a meta-analysis of research on gay, lesbian, and bisexual parenting, see Stacey, J. & Biblarz, T. (2001). (How) does the sexual orientation of the parent matter? *American Sociological Review*, 66(2), 159–184.

144. Perrin, E. C. & The Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2002). Technical report: Co-parent or second-parent adoption by same-sex parents. *Pediatrics*, 109(2), 341–344.

145. Fischer, M. (2004). Report of Reference Committee B, American Medical Association House of Delegates (A-04).

146. American Academy of Family Physicians (2005). Children's health. Leawood, KS: Author. Retrieved October 14, 2005, from <http://www.aafp.org/x16320.xml>

147. See, for example, Stacey, J., and Biblarz, T. (2001). (How) does the sexual orientation of the parent matter? *American Sociological Review*, 66(2), 159–184.

148. Search conducted February 22, 2006.



two letters to journals contesting claims made about homosexuality and about him and his work. These are in *Contemporary Sexuality* and *Educational Leadership*. In 2003, he published a brief (three-page) comment on the Spitzer study in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, along with several dozen other commentaries by proponents and opponents of ex-gay therapy.¹⁴⁹ He also published several studies in *Psychological Reports*. EBSCO Host/Academic Search Premier found no other academic publications. A ProQuest search turned up no academic publications by Nicolosi. A search in PsychARTICLES—“a definitive source of searchable full-text, peer-reviewed scholarly and scientific articles in psychology” that includes 40,000 articles from 56 psychological journals dating back to 1985—turned up no articles by Nicolosi.¹⁵⁰

While Nicolosi claims that *Psychological Reports* is peer-reviewed, it is not viewed as a respectable psychology journal.¹⁵¹ The Southern Poverty Law Center’s *Intelligence Report*, which tracks right-wing groups in the United States, called *Psychological Reports* “a Montana-based vanity magazine that advertises itself as ‘The Scientific Manifestation of Free Speech’ and will publish practically anything for \$27.50 per page. Unlike a serious academic journal, *Psychological Reports* does not employ a peer review panel of scientists to guard against flawed studies.”¹⁵² Among *Psychological Reports*’ most frequently published authors is Paul Cameron, the anti-gay activist and discredited researcher we discussed earlier in this report, who was kicked out of the American Psychological Association and publicly condemned by the American Sociological Association.¹⁵³

THE PROBLEM WITH RESEARCH ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION: THE 2001 *ARCHIVES OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR* STUDY

Ex-gay leaders posit a central role of child sexual abuse in the development of homosexuality. They claim that gay men and lesbians are much more likely to be victims of child sexual abuse than heterosexuals (they generally ignore bisexuals, perhaps lumping them in with homosexuals; it is not clear).

However, the social science research that purports to show a higher rate of child sexual abuse among lesbians and gay men is limited and deeply flawed. More research in this area is needed. NARTH’s website, under a section titled “Research studies and journal articles of interest,” prominently cites a 2001 study in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* that claimed that 46 percent of gay men and 22 percent of lesbians in a small, non-clinical sample (n=277) had been molested as children by adults of the same sex. By contrast, a sample of 675 self-identified heterosexual college students in central California found that only 7 percent of straight men and 1 percent of straight women reported having been molested as children by adults of the same sex.¹⁵⁴ This study is widely cited by anti-gay activists in support of the claim that homosexuality and pedophilia/child sexual abuse are intrinsically linked.

There are many problems with this study. First, there were issues with both the gay and straight samples. Both samples, which are compared, were gathered in different

149. Nicolosi, J. (2003, October). Finally, recognition of a long-neglected population. *Archives of sexual behavior*. 32(5), 445-447.

150. Search conducted February 22, 2006.

151. Nicolosi, J. (2006, January). Letter to the editor. *Contemporary sexuality*. 40(1): 15.

152. Holthouse, D. (2005, Winter). The fabulist: Anti-gay researcher Paul Cameron’s falsehoods are well known. The incredible thing is the people who still cite them. *Intelligence report*. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center.

153. Ibid.

154. Tomeo, M.E., Templer, D.I., Anderson, S., & Kotler, D. (2001). Comparative data of childhood and adolescence molestation in heterosexual and homosexual persons. *Archives of sexual behavior*. 30(5): 535-541.



ways. Of 675 surveys gathered through “several California educational institutions,” i.e. colleges and universities in the center of the state, only 10 were returned by self-described “gay/lesbian” individuals. Of 208 male respondents, only three men, or 1.5 percent, were gay men. Of 467 female respondents, only seven women, or 1.5 percent, were lesbians. When these surveys were distributed and collected is not stated.

These rates of homosexuality are low for a college-age sample, and are at the low end of the range of estimates of the homosexual population. Recent voter exit polls have found that 4 to 5 percent of all voters are openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Recent state Youth Risk Behavior Surveys and other school-based surveys have found 3 to 5 percent of students in various age groups (middle school and high school) are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Which colleges and universities were surveyed were not mentioned in the 2001 study; if only conservative and/or Christian colleges were sampled, for example, this would skew the results in many ways, including the percent of students “out” as gay or lesbian.

In order to gather a larger gay/lesbian sample, 267 gay men and lesbians were surveyed at “the homosexual pride events in the central California area.” Which events were surveyed and when were not specified. “The principle investigator rented a booth at the event and asked individuals who approached the booth to participate in the research,” the authors stated. “All of the participants who accepted questionnaires completed and returned them.” However, it was not stated what the sign at the front of the booth said, or how the survey was described to the respondents. This could have affected who was interested in or willing to complete it. Whether or not the two samples were representative of the populations being surveyed—in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, income, etc.—or similar to each other in terms of racial diversity, income, etc. was also not addressed.

Respondents were asked if they were “predominantly a heterosexual person” or “predominantly a gay/lesbian person.” Bisexuality was not an option. Of 981 surveys returned, 39 did not include sexual orientation or gender identity or both. It is possible that some of these 39 included bisexuals who left “sexual orientation” blank because their identity was not an option; surely others who self-identified as bisexual chose “gay/lesbian” or “heterosexual” because those were the only two options.

The fact that these two samples were gathered in different ways also raises questions about the validity of the data, particularly the comparisons made between the two populations. Nearly all of the gay/lesbian respondents were surveyed at “homosexual pride events,” while all of the heterosexual respondents completed surveys “distribut[ed]...in the classroom.” Also, “[t]he vast majority of the students who received the questionnaires completed and returned them, but the exact percentage is not known.” A high refusal or drop-off rate would be important to know. With the gay pride sample, we are told that “[a]ll of the participants who accepted questionnaires completed and returned them.” But what percentage refused to complete the questionnaire, and why? Was this refusal rate higher among the gay pride respondents than among the overwhelmingly straight classroom respondents? We do not know.

There are a couple other reasons for concern. In the study’s literature review, two articles published in *Psychological Reports* are cited and described. This is the journal described by the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Report as “a Montana-based vanity magazine” that “will publish practically anything for \$27.50 per page” and is the antithesis of “a serious academic journal.”¹⁵⁵ One of these articles is co-authored

155. Holthouse, D. (2005, Winter).



by Paul Cameron, the discredited psychologist who was kicked out of both the American Psychological Association and the American Sociological Association for misusing and misrepresenting research. A third article described in the literature review and presented as evidence that “gay men and lesbian women have a greater history of molestation than do heterosexual persons” is a study of 35 lesbians in an alcohol recovery program.¹⁵⁶ Lesbians in recovery do not represent lesbians in general, and alcoholism may result from being molested as a child. Another study cited in support of the premise that gays are more likely to be molested than heterosexuals is based on a very small sample, “54 gay men and 29 gay women.”¹⁵⁷

We might also consider the study’s authors. The authors all hail from the California School of Professional Psychology, a school ranked 171 out of 185 U.S. Ph.D. programs in psychology by the National Research Council.¹⁵⁸ (This is also the school where Dr. Nicolosi received his doctorate.) Marie E. Tomeo is listed as the lead author to the study: the work is her doctoral student’s thesis. Second author Donald I. Templer was the sponsoring faculty member, and all outside inquiries were to be directed to him. The third and fourth authors sat on Tomeo’s dissertation committee but had little to do with the article, according to fourth author Debra Kotler.¹⁵⁹ Templer is also an advocate of racist eugenic views, the belief that some races are intellectually superior to others. Templer wrote “‘The Bell Curve’: An assessment after ten years.” *The Bell Curve*, by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, was a controversial book published in 1994 alleging racial differences in intelligence. Templer’s retrospective essay lauding the book was published, apparently in 2004, in the *Occidental Quarterly*. Here’s how the *American Prospect*, a liberal monthly, describes *Occidental Quarterly*:

The faculty advisor to the student whose dissertation found high rates of child sexual abuse among gay men and lesbians is also a proponent of racial eugenic views.

It’s hard to fathom that a small journal like the *Occidental Quarterly*, which publishes articles defending the science of eugenics, claiming that “neoconservatism is indeed a Jewish intellectual and political movement,” contending that Abraham Lincoln was a white supremacist pressured into “an unnecessary war,” and saying that the United States made a grave error in declaring war on Nazi Germany, could have had much of an impact on American politics. Yet as the premier voice of the white-nationalist movement, the *Occidental Quarterly* acts as a roundtable for some of the far right’s most influential figures.¹⁶⁰

Templer’s essay cites a small sampling of contentious studies in support of Templer’s racial beliefs. Templer holds,

The evidence that they and other scholars use in inferring that on average blacks tend not to be as well endowed genetically in intelligence as whites is overwhelming. It

156. Hall, J.M. (1996). Pervasive effects of childhood sexual abuse in lesbians’ recovery from alcohol abuse. *Subst. Use Misuse* 31:225-239, cited in Tomeo et al. (2001), 535-536.

157. Simari, C. & Baskin, D. (1982). Incestuous experiences within homosexual populations: A preliminary study. *Arch. Sex. Behav.* 11:329-344, cited in Tomeo et al. (2001), 541.

158. National Research Council. NRC Ranking of U.S. Psychology Ph.D. Programs. Retrieved on 02/28/2006 from <http://www.socialpsychology.org/ranking.htm>.

159. Personal communication, March 1, 2006

160. Blumenthal, Max. (08/31/2004) White Noise: Anti-immigration zealots have launched a stealth campaign to “fix” Bush’s policies. *The American Prospect*. Retrieved on 02/28/2006 from <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.ww?section=root&name=ViewWeb&articleId=8442>.



is one of the most conclusively established (albeit not accepted by all psychologists) generalizations in the field of psychology. If the biological hypothesis that explains the black-white gap in intelligence is a myth, then Pavlov's dog never salivated, and B. F. Skinner's pigeons never pressed a bar and were never rewarded with food. There are many psychologists who prefer not to accept that many unsuccessful individuals are unsuccessful because they are intellectually dull.¹⁶¹

Templer says that *Bell Curve* authors Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray "had the courage to write what is scientifically valid rather than what is politically correct. They displayed the courage to tell the truth about IQ and race."¹⁶² Ignoring any evidence that differences in economic and educational attainment between races may be the result of race discrimination and unequal opportunities, Templer holds that all inequality is based on legitimate biological differences. He cites another eugenicist's claims that "Blacks tend to have the smallest brain size, lowest intelligence..." Told by an anthropologist friend that the ruling class in all societies have "lighter complexions," Templer writes that "the preference for lighter skin probably is rooted in the fact that lighter-skinned people tend to be more successful because this success corresponds to a higher average intelligence."¹⁶³ No evidence is provided for this assertion. He then goes on to suggest that "much of the anger of blacks toward whites is a function of jealousy of whites' higher average intelligence levels."¹⁶⁴ This hatred of high intelligence among the unintelligent can be seen throughout history, Templer says, and as evidence he claims,

In the Rodney King riot in Los Angeles, blacks looted and burned business of Koreans. They were angry because the Koreans had the necessary intelligence and work ethic and ability to delay gratification to prosper as successful business people in black neighborhoods.¹⁶⁵

Again, no evidence is offered for this besides his general view that blacks are less "intelligent" than other races.

Templer's essay lauding *The Bell Curve* cites two papers presented at recent conferences that also appear to articulate a racial and racist understanding of intelligence. They are:

Templer, D.I. (2004, February 20-22). The dire consequences of public denial of black-white differences in intelligence. Presented at the American Renaissance Conference, Herndon, VA.

Templer, D.I. & Arikawa, H. (2003, December). Temperature, skin color, per capita income, and IQ: An international perspective. Presented at the International Society for Intelligence Research, Newport Beach, CA.

Given this use of pseudoscience in support of racial inequality and racism, we would be wise to be suspicious of Templer's work in the area of child abuse and sexual orientation.

EMPHASIS ON FACT THAT GAYS ARE A SMALL MINORITY, LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF POPULATION

Several speakers made much of the fact that most surveys indicate that homosexuals—

161. Templer, Donald I. (No date, probably 2004). "The Bell Curve": An assessment after ten years. *The Occidental Quarterly*. 4(3). Retrieved on 02/28/2006 from <http://theoccidentalquarterly.com/vol4no3/dt-tbc.html>.

162. Ibid.

163. Ibid.

164. Ibid.

165. Ibid.



whether measured by self-identity/sexual orientation, attraction, or behavior—represent less than 10% of the population. Nicolosi said that “not 10% but 1 to 2%” of the population is homosexual, and said that the claim that one in 10 people is gay is one of several “gay myths.”

Dick Carpenter, Ph.D., who is described in the program book as “currently serv[ing] as assistant professor of educational leadership in a major research university system,” presented the 10 percent claim as part of a pro-gay political agenda. In a plenary session titled “Why is what they’re teaching so dangerous?” Carpenter showed a video in which a woman affiliated with ACT UP, the direct action group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, said 10 percent of the population is gay. “What’s the goal here, accuracy or an agenda?” Carpenter asked rhetorically.

In his workshop, “Teaching captivity? Addressing the pro-gay agenda in your school,” Dr. Dick Carpenter faulted a gay-inclusive curriculum that said, “A significant percentage of the population is gay.” Carpenter dismissed this claim, saying, “I don’t know about you, but 1 to 3% of the population is not significant.” This statement prompted Massachusetts activist Arthur Lipkin, who is Jewish and gay, to say, “Jews are 3% of the population, so I guess we are not significant.” Other minority groups, such as Native Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders, also represent a small proportion of the U.S. population, but are nonetheless not insignificant.

In pointing out the “myth” that 10 percent of the population is gay—a claim first made in the Kinsey studies half a century ago—Nicolosi, Carpenter and others seemed to be making the claim that gay activists lie, and that this lie was linked to other allegedly false claims made by gay rights activists, such as the claim that people are born gay or that homosexuality is equivalent to heterosexuality. Nicolosi hinted at a grand conspiracy, claiming that “Kinsey himself was a homosexual and a sadomasochist, and he had a personal interest in inflating the numbers.”

In fact, research done since the Kinsey studies are more sound methodologically (see text box: How many gay people are there?).¹⁶⁶ Whether gay men and lesbians are 3 percent of the U.S. population, 6 percent, or 10 percent should not matter. The U.S. Constitution guarantees civil rights to all citizens, whether they are in the majority or constitute a small minority. The gay activists who, a decade or so ago, claimed that gays were 10 percent of the population were not lying, they were simply citing a study that is now outdated.

Whether gay men and lesbians are 3 percent of the U.S. population, 6 percent, or 10 percent does not matter. The U.S. Constitution guarantees civil rights to all citizens.

166. For a critical analysis of the Kinsey study, see Cahill, S., South, K. & Spade, J. (2000). *Outing age: Public policy issues affecting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender elders*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. p. 7 and footnote 41. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/outingage.pdf>



HOW MANY GAY PEOPLE ARE THERE?

How one measures homosexuality and bisexuality affects what percentage of the population is viewed as gay, lesbian or bisexual. If one measures attraction one gets the highest rates. If one measures sexual behavior one gets lower rates, and if one asks about self-identification one gets the lowest rates. A number of studies conducted over the past decade and a half indicate that the percentage of the population that is homosexual is likely in the low- to mid-single digits, perhaps between 3 and 6 percent.

The 2002 National Survey of Family Growth found that 6.5 percent of men 25-44 years of age and 11 percent of women 25-44 years of age reported a same-sex sexual experience. When asked if they thought of themselves as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or something else, 2.3 percent of respondents answered homosexual, 1.8 percent bisexual, and 5.7 percent said something else or did not give an answer (3.9 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively). Among women, 1.3 percent answered homosexual, 2.8 percent bisexual, and 5.6 percent said something else or did not give an answer (3.8 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively). Roughly 4.1 percent of respondents identified as homosexual or bisexual.

When questioned about their sexual attractions, 92 percent of men 18 to 44 years of age said they were attracted to only females, while 3.9 percent said mostly to females and 3.2 percent said mostly males, or males and females equally. For women, 86 percent said they were attracted only to males, 10 percent said mostly to males and 3.4 percent said mostly to females or equally to males and females.¹⁶⁷

In 1994, the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs) found that 2.8 percent of men and 1.4 per-

cent of women identified as gay or lesbian, while 7.7 percent of men and 7.5 percent of women reported homosexual desire.¹⁶⁸

The 1996 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a comprehensive study of over 12,000 youth in grades seven through 12, found that 6 percent of participants between the ages of 12 and 19 reported same-sex attraction, with 1% reporting that they were only attracted to members of their own sex and 5 percent reporting attraction to both sexes.¹⁶⁹ A 1999 Safe Schools Coalition of Washington study found that among eight population-based studies administered over 10 years to 83,042 youth, 4 to 5 percent of teens in secondary schools either identified themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual; had engaged in same-sex sexual activity; or had experienced same-sex attraction.¹⁷⁰ More recent population-based studies have had similar results:

- The 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that 5 percent of respondents either self-identified as gay or bisexual or reported same-sex sexual experiences¹⁷¹
- The 2001 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 3 percent of students had engaged in same-sex sexual activity¹⁷²
- Finally, Voter News Service exit polls in 1996, 1998 and 2000 found that between 4 and 5 percent of all voters self-identified as gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Voters under 40 were twice as likely to identify as gay or bisexual as voters over 40, indicating that older voters were less willing to "out" themselves to an exit pollster and that the 4-5 percent figure is likely an undercount.¹⁷³

167. Mosher, W., Chandra A. & Jones, J. (2005, September 15). Sexual Behavior and Selected Health Measures: Men and Women 15-44 Years of Age, United States, 2002. *Advance Data From Vital and Health Statistics. Number 362*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

168. Laumann, E., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T. & Michaels, S. (1994). *The Social Organization of Sexuality in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved October 17, 2005, from http://gaydata.org/ds016_NHSLs.html

169. Russell, S.T., Seif H. & Truong, N.L. (2001). School outcomes of sexual minority youth in the United States: Evidence from a national study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 24, 111-127.

170. Reis, B. & Saewyc E. (1999). *Eighty-three thousand youth: Selected findings of eight population-based studies as they pertain to antigay harassment and the safety and well-being of sexual minority students*. Seattle: The Safe Schools Coalition of Washington.

171. Massachusetts Department of Education. (2002). *2001 Massachusetts youth risk behavior survey results*. Malden, MA: Author. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/hssss/yrbs/01/results.pdf>

172. Vermont Department of Health Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs. (2002). *2001 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Burlington, VT: Author. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from <http://www.state.vt.us/health/adap/pubs/2001/yrbs2001.pdf>

173. Unpublished analysis of 2000 Voter News Service exit poll data. Cited in Bailey, R. (2000). *Out and voting II: The gay, lesbian, and bisexual vote in congressional elections, 1990-1998*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/outvote2.pdf>



ARCHAIC, STEREOTYPICAL GENDER ROLES ARE CENTRAL TO HETEROSEXUALITY

Dr. Nicolosi, Melissa Fryrear and others made a number of jokes about the differences between men and women. Often these reflected outdated gender stereotypes, particularly about women.

For example, Nicolosi told a joke about a boy who got the part of the father in a school play. His mother, indignant, told him, “You go back and tell them you want a speaking part.” Describing innate differences between (presumably straight) males and females, Nicolosi said men are “dull, can’t see color as well, can’t remember show tunes.”

Fryrear made a number of self-deprecating jokes about her lack of femininity and her travails trying to appear feminine and, therefore, apparently, heterosexual. It was clear that she considered outward manifestations of mid-20th Century American femininity as evidence of her transition “out of homosexuality” into heterosexuality. Here are a few examples:

I was bound up for so many years. I thought it was weak to cry. But now I’m a princess so I’m the queen of crying.

God taught me about this thing called womanhood. [This included] eyebrow plucking, mudmasks...Do you have any idea how expensive it is to be a woman?... My friend, Linda, has a heated eyelash curler too. This is true!

Fryrear frequently joked about how much work she still had to do on her femininity/womanhood, that despite her best efforts she couldn’t completely shed her butchness and “mannishness.” Fryrear is a large, tall woman. At one point she joked about how hard she had to work each morning fitting into her pantyhose.

Mike Haley told how his father called him “Michelle” as a child, or “his third daughter” (Haley had two older sisters). This was because Haley was “a mommy’s boy” and did not like to play sports. His father owned a sporting good store.

During an afternoon question and answer session, Mike Haley talked about how, after he left homosexuality, “I wanted my outward manifestations to show the work God was doing inside of me.” This made him pay closer attention to “how you cross your legs” (apparently there is a gay way and a straight way). Haley said he developed effeminate habits from spending too much time around his mothers and sisters, “for example, watching how my mother placed her napkin in her lap.” He mentioned one ex-gay man who “calls very visible manifestations of where he’s been [i.e. effeminate behavior] ‘scar tissue.’” He also said that ex-gay men needed to act masculine in order to be accepted into the company of heterosexual men: “If I’m going to be doing things that are offensive to other men, then I won’t be able to get close to them in the way I need to.”

HOMOSEXUALITY DESCRIBED AS A CONDITION CAUSED BY THE DEVIL

Both Haley and Fryrear said that Satan was behind their experiences with homosexuality. “There is an enemy of our souls,” Fryrear said. “We know he is the deceiver, the father of lies. Homosexuality is not genetic...The opposite of homosexuality is holiness,” Fryrear said.



HOMOSEXUALITY COMPARED TO ALCOHOLISM, LINKED TO PATHOLOGY, AIDS

Fryrear compared homosexuality to alcoholism, a claim frequently made by anti-gay activists. Another speaker, John, made this comparison during the question and answer session in the afternoon. Speakers also portrayed homosexuality as intrinsically pathological, claiming that homosexuality and self-loathing were two aspects of the same condition. Fryrear spoke of the lesbian having “a lack of confidence in her feminine identity and an insecurity in her sense of worth as a female.” Speakers also portrayed homosexuality as intrinsically linked to HIV/AIDS, despite the fact that lesbians have much lower rates of HIV/AIDS than heterosexual women and men. At one point Mike Haley, talking about a former friend who was gay, said, “I saw him just before he died. He died of AIDS of course.”

Some ex-gays described their struggle as akin to that of alcoholics; although they might stop engaging in homosexual acts, the temptation to do so is something they will struggle with for the rest of their lives. For example, Alan Chambers, president of Exodus International, said, “The struggle may be lifelong, but Christ will bring you peace. I still struggle with my feelings, but I have a new identity as an ex-gay Christian. People say I’m in denial, but I admit my struggle to keep my flesh from overcoming my spirit.”

Fryrear said she was on the lookout for a man, preferably “a red-head in a kilt,” but that she also would be happy to remain celibate for the rest of her life. “Singlehood is a calling,” she said, referring to herself as “a handmaiden of Christ” on “a journey of repentance and obedience,” in “pursuit of holiness” which is “the opposite of homosexuality.”

Speakers portrayed homosexuality as intrinsically linked to HIV/AIDS, despite the fact that lesbians have much lower rates of HIV/AIDS than heterosexual women and men.

GAY ACTIVISTS COMPARED TO NAZIS

Dr. Nicolosi portrayed ex-gay activists as brave and standing up to intimidation. Referring to his own work, Nicolosi said “many other psychologists don’t want to touch this issue because of intimidation.” Others warned that gay activists on college campuses intimidated anti-gay Christian students into silence.

Several speakers took this a step further, comparing gay activists to Nazis. Another compared gay activists to mass murderers and slave owners. Those who compromise with gay demands were compared to Neville Chamberlain, the British diplomat who sought to appease Hitler in 1938. Referring to the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands and comparing the Nazis to gay activists, one speaker quoted a Holocaust survivor: “The true horror of the occupation only came over us slowly – a rock through a synagogue window. It’s like they were testing us, trying the temper of our nation, seeing how far they could go.”

Such parallels are frequent on the part of antigay activists. Focus on the Family’s Dr. James Dobson compared pro-gay marriage developments to the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Nazi invasion of Europe:



Just as the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 by the empire of Japan served to energize and mobilize the armed forces of the United States, it would appear that the vicious assault on marriage and the church in recent months has begun to reinvigorate people of faith. I see indications that the church is marshaling its forces and preparing to meet the challenge. Evil has a way of overreaching, and that appears to have happened regarding the blatant and lawless assault on marriage and biblical morality.¹⁷⁴

Like Adolf Hitler, who overran his European neighbors, those who favor homosexual marriage are determined to make it legal, regardless of the democratic processes that stand in their way.¹⁷⁵

The Massachusetts Family Institute (MFI), a local affiliate of Focus on the Family, has a link on its website which connects to *The Pink Swastika*, a book that argues, falsely, that “rather than being victimized by the Nazis, gay men in Hitler’s inner circle masterminded the Holocaust.”¹⁷⁶ The MFI website also links to an essay by Scott Lively, coauthor of *The Pink Swastika*, titled “Homosexuality and the Nazi Party,” which appears to be an excerpt from the book.¹⁷⁷

Focus on the Family and the Massachusetts Family Institute are also fond of other hyperboles. Here are two more from Dr. Dobson that portray gay people as capable of destroying the United States and the planet:

...and I tell you it [same-sex marriage] will bring the destruction of this nation and many others if we go in that direction. (October 6, 2005 radio broadcast.)¹⁷⁸

Homosexuals are not monogamous. They want to destroy the institution of marriage. It will destroy marriage. It will destroy the Earth. (October 22, 2004 rally in support of Republican U.S. Senate candidate Tom Coburn.)¹⁷⁹

In a 2004 book against same-sex marriage, Dr. Dobson claimed that the threat posed by gay marriage exceeds that posed by terrorism:

There is no issue today that is more significant to our culture than the defense of the family. Not even the war on terror eclipses it.¹⁸⁰

Pro-gay court rulings and policy developments are frequently compared to terrorism by Christian right activists.¹⁸¹ The Massachusetts Family Institute promoted the terror analogy in early 2004, when it posted a column on its website comparing gay marriage activists to Al Qaeda.¹⁸²

174. Excerpt from Dobson, J. (2004). *Marriage under fire: Why we must win this battle*. Multnomah Press. The chapter titled “The state of our unions” is available on Focus on the Family’s Website. Retrieved October 14, 2005, from <http://www.family.org/docstudy/bookshelf/a0032438.cfm>

175. Ibid. p. 41.

176. Moser, B. (2005, spring). Making myths: Anti-gay religious crusaders claim homosexuals helped mastermind the Holocaust. They’re not telling the truth. *Intelligence Report*. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center. 18-19.

177. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from <http://www.leaderu.com/jhs/lively.html>

178. Dobson, J. (2005, October 6). Interview. Focus on the Family. A transcript and audio recording of this interview was retrieved October 13, 2005, from <http://mediamatters.org/items/200510070004>.

179. Snyder, C. P. (2004, October 23). Marriage, family advocate in state to support Coburn; James Dobson spoke to people during a rally and urged them to consider Brad Carson’s record. *The Daily Oklahoman*.

180. Dobson, J. (2004). *Marriage Under Fire: Why We Must Win This Battle*, Multnomah Publishers, Inc. pp. 84-85. An excerpt of this book is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_Under_Fire.

181. For more examples, including comments by former Family Research Council leader Gary Bauer and current FRC director Tony Perkins, see Cahill, S. (2004). *Same-sex marriage in the United States: Focus on the facts*. New York: Lexington Books. pp. 36-37, 82.

182. The Massachusetts Family Institute posted a column on its website by Dennis Prager titled “San Francisco and Islamists: Fighting the Same Enemy.” Prager compares “secular extremism” to “religious extremism...one enemy is led from abroad... (cont’d)



GAY ACTIVISTS SAID TO THREATEN THE RIGHTS OF CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVES, INCLUDING THEIR FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Speakers claimed that gay activists, unchecked, will destroy freedom of religion, conscience, and speech in America. The Rev. Joe Dallas warned that “the silencing will extend to the faith of our Gospel.” In fact, our Constitution’s First Amendment will always protect religious conservatives’ right to hold and express anti-gay views, and to assemble to promote them as they did in Boston on October 29, 2005. Conservative congregations will be able to prevent gay marriages within their churches, just as the Roman Catholic Church is still able to ban divorce for Catholics, even though divorce is available from the state of Massachusetts.

Speakers portrayed conservative evangelical Christians as a small beleaguered “inconvenient minority” and claimed that gay people have politicians, the media, and the culture on their side.

In fact, until recently in Massachusetts there was an anti-gay House of Representatives and there is still an anti-gay, Republican governor. All three branches of the federal government are controlled by an anti-gay political party. While increasingly America supports legal equality for gay people, significant majorities still oppose marriage equality, and four in five states have anti-gay family laws.

Dallas made a number of statements that were disturbing, including the following excerpts. While we don’t fully understand what he was advocating, we are certain that the parallels he was drawing were not good:

There is a difference between anger and hostility. There is much to be angry about. The Christian in 2005 who reads the paper and doesn’t feel righteous anger is a Christian who is blind...Anger [leads one to] correct a problem...When I feel wrath I don’t want to correct a problem, I want to kill...

The Church is the conscience of the State. A man without a conscience is a sociopath. The only thing more frightening than a sociopathic man is a sociopathic culture... [Our culture has] allowed itself to be intimidated into silence...[there is] no hope for a State that has been intimidated into silence. God will require the blood of the State at the foot of the conscience of the State [i.e. at the foot of the Church]...Some gay activists want to silence the State...

From his opening line that “the silencing will extend to the faith of our Gospel,” Dallas is appealing to an interpretation of the Bible that is apocalyptic in nature. Most Christian and secular biblical scholars would describe this kind of interpretation as urgently awaiting the return of Jesus and the “end times.” By taking this apocalyptic interpretation for granted, Dallas is aware of the emotional appeal this will have on the audience since many evangelical churches read the Bible in this manner. Dallas is most likely aware that conservative evangelical Christians will connect Old Testament

182 (cont’d). ...The other is directed from home.” Prager continues, “the war over same-sex marriage and the war against Islamic totalitarianism are actually two fronts in the same war – a war for the preservation of the unique creation known as Judeo-Christian civilization...” Prager argues “the Left is preoccupied with destroying America’s distinctive values...So, if the Islamists are fellow anti-Americans, the Left figures it can worry about them later...” He goes on to tell Massachusetts Family Institute supporters that “The civilization is now fighting for its life – as much here as abroad. Join the fight, or it will be gone as fast as you can say ‘Democrat.’” Prager, D. *San Francisco and Islamists: Fighting the Same Enemy*. Linked to the Massachusetts Family Institute Web site. Retrieved March 3, 2004, from <http://www.mafamily.org/commentary.html>



stories of persecution and silencing of God's people with themselves and bring about an urgency to defend and protect themselves from dangerous ungodly forces. One such force, as Dallas described it in a workshop earlier in the day, is the alleged abomination of "ceremonial homosexuality."

Through this interpretation, the danger of two points made by Dallas becomes clearer. The first point is reminiscent of the Conservative Gospel Movement at the end of the previous century, where the fundamentalist movement began in the United States. It is also reflective of the political nature of the modern Christian conservative movement, which advocates that every Christian should have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. The danger is the assumption that political involvement has the same apocalyptic undertones as interpreting the Bible, such that political engagement is not about dialogue, debate, and other democratic processes, but rather about eliminating one's unchristian and unbiblical enemy.

The final point above is possibly the most insidious because it follows the same logic that Nicolosi uses when looking at medical and scientific information. Dallas does not distinguish between biblical interpretation and scholarship, political convictions, Christian beliefs, and the complex relationship between citizens and the state. Like Nicolosi, Dallas is able to make this assertion by drawing from debunked biblical research and faulty theological reasoning. His claims and arguments do not appear in any reputable (or non-denominational) theological or religious journals, articles, or university curriculums. Like Nicolosi, Dallas ultimately draws from an obsolete notion of a "universal theology" and ignores the scholarship of the past 50 years that has brought about viable and diverse work on religion, biblical interpretation, and historical research, which makes his views of the bible untenable.

We interpret Dallas's remarks as a rallying call in the mode of the Old Testament prophets to exhort evangelical Christians to confront sin. Dallas' presentation was an attempt to get his listeners to become politically active in the anti-gay movement. To paraphrase: Christians are obliged to challenge sin, especially in the face of perceived intimidation. If the church does not hold the state accountable for its mistakes, then God will exercise his wrath, not only against "some gay activists," but against everyone, including church members who fail in their obligation to confront sin.

The problem is that people's sincere faith is mobilized into bigoted political activity by suggesting that anti-gay activism is God's will and that failure to act is not just a personal shortcoming but a religious error. Implicit in this is the claim that a particular reading of biblical text should be endorsed by the state. Further, this suggests that eroding the separation of church and state is not only acceptable, but also necessary.

There was one point on which we agreed with the Rev. Dallas. He faulted pro-gay activists who rallied in front of the Temple Baptist Church at midday. Among the many chants was "Shut it down!" Referencing that chant, the Rev. Dallas said that it frightened him and represented "the dark side of the gay rights movement." While we understand why many are opposed to the Love Won Out conference, the answer is not to "shut it down." To do that would violate people's freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion. The answer is to expose it and challenge it intellectually and in the court of public opinion.



A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

Love Won Out appeals to and exploits anxieties among parents who are worried that their children may be gay or gender variant. Many parents don't want their children to be gay because they believe there is something intrinsically pathological about homosexuality and the so-called "homosexual lifestyle." However, this view was definitively rejected by the American Psychiatric Association 33 years ago. Studies show that relationship quality and satisfaction are about the same among same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples.¹⁸³

Another reason many parents don't want their children to be gay is the continued level of social stigma against homosexuality and prejudice against gay people. Focus on the Family, the organization sponsoring the Love Won Out conference, is the nation's largest anti-gay organization. While anti-gay stigma and bias are part of the cultural tradition of the United States and the west, it is important to acknowledge the role groups like Focus on the Family play in stoking stigma and bias, spreading fear and misunderstanding about gay people, and mobilizing resentment against pro-gay advances, such as the Massachusetts high court ruling in 2003.

Although many speakers gave "testimony" to their "exodus" from homosexuality, and many speakers presented an analysis of how homosexuality allegedly developed in children, no speaker gave specifics about how Love Won Out's methods either transformed homosexuals into heterosexuals or kept children from developing into homosexuals. Aside from frequent allusions to the transformative power of accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal savior by becoming a born-again Christian, no other specific methods were shared with conference attendees.

Focus on the Family, the group sponsoring the Love Won Out conference, promotes a broad, reactionary political agenda that goes far beyond opposing legal equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people and promoting anti-gay policies. Focus on the Family also opposes women's equality and advocates a rigid adherence to archaic, anachronistic gender roles and family structures. FOF opposes sex education, reproductive choice, and the teaching of evolution in schools. It also supports allowing school prayer.¹⁸⁴ Speakers at the Love Won Out conference denounced no-fault divorce; many Christian right groups seek to repeal no-fault divorce and require mutual consent and waiting periods before a divorce is granted. Focus on the Family represents a backlash movement to rapid social change, including the successes of the gay rights, civil rights and women's movements over the past 40 years. Its ultimate goal is a theocratic state in which one religious tradition—right-wing, evangelical Christianity—will determine public policy and individual rights, even those involving control over one's body and one's intimate relationships.

It is important to acknowledge the role groups like Focus on the Family play in stoking stigma and bias by spreading fear and misunderstanding about gay people.

No speaker gave specifics about how Love Won Out's methods either transformed homosexuals into heterosexuals or kept children from developing into homosexuals.

183. Gottman Institute. (2001). *12-year study of gay and lesbian couples*. Author. Retrieved January 5, 2004 from <http://www.gottman.com/research/projects/gaylesbian>

184. Cahill, S. (2004, March). *Anti-gay groups active in Massachusetts: A closer look*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Available at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/AntiGayMA.pdf>



Focus on the Family and its Love Won Out conference pose a very proximate threat to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. But this Christian right behemoth also threatens much that is great about our country—religious pluralism, church-state separation, individual rights, equality, not to mention intellectual honesty and compassion. As such, it poses an acute threat to all Americans.



Does conversion therapy work? It depends on the definition of “change”

The slogans, “change is possible,” “question homosexuality” and “truth brought freedom” have been a part of advertisements used by Exodus International in newspapers and magazine ads, and in 2005, on giant billboards along highways in Houston, Texas,¹⁸⁵ and Orlando, Fla.¹⁸⁶ In a press release announcing the Orlando ad campaign, Exodus President Alan Chambers said, “The public is constantly bombarded by media messages asserting that people are born gay and that change is a myth.”¹⁸⁷

In the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section of its website, Exodus explain what it means by “change” in more confusing detail:

No one is saying that change is easy. It requires strong motivation, hard work, and perseverance.... On the statistical side, careful reviews of research studies on sexual orientation change suggest that real change is indeed possible. Studies suggesting change rates in the range of 30-50% are not unusual, although “success rates” vary considerably and the measurement of change is problematic.¹⁸⁸

Further analysis of the statements made by ex-gay programs and their leaders reveals a shifting definition of what it means to “change.”

According to Rev. John Smid, director of Love In Action, “There isn’t a cure for homosexuality.”¹⁸⁹ In a 2001 interview, Alan Chambers, said, “I don’t think [change is] going from gay to straight. Just saying that doesn’t sound like an accurate representation of what Exodus facilitates or proclaims.”¹⁹⁰ Smid and Chambers are not alone in this sentiment as many of the nation’s most prominent ex-gays admit to still having same-sex attractions. According to Joe Dallas, a featured speaker at Focus on the Family’s “Love Won Out” conferences, “No one has ever left therapy saying, ‘Wow, I have absolutely no homosexual thoughts.’”¹⁹¹ In his testimony distributed by Love In Action (LIA), John



¹⁸⁵ Exodus International. (2005, January 26). Houston billboards feature former homosexuals: Ministry sponsors ads offering a message of hope. Author. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from http://exodus.to/news_2005_0127.shtml

¹⁸⁶ Exodus International. (2005, April 1). Orlando billboards to feature former homosexuals. Offering a message of change: Ex-gay organization's ads to appear above local gay resort. Author. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from http://exodus.to/news_2005_0401PR.shtml

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Exodus International. http://www.exodus-international.org/exodus_faqs_success.shtml

¹⁸⁹ Feyerick, D. (2005, July 28).

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Alan and Leslie Chambers, taped March 11, 2001. Cited in Besen, W. R. (2003). p. 35.

¹⁹¹ Christian, S. (1990, April 5). The last temptation. *Los Angeles Times*. Cited in Besen, W. R. (2003). p. 37.



Smid—married for over sixteen years—admits, “I still struggle at times...I still shut down with my wife at times. I periodically have sexual thoughts regarding men.”¹⁹²

Perhaps because of the growing number of ex-gay leaders who have publicly “fallen off the wagon,” when asked specifically in interviews many current ex-gay leaders have abandoned explicit claims of conversion, focusing on less stringent measures of success. For example, more recent success stories highlighted by ex-gay programs stop short of declaring a full conversion. For example, Leah Deriel, an LIA graduate interviewed by NPR in July 2005, admitted that “[t]he feelings come back from time to time.”¹⁹³ According to Gerard Wellman, another LIA graduate who is also a staff member of the organization, “[t]herapy doesn’t change attractions, it changes behavior. I have guardrails not for my attractions but for my behaviors so there’s things I don’t do based on my faith.”¹⁹⁴ Finally, Ben Marshall, a graduate of Refuge, the same LIA program that Zach Stark and DJ Butler were forced to attend, admits, “[t]here is that lust that’s still there. It’s subsiding. I don’t know if it’ll ever go away altogether.”¹⁹⁵



Rev. John Smid,
Love in Action

Perhaps the most striking example of the confusing rhetorical dance by ex-gay leaders around the question of whether their programs actually work is a statement made by John Smid, who, when asked by a reporter how God makes a gay man straight replied:

I’m looking at that wall and suddenly I say it’s blue. Someone else comes along and says, “No, it’s gold.” But I want to believe that wall is blue. Then God comes along and He says, “You’re right, John, [that yellow wall] is blue.” That’s the help I need. God can help me make that [yellow] wall blue.¹⁹⁶

In a July 2005 interview with *Friends and Family* magazine, Smid provides more clarity on the success rate of his ex-gay teen program, Refuge, for the 23 adolescents who had been treated by the time of the interview.

Out of the 23, one of them left after two days, who was not a fit for the program; two of them remained through the two-week period and at the end stated that they were going to pursue homosexuality after they left the program. The other 19, or 20, at the point where they graduated, said that they were clearly not going to pursue homosexuality and they felt so much clarity about it. I think as a result of that since that time in two and a half years I would say I think, from what I can see and know, about three or four of them returned to homosexual behavior, but I clearly see their age bracket as a very fluid time and I don’t know where they’re going to be 10 years from now or 20 years from now.¹⁹⁷

However, in a *New York Times* article also printed in July 2005, Smid said that he does

192. Smid, J. (1994). Journey out of homosexuality. Memphis, TN: Love in Action. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from http://www.stonewallrevisited.com/pages/john_s.html; Cited in Besen, W. R. (2003). p. 36.

193. OnPoint. (2005, July 29). Making gays straight. Boston: WBUR. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from http://www.onpointradio.org/shows/2005/07/20050729_a_main.asp

194. Sawyer, D. (2005, July 28). Conversion therapy? Controversial crusade: Turning gay teens straight. New York: ABC News.

195. Feyerick, D. (2005, July 28).

196. Cited in Davis, C. (2005, June 17). Homo no mo: Yellow is blue and pink’s a sin at the Love in Action camp. *Memphis Flyer*. Retrieved July 20, 2005, from <http://www.memphisflyer.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=9657>

197. Pair, P. (2005, July). Love In Action’s Rev. John J. Smid talks openly. *Family and Friends Magazine*. Reprinted with permission at Exgay Watch. Retrieved February 20, 2006, from http://www.exgaywatch.com/blog/archives/2005/07/love_in_actions_1.html



not track the success rate of his programs.¹⁹⁸ It is important to note here that Smid charges \$2,000 for the two-week Refuge program, and \$4,500 for the 6-week program.

The shifting definition of the word “change,” along with unclear details of how “change” happens, is an important development in the third wave of ex-gay activism. Additionally, ex-gay and evangelical Christian right leaders have yet to come up with a consistent and verifiable number of how many individuals have actually been changed. For example, in 2002, Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family claimed that there are “800 known former gay and lesbian individuals today who have escaped from the homosexual lifestyle and found wholeness in their newfound heterosexuality.”¹⁹⁹ Three years later, in 2005, Melissa Fryrear had a larger but less specific number, claiming “literally thousands of men and women have successfully overcome homosexuality.”²⁰⁰

Over a three year period, the number of homosexuals who have changed according to Alan Chambers has grown exponentially. In an August 2003 interview responding to ex-gay leader Michael Johnston’s “falling back into homosexuality,” Chambers said there were “thousands” of ex-gays.²⁰¹ In an April 2004 same-sex marriage debate at UC Berkeley, he claimed to be one of “tens of thousands” of ex-gays.²⁰² More recently, in July 2005, he claimed that there are “hundreds of thousands” of ex-gays.²⁰³

Given the sheer number of ex-gays that exist according to Alan Chambers, one would think that ex-gay leaders would have more success stories of real people available on their websites or appearing in their advertisements, but that is not the case. According to Richard Cohen, an ex-gay therapist who claims to know “thousands” of ex-gays, “A lot of the people I’ve worked with ... don’t want to come forward. So many people don’t want to be seen or heard. They’ve moved on. That’s like their past.”²⁰⁴ Melissa Fryrear offers an alternative explanation: “There are plenty of success stories, but those people often keep quiet to avoid intimidation by the gay community.”²⁰⁵

198. Williams, A. (2005, July 17) Gay Teenager Stirs a Storm, *The New York Times*.

199. Dobson, J. (2002, June). Dr. Dobson’s newsletter: Can homosexuality be treated and prevented? Focus on the Family. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.family.org/docstudy/newsletters/a0021043.cfm>

200. Jacobs, E. (2005, August 11). Ex-gay movement plans Boston confab. *Bay Windows*. Retrieved August 11, 2005, from <http://www.baywindows.com/media/paper328/news/2005/08/11/News/ExGay.Movement.Plans.Boston.Confab-966568.shtml>.

201. Foust, M. (2003, August 8). News about fallen leader doesn’t change truth of ex-’gay’ message, friends say. *BP News*. Retrieved July 13, 2005, from <http://bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=16452>

202. Chambers, A. (2004, April 17). Opening testimony of Exodus president Alan Chambers: U.C. Berkeley debate on same-sex marriage. *NARTH*. Retrieved February 17, 2006, from <http://narth.com/docs/chambers.html>

203. WorldNetDaily.com. (2005, July 5) OK’ing “gay” unions “not true compassion.” Author. Retrieved July 13, 2005, from http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=45132

204. Besen, W. R (2003).

205. Jacobs, E. (2005, August 11). Ex-gay movement plans Boston confab. *Bay Windows*. Retrieved August 11, 2005, from <http://www.baywindows.com/media/paper328/news/2005/08/11/News/ExGay.Movement.Plans.Boston.Confab-966568.shtml>



The debate over the 2003 Spitzer study on the efficacy of conversion therapies

...it is possible to change, first of all.... Dr. Spitzer is the psychiatrist who did the most to change the policy of the American Psychiatric Association saying there is nothing wrong with homosexuality.... He's come all the way over to the other side and now says that it can be changed in some individuals because it's not genetic.

—Dr. James Dobson

Referencing the work of Dr. Robert L. Spitzer as evidence supporting the efficacy of conversion therapy in a CNN interview with Larry King²⁰⁶

The role of conversion therapy has long been controversial in the professional psychological community. However, the 2003 publication of a paper by renowned psychologist Robert L. Spitzer brought the issue back to the forefront of the debate surrounding the “cause” of sexual orientation and, perhaps more importantly, its impact on the public policy debate over full legal and social equality for LGBT Americans.²⁰⁷ On the surface, the study purports to demonstrate that it is possible in some instances for individuals to change their sexual orientation following participation in a conversion therapy program.

For his study, Spitzer interviewed 200 people (143 men and 57 women) over the telephone, asking them questions about their sexual attraction and sexual history prior to and subsequent to conversion therapy. A number of respondents claimed a marked increase in both the frequency and satisfaction of “heterosexual activity.” However, only 11 percent of men and 37 percent of women reported that they completely changed their sexual orientation. While these numbers might not seem especially impressive, they were enthusiastically seized upon by ex-gay leaders and the evangelical Christian right as evidence that sexual orientation was a changeable behavioral trait, and that gays and lesbians did not deserve “special protections.” Why did the ex-gay movement place such importance on this particular study?

The answer is simple, but requires us to go back more than 30 years to a time when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) considered homosexuality a treatable mental illness. At the APA’s conference in 1972, a young Dr. Spitzer attended a panel discussion on electroshock therapy as a form of conversion therapy treatment for gay men and lesbians.²⁰⁸ After lesbian and gay activists interrupted the meeting to protest their

206. CNN Larry King Live. (2002, March 7). Transcript: Interview with Dr. James Dobson. CNN. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0203/07/lkl.00.html>

207. Spitzer, R. L. (2003). Can some gay men and lesbians change their sexual orientation? 200 participants reporting a change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32 (5). 403–417.

208. Besen, W. R. (2003). p.227.



mistreatment by psychiatrists, Spitzer engaged one of the protestors in conversation. After further conversations over the course of a year, Spitzer decided to advocate for the removal of homosexuality from the profession's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). In 1973 the APA voted to approve this change.²⁰⁹ Given Spitzer's pivotal role in advancing the cause of gay rights, is it any wonder that years later his role in suggesting that a change in sexual orientation was possible would make him a poster child for the ex-gay movement? Before discussing the criticisms and outcome of the debate over the Spitzer study, we first provide a brief history of conversion therapies, which date back to the early 1900s

FROM FREUD TO NICOLASI: A BRIEF HISTORY OF CONVERSION THERAPIES

The history of these controversial therapies is complex, with discussion about the causes, consequences and treatments for homosexuality going back at least as far as Freud. Given the day and age in which he lived, Freud was generally tolerant of the notion of homosexuality, and he even signed a statement calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality in Germany in the 1930's.²¹⁰ According to Dr. Jack Drescher, "Taken out of the historical context in which he wrote, and depending upon the author's selective citations, Freud can be portrayed as either virulently antihomosexual or as a closeted friend of gays."²¹¹ Since his time, many psychologists have sought to impart their version of the truth on this complex topic.

In the 1960s, Sandor Rado laid the foundation for what became modern-day conversion therapy, claiming that heterosexuality is the "...only nonpathological" outcome of human sexual development.²¹² Irving Bieber more directly linked homosexuality to a dysfunctional family situation, supporting the notion that a mental health professional might help a patient "overcome" the "...personality maladaptation" caused by dysfunction in the nuclear family.²¹³ This "blame the parents" route was further adapted by Charles Socarides, who blamed "...absent, weak, detached or sadistic" fathers for creating homosexual sons.²¹⁴ Socarides' theories took on a new context after his own son came out of the closet in the 1995.²¹⁵

In 1969 Lionel Ovesey took conversion therapy advocacy among his peers one step further by suggesting that "those who lack conviction that homosexuality is a treatable illness, but believe instead that it is a natural constitutional variant, should not accept homosexuals as patients."²¹⁶ Compared to the rigors of shock therapy, Ovesey had what some may consider a more simplistic approach to conversion:

There is only one way that the homosexual can overcome this phobia and learn to

209. Ibid. p.228.

210. Drescher, J. (2001). I'm your handyman: A history of reparative therapies. In A. Shidlo, M. Schroeder & J. Drescher (eds.), *Sexual conversion therapy: Ethical, clinical and research perspectives*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Medical Press, pp.5-24.

211. Ibid. p. 7.

212. Ibid. p.12.

213. Ibid. p.13.

214. Ibid. pp.13-14.

215. Nagourney, A. (1995). Father doesn't know best. *Out Magazine*, Feb. pp. 75-77, 113-115.

216. Ovesey, L. (1969). *Homosexuality and pseudohomosexuality*. New York: Science House. p. 119. Cited in Drescher, J. (2001). p. 14.



have heterosexual intercourse, and that way is in bed with a woman.... Sooner or later, the homosexual patient must make the necessary attempts to have intercourse, and he must make them again and again, until he is capable of a sustained erection, penetration, and pleasurable intravaginal orgasm.²¹⁷

In the 1980s and '90s, we begin to see the “science” of conversion therapy replaced by religion. In 1991, Joseph Nicolosi produced what has been called the first overtly religious based analysis of this issue, defined by conformity to “traditional values” and gender roles. Nicolosi claimed that homosexual men feel incomplete within themselves; hence they seek out other men to complete themselves. Conversely, heterosexual men have a healthy self regard of themselves as men and so they seek out, quite naturally, a woman to “round out the package,” so to speak.²¹⁸

It is not surprising, given their determination to cling to a pathology-based view of homosexuality, that some adherents to the notion of changeability were frustrated when the APA officially removed homosexuality from the DSM in 1973. Given their increasing sense of marginalization from mainstream psychology and psychiatry, proponents of reparative therapy, lead by Nicolosi, gradually moved away from recognized professional associations, and in the early 1990s established a new organization, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH).²¹⁹

As religion and dogma superseded science for these practitioners, they were welcomed with open arms by anti-LGBT organizations, which spent millions of dollars promoting the possibility of change to support the “special rights” argument they use to fight against legal equality for LGBT people. As Lee Tiffen points out, NARTH has adopted tactics akin to creationists who “...obscure their increasingly fundamentalist religious political agendas behind scientific and pseudo-scientific language.”²²⁰

BACK TO SPITZER: ANTICIPATING THE CRITICISM

Given the predictable controversy that was likely to follow publication of Spitzer’s study, the journal that published his study, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, invited commentaries on his results, which were published in the same issue. A number of researchers and mental health practitioners took the opportunity to review and comment on Spitzer’s work, and the criticisms were broad in scope. The following is a summary of the more significant problems identified with Spitzer’s methodology and interpretations. Despite Spitzer’s reputation, this particularly study was plagued by many of the same fatal flaws found in other conversion therapy research.

First and foremost, Spitzer’s sample of respondents was seriously biased in a number of distinct ways. The respondents were self-selected, which means they were theoretically more likely to have a desire to take part in the study. While self-selection bias is a problem faced by much of social science research (true random, representative samples are extremely difficult and costly to produce, especially when studying small and stigmatized

217. Drescher, J. (2001).

218. Ibid. p.18.

219. Ibid. p.20.

220. Ibid. p.21 citing Tiffen, L. (1994). *Creationism’s upside-down pyramid: How science refutes fundamentalism*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.



minority populations), Spitzer's sample was so biased that the generalizeability of his findings can be seriously questioned. For example, nearly half (43 percent) of his participants were provided by professional ex-gay organizations, with nearly one-quarter (23 percent) referred by NARTH. Additionally, 78 percent had spoken publicly in favor of conversion therapy as a way to "overcome" homosexuality.²²¹

Obviously anyone involved with the ex-gay movement might well be predisposed to say good things about a program so central to the movement's very existence. As Cohen & Savin-Williams note, respondents were "...decidedly invested in demonstrating the possibility and benefits of reparative therapy."²²²

The demographics of the group are also significantly biased towards white, Christian, married people of a certain age range.²²³ Ninety-three percent claimed that their religion was extremely or very important to them, and 19 were mental health professional or directors of ex-gay programs. Given the role of religious organizations in the conversion therapy movement, it is likely that this proportion impacted responses significantly. Legitimate studies have demonstrated the conflict caused by the role of religion on internalized homophobia and "[the] effect of such conflict and anguish very likely distorts assessments made by individuals who have gone to great lengths to seek help."²²⁴ Spitzer also failed to talk to anyone who had experienced particular problems with the therapy process or who publicly decried the programs.

The aim of the study was theoretically to demonstrate the capacity to change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation, but the sexual orientation of respondents prior and subsequent to therapy is hardly clear. In fact, 86 percent of the men and 63 percent of the women in the study commented that after therapy they still experienced same-sex attraction. While we might suggest that they were bisexual, it is clearly an exaggeration in these cases to claim that people successfully changed their sexual orientation.

In the end, Spitzer even declared, "...it would be a serious mistake to conclude from my study that any highly motivated homosexual can change his or her sexual orientation, or that my study shows that homosexuality is a 'choice'"²²⁵ In an interview with *The Advocate* magazine, Spitzer also expressed his support for legal and social equality for gay people saying, "I want to make it clear I support gay marriage and adoption and that I'm opposed to the military policy banning gays from serving openly. Look, I'm a Jew atheist, I'm not really comfortable with right-wing groups. I'm certainly not for telling people they should change for political or religious reasons."²²⁶

Nearly half (43 percent) of Spitzer's participants were provided by professional ex-gay organizations, with nearly one-quarter (23 percent) referred by the National Association for the Reparative Treatment of Homosexuality (NARTH).

221. Spitzer, R. L. (2003). p.406.

222. Cohen, K. M. & Savin-Williams, R. C. (2003). Are converts to be believed? Assessing sexual orientation "conversions." In Archives of Sexual Behavior. (2003). Peer commentaries on Spitzer (2003). *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 32(5), 419

223. Carlson, H. M. (2003). A methodological critique of Spitzer's research on reparative therapy. In Archives of Sexual Behavior. (2003).

224. Hill, C. A. & DiClementi, J. D. (2003). Methodological limitations do not justify the claim that same-sex attraction changed through "reparative therapy." In Archives of Sexual Behavior. (2003).

225. Spitzer, R. L. (2001, September 24). Open e-mail letter to Kari Karkkainen, MP. Cited in Stalstorm, O. & Nissinen, J. (2003). The Spitzer study and the Finnish parliament. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 7(3), 83-95.

226 Bull, C. (2001, July 19). Much ado about changing. *The Advocate*.



Academic research and literature on the harm and ethical violations of conversion therapy

Those of us who have criticized Spitzer from a scientific perspective fear an increase in suicide rates and mental health problems in adolescents and young adults who, due to societal homophobia, internalized homophobia, and poorly designed studies like Spitzer's, are pressed to pursue conversion therapy that may expose them to more harm and years of struggle.

— Dr. Milton Wainberg
Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Columbia University²²⁷

As was the case with Spitzer's study, medical and mental health professionals often warn about the harmful effects of conversion therapy whenever ex-gay leaders receive prominent coverage in the mainstream press. In a *New York Times* article about Zach Stark and his experiences at Refuge, experts stated that the stakes are even higher for adolescents forced by their parents to attend conversion therapy programs because they are already wrestling with deep questions of identity and sexuality. In the article, Dr. Jack Drescher is quoted saying, "One serious risk for the parent to consider is that most of the people who undergo these treatments don't change. That means that most people who go through these experiences often come out feeling worse than when they went in."²²⁸

In an early analysis of conversion therapy published in 1991, Dr. Doug Haldeman, who received an American Psychological Association Presidential Citation for his important and valuable contributions to psychology, warned that "[g]ay men and lesbians who are coming out are at particular risk for the harmful effects of conversion treatments."²²⁹ Young people may view the possibility of change as a panacea during a time when they are having a difficulty accepting themselves and are likely to be afraid of rejection from their friends, families and religion, if they are not experiencing it already. According to Haldeman, this fear makes them vulnerable targets for conversion therapy programs.²³⁰

Haldeman provided two examples of how the vulnerability of youth questioning their sexual orientation may make them an easy target for ex-gay leaders who have "fallen from grace" for having sex with their clients. Collin Clark, whose ex-gay counseling program was affiliated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church, was eventually exposed for having sexual contact with his clients during "treatment." Haldeman also cited the work of Ralph Blair, who wrote one of the first reports on ex-gay programs, simply titled *Ex-gay*. In his book, Blair detailed the history of "Liberation in Jesus Christ," founded

227. Wainberg, M. L. (2004). Letters to the editor: Reply to Spitzer's (2003) reply. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 33(2), 83-84.

228. Williams, A. (2005, July 17) Gay Teenager Stirs a Storm, *The New York Times*.

229. Haldeman, D. (1991). Sexual orientation conversion therapy for gay men and lesbians: A scientific examination. p.153. In J. Gonsiorek & J. Weinrich. (eds.), *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp.149-160

230. Ibid.



by Guy Charles as an ex-gay program affiliated with the Episcopal Church. Charles was also exposed for having sex with his clients during treatment sessions; he told his clients that these experiences were not homosexual experiences, but rather “Jonathan and David” relationships, referring to the Old Testament friendship between King David and Jonathan. Haldeman concluded that the “tradition of conflicted homosexual pastors using their ministries to gain sexual access to vulnerable gay people is as long-standing as the conversion movement itself.”²³¹

The concerns expressed by respected, licensed medical and mental health professionals in earlier journal articles about the harmful effects of conversion therapy are an important part of the case against conversion therapy. Based on over 20 years of clinical practice with people who have been through a variety of conversion therapy treatments, Haldeman concludes that potential harms of conversion therapy include depression related to a number of factors, such as feelings of failure when conversion therapy did not work and feelings of loss related to broken relationships with family and friends. Some of Haldeman’s clients experienced depression to the point of feeling suicidal. His clients also experienced “intimacy avoidance,” a pattern of difficulty in developing long-term relationships post conversion therapy treatment, as well as sexual dysfunction and internal conflict over reconciling their religious beliefs with their sexual orientation, which was often what prompted them to seek out conversion therapy in the first place.²³²

Haldeman concluded that the “tradition of conflicted homosexual pastors using their ministries to gain sexual access to vulnerable gay people is as long-standing as the conversion movement itself.”

A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF OVER 200 CONSUMERS OF CONVERSION THERAPY

What is missing from these accounts is empirical research data from large-scale studies designed to assess the experiences of conversion therapies, including any harm that resulted from treatment. This need prompted psychologists Ariel Shidlo and Michael Schroeder to embark on a seven-year project to collect and publish data from consumers of conversion therapy. Their goals were to help individuals make more informed choices about participating in conversion therapy, and to identify how individuals perceive their failure to change or their success in changing post treatment. They also examined ethical issues related to the provision of conversion therapy. Their study was designed to collect qualitative data to help lay the groundwork for future quantitative assessments.

The article summarizing Shidlo and Schroeder’s findings, “Changing Sexual Orientation: A Consumer’s Report,” was published in 2002 in *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, a peer-reviewed journal produced by the American Psychological Association.²³³ At the beginning of the article, the authors clearly state the limitations

231. Ibid. p. 158.

232. Haldeman, D. C. (2001). Therapeutic antidotes: Helping gay and bisexual men recover from conversion therapies. In A. Shidlo, M. Schroeder & J. Drescher. (eds.), *Sexual conversion therapy: Ethical, clinical and research perspectives*. New York: The Haworth Medical Press. pp. 131-166.

233. Shidlo, A & Schroeder, M. (2002). Changing sexual orientation: A consumer’s report. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33(3), 249-259.



of their exploratory study: their findings are not generalizable to all individuals who have received some form of conversion therapy treatment. Additionally, the study was based on the retrospective accounts of conversion therapy consumers, and such “self-reporting” may not always accurately reflect the behavior of therapists or the effects of therapy. However, the qualitative data they collected do provide in-depth information about the 202 participants in the study. They also assist in the development of a methodology that can be used for quantitative studies in the future. Despite these limitations, Shidlo and Schroeder’s research provides comprehensive analysis of the experiences of a large group of conversion therapy consumers published in a respected, peer-reviewed academic.

To collect the data for their analysis, Shidlo and Schroeder conducted in-person and telephone interviews with participants between 1995 and 2000. Individuals who reported that they participated in at least six sessions of any form of conversion therapy, and ranked themselves from five (more homosexual than heterosexual) to seven (exclusively homosexual) on a modified seven-point Kinsey scale, were allowed to participate. While a total of 216 interviews were conducted, four were excluded because they did not meet these criteria, resulting in a final population of 202 study participants who were primarily Caucasian (86 percent) male (90 percent) and religious (66 percent).²³⁴

To recruit these participants, the researchers developed a Web site and sent advertisements to gay and ex-gay organizations, as well as to a national professional association of conversion therapists. Participants were able to call a toll-free number, which was established to ensure that the interviews were anonymous. Those participants who chose to conduct the interview in person were given an informed consent form. Verbal consent was obtained during telephone interviews. When asked how they heard about the study, 33 percent of participants reported that they were recruited through advertisements in gay and lesbian newspapers, Web sites or email lists. Nine percent were recruited through advertisements in non-gay press and 8 percent heard about the study from friends. Four percent heard about the study in the media and 3 percent were recruited through a brochure (percentages do not total 100 because many participants reported that they did not remember how they heard about the study). In the course of their interviews, some participants also revealed that they were referred to the study by a conversion therapist, though the researchers did not keep track of the number.²³⁵

Shidlo and Schroeder were honest about the fact that they are both openly gay psychologists, and that this research was hosted by the National Lesbian and Gay Health Association and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. While some participants reported that they came into the interviews concerned about a pro-gay, ex-gay, or religious bias, after the interview they reported that their fears were unwarranted. According to one participant:

Before [the interview], I thought, well, maybe you were looking for something and not wanting to hear what I had to say. But I felt like it’s been very unbiased, and you listened. I feel you said that I [the interviewer] want to make sure you got your feelings down right. So I feel real comfortable with it.²³⁶

234. Ibid. p. 250.

235. Ibid. p. 251.

236. Ibid.



Study participants reported receiving conversion therapy from a total of 203 licensed mental health practitioners, most of whom were psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and master's-level therapists. Participants also received conversion therapy from 105 unlicensed counselors, the majority of whom were peer and religious counselors. Most of the clinical conversion therapy interventions were unspecified individual psychotherapy sessions, though a small number of participants reported experiencing behavior therapy/cognitive-behavior therapy, psychoanalysis and aversive conditioning. Most of the non-clinical conversion therapy interventions consisted of peer group and peer individual counseling. The average number of counseling sessions experienced by the study participants was 118 over an average of 26 months. The average time between the end of the last intervention and the date of the interview was 12 months, with the earliest treatment ending in 1951 and the most recent in 1999.

Even though their study uses data referring to interventions that took place an average of 12 years prior to the participant interviews, Shidlo and Schroeder argue that their data are still timely and relevant. First, there is little evidence that conversion therapy interventions and techniques have significantly changed over the past few decades. Second, one of the most important findings of their study is that the views and feelings of former conversion therapy clients about their experiences go through significant changes over time. For example, participants who failed to change their sexual orientation said that at the end of their treatment they still would have reported that conversion therapy worked for them anyway. It was not until a longer period of time that they came to terms with the fact that they did not change. According to Shidlo and Schroeder, "...a study that would limit itself to interviewing only clients who had recently completed conversion therapy may significantly distort the long-term effects of conversion therapies."²³⁷

Shidlo and Schroeder outlined the various reasons why their study participants decided to change their sexual orientation through conversion therapy. Some, who were already out of the closet prior to therapy, reported that they did not feel connected to the gay and lesbian community and sought conversion to find a group to which they felt they could belong. Participants who were not "out" prior to therapy were primarily motivated by guilt and fear based on their religious faith. A number of participants also were motivated by a desire to save their marriage and relationship with their children. Those participants who attended religious universities were coerced into treatment by the threat of expulsion. Strikingly, nearly 25 percent of conversion therapy interventions were initiated by the therapists whom study participants were already seeing after disclosing their sexual orientation.²³⁸

Many of the study participants reported experiencing a sense of joy or euphoria immediately after they started conversion therapy, which Shidlo and Schroeder described as the "honeymoon period." Common to what many people experience after they begin any course of psychotherapy, participants reported experiencing a sense of relief from telling their story, a sense of hope that they could change, and a sense of understanding about the negative feelings and experiences associated with their sexual orientation.²³⁹ This is an important component of conversion therapy, which is based on a disease model of homosexuality that provides seemingly good reasons for the negative experiences of conversion therapy clients, including bad relationships with parents,

237. Ibid.

238. Ibid. p. 252.

239. Ibid.



difficulty making same-sex friends, as well as behavior that falls outside of stereotypical gender norms. For many of the study participants, homosexuality was explained as both the cause *and* consequence of negative life experiences.²⁴⁰

Following the honeymoon period, study participants described experiences that could be split into two categories, “self-perceived failure” or “self-perceived success.” Twenty-six (13 percent) of the study participants reported believing that they successfully changed post treatment (self-perceived success), and were further divided into the following categories:

- **Successful but struggling:** The 12 participants in this category reported experiencing frequent “slips” back into same-sex sexual behavior, including anonymous same-sex encounters, the use of gay pornography and same-sex fantasies.
- **Successful and not struggling:** The six participants in this category felt that they were on the road to recovery and simply had a history of homosexual behavior. Five of the six participants in this group refused to label their sexual orientation and half were celibate. According to one participant in this group, “My opinion is that change per se is not possible. This is a physical thing and I will always have to manage it.”
- **Successful heterosexual shift:** The eight participants in this category rated themselves as three or less on the modified Kinsey scale (mostly heterosexual to completely heterosexual), labeled themselves as heterosexual, reported sexual behavior with members of the opposite sex, denied sexual behavior with members of the same sex, and were involved in a primary intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex. If the participants in this group reported experiencing same-sex desires, they said they were fleeting and manageable by using skills they learned in conversion therapy. It was ultimately unclear to Shidlo and Schroeder why this very small group reported such different experiences compared to the other study participants. *However, it is important to note that seven of the eight participants in this group were providers of ex-gay counseling and four out of those seven actually had paid positions as ex-gay counselors.*²⁴¹

For the 176 study participants (87 percent) in the self-perceived failure group, the period post the honeymoon phase was quite different. Many began to realize that, despite their best efforts to employ the techniques they learned in conversion therapy, they could not change their sexual orientation. Increased frustration, discouragement and blaming themselves for the failure of their therapy led some to become celibate, work compulsively and feel anxious and depressed. Other participants who failed exhibited even worse symptoms, as their increased guilt, depression, anxiety, and self-blame for their failure lead to social isolation and harmful behaviors, including suicidal gestures, unprotected sex with untested partners, and substance abuse. Study participants in this group reported that despite acknowledging to themselves that they had failed, they would have told others that they were successful if asked, including by their therapists. This is an important finding as it likely led to the false perception of high success rates among providers and the family and friends of conversion therapy clients.²⁴²

Of the 176 participants in the self-perceived failure group, 155 reported significant long-term harm from conversion therapy. The remaining 21 proved to be more

240. Ibid. p. 253.

241. Ibid.

242. Ibid.



resilient. They viewed their failure as an opportunity for them to more completely embrace a gay or lesbian identity and reported few or no long-term damaging effects. However, the larger group reported feeling worse after conversion therapy than they did before. According to one participant:

I felt dirty about [my homosexual orientation]. I felt like a cancer with a boil that someone is trying to lance out. I felt and still feel like a failure.... The counseling helped for a while but after that it reinforced self-loathing and internalized homophobia.... It increased my self-loathing greatly.²⁴³

The following is a summary of the results of Shidlo and Schroeder's qualitative data on the harm experienced by the participants in their study.

PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

- **Depression, suicidal ideation and attempts:** As discussed previously, many participants reported feelings of depression, some to the point of wanting to and actually attempting to commit suicide. According to one of the female study participants:

I attempted suicide with pills. I just wanted to die. Part of it had to do with the feeling that I was dying already because of what the nun [conversion therapist] was doing to me. It felt like she was killing me, trying to rid me of my lesbian self.²⁴⁴

In order to further assess the impact of conversion therapy on suicidal ideation, Shidlo and Schroeder distinguished between study participants who had a history of suicide before conversion therapy and those who did not: 25 had attempted suicide before conversion therapy, 23 during conversion therapy and 11 afterwards. Of the 11 who reported suicide attempts after conversion therapy, only three had attempted suicide prior to conversion therapy. While more research is needed to quantify a link between conversion therapy and suicide, Shidlo and Schroeder's findings add to the existing body of evidence indicating that for some individuals, conversion therapy is harmful enough to cause significant depression and attempted suicide.²⁴⁵

- **Self-esteem and internalized homophobia:** Many of the study participants reported that the false and defamatory information provided by their therapist about homosexuality and gay and lesbian people significantly harmed their self-esteem. According to one participant, "I think it harmed me....it reinforced all my own negative stereotypes about homosexuality and my being a failure and an inadequate human being."²⁴⁶
- **Distorted perception of homosexual orientation:** Some conversion therapists and patients attributed some, if not all, of the negative experiences and life events of the patient to homosexuality. This led to the false belief that when a patient changed his/her sexual orientation, these other problems would also disappear.
- **Intrusive imagery and sexual dysfunction:** A number of participants reported experiencing intrusive and disturbing images in their minds that were formed in conversion therapy. Male participants also reported sexual impotence:
...when I was in the behavior mod program, when I was in the relationship with that

243. Ibid. p. 254.

244. Ibid.

245. Ibid.

246. Ibid. p. 255.



guy, my therapist would have me envision [wife's name] there, versus the guy being there; I was to envision her, not him, while having sex with him. That was a mind bender.... I still have it with me sometimes. Not as bad as I used to, but I still get a flashback. ...sometimes I really have to try to push out thoughts in my mind that he planted, or I will not be able to achieve an erection or ejaculation.²⁴⁷

The participants who reported the most disturbing and destructive harm in this category were those who were forced to endure “aversive conditioning” a form of behavioral therapy where an attractive stimulus is paired with a noxious stimulus in order to elicit a negative reaction to a particular stimulus,²⁴⁸ which in this case was same-sex attraction. In the next section we describe the experiences of these participants in more detail.

- **Monitoring of gender-deviant mannerisms:** Some participants reported that conversion therapy made them worry about appearing “too gay” through their speech and/or mannerisms. This led to paranoia about not being able to “pass” as a heterosexual.

SOCIAL AND INTERPERSONAL HARM

- **Family of origin:** Many participants complained that conversion therapy particularly harmed their relationship with their parents. This was due, in part, to the fact that they were told by their therapist to blame their parents for their homosexuality.
- **Alienation, loneliness, and social isolation:** Even for participants who developed ex-gay or heterosexual support networks during their conversion therapy, they still felt loneliness attributed to hiding the fact that they were still homosexual.
- **Interference with intimate relationships:** Participants reported the loss of same-sex partners and opportunities to commit to long term relationships with those partners whom they were in love with. This occurred for some because their therapists instructed them to break off those relationships.
- **Loss of social supports when entering and leaving the ex-gay community:** When they started conversion therapy, many study participants were told to end their relationships with their lesbian and gay friends. Similar loss occurred when those participants ended conversion therapy and left their ex-gay community. Many were rejected for abandoning their struggle against homosexuality.
- **Fear of being a child abuser:** A number of male participants reported that their therapists created a fear that they would become child abusers, which interfered with their relationships with children. According to one participant:

It really screwed me up, because these thoughts were put in my head that I was attracted to little boys, and I'm not. I was very angry at that.... I had very young nephews, I was afraid to be around them, afraid to play with them²⁴⁹

- **Delay of developmental tasks due to not coming out as gay or lesbian earlier:** The years they spent in conversion therapy, for some more than a decade, delayed a number of experiences including intimate relationships and the development of social skills. These participants reported experiencing difficulties distinguishing between intimacy, friendship, sex and love.

²⁴⁷. Ibid.

²⁴⁸. Psychology Matters. (n.d.). Glossary. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.psychologymatters.org/glossary.html>

²⁴⁹. Shidlo, A & Schroeder, M. (2002). p. 256.



It delayed my being a gay man once again. It preserved the false notion that sexual orientation could be changed and added more years to my time in the closet. I lost a lot of my life as a result of this.²⁵⁰

SPIRITUAL HARM

One hundred and thirty-three (66 percent) participants considered themselves to be religious: 76 participants identified as Protestant, 19 as Catholic, 11 with the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), nine as Jewish, two as pagan and two as Buddhist (percentages do not total 100 because of missing data).²⁵¹ Those in the perceived failure category reported a negative impact on their beliefs. These effects included a complete loss of faith, a sense of betrayal by their religious leaders, anger at the therapists who told them God was ashamed of them in the first place, and excommunication from their churches.

MAGGOTS, FECES AND ELECTRODES: “Aversive conditioning” techniques used in rare forms of conversion therapy

On November 18, 2001, Shidlo and Schroeder spoke at the Association for Advancement of Behavioral Therapy (AABT)²⁵² conference in Philadelphia, where he presented findings from the consumer study for the small subset of respondents (18 men) who reported undergoing a category of conversion therapy called “aversive conditioning.”²⁵³ This is a form of behavioral therapy where an attractive stimulus is paired with a noxious stimulus in order to elicit a negative reaction to a particular stimulus, in this case, same-sex attraction.²⁵⁴ According to Shidlo, the interventions experienced by these 18 study participants included electric shock therapy, the use of an inhalable or injectable emetic to induce vomiting, and the use of “covert sensitization,” which is “a form of behavior therapy in which an undesirable behavior is paired with an unpleasant image in order to eliminate that behavior.”²⁵⁵

Given the small size of this sample, the findings presented by Shidlo for study participants in this category are clearly not representative of all individuals receiving conversion therapy. Additionally, the last reported incident cited in the study occurred in 1992, and we could not find more recent literature to determine whether therapists offering conversion therapy are still using these techniques. However, we present a brief summary of Shidlo’s discussion on this subset of respondents because they represent a sample of individuals who have undergone what many may consider the most rare and most harmful forms of conversion therapy. It is important to note that 12 of the respondents in this subset reported experiencing this kind of conversion therapy

250. Ibid.

251. Ibid. p. 250.

252. Now known as the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies; <http://www.aabt.org>

253. Shidlo, A. & Schroeder, M. (2001, November 18). Attempts to change homosexual orientation: Iatrogenic effects of conversion therapies. Unpublished information presented during a symposium at the 2001 Association for Advancement of Behavioral Therapy Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

254. Psychology Matters. (n.d.). Glossary. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.psychologymatters.org/glossary.html>

255. Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders. (n.d.). Covert sensitization. Author. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from <http://www.minddisorders.com/Br-Del/Covert-sensitization.html>



treatment *after* the 1973 declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association.

Shidlo reported that electric shock was administered to 15 of these respondents on their fingers, and genitalia, among other places on the body, and was sometimes paired with disturbing images, including a bowl with feces and pictures of Kaposi's Sarcoma lesions on gay men. Kaposi's Sarcoma is sometimes experienced by people living with AIDS. One respondent described his experience with the use of covert sensitization as hypnotherapy:

[The therapist would] lead me through different scenarios. Put myself in a nice beach, these men would come down, beautiful homosexual men, with Speedos. I would be attracted to them. As they opened their mouths, feces would come of their mouth, urine dripping out of their eyes and nose. The therapists would then take me to a peaceful place where Jesus would minister to me.²⁵⁶

All 18 respondents reported harmful emotional and physical effects from their treatment, including physical pain and skin burns from those who were administered electro-shock therapy. One respondent described the emotional and mental violence he experienced:

It was horrible. I was trying to destroy a part of myself. [It was] a form of suicide, of psychic suicide, where I was trying to kill something vital in myself, something natural, powerful, normal, and I was trying to electrocute it. Like I was frying feelings.²⁵⁷

The long-term impacts of conversion therapy reported by these respondents were similar to those reported by the entire population of the consumer study, including the belief that they were responsible for their own failure to become heterosexual, low self-esteem, social isolation, difficulties with intimacy, shame, damaged opposite-sex marriage, and impotence. While a few of the 18 respondents reported short-term "positive" outcomes of their aversion therapy, including some increase in opposite-sex attraction and participation in short-term opposite-sex relationships, all of them reported that these changes were fleeting and their same-sex attractions and desires returned.²⁵⁸

ETHICAL CONCERNS RAISED BY CONVERSION THERAPY

The fundamental Christian approaches to conversion treatments have been characterized by a host of problems, ranging from lack of empirical support to sexually predatory behavior of some counselors...To exacerbate the potential harm done to naïve, shame-ridden counselees, many of these programs operate under the formidable auspices of the Christian church, and outside the jurisdiction of any professional organization that might impose ethical standards of practice and accountability on them.²⁵⁹

Along with the physical and mental harm caused by conversion therapy programs, there are broad ethical concerns that need to be addressed. Unlike many organizations and individuals who offer counseling and mental health treatment services, the majority

256. Shidlo, A. (2001, November 18).

257. Ibid.

258. Ibid.

259. Haldeman, D. (1991). Sexual orientation conversion therapy for gay men and lesbians: A scientific examination. p.159. In J. Gonsiorek & J. Weinrich. (eds.), *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp.149-160



of ex-gay programs market themselves as religious ministries and are therefore not governed or overseen by professional associations, licensing boards, state departments of health or other bureaucracies. This is particularly troublesome for ex-gay teen programs like Refuge, which may be providing services to clients against their will, as reported by Zach Stark and DJ Butler.

In April 2005, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) introduced the End Institutionalized Abuse Against Children Act of 2005, which would require more federal oversight of any foreign-based or domestic residential treatment program for minors.²⁶⁰ According to Rep. Miller,

There is no excuse for placing children in unlicensed programs with badly trained and abusive staff members, which could lead to mental, physical, and sexual abuse. It is truly frightening when the very people entrusted to care for and protect children are actually the ones who endanger them. Residential programs for children should be licensed and meet reasonable safety and staff training standards.²⁶¹

While this legislation was introduced in response to multiple incidents of abuse and even deaths that occurred at residential “behavior modification” camps for troubled youth, the principle behind it also raises serious questions about the lack of oversight and monitoring of ex-gay treatment programs like those provided by Love In Action (LIA).

In the lawsuit filed after it was ordered by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD) to stop providing mental health services without a license, LIA, represented by the Alliance Defense Fund, claims that the state violated its Constitutional rights under the Due Process Clause and Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, as well as the Free Speech Clause and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. According to LIA, since it is a faith-based program, it not only falls outside of the jurisdiction of Tennessee law, but also is protected from regulation by the U.S. Constitution.²⁶² A more detailed discussion of LIA’s legal arguments is worthy of its own publication. Our point here is that ex-gay programs have historically benefited from positioning themselves in legally gray areas that permit them to operate free of any oversight, which has serious implications.

On the one hand, ex-gay and evangelical Christian right leaders claim that homosexuality should never have been declassified as a mental illness. As explained earlier in this report, Dobson and Nicolosi have referred to and/or written entire books that outline a pathological or disease model of homosexuality. They have even created their own terminology, like “prehomosexuality,” to make their theories sound more credible. They have also supported and publicized studies and reports claiming that certain interventions can be used to either prevent a child from becoming a homosexual, or to treat and change an individual’s sexual orientation. When challenged on the scientific validity

When challenged on the validity of their beliefs, ex-gay leaders are quick to point to their “science” to support their positions. These same leaders concurrently claim that their programs are faith-based and should be free from the same oversight and regulation mandated for organizations that provide mental health treatment.

260. Office of Congressman George Miller. (2005, April 20). Representative Miller introduces legislation to curb child abuse in residential treatment programs. Author. Retrieved February 19, 2006, from http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ed31_democrats/rel42005.html

261. Ibid.

262. For a more details, see pp. 23-27 of LIA’s lawsuit, retrieved February 19, 2006, from <http://www.telladf.org/UserDocs/LIAvTNcomplaint.pdf>



of their beliefs about homosexuality, ex-gay and evangelical Christian leaders are quick to point to their “science” to support their positions. On the other hand, ex-gay leaders concurrently claim that their programs are faith-based and should be free from the same oversight and regulation mandated for organizations that provide mental health treatment. This strategy, which has provided cover to ex-gay programs for over 30 years, has no simple solution.

However, if individual licensed counselors or therapists offer some form of conversion therapy in their practice, they may fall under the auspices of their respective professional organizations and risk censure or even expulsion for violating any ethical standards. The following is a brief summary of the literature on how the practice of conversion therapy violates those standards.

In the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Haldeman summarized ethical concerns raised by a number of therapists and researchers, concluding that psychologists fail to uphold the dignity and welfare of their patients in conversion therapy because those treatments are predicated on the devaluation of homosexual identity and behavior.²⁶³ According to Haldeman, there would be no conversion therapy in the first place if not for the assumption that homosexuals are mentally ill and require treatment.²⁶⁴ This is contrary to the positions taken by nearly every major medical and mental health association, representing 477,000 professionals.²⁶⁵

For example, in 2000, the American Psychiatric Association released the following statement in response to the rise in the number of therapists offering conversion therapy: “Until there is rigorous scientific research to substantiate claims of cure, ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals’ sexual orientation keeping in mind medical dictum to first, do no harm.” The National Association of Social Workers also condemned conversion therapy in 1999, declaring, “Sexual orientation conversion therapies assume that homosexual orientation is both pathological and freely chosen. No data demonstrate that reparative or conversion therapies are effective, and in fact they may be harmful.”²⁶⁶

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “[T]herapy directed specifically at changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation.”²⁶⁷ Other major medical and professional associations that have passed resolutions against

Psychologists fail to uphold the dignity and welfare of their patients in conversion therapy by the very definition of these treatments, because they are predicated on the devaluation of homosexual identity and behavior.

“Until there is rigorous scientific research to substantiate claims of cure, ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals’ sexual orientation keeping in mind medical dictum to first, do no harm.”
—American Psychiatric Association (2000)

263. Haldeman, D. C. (1994). The practice and ethics of sexual orientation conversion therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62(2), 221-227.

264. Ibid. pp. 225-226.

265. The American Psychiatric Association, (2005, August 15).

266. Davison, G. C. (1991). Constructionism and morality in therapy for homosexuality. In J.C. Gonsiorek & J.D. Weinrich, *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

267. American Academy of Pediatrics. (1993). Policy statement: Homosexuality and adolescence. Author. Cited in American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Just the facts about sexual orientation and youth: A primer for principals, educators, and school personnel*. Author. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbcc/publications/justthefacts.html>



conversion therapy include the American Counseling Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Education Association.²⁶⁸

Based on the experiences of 202 former conversion therapy patients collected for their consumer's report, Schroeder and Shidlo concluded that "many conversion therapists may not be practicing in a manner consistent with the APA Ethics Code (1992), similar professional codes by other mental health organizations, and guidelines on the appropriate treatment of gay and lesbian psychotherapy patients."²⁶⁹ The following is a summary of their key findings:

- **Lack of informed consent:** Many conversion therapists provided "false and prejudicial" information disguised as science to prospective clients in order to convince them that they need treatment. For example, clients were told that homosexuality is a mental disorder or that it simply did not exist. Clients were also given fraudulent information claiming that most gay and lesbian people and same-sex relationships were unhappy and dysfunctional. Therapists also did not provide accurate information about the efficacy of conversion therapy. Alternative treatment options, including therapy to help clients accept their sexual orientation, were rarely discussed. Finally, therapists employed by religious institutions may have a professional conflict of interest if they provide conversion therapy to students who are told they need to change their sexual orientation or face academic expulsion.²⁷⁰
- **Use of religion in therapy:** More research is needed on when it is ethical for a therapist to use religion to justify behavioral change, including the threat of religious consequences (e.g. going to hell or living outside of God's will) for failure to change their sexual orientation.²⁷¹
- **Lack of pre-termination counseling:** Many clients who failed to change their sexual orientation were not provided with proper assistance to help them after their treatment. Clients blamed themselves and/or were even blamed by their therapists for their failure to change. These clients were not referred to another therapist who could help them with this process. Clients were not provided assistance to help them deal with significant internalized homophobia that often results from the indoctrination into the belief that homosexuality is a psychological disorder.²⁷²
- **Lack of information about negative side-effects:** Many conversion therapists failed to inform their clients about the possible harmful side-effect of conversion therapy. This may be because clients are afraid to tell their therapists about harm they are experiencing because of fears of failure. It is the therapist's responsibility to fully

"[T]herapy directed specifically at changing sexual orientation is contraindicated..."
—American Academy of Pediatrics (1993)

268. American Psychiatric Association. (n.d.). Answers to your questions about sexual orientation and homosexuality. Author. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from <http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/answers.html>

269. Schroeder, M. & Shidlo, A. (2001). Ethical issues in sexual orientation conversion therapies: An empirical study of consumers. p. 158. In A. Shidlo, M. Schroeder & J. Drescher. (eds.), *Sexual conversion therapy: Ethical, clinical and research perspectives*. New York: The Haworth Medical Press. pp. 131-166.

270. Ibid. p. 159.

271. Ibid. pp. 159-160.

272. Ibid. p. 160.



inform the client of potential side-effects, and to engage the client in follow-up discussion about those side-effects throughout the course of treatment.²⁷³

For decades, former conversion therapy clients have been sharing their stories of pain, frustration, depression, internalized hatred and other forms of life-altering harm that resulted from trying to change their sexual orientation, something that has not been considered a mental illness for over 30 years. With their consumer study, Shidlo and Schroeder have added to the preponderance of evidence against conversion therapy, and have paved the way for much needed studies that could provide additional quantitative data. As was the case with the consumer study, such research takes a lot of time and a lot of money, and ultimately relies on the willingness of former conversion therapy clients to share and even relive experiences that they most likely wish they could forget. In the interim, ex-gay leaders and their evangelical Christian right allies continue to tout the “success” of their programs and the “hundreds of thousands” of ex-gays who allegedly exist as evidence that sexual orientation is a choice. The peer-reviewed research presented by Haldeman, Shidlo and Schroeder, and other respected researchers tells a much different story.

273. Ibid. pp. 160-162.



Conclusion

Founded in 1973, Love in Action has the dubious distinction of being not only the nation's first ex-gay program, but also the first to draw national attention to the focus on youth in the third wave of ex-gay activism over 30 years later. Young people are now being used as ammunition in the evangelical Christian and political right-wing's war against equality for LGBT Americans. Ex-gay organizations, in particular, have taken what used to be an intensely personal process (coming out to one's self, friends and family) and have created dedicated programs and conferences that link the personal lives of young people to battles over same-sex marriage and the election of conservative political leaders.

Homosexuality is not a mental illness. There is a growing body of evidence that conversion therapy not only does not work, but also can be extremely harmful, resulting in depression, social isolation from family and friends, low self-esteem, internalized homophobia, and even attempted suicide. There is also a growing body of ethical concerns raised by the provision of conversion therapy. Many former conversion therapy clients have reported a lack of informed consent because their therapist provided false information disguised as science that pathologized gays and lesbians. Clients were not informed about alternative treatment options, including therapy that could have helped them accept their sexual orientation. Clients were also not told about the potential negative effects of conversion therapy, and when they failed to change, they were often blamed by the therapist for their failure.

In light of this research, Nicolosi's story about providing therapy to 5-year-old "Stevie" to treat his "prehomosexuality" is extremely disturbing, as are the experiences of Zach Stark and DJ Butler, who were forced by their parents to attend Love in Action's ex-gay teen program. However, we believe it is important not to demonize parents for their decisions to send their children to conversion therapy programs. Joe Stark's statement—that he sent his son Zach to the program because he was afraid Zach would die by the age of 30 if he was gay—revealed an important and tragic reality of the third wave of ex-gay activism: *Parents are being lied to by ex-gay and religious leaders they trust.*

In books, through the advertisements of ex-gay programs and at traveling political road shows like Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference, parents are being told that homosexuality is a mental illness, caused primarily by their inability to parent properly, which can be cured through conversion therapy. This is presented to parents as fact even though homosexuality is *not* a mental illness and conversion therapy is opposed by nearly

There is a growing body of evidence that conversion therapy not only does not work, but also can be extremely harmful.

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every medical and mental health professional association.

Parents are told that if their sons and daughters are in the “homosexual lifestyle,” they are destined to lead short lives characterized by depression, anger, substance abuse and domestically violent relationships. This information is presented as fact even though it is based on flawed, ideologically driven “research” that has either not been published in respected, peer-reviewed academic journals, or has been produced by people like Paul Cameron, who was kicked out of the American Psychological Association for producing bogus research.

Most parents would do anything they could to protect their children from harm and to help ensure they lead the longest and healthiest lives possible. Sadly, ex-gay and evangelical Christian right leaders are instructing parents to do something more likely to harm than help their sons and daughters.

If ex-gay programs and conversion therapists are advocating and providing a service that is unethical and harmful, what can be done to protect people, particularly minors?

According to Hayley Gorenberg, deputy legal director at Lambda Legal, there are a variety of legal theories — depending upon the facts and circumstances of the particular case — under which ex-gay programs and conversion therapy practitioners could be shut down and even held liable for the harm they cause to clients.²⁷⁴ For example, licensed therapists and physicians could be charged with malpractice for acting outside the bounds of recognized therapeutic treatment. If ex-gay programs are providing something that they should be licensed for, but are not, they could be forced to stop providing those services, as was the case with Love In Action in Tennessee. If ex-gay programs or conversion therapy practitioners make clients sign a consent form or use other documentation that misrepresents the services they are providing, there could be standing to sue under contract law.

While consumer law varies by state, there could also be standing to sue based on consumer fraud or false advertising by ex-gay programs and conversion therapy providers. Additionally, if insurance reimbursements are submitted for conversion therapy treatments that are not properly covered, there may be a case for insurance fraud. Finally, depending upon the content of the program, there could be standing to move forward under child abuse and neglect laws for minors subjected to an ex-gay program. Gorenberg clearly points out that while the Constitution protects parents’ right to raise their children and instill moral and religious values, that right is limited to protect minors from actual harm, and the legal theories above do not conflict with parental rights when the factual circumstances for a challenge are present.²⁷⁵

If former conversion therapy clients feel they have been harmed by their therapist or an ex-gay program, it is important that they contact an attorney who can help them as soon as possible. Statutes of limitation vary by state, and if individuals wait too long to contact an attorney, they may be unable to take any legal action. Lambda Legal staffs a telephone legal help desk in each of its regional offices. For more information, go to www.lambdalegal.org or call 1-800-LGBTEEN.

Conversion therapy practitioners could be shut down and even held liable for the harm they cause to clients.

If former conversion therapy clients feel they have been harmed, it is important that they contact an attorney who can help them as soon as possible.

274. Telephone interview with Hayley Gorenberg, Deputy Legal Director of Lambda Legal. (2005, February 17).

275. Ibid.



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National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

policy institute bestsellers

Black Same-Sex Households in the United States

A REPORT FROM THE 2000 CENSUS

by Alain Dang and Somjen Frazer

Political and religious leaders often claim that LGBT people do not need protection from discrimination because they are white, wealthy, and privileged.

This study breaks that myth through an analysis of the almost 85,000 black same-sex households that self-identified in the 2000 U.S. Census. This study shows that black same-sex couples and their children are disproportionately impacted by anti-LGBT policies and have more to lose when anti-same-sex marriage amendments are on the ballot.

(October 2004; 46 pp.; \$10.00;
www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

Hispanic and Latino Same-Sex Couple Households in the United States

A REPORT FROM THE 2000 CENSUS

by Jason Cianciotto

Post the success of anti-same-sex marriage ballot measures in the 2004 election, anti-LGBT political and religious leaders are supporting the next wave of anti-marriage and anti-parenting laws and ballot measures in a number of states with large Hispanic populations, including California and Florida. This study sheds light on the over 105,000 Hispanic same-sex couple households counted in the 2000 Census, nearly half with children, who are disproportionately harmed by such anti-LGBT legislation.

(November 2005; 85pp.; \$10.00;
www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

Transitioning our Shelters

A GUIDE FOR MAKING
HOMELESS SHELTERS SAFE
FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

by Lisa Mottet and John M. Ohle

The problem of unsafe shelters for transgender people is pervasive. *Transitioning our Shelters* is a guide designed for shelters that want to provide safe shelter for transgender people but are not sure how to do so. A joint publication of the Task Force and the National Coalition for the Homeless, the Guide provides many answers to concerns about safety and privacy for transgender residents based on successes at real shelters across the country, the bulk of which are addressed without monetary expenditures.

(January 2004; 56 pp.;
\$10.00; www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

Education Policy

ISSUES AFFECTING
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH

by Jason Cianciotto and Sean Cahill

Education Policy provides a comprehensive overview of social science research on the extent and impact of harassment and violence against LGBT students, as well as the public policy interventions that support LGBT students and make schools safer. It includes the first in-depth analysis of how President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act affects LGBT students, profiles eight students who stood up to anti-LGBT abuse, and articulates an agenda for future research and policy analysis. (November 2003; 168 pp.; \$20.00; www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

Selling Us Short

HOW SOCIAL SECURITY
PRIVATIZATION WILL AFFECT
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND
TRANSGENDER AMERICANS

by Mandy Hu

Selling Us Short highlights the disproportionate impact of President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security on LGBT Americans. LGBT Americans, on average, have lower incomes than their heterosexual counterparts, and they are less able to keep what they earn. This translates into lower Social Security payments in retirement. This report also explains how the cuts in retirement benefits for all but the poorest workers inherent to Bush's plan will disproportionately hurt LGBT elders. (August 2004; 31 pp. Available at www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

A Report From "Love Won Out: Addressing, Understanding, and Preventing Homosexuality"

by Cynthia Burack and Jyl J. Josephson

This report provides a first-hand account of an "ex-gay" conference sponsored by the evangelical Christian group Focus on the Family. The report's authors detail the theories and world views espoused by the presenters and "ex-gay" leaders who spoke at the conference, one of at least four sponsored annually by Focus on the Family around the country. It also provides information and analysis about the "Love Won Out" ministry, and concludes with some political implications of the "ex-gay" movement for LGBT people. (May 2004; 20 pp. Available at www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

Caregiving

AMONG LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ELDERS IN NEW YORK

The largest-ever study of caregiving among LGBT people 50 and older, by Marjorie H. Cantor, Mark Brennan, and R. Andrew Shippy, documents how central older gay people are to caregiving, both for family of origin members as well as for same-sex partners and close friends. It also examines unequal treatment under key policies such as the Family and Medical Leave Act. (June 2004; 108 pp.; \$10.00; www.thetaskforce.org/library/)

Family Policy

ISSUES AFFECTING GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER FAMILIES

This report by Sean Cahill, Mitra Ellen, and Sarah Tobias examines family policy as it relates to LGBT people and their loved ones. It provides information useful to those advancing supportive legislation and policy, particularly at the state and local levels. Covers partner recognition; antigay adoption and foster policies; youth and elder issues; health care and end-of-life concerns; and the impact of welfare reform and the faith-based initiative. (December 2002; 216 pp.; \$20.00; www.nglftf.org/library/)

Say it Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud

THE BLACK PRIDE SURVEY 2000

This largest-ever study of Black LGBT people is the result of a two-year collaboration between nine Black LGBT Pride organizations, the Task Force Policy Institute, and five African-American researchers. The survey of nearly 2,700 respondents documents significant and often surprising demographics, experiences, and policy priorities of Black LGBT people. (March 2002; 86 pp.; \$10.00; www.nglftf.org/library/)

Campus Climate

FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE: A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Based on a survey of nearly 1700 students, faculty, and staff at 14 colleges and universities across the country, this report, by Susan R. Rankin, documents anti-LGBT bias and harassment, along with levels of institutional support for LGBT people. It highlights differences in experiences between various identity groups and concludes with recommendations for creating an inclusive and supportive environment for LGBT people. (May 2003; 70 pp.; \$10.00; www.nglftf.org/library/)

Leaving Our Children Behind

WELFARE REFORM AND THE GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

This report, by Sean Cahill and Kenneth T. Jones, describes the reactionary agenda of senior policymakers in the Bush administration to change social service provision in the United States. It examines welfare reform and the impact of marriage and fatherhood initiatives, abstinence-only-until-marriage education, and the faith-based initiative on the LGBT community. (December 2001; 112 pp.; \$10.00 www.nglftf.org/library/)

Social Discrimination and Health

THE CASE OF LATINO GAY MEN AND HIV RISK

This report, by renowned AIDS researchers Rafael Diaz and George Ayala, documents the correlations among homophobia, racism, poverty, and HIV risk, and has significant implications for prevention strategies. Although Latinos were the subject of this case study, the findings are relevant to other communities of color and marginalized groups. Available in English and Spanish. (July 2001; SOLD OUT; download at www.nglftf.org/library/)

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The **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute** is a think tank dedicated to research, policy analysis and strategy development to advance greater understanding and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.