

## Gay Youth: Driven to Suicide? Victims of Violence?

Are 33% of teenagers who commit suicide homosexual? Do "45% of gay youth and 20% of lesbian youth" "directly experience violence at school?" These are among the claims made by pro-homosexual groups as they seek to get federal and state grant money and enter school systems to "train" faculty and counselors to "meet the needs" of homosexual teenagers. Administrators of the Miami-Dade County school system have apparently accepted these claims as true. They signed on to be "trained" by a gay support group during the 1998-1999 school year.

But are these claims *true*?

### Claims About Suicide

So far, only one well-done study has examined the claim made in a U.S. federal government-sponsored

publication that adolescent gays are much more apt to commit suicide because of stigmatization. 120 consecutive suicides by those under the age of 20 in the New York City area were psychologically autopsied and compared with matched controls who were still alive. Only 3 of the 120 suicides involved those who engaged in homosexuality. And their homosexual involvements did not appear central to their suicide. None of the 147 controls reported homosexual involvements. Of the 3 suicides by adolescents who participated in homosexuality, none followed harassment or stigmatization because of their homosexual interests. Thus the study found "no evidence" of disproportionate suicide by adolescents who engage in homosexuality. So contrary to the claims of a number of activist groups — homosexual teens were not more

apt to commit suicide, at least in New York City.<sup>1</sup>

But perhaps Miami is different than New York.

Concerned about the supposed "epidemic" of gay teen suicides, Project YES, a homosexual group, received permission from the Miami public schools to conduct seminars just this past school year with teachers and counselors in four of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The purpose? — "to stem the tide of suicide and violence toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth."

The schools (and thus taxpayers) footed the bill for the rooms and overhead and provided the teachers, while the YES group provided the "training." Jose Carbia, District Director, Division of Student Services, endorsed the program as

*continued on page 2*

## Vindication: STDs and Homosexuality

In 1985, FRI published the first random sample-based study of sexually transmitted diseases [STDs] and sexual orientation. Appearing in the *Nebraska Medical Journal*,<sup>1</sup> our study, based upon 4,320 adults drawn from 5 U.S. cities, reported a clear relationship between homosexual activity and the incidence of STDs.

FRI asked respondents whether they were heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual; whether they had ever had one or more of 15 STDs and how many times; and how many homosexual and heterosexual partners they had had in their lifetime. We found that men who currently claimed to be bisexual or gay (almost 6% of the sample) accounted for 11% of all the

STDs reported by men. If we added in that 7% of heterosexuals who reported at least one homosexual partner during their lives, the combined 13% of men in the sample accounted for 25% of all male STDs.

For women, just over 3% said that they were bisexual or homosexual but accounted for

**...both men and women who engage in homosexuality make their fellow citizens disproportionately pay for medical treatments, simply because those who engage in homosexuality are more apt to get STDs...**

more than 4% of STDs reported by women. Again, if we added in the 3% of currently heterosexual women who reported at least one homosexual partner, this subset of 6% of the

women in the sample accounted for 10% of all female STDs.

Of course, since "heterosexuals" also had sex with the opposite sex, all of their STDs could not be attributed to homosexual activity, per se. But it is clear that for our U.S. sample, those who engaged in homosexuality had about twice the volume of STDs compared to those who did not.

The University of Chicago sex survey in 1994 could have replicated or falsified our findings. But the authors of the Chicago study decided not to publish their results on the relationship between STDs and sexual orientation. However, a national British sexuality survey<sup>2</sup>, also published in 1994,

*continued on page 3*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- The Essential Father



A tantalizing mix of recent headlines

• **Washington, DC:** Pres. Clinton appointed gay activist James Hormel as U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg, breaking the tradition/requirement that he get "advise and consent" by the Senate to do so. Of interest, Sen. Bob Smith, a member of the FRI national advisory board, opposed the nomination but Republican Sens. John McCain, Richard Lugar, Orrin Hatch, and Slade Gorton supported Hormel. Sen. Jesse Helms, in a surprise move, allowed Hormel's nomination to pass through his Foreign Relations Committee, setting the stage for the President's move. (*Washington Blade* 6/11/99)

• **Denmark:** Ten years ago Denmark became the first country to allow homosexuals to marry, but homosexual couples could not adopt children. Now partners can adopt the other partner's child and full marriage is apparently just around the corner. (*Denver Post* 5/12/99)

• **Reno:** Nevada became the 11th state with a gay rights law. As with California, it guarantees nondiscrimination in employment. The only openly-gay state assemblyman, David Parks (D-Las Vegas), introduced and pushed for the bill. All non-profit organizations, as well as religious organizations and businesses with fewer than 15 employees are exempted. (*Washington Blade* 5/28/99)

**GAY YOUTH** *from page 1*

addressing “issues faced by sexual minority youth in schools. Since safety in schools is a factor for all students, but has special risks for those who are or appear to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, Project YES has established the Safe Schools, Healthy Families initiative. A brochure describing the initiative is attached.”

Here is what the brochure claims: “Are Schools Really Unsafe?”

In schools, gay and lesbian youth are at high risk. Consider the following statistics:

–33% of teenagers who commit suicide are gay or lesbian

–45% of gay youth and 20% of lesbian youth have directly experienced violence at schools

–28% high school dropout rate for gay youth

–Gay students are 5 times more likely to skip school over fears about personal safety and 4 times more likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school.”

“Many educators have no information on the topic of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. Even the best-intentioned may be uncomfortable with this topic. Project YES has demonstrated the ability to affect faculties and make schools safer for these youth.

...25%-40% of homeless youth are gay or lesbian

50% of gay and lesbian youth are rejected by their families.”

“Miami-Dade County Making History

Four locations will be selected for an intensive training format. These four schools will become part of history, producing a model training that can be replicated nationally.”

Miami-Dade is the third largest school district in the U.S. (behind NYC and LA). If, as the Project YES brochure claims, “33% of teenagers who commit suicide are gay or lesbian,” about a third of the adolescent suicides in Dade County ought to be of homosexuals. And if teenagers who engage in homosexuality are disproportionately the targets of violence, that ought to show up in school statistics.

What are the facts?

FRI worked with Ramon Diaz, head of the *Universal HeteroSexual Family Foundation* in Miami. With his help, we examined the 65 reported suicides by teenagers in Miami from 1994 through 1998. Twelve (18%) of the suicides were girls and 53 (82%) were boys.

In 1994 there were 17 recorded suicides by teens, 15 in 1995, 10 in 1996, 8 in 1997, and 15 in 1998. Since there are about 145,000 students in the Miami school system, that works out to about one suicide for every 11,000 pupils per year – right around the national average of 9/100,000.

Diaz first got the official police investigation summaries for each of the 65 suicides by teenagers over the 5 year period. We wanted to see if there was evidence of a “homosexual” connection to any of these deaths. The police reports don’t try to give a complete psychological autopsy of each case. Rather they attempt to document enough about the motivations for the suicide to rule out foul play. To do this, the police try to establish a motive for each death – and it must be plausible enough to close the case. They interview the parents, the friends, and anybody else that might be involved.

As in any investigation, mistakes are undoubtedly made. One or two of these cases might have been homicide of some variety and the police “missed it.” But, any kind of data has its uncertainties. For instance, some of the 11 youngsters killed “playing” Russian roulette or some other dangerous game might not have intended to shoot themselves, but those accidents are considered suicide anyway.

The motives sketched in the police reports included:

–some sort of love-pact, girlfriend/boyfriend problem/argument: 13 (20%)

–family problems, divorce, parent going to jail, both parents dying etc: 12 (18.5%)

–drugs, alcohol, criminality, or mental illness: 14 (21.5%)

–school problems: 3 (5%)

–unknown: 23 (35.4%)

If a third of youth suicide is gay-

related, one thing is conspicuous by its absence – *anything to do with homosexuality*. According to the police investigation nothing specifically connected with homosexuality surfaced. Where was the “33%” Project YES touted and the Miami school administrators believed?

When phone numbers could be obtained, the home was called and a relative was told about our project. We asked one question (which was also put in Spanish for those who did not speak English): “Did your child ever show any inclination, behavior or ever talk about being or wanting to be a homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual individual?” Six of the 9 who were phoned (4 mothers, a father, and an uncle) responded, the other three refused the interview. 63 letters with the question were sent to the addresses given in the police reports. 13 were returned with an answer (11 answered by the mother, one by the adoptive mother, one answered by the father), 20 letters were returned as undeliverable, and 31 did not reply.

Twenty-two of the police reports mentioned a boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse consistent with the victim having heterosexual inclinations. In 7 of these 22 cases, the relative who replied also reported that the victim had not expressed any homosexual interests. In 12 cases where the sexual proclivities of the suicide victim were not discussed in the police report, the relative reported that the victim had no homosexual inclinations. Thus, in all 34 cases for which information about sexual proclivities was available, all indications were that the victims were heterosexual.

Not only was there no evidence that “33%” of youth suicides were of homosexuals, there was no hard evidence that even ONE of the Miami adolescents who committed suicide was a homosexual!

To summarize, we obtained

reports on the sexual interests of 10 (83%) of the 12 girls who committed suicide. All of

these reports (including three girls for which we had information from both the police report and her mother) indicated she was heterosexual. Of the 53 boy victims, we got similar information for 24 (45%) (including four with agreement between both the police and the family member).

In addition, one family member in each of 19 cases made a positive denial of the victim’s possible homosexuality. So there was no evidence that any of the victims had homosexual inclinations. Thus, in complete contradiction of the claim of pro-homosexual groups that 33% of teenagers who commit suicide are homosexual – we found NO EVIDENCE, zero, nada, that even one of these Miami kids who committed suicide was homosexual.

Might one or more of these kids have been “secretly homosexual?”

Yes, it’s possible. Twenty-three cases did not list a probable motive in the police report. The police may have been wrong and/or the parents may have been wrong (or perhaps they did not tell us the truth). Further, since a number of parents could either not be contacted or refused to cooperate, the possibility that they refused because their child was tilting toward homosexuality cannot be eliminated.

But any claim that one or more was homosexual rests – not on evidence – but on *sheer speculation*. It is also possible that one of the kids who committed suicide was murdered in such a way that it appeared to be suicide – that too is speculation. The long and short of it is that all the actual evidence indicates that not a single teenager of the 65 who committed suicide over the 5 year period was a “gay youth.” As near as we or the police could determine, the “problem” that was claimed by Project YES did not exist.

Sometimes attempting to “solve” problems creates problems larger

**Correction:** We goofed in our last issue! We trusted *Chronicles Magazine* on the Reno quote about cultists. But we didn’t have the *60 Minutes* tape and the quote appears to be a fabrication. We apologize to Janet Reno and to our readers.

than the problem you hope to solve. When it comes to suicide, increasing evidence suggests that attempting to “cure” suicide either has no effect upon diminishing it or may actually increase it. In the mid-1980s, a spate of teenage suicides (often by lovers) made the news. Amid mounting hysteria and news coverage, the number of such teen suicides increased over a period of several months. It seemed that the “news” made teens more likely to “make the news” through suicide.

Although this was a fairly clear case of “news of suicide” encouraging others to suicide, eventually, new suicides were pretty-much dismissed as “old hat” in the news cycle and the rash of suicides stopped. The recent Columbine high school shootings in Colorado also showed that intense media attention to school violence can lead to many “copycat” threats and actual plots and shootings. However, “people are tired of hearing about” such things now, school is out, and the whole issue has been pretty much been dropped (but wait until fall!).

*Family Research Report* has pointed out a number of times that “training” students in suicide prevention may actually increase teen suicide. The Jan-Feb 1994 issue, for instance, reviewed a study suggesting that exposure to suicide prevention programs made students more apt to agree with the statement that “suicide could sometimes be a solution to problems.” We are still unaware of a *single study* that appears to suggest that “suicide prevention programs” work to decrease adolescent suicide!

### Violence Toward and Harassment of Gays in School

As to violence, if the claims in the Project YES brochure are accurate (e.g., “45% of gay youth and 20% of lesbian youth have directly experienced violence at school”), we would expect a fair amount of violence in police reports to be homosexually-related. In April, Ramon Diaz spoke with the head of the School Police department, Dr. Henry C. Fraind, Deputy Superintendent of Schools for Miami-Dade

County. Diaz asked Dr. Fraind, specifically, whether any of the 57,108 crimes recorded in the school offense statistics from 1994 through 1998 involved gays or lesbians. Fraind said “not to my recollection, that’s why we don’t have a category for them.” When pressed, Dr. Fraind noted that “the fact the category is not there, proves the point.”

Unlike the claims about suicide, violence against gays is a bit harder to pin down — a lot of crimes are not reported to the police or school authorities. Nonetheless, Dr. Fraind failed to recall even one incident of violence or sexual assault involving a homosexual teen in the 12,134 instances of assault or in the 612 instances of sex offenses during those school years.

That says quite a bit.

There is certainly no *evidence* that homosexual teens are disproportionately victimized by violence in the Miami public schools — indeed, Dr. Fraind recalled *no evidence that they were victimized by violence at all*. Saying it’s so doesn’t make it so, regardless of the Project YES brochure.

All we have to substantiate that such disproportionate victimization occurs is the claim of a social service group, Project YES, one having a particular axe to grind, a grant to spend, and a burning desire to “tell their story” in the public school system. The same group made an even more dramatic claim about youth suicide. Once again, no hard evidence backed up either Project YES claim.

How about the Project YES claim that “Gay students are 5 times more likely to skip school over fears about personal safety and 4 times more likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school?”

Are teenagers who consider themselves gay and lesbian really at greater risk? If they are, why don’t they make more complaints to authorities? On April 29, Dr. Fraind wrote “in response to your public information request regarding students filing harassment complaints related to ‘sexual orientation.’ Staff has advised that there are no student complaints on the basis of sexual orientation.” Again, no

evidence.

The evidence we gathered — about the supposed suicides, violence, and harassment — did not substantiate the claims of the Project YES brochure, at least in Miami. This situation has to trouble the taxpayers of Miami-Dade County Schools and, since we all pay for federal assistance to the large school systems, all U.S. taxpayers. The *American Psychological Association* has just joined with the *Centers for Disease Control* to “help” schools provide health programs for “gay, lesbian and bisexual” youth. You can bet on it, the program will be much like Project YES — and with just as little “real empirical meat.”

Schools are supposed to teach, at least in theory, “the best” and/or “the approved” aspects of our society. As such, whatever is allowed in is given the “OK or better” stamp of approval. Administrators are supposed to be very careful before they allow something new into the schools. Anything new takes away time from what was there before the new thing arrived.

The administrators duly “looked the proposal of YES” over. They held private meetings to evaluate and judge the claims of the YES group and whether YES should be given the school system’s stamp of approval. Further, these administrators had to decide whether other ostensibly “valuable things” should be displaced in favor of Project YES. And, *on the basis of NO hard empirical evidence*, the Miami administration gave Project YES the green light.

Anyone who wonders why the schools aren’t doing a better job educating our kids doesn’t have far to look — this situation is a perfect example. Too much time and money are being wasted on no-account projects, inservice trainings, and the like. Is this why society is asked to “keep kids in school” and “keep kids from dropping out of school?”

Why did they make this decision?

Not on the basis of evidence — after all, the administrators could have done what we did. They could have checked with the police in the

*continued on page 4*

### STDs from page 1

*did* release their analysis of this question.

Unlike the FRI study, the British investigators did not ask about specific STDs. Rather, they asked whether the respondent had ever visited an STD clinic and whether they had visited one in the past 5 years. Since Britain has “free” medicine, a visit to an STD clinic is a reasonable surrogate for an actual STD diagnosis (of course, neither we nor the Brits had the actual medical reports).

Another point of difference is that the Brits did not ask about sexual orientation per se. Instead, the authors asked whether respondents had ever had a homosexual experience with an adult and whether they had had at least one such experience in the last 5 years. Also, Britain appears to have proportionately fewer homosexuals than the U.S.

For men, 3.9% reported ever having had at least one homosexual partner, and these men accounted for 14.8% of STD clinic visits. For women, 1.9% of British females reported at least one homosexual experience, and they accounted

*continued on page 4*

## FAMILY RESEARCH REPORT

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# Cameron's Corner

## The Essential Father

One of the most notable effects of the sexual revolution is that fewer and fewer kids live with their father nowadays. Just how important is this lack of fathers? The *American Psychological Association* (APA) in June featured "Deconstructing the Essential Father" as the lead article in its premier journal, the *American Psychologist*. By way of background, the *American Psychologist* often features articles that weave together unabashed opinion and empiricism, frequently helping set the stage for social initiatives of the APA. In this latest article, the authors concluded from interviews bearing on "the fathering identities" of "approximately 200" volunteers "who are actively involved with their children" that "our data on gay fathering couples have convinced us that neither a mother nor a father is essential (p. 397)."

What can you tell about "fathering" from volunteers and their claims about how well they "father?" The proof of "fathering" is *how the kids turn out, not how the fathers "feel" or the claims they make*. Their rag-tag sample — "Haitian Christian fathers; Promise Keeper fathers; gay fathers; Latino fathers; White, nongay divorced fathers; Modern Orthodox Jewish fathers; and Greek grandfathers" — might have led the investigators toward interesting hypotheses they could then test on representative samples of fathers and their children. But to make strong statements about fathering based on this sample would be terribly unjustified.

Yet the authors stated: "we do not believe that heterosexual marriage is the social context in which responsible fathering is most likely to occur (p. 398)." This is a very strong assertion indeed, suggesting that whatever parental benefits to children might be, those benefits are less likely to occur within traditional marriage! What kind of leap of logic takes the claims/reports of 200 volunteer fathers as "the gospel truth" — so very much so that thousands of years of human experience can safely be discarded?

One refreshing thing about the article is that it is openly biased and admittedly only quasi-empirical: "Many social scientists believe that it is possible to draw a sharp distinction between scientific fact and political values. From our perspective, science is always structured by values, both in the research questions that are generated and in the interpretation of data (p. 398)." While most might see a large difference between "scientific fact" and "political values," these authors see little, and admit they are willing to twist data and logic to serve their ends.

This point of view — that "science" may be used in service of political goals irrespective of the "truth" and logic of the argument — should disturb everyone. The modern university and the modern professional association is increasingly dedicated not to truth, but to the "right outcome." When the elite of a society are willing to view "truth" through the lens of a desired political outcome instead of trying to determine the truth about that political outcome, nothing stands in the way of those like Mao, Stalin, or Hitler. To these institutions and these authors, traditional values and mores are "of grave concern... because [they] discriminate against cohabiting couples, single mothers, and gay and lesbian parents" (p. 399).

The authors imagine a society where a "father's relationship with his children could... develop and remain independent of his relationship with the child's mother (p. 405), where there would be more feminine control of the institutions of society, and "a comprehensive program of governmental subsidies to all families with children (p. 405)." *What a great employment plan for psychologists*. Turn the whole society upside down and everybody will need a shrink! This article would be laughable except that it mirrors the thinking of modern-day elites. Nothing is more trendy among the elite than to abandon "what brought them to the dance" in favor of various forms of social suicide. The West may be rich today, but thinking like this all but assures that its wealth will be fleeting.

**Reference:** Silverstein LB, Auerbach, CF. Deconstructing the essential father. *American Psychologist*, 1999;54:397-407.

### GAY YOUTH from page 3

county about suicides and the police department within their own school district about violence toward homosexuals. But there is no evidence that they did. Instead, they simply took some of the valuable resources of the school district and gave them to Project YES.

Public school districts lurch from one fad to another. A few decades ago "teaching machines" would "solve the problem" of kids not learning. Then it was computers —

they would "do it all." Nowadays it is "diversity" and "multiculturalism" and acceptance of "divergent lifestyles" (which we presume helped lead to acceptance of the Project YES proposal). The public school systems are supposed to help socialize our children. Parents teach them how to speak, eat, dress, etc.

Then kids are supposed to learn how to read, write, compute and digest enough about the core culture to get by and hold a paying job. If such a good job of teaching these

"basics" is being done in Miami that there is enough "spare time" and "spare money" to include worthless things like Project YES in the curriculum and budget, why aren't the students of the school district doing better on their standardized tests?

### **Reference:**

1. Shaffer, D. et al. Sexual orientation in adolescents who commit suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 1995;25:64-71.

### STDs from page 3

for 7.9% of STD clinic visits by women.

Considering just the last 5 years, 1.6% of the men reported having had sex with at least one man; they accounted for 12.1% of male STD clinic visits in the past 5 years. For women, 0.7% reported having had sex with at least one woman, accounting for 1.6% of all female STD clinic visits.

As a rule, city dwellers get more STDs than those who live in rural areas — there is simply more "fooling around" in cities. On this score, the British study is larger (with over 17,000 respondents) and more generalizable than FRI's because it sampled proportionately from all across Britain. However, because free STD clinics in the U.S. are disproportionately located in cities, the FRI estimates are probably close to the proportionate cost of homosexuality and heterosexuality to U.S. taxpayers.

In any case, whether you take the British or FRI estimates, it is clear that both men and women who engage in homosexuality make their fellow citizens disproportionately pay for medical treatments, simply because those who engage in homosexuality are more apt to get STDs.

In 1985, FRI estimated that those who engage in homosexuality account for about 15% of all STDs in the U.S. The British study might suggest that those who engage in homosexuality account for about 12% of all STDs in Great Britain.

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2. Johnson, A.M, Wadsworth, J., Wellings, K., Field, J. *Sexual attitudes and lifestyles*. 1994, London: Blackwell Scientific Publications.
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