

APA Journal Article Discourages Reorientation Therapy

Clients should be persuaded to embrace unwanted attractions, because "same-sex desire not immoral," psychologists say, "or pathological"

by Frank York

Psychologists Jon S. Lasser and Dr. Michael C. Gottlieb believe it is unethical for psychologists to attempt reorientation therapy or even to refer patients to reorientation therapists. Paradoxically, however, they encourage therapists to acknowledge "the plasticity of sexual orientation." They would also approve reorientation therapy as a last resort if suicide is a possible outcome.

Writing in the April, 2004, issue of *Professional Psychology: Research And Practice*, (Vol. 35, No. 2., 194-200), Lasser and Gottlieb maintain that psychologists who are confronted with individuals wishing to change their sexual orientation should either 1) refuse to take such patients or 2) work to convince them that bisexuality or homosexuality are normal variants of sexuality.

They believe "that same-sex desire is neither pathological nor immoral and that efforts to change sexual orientation are generally unwarranted and may even be harmful."

Lasser and Gottlieb note that if a psychologist is willing to work with a patient who seeks to change his orientation, he should consider using the therapeutic assessment model developed by Finn and Tonsager.

The authors present a case of a 20-year-old man who reported a typical adolescence and dated girls. Eventually, he began having a sexual relationship with an older man and later began having an affair with a woman. In using therapeutic assessment with clients such as this one, the

therapist can lead them to "gain insight, reduce or eliminate distress, and accept themselves" as bisexual. The goal is to show the client that his attraction to both sexes is normal and healthy and he does not need reorientation therapy.

In a discussion of the ethical considerations involved in providing therapy for a person who wishes to diminish his homosexuality and develop his heterosexual potential, the authors state: "In our judgment, it is not appropriate for practitioners to accept patients for treatment under such circumstances, regardless of their good intentions."

The psychologist's goal is to persuade the client that his bisexual interests are normal and healthy.

However, in extreme cases, if the patient has been counseled by several therapists and still wishes reparative therapy, he may be referred to someone who believes in conversion therapy—but this is only as the last resort to avoid a

suicide and to respect patient autonomy.

The authors note that "At the present time, there is insufficient scientific knowledge to fully explain the etiology of sexual orientation."

Later, they urge psychologists to reject "older models based on male paradigms, assumptions of illness, and inflexible behaviors and attitudes," and to embrace "new models [that] recognize the *plasticity of sexual orientation* [emphasis added], the social context of sexuality, and differences between male and female sexuality."

New Editor for NARTH

In November, NARTH's longtime Publication Director Linda Nicolosi announced that she will be delegating the position of editor to Frank York, currently a staff writer for NARTH. Mrs. Nicolosi has been editor of NARTH's publications since its founding in 1992.

Mrs. Nicolosi, who is turning her attention for a period of time to other projects, will remain as Publications Director but will not be involved in the daily management of the NARTH website or writing of articles, at least through 2005.