

## BOOK REVIEW

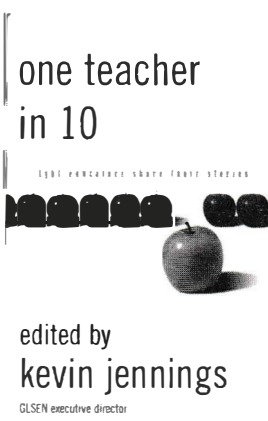
### “One teacher in 10: LGBT educators share their stories”

Reviewed by Robert L. Vazzo, MA, MMFT

Robert Vazzo holds a Master of Arts degree in linguistics from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of Southern California. Currently, he is a Marriage and Family Therapist Intern at the Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic in Encino, California.

The reader may have already detected the misinformation in the title of the text. Mental health practitioners and educators who have done their homework know that the 10% theory of homosexuality is not reliable. Originally, it found its way into the literature during the Kinsey days of biased samples and sociopolitical expediency. More recent scientific inquiries into the prevalence of exclusive homosexuality have put the number at between 2%-3% (Laumann, E. *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, 1994).

If ever there were a book that laid out the philosophical agenda of gay activists in our public schools, this would be it. The book’s purpose, according to editor Kevin Jennings, executive director of the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educational Network (GLSEN) is to serve “. . . as a resource, a comfort, proof that they are not alone” (back cover). Instead, the text provides the reader with an unobstructed view into the minds of gays, lesbians, and transgendered teachers and their attempts to completely transform our public educational institutions into places where their social agendas take precedence over our own wishes regarding the education of our



children. In many cases, the advocacy promoted in the book transcends mere tolerance and acceptance; attempts to influence and manipulate our youth into accepting their philosophy are plentiful. *One teacher in 10* has been written by 39 individual instructors and organized into four sections, each which highlights an aspect of the instructor’s process toward full advocacy of gay, lesbian, and transgendered issues.

The first section deals with the coming out process. Throughout this section, the reader gets the feeling that teachers are preoccupied with the coming out process (when to do it, who to come out to, how to come out to the students) and that it takes precedence over the learning of subject matter. Indeed, many teachers describe opportunities to discuss homosexuality as “teaching moments.” In his anxiety about coming out, one instructor consults with another colleague, and the latter advises him to consider whether coming out would benefit him more than it would benefit his students. Unfortunately, the teacher does not heed the colleague’s advice. Putting his need to come out over the students’ best interest, the language arts and social studies teacher loses his sense of boundaries and answers all of his students’ questions about his personal life.

Indeed the reader soon learns that in a very strange way, despite their initial fear, these teachers actually enjoy students’ inquiries about their personal lives because they view them as opportunities to promote their gay identities. Nevertheless, in doing so, they

may do more harm than good. Indeed, the teachers' audacity is troubling. One takes pride that she "... let the whole class know ..." that she was a lesbian (p. 57). (What the reader soon learns is that this teacher's students were very young children who couldn't possibly have the cognitive abilities to understand the full impact of the teacher's statement.) Another marvels that he "... had lived under the assumption that as an elementary teacher [his] students were too young to be concerned with the intimate details of [his] personal life" (p. 51). The self-centeredness of these teachers and their disrespect for the psychological well being of their students and their parents' trust is alarming. Particularly disturbing is the teachers' inability to realize that they have power and that their students are in a one-down position.

One marvels at the demands that these teachers impose on their students. They expect them to readily accept a man having a husband, a woman having a wife, a man desiring to become a woman, a woman desiring to become a man, and everything in between. They insist that their students "learn" that each alternative is perfectly normal and that they shouldn't have negative reactions. In fact, they admonish their students when they do have negative reactions to homosexuality, telling them that their remarks are "homophobic" and have hurt the teacher. What these teachers fail to realize is that the youngsters are often at a developmental stage where they are trying to consolidate their sense of masculinity and femininity and that the negative remarks are simply a defense against a perceived threat to that development.

The book continues with the second section entitled "Lessons Taught . . . and Learned," which describes different teachers' life journeys after coming out and what they have learned from their experiences. In this section, disrespect for administrators, students, and their parents abound. One teacher expressed anger that her boss insisted that she remove bumper stickers from her car that read, "Vegetarians taste better" and "Sorry I missed church, I was busy practicing witchcraft and becoming a lesbian" (p. 102). She became incensed when her assistant superintendent did not renew her contract. Another teacher labeled Catholic or Christian environments as homophobic. Anti-Christian sentiment is obvious, and the various authors treat Christianity and conservative values as threats. The authors' use the term homophobia throughout the text as a weapon against anyone who would question the teachers' revelations of their sexual orientation to their students, their implementing pro-gay curricula changes, starting gay-friendly clubs, or admonishing students who make negative statements about homosexuality. One contributor, a university professor, tries to draw parallels between racism/sexism and homophobia and thus manipulates her students to support her cause. The implications of these and other tactics are enormous.

Of particular concern to me as a family therapist was the teachers' attempt to affirm a gay identity in young people dealing with sexual orientation and gender identity issues. They accomplished this through the creation of student clubs such as GLSEN and gay-straight alliances and justified their actions by stating that no student should suffer what they suffered as students. However, as any good therapist knows, childhood and adolescence are fraught with confusion and ambiguity. The teachers, however, rush to judgment about different students' orientation and then take action to affirm and promote that orientation. Parents may be further annoyed that,

with respect to these issues, many of the writers have taken on the professional role of counselor and therapist, duties well beyond the scope of their training and competence. Shockingly enough, one teacher, after learning that his student is having sexual relations with adult males, does absolutely nothing.

The third section of the book, "May-September," highlights both personal and professional changes in the teachers' lives after years of experience in various school systems. Some accounts are downright confusing. One involves a lesbian named Randy who is contemplating a sex change operation. Coworkers refer to Randy as "he," yet Randy presents professionally as a female, and her students address her with the pronoun "she." Nevertheless, "she" wears male clothing and becomes a male after work and considers herself a male. As a result, Randy told a student that she was a lesbian. He later went on to describe how she was going to change her gender from female to male. The teacher admits that "many days I am too distracted to be able to devote my full attention to teaching or planning lessons because something very basic to my self-identity, my gender, is not acknowledged at all" (p. 169). The reader is left in utter confusion about the final gender identity of the instructor.

The fourth section outlines the need for teachers to take action for change to occur. It provides guidance based on experience. Among other things, teachers advocate turning anger into action, choosing one's battles carefully, educating staff and students, and starting gay-friendly student organizations. Ironically enough, much of what the teachers say about themselves provides insight into their history and the roots of their sexual orientation issues. One lesbian teacher laments: "I'm not from TV where families stay together; mothers kiss their children goodbye and give them a lunch as they go to school. I am from my secret place where mothers hurt you and then they leave without worrying about your school lunch, or a kiss." (p. 275)

Another teacher describes revealing his orientation to his parents and how they cried. It appears that it came as a complete surprise. This supports the belief of many reparative therapists that in families where a child has a homosexual orientation, the relationship between parents and children, especially between the same-sex parent and child, is poor and communication lacking. Finally, a third teacher recounts how one of his students went to a gay bar seeking initiatory gay sex with older men. Such behavior supports many reparative therapists' belief that many young men have sexual relations with older men to heal the father wound.

In the United States, we currently have a separation of church and state. This is to prevent the imposition of one group's religious beliefs upon another group. Basically, religious beliefs represent principles that people adhere to to guide their daily living. Gays, lesbians, and transsexuals promote a set of principles that guide their lives. These principles have as their underlying rationale "I am my feelings." A corollary to this rationale is "I should act on my feelings." Using their professional positions in our schools, they seek to disseminate and promote this philosophy. Concerned citizens have both the right and the duty to stop this abuse of privilege, power, and the public trust.

*One teacher in 10* is an ideal text for learning about how gays, les-

bians, and transsexuals think, act, and react. It must be read by anyone who resents the imposition of another's agenda in the rearing of their children. This includes concerned parents, pastors,

teachers, and therapists. To do otherwise is to ultimately betray their children's trust.

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\* A statistician (in an email correspondence) noted quite appropriately that heritability is a measure of the ratio of two variances and is not a simple proportion. A heritability index and a proportion are calculated on different scales. In this case, however, both the data from the heritability index and the proportion support the conclusion that homosexuality is not hardwired (or simply biologically fated). Though Dr. Collins offered a 20% concordance for monozygotic twins, it should be noted that this figure is the proband concordance. This is mathematically correct. However, Dr. Neil Whitehead offered a correct pairwise concordance of 11%. For the lay audience, it should be understood that different answers will emerge with different models. However, the conclusion is the same: current data provides little evidence to support the conclusion that homosexuality is hardwired. •

*(Psychology Needs Reform, continued from page 9)*

of Council's time is spent on diversity, 60% on assuring the perpetuation of the incumbents' participation in the various aspects of governance, and only 20% on issues of vital interest to the general membership. And why should it be different? Not being elected by the members at large, those in governance are only tangentially, or even unlikely to be responsive to their interests.

I have been urged to call for a new division that might somehow balance the APA's tilt to the left, but this seems like just another band-aid. At present the warring academic and professional coalitions on Council are unable to prevail against each other without making alliances with the third, or public interest coalition from which most of the ideologies spring. In this way we sell out our science and profession to political ideology and political correctness. What we need is a gut-wrenching sweep of our troubled house.

I propose that we do away with the current divisional governance, wiping out the fiefdoms of the special interests, and returning the organization to the membership on a one-member-one-vote democratic election process not only for the president, but also the Board of Directors and the Council of Representatives. Divisions and state associations could continue to exist, and can even advance candidates for election to Council and the Board of Directors, but they do not solely determine them.

Yes, I am aware that such a clean sweep of our fractionated special interests for the good of the science and profession is a drastic step and will be fought tooth-and-nail by the status quo. In 1945 the APA saved itself by forming a dozen divisions. In the 1970s it saved itself again by granting power to the divisions to elect the Council through an allocation system of votes that determined how many seats each division/state association would have. These reforms sufficed for years, but now we are

*(Why I Am Not, continued from page 17)*

position differs from the American Psychological Association, which sees homosexuality and heterosexuality as equivalent, and along the way, we encourage them to clarify and re-clarify the direction of their identity commitment. Gay-affirmative therapy should, of course, be available for any such client.

A few gay-identified clients do decide to stay with us. Out of respect for diversity and autonomy, I affirm them in their right to define themselves as they wish, and I accept them in their gay self-label.

### **Client And Therapist Together**

But the most powerful dimension of the working alliance can only come into play when therapist and client together view SSA the same way. When the therapist takes a "neutral" position ("I see gay and straight as equally OK"), this dilutes the power of the transference and leaves the client feeling incompletely understood and incompletely supported.

bogged down in fractionation, growing divisiveness, and member alienation. It is the 21st century and we need another force, independent of the current corrupt governance, somewhat like the Albee Commission that prevented the self-destruction of the APA decades ago by arriving at our present system.

George Albee, who died just a month ago, never envisaged that the solution of the previous crisis would eventually result in the present one. But George was an agent of change and of progress, and I am sure he would have agreed to our need for an overhaul. •

*Dr. Cummings is Distinguished Professor, University of Nevada, Reno; President, Cummings Foundation for Behavioral Health; Board Chair, The Nicholas & Dorothy Cummings Foundation; Board Chair, CareIntegra. He served as APA president in 1979. He may be reached at 4781 Caughlin Parkway, Reno, NV 89519 or CummFound@aol.com The book on which the APA panel in New Orleans is based is Wright & N.A. Cummings (2005), Destructive Trends in Mental Health: The Well Intentioned Path to Harm. New York: Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).*

**Order Destructive Trends in Mental Health: The Well Intentioned PATH To Harm** from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com or other online publishing companies.

*"This book may be the read of the year for mental health practitioners. It is the most sweeping critique (and often indictment) of the mental health professions in recent memory." – Frank Farley and V.K. Kumar, Reviewers, Contemporary Psychology, 06/07/2005*

What sustains the client during difficult periods of therapy is the therapist's unwavering conviction that he does possess a latent heterosexual nature. For these men, to know that a salient man sees this potential, however hidden—even when they themselves are undergoing doubts—is a powerful inspiration.

I remember a client recalling a long-ago moment when he was 15 years old. He had just seen his school counselor, and went home crying in despair to his father, saying he'd been told he was gay. His father stood up from his chair and declared in a caring yet forceful voice, "No, Matthew, you are not gay. You are a heterosexual!"

To this day, Matthew still cherishes the memory of his father's words. •