



“Reorientation” Therapies and Same-Sex Desire: Are they Effective and Ethical?

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ASA 2011



Is it ethical to offer therapy to assist people who would like to change their sexual orientation?

The Context and the Story

Pre-1973: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
(DSM-II)

‘personality disorders not otherwise specified’

‘sexual deviations’ (302)

‘homosexuality’ (302.0)

Post-1973:

-homosexuality is not a mental illness

-distress at same-sex attractions reflects homophobia

-sexual orientation is stable

American Psychiatric Association (APA):

<http://www.psych.org/Departments/EDU/Library/>

[APAOfficialDocumentsandRelated/Position-Statement-on-Homosexuality.aspx](http://www.psych.org/Departments/EDU/Library/APAOfficialDocumentsandRelated/Position-Statement-on-Homosexuality.aspx)

American Psychological Association (APA):

<http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/sorientation.pdf>

Organizations Offering 'Conversion' Therapies

Exodus International (<http://exodusinternational.org/>)

“We believe homosexuality to be a multi-causal, developmental issue and that any individual can experience freedom through the support of caring individuals and the healing power of Jesus Christ”

National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) (<http://narth.com/>)

“offers hope to those who struggle with unwanted homosexuality...we disseminate educational information, conduct and collect scientific research, promote effective therapeutic treatment, and provide referrals to those who seek our assistance.”



THOMAS AQUINAS PSYCHOLOGICAL CLINIC

You don't have to be gay.

- Diminish your unwanted homosexuality
- Develop your heterosexual potential

Dr. Joseph Nicolosi

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Evaluating Conversion Therapies

Do they pose a risk of harm?

1. positives
2. negatives

Do they effectively alter sexual orientation?

- conversion therapies
 - surgery, hormone injections
 - behavior therapies: aversion therapy, covert sensitization
 - reparative therapy (Nicolosi)

Evaluating Conversion Therapies

defining 'success'

duration of change

physiological measures

retrospective & self-report measures

Nicolosi, Byrd & Potts, Psychological Reports, 2000

Spitzer, Archives of Sexual Behavior, 2003

Evaluating Conversion Therapies

“...although sexual reorientation techniques have achieved moderately positive results, research is sorely needed on ways to improve the efficacy of the procedures. [They] do not yet operate at a level of sophistication and validity that will allow clinicians to place much faith in the procedures and use them in a competent manner, assured of the potential for success.”

Adams & Sturgis, Psychological Bulletin, 1977

“[Conversion therapy] appears to...lack an empirical basis as a treatment option”

Cramer, Golom, LoPresto & Krikley, Ethics & Behavior, 2008

Sexual Orienteering: A Road Map



“Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes.

“Sexual orientation refers to a person’s sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions.”

American Psychological Association

Sexual Orienteering

sexual desires

affectional feelings

sexual behavior

socio-sexual identity (gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual)

gender identity

gender role

Sexual Orienteering

The “Kinsey Scale”

Rating	Description
0	Exclusively heterosexual
1	Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
2	Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3	Equally heterosexual and homosexual.
4	Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
5	Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual
6	Exclusively homosexual
X	Asexual, Non-Sexual

Motive for Reproduction
Gender-specific

Motive for social bonding
Gender non-specific



Diamond, L., Psychological Review, 2003

The Two Main Ethical Arguments

1. *Conversion therapies are unethical because they:*

- try to change the something that isn't a disorder...
- can't be changed anyway...
- and contribute to a hostile environment for people with same-sex desires

Solution: change, escape or reject community rather than internal desires

2. *Conversion therapies are ethical because they:*

- deal with a real disorder...
- that can be changed/healed...
- and people freely choose to seek such therapy

Solution: change, escape, or reject internal desires rather than community

Worldview Assumptions

1. *Major mental health organizations*


-individualist, autonomy, self-determination

2. *Conversion therapists and related organizations*

-communitarian, authoritarian, theocentric

The Courage Apostolate Home Page

Veni Redemptor Gentium!

Still time to register for the Courage/EnCourage Annual Conference -- This year dedicated to Fr. John Harvey! 

This site has received the **Triple Excellency Gold Award** for Excellence in Fidelity, Resources, and Usability from CatholicCulture.org



*You don't have to climb this
mountain alone!*

Are you or a loved one experiencing homosexual attractions and looking for answers?

Courage, an apostolate of the Catholic Church, ministers to those with same-sex attractions and their loved ones. We have been endorsed by the [Pontifical Council for the Family](#) and our beloved John Paul II said of this ministry, "**COURAGE is doing the work of God!**" We also have an outreach called [EnCourage](#) which ministers to relatives and friends of persons with same-sex attractions.

From our website you will learn about same sex attraction and chastity. By developing an interior life of chastity, which is the universal call to all Christians, one can move beyond the confines of the homosexual identity to a more complete one in Christ.

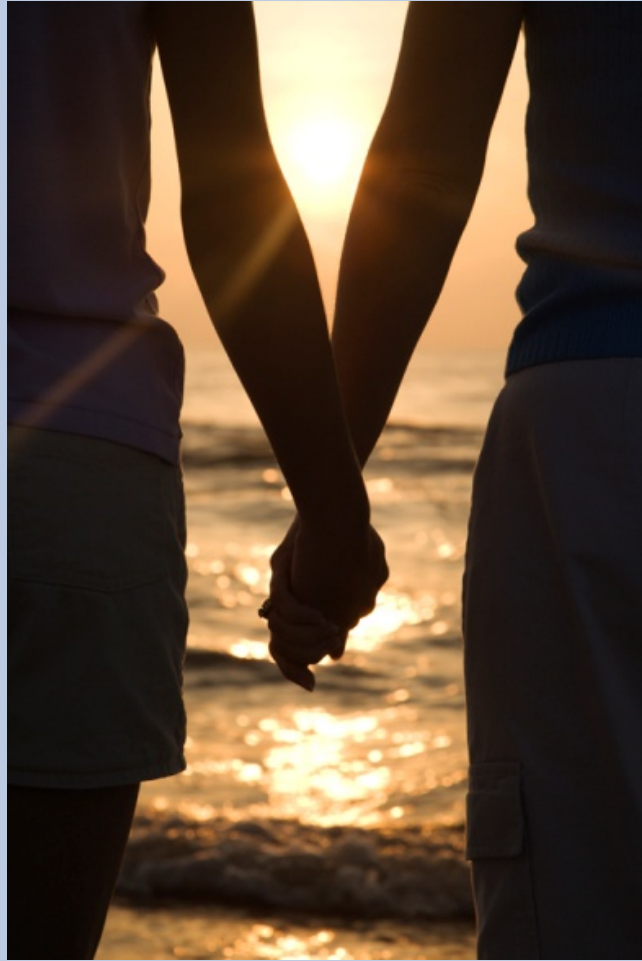
In Courage you will get to know men and women who share in your concerns, meeting them online through our Listservs, or in person at Chapter Meetings, Conferences, Days of Recollection, and Retreats.

Come see what we are about. Browse our pages. Get to know our community. You'll be glad you did!



"Trust Christ; listen attentively to his teachings, fix your eyes on his face, persevere in listening to his Word. Allow him to focus your search"

<http://couragerc.net/>



Recommended: *Margaret Farley, Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics, 2008 Continuum, esp chapters 6 & 7*