

On Spontaneous Changes In Sexual Orientation

by Frank York

Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, in his recently-published NARTH paper, "The Trojan Couch," points out that sexual orientation has been found to be unstable over time in both males and females. This finding has been reported in many studies, including the research of Edward O. Laumann, John H. Gagnon, Robert T. Michael, and Stuart Michaels in *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*, (University of Chicago Press, 1994)

According to Satinover, Laumann and his colleagues "found to their surprise that its [homosexual orientation] instability over the course of life was one-directional: declining, and very significantly so."

Homosexuality tended spontaneously to "convert" into heterosexuality as a cohort of individuals aged, and this was true for both men and women—"the pull of the normative, as it were," said Satinover. One of the main discoveries of Laumann was that homosexuality, as a fixed trait "scarcely even seems to exist." (Quote from Laumann, Michael, Gagnon in *Family Planning Perspectives*, Jan-Feb 1994.)

A study published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, (April 2005) also confirms the flexibility of sexual orientation. "Sex Differences in the Flexibility of Sexual Orientation: A Multidimensional Retrospective Assessment," by Kinnish, Strassberg, and Turner, surveyed self-identified homosexuals, bisexuals, and heterosexuals, to

determine if there were differences between males and females in the flexibility of their sexual orientations.

The authors note that while most researchers have maintained the position that sexual orientation is stable across the lifespan, this view has been challenged in recent years by other researchers who say that "sexual orientation is inherently flexible, evolving continuously over the lifespan. From this perspective, individuals may experience transitions in sexual orientation experiences, social interactions, and the influence of the cultural context."

Lesbians, in particular, have been found to be more flexible in their sexual orientation than male homosexuals. Researchers have described this flexibility variously as "greater fluidity and ambiguity," "choices or social and political constructions," and that women are more responsive to "culture, learning and social circumstances."

They found that lesbian participants were far more likely than gay men to report having previously identified as something "other than homosexual -- most of the women had previously identified as heterosexual, while for the males, the modal prior identification was as bisexual (rather than heterosexual)." Thus, it was concluded that the women demonstrated greater fluidity (moving from heterosexual to homosexual) than did the men."