

More Balance Needed in the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy

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Over the past decade, Student, Associate and Clinical Membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) has created a valuable pathway for my growth and development in the practice of marriage and family therapy. Research and publications seemed value-neutral and respectful of the wide range of views held by the many members of the association.

However, the October 2000 issue of the *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy* took a distinctly different approach with a special section entitled "Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues in Family Therapy." This collection of writings by nine authors, who were invited by a homosexual guest editor from the editorial board, provided "Perspectives for the Contemporary Therapist." Those perspectives labeled our culture "homophobic and heterosexist," warning of "the threat of anti-gay/lesbian violence."

The guest editor regretted the lack of articles in the AAMFT literature addressing the gay civil rights movement over the past twenty years, and decried the "so-called 'Defense of Marriage Acts'" which define marriage as between one man and one woman. He stated, "We still have a long way to go...."

Other authors provided anecdotal case studies of therapy sessions. In one disturbing account, a 13-year-old oppositional girl spoke of wanting to marry and have children. The consultant asked, "But I'm curious, what would happen if in fact you fell in love with another woman and not a man?" "The girl confirmed, 'Then I'd be gay.'" Eventually, the girl learned about lesbianism from the consultant.

In my first semester of training, I learned therapists do not lead clients. Yet this young, oppositional teenager had been introduced to lesbianism in therapy, and soon after, defined herself as gay. This author claimed that 10%-12% of youth are gay, so "homophobia and heterosexism" within families and among teachers and health care providers contribute to poor self-esteem and suicidality.

Another writer described a session with a 6-year-old boy and his parents. The child's affectionate play at recess, hugging another little boy while trying to kiss his cheek, caused concern in the parents, who wondered if he were transsexual. This child came to the family through adoption when he was one year old; therefore, he would have had primary attachment deficits to overcome. But the

story of his therapy sexualized the child's needs and motives and discounted his parents' "fear of recruiting young people into the gay lifestyle" as a stereotype. The therapist sought to educate the family about successful gay and lesbian persons, with the goal that "heterosexism and homophobia" would be countered.



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After reading this heavily biased material, I was discouraged that my professional association would publish such a collection of articles, allowing name-calling of those with traditional moral values. Many clinicians, in fact, still treat homosexuality based upon the body of research on sexual disorders (such as Bieber's) which has never been disproven.

My prior training through the AAMFT generally emphasized respect for clients' and therapists' values. I immediately called the editor and discussed the biased nature of the issue. She responded that this was clinical research which had passed the editorial board's review, and then she added that I

was the only person who had disapproved within the AAMFT's broad readership, which extends to Canada, South America and overseas.

After collaboration with Dr. Nicolosi at NARTH, I gathered ten other clinicians from the U.S. and South America and we sent letters to the editor asking for a special section, equal in length to the prior one, publishing the exciting new research regarding the effectiveness of change therapy for homosexuals. We stated that such knowledge is necessary for professional competence in working with this population. We also sent her additional research, along with the Michael Johnston videotape, "It's Not Gay."

The journal's editor, Karen Wampler, replied,

"A review of the videotape you sent as well as the two reprints of articles published in *Psychological Reports* and the five fact sheets from the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality that you enclosed with your letter did not provide any evidence that would change my mind...."

"I take responsibility for my decision to not publish the special section you requested....I invite you to direct your concerns directly to the Board of Directors of AAMFT."

Dr. Wampler sent copies of her response to me to the Board of Directors, including James Morris, President of AAMFT, Michael Bowers, Executive Director of AAMFT, Froma

continued on page 25

Walsh, Former Editor, JMFT and Robert-Jay Green, Editor, Special Section.

I discussed the matter further with the people at NARTH, and they sent additional published research—including a copy of a published analysis of the literature by Warren Throckmorton, Ph.D. past president of the National Association of Mental Health Counselors. Dr. Throckmorton's study of the literature concludes that change is possible.

NARTH also made the editor aware that both the American Psychiatric and Psychological Associations had scheduled symposiums on this issue.

Additional copies of that information were then sent to the AAMFT Board, requesting publication of a section on reorientation therapy.

I also sent my letter to the *Family Therapy News*. It was not published, but sent back to the journal editor, who stated that there was no place for letters-to-the-editor. It is clear that the

AAMFT will print no opposing viewpoint at this time.

Please join me in taking the responsibility of promoting publication of research which clarifies that homosexuals can leave the lifestyle through change therapy.

Our culture depends on the sound judgment of those in positions of authority.

The AAMFT can be reached at:

Editor:

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