

The Truth About So-Called 'Conversion Therapy'

In light of the latest attack on sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE), namely, Amazon's banning of books on the subject, we do well to separate fact from fiction. Are these change efforts really so dangerous? Should they be banned and even criminalized?

According to the critics, "conversion therapy" is dangerous and harmful because it tries to change something that cannot be changed, akin to trying to change a left-handed person into a right-handed person. In keeping with this analogy, it would also say that there is something fundamentally wrong with being left-handed.

As expressed in California's SB 1172, which was signed into law in 2012 and criminalized SOCE for minors:

Sexual orientation change efforts pose critical health risks to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, including confusion, depression, guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, shame, social withdrawal, suicidality, substance abuse, stress, disappointment, self-blame, decreased self-esteem and authenticity to others, increased self-hatred, hostility and blame toward parents, feelings of anger and betrayal, loss of friends and potential romantic partners, problems in sexual and emotional intimacy, sexual dysfunction, high-risk sexual behaviors, a feeling of being dehumanized and untrue to self, a loss of faith and a sense of having wasted time and resources. This is documented by the American Psychological Association task force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation in its 2009 Report of the task force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation.

Is this true? Certainly not.

According to Christopher Doyle, himself a former homosexual and today, a licensed therapist, "Despite the claims of harm cited in SB 1172, the American Psychological Association task force did not actually provide evidence to back up the 28 health risks listed above. In fact, none of these health risks have been documented in the scientific peer-reviewed literature outside of a few published and unpublished anecdotal reports from adults. But there is not one single outcome-based study in the scientific literature of minors undergoing SOCE therapy to back up these claims."

In short, while there is no doubt that some people have been hurt by SOCE, there is also no doubt that the harm has been exaggerated.

In fact, it is these exaggerated charges, including shock treatment and torture camps (as if sadistic therapists try to torture gays into becoming straight), that have been used to criminalize SOCE efforts for minors in other states.

Not only so, but many people have been helped through SOCE.

As noted by Brandon Showalter, "A new study is challenging the American Psychological Association's contention that therapies for unwanted same-sex attraction are harmful.

"The study, 'Effects of Therapy on Religious Men Who Have Unwanted Same-Sex Attraction,' which was first published July 23 in *The Linacre Quarterly*, finds that sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE), often derisively called 'conversion therapy,' improves the mental health of participants. Researchers surveyed 125 male residents of the United States."

We should also remember that the very term "conversion therapy," as noted by Showalter, is derogatory more than descriptive. It was coined by critics to describe professional efforts to help people with unwanted same-sex attractions (or, unwanted gender identity confusion). This would be like white supremacists calling the Civil Rights movement the "Negro

Aggression Movement.”

Such derogatory monikers are unfair and unhelpful. That’s why we do better to speak of SOCE. Why use the language of the critics?

As to the alleged harm of SOCE, while it’s true that there have been examples of abusive practices in the past, similar abuses have been documented in other types of psychotherapy as well. (In other words, shock treatment was formerly used to treat a wide variety of mental disorders.)

More importantly, professionals involved in SOCE engage in talk therapy, speaking with their clients and helping them get to the root of their inner-conflicts and struggles.

What on earth is so bad about this? What is so frightening?

I could also point to a book like *Twelve-Step Horror Stories* which “tells tales of unmitigated horror. And all of them occur either in 12-step support groups or in treatment based on the 12 step of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Should all twelve-step programs be banned? Should books promoting them be removed from Amazon?

And what of various diet fads, leading to many horror stories? Should diet books be banned? Should weight-loss programs be criminalized?

Why is it, then, that books promoting SOCE that are singled out? Why is it professional therapy that addresses LGBT concerns that is being banned and criminalized?

Even the idea that homosexuality is immutable, a sacred plank of gay activism, is being challenged on many new fronts.

In fact, Dr. Lisa Diamond, a lesbian activist and respected researcher in the American Psychological Association, said this in one of her lectures: “I feel as a community, the

queers have to stop saying, 'Please help us. We're born this way, and we can't change' as an argument for legal that argument is going to bite us in the a**, because now we know that there's enough data out there, that the other side is aware of as much as we are aware of it."

Yes, the data is out there, but LGBT activists and their allies want to suppress it. Let the truth be told.

Rod Dreher pointed out that currently, on Amazon, you can buy books ranging from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* to Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*, "which calls on Muslims to wage relentless global jihad against non-Muslims and insufficiently radical Muslims, until the entire world is under radical Islamic rule." But you can no longer buy books by the Catholic psychologist Dr. Joseph Nicolosi.

He writes, "You can buy the work of Dr. Joseph Goebbels on , but not the work of Dr. Joseph Nicolosi!"

Indeed, " now bans the sale of works of an author that LGBT activists find offensive. Woke capitalism at its finest. Where does this stop?"

What, then, makes Dr. Nicolosi's books so bad? Why are they so exceptionally dangerous? How evil is so-called "conversion therapy"?

In the words of the gay activist largely responsible for getting the books removed, "Our hard work finally [expletive] paid off!! We got the homophobic books pulled from Amazon!!!"

This was nothing less than gay activism at its totalitarian worst. There is nothing enlightened, inclusive, or tolerant about it.

Let the truth be told.

If people don't like books on SOCE, they don't have to buy them. And if they don't want to participate in SOCE, they

don't have to.

Why can't we live with that?