

# PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY CAN FACILITATE CHANGE IN SEXUAL ATTRACTIONS

Two Alliance/NARTH Institute leaders presented initial data from their outcome study at the CAPS (Christian Association for Psychological Studies) conference in Pasadena, California on 10th March 2016.



With their study they challenge the unfounded conventional allegation that psychotherapy services for clients dissatisfied with their same-sex attractions (SSA) would be harmful and ineffective in facilitating SSA change. They have provided facts proving the contrary.

Alliance president Carolyn Pela, Ph.D., and NARTH Institute founder and former president Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D. (click [here](#)), summarized the findings of their study, “Clinical outcomes for same-sex attraction distress: Well-being and change,” to an attentive audience at the Pasadena Hilton Hotel.

Pela and Nicolosi cited as rationale for their research the APA 2009 Task Force Report that concluded there were no empirical, rigorous studies that are able to speak to the beneficence or harm of psychotherapeutic services to clients distressed about their same-sex attractions who pursue change as a goal.

Dr. Pela described the study as being longitudinal with a within-group repeated-measures design. Their dependent variable was psychotherapy as conducted at Dr. Nicolosi’s Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic. The independent variables were (1) well-being as operationalized by the Outcome Questionnaire 45 (OQ-45.2), a highly respected measure of psychotherapy process and outcome, and (2) separately assessed dimensions of sexual orientation, namely, thoughts, desires, behavior, and identity. Data collected to date involved 102 male psychotherapy clients who presented with ambivalence, discomfort, or distress regarding their SSA. Eighty-one participants had been involved in the study long enough to have well-being assessed and data on change were available from 56 participants at the time of the CAPS presentation.

## Results

Findings from preliminary data collected over a 12 month period indicated *statistically signifi-*

*cant reductions in distress and improvements in well-being, significant movement toward heterosexual identity, and significant increases in heterosexual thoughts and desires with accompanying significant decreases in homosexual thoughts and desires.* Effect sizes for these changes were generally in the moderate range, which suggests they are robust and not likely to be statistical artifacts. The findings did not discover significant change in heterosexual or homosexual kissing or sexual activity. These findings appear to have been the result of very low base rates in these behaviors among study participants leading to floor effects and a subsequent lack of change, as it is not possible to change a behavior in which participants are not engaging.

Drs. Pela and Nicolosi indicated they are continuing to collect data, adding both new participants and extending the study period out for at least a multiple year period. They also expressed an intent to present updated findings from their research in other professional settings and conferences.

