



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 11, 2011

Homosexuals Can Change, New Peer-Reviewed Study Confirms

A new study published in the October issue of the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* confirms what thousands of former homosexuals know first hand: individuals tormented by unwanted same-sex attraction can change. The study, conducted by psychologists Stanton L. Jones of Wheaton College and Mark A. Yarhouse of Regent University, followed the progress over several years of 98 individuals (72 men, 26 women) seeking to change their sexual orientation through involvement in programs affiliated with Exodus International, a noted ministry for those wishing to leave homosexuality.



Of the 61 subjects who completed the study and were “successfully categorized for general outcome,” noted a [press release](#) on the project, 53 percent were determined by Exodus International’s evaluation to have had successful outcomes from the religious-based therapy. “Specifically,” noted the researchers, “23% of the subjects reported success in the form of successful ‘conversion’ to heterosexual orientation and functioning, while an additional 30% reported stable behavioral chastity with substantive dis-identification with homosexual orientation.” Only 20 percent of the subjects “reported giving up on the change process and fully embracing gay identity,” found the study.

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The researchers noted that, by and large, the “professional world” of psychology and psychiatry “proclaims that it is impossible to change sexual orientation, particularly homosexual orientation, and that the attempt to change sexual orientation is commonly and inherently harmful.” For example, they noted, “for many years the Public Affairs website of the American Psychological Association stated: ‘Can therapy change sexual orientation? No ... homosexuality ... does not require treatment and is not changeable.’” And regarding the harm that reparative therapy can supposedly cause individuals, the study’s authors noted the oft-repeated declaration from the American Psychiatric Association that the “potential risks of ‘reparative therapy’ are great, including depression, anxiety, and self-destructive behavior.”

Jones and Yarhouse said in a joint statement that the results of the study “do not prove that categorical change in sexual orientation is possible for everyone or anyone, but rather that meaningful shifts along a continuum that constitute real changes appear possible for some.” The authors also noted that “the results do not prove that no one is harmed by the attempt to change, but rather that the attempt does not appear to be harmful on average or inherently harmful.”

Jones told the [Christian Post](#) that while the study “does not prove that everyone can change,” it does show that “there seems to be some capacity for some people to shift their sexual orientation in a way



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that has personal meaning to them.”

Significantly, the research addresses one of the main criticisms of past studies that claim to prove the positive impact of reparative therapy: that they do not track the subject over a long period of time. Jones told [LifeSiteNews.com](#) that rigorously following the progress of the subjects in the study over a half dozen years addressed that key issue. “The ‘silver standard’ [of same-sex attraction therapy studies] is a longitudinal study that follows people repeatedly over multiple years and also a prospective study that assesses people from the beginning of change,” Jones said. “To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first such study.”

LifeSiteNews reported that a “meta-analysis of over 100 years’ worth of research into therapy for unwanted same-sex attraction published in June 2009 concluded that homosexuality was not immutable, and that individuals seeking change could benefit from therapy. The report, published by NARTH, included 600 reports from clinicians, researchers, and former clients principally published in professional and peer-reviewed journals.”

Jones and Yarhouse published early results of their study in a 2007 book entitled [Ex-Gays?](#), but faced mainstream criticism for not first publishing their findings in a peer-reviewed journal. “The implication was that it couldn’t be published in a scientific, reputable journal,” Yarhouse told the *Christian Post*. But following several more years of research and fine-tuning their methods, the pair gained positive recognition for their efforts.

One respected professional who has praised the pair’s work is Dr. Nicholas Cummings, former president of the American Psychological Association, who said: “This study has broken new ground in its adherence to objectivity and a scientific precision that can be replicated and expanded, and it opens new horizons for investigation.... I have waited over thirty years for this refreshing, penetrating study of an imperative, though controversial human condition.”

Not surprisingly, the study has been met with skepticism by some in mainstream, secular psychology. “We’ve been through this over and over,” Eli Coleman, professor of human sexuality at the University of Minnesota, told [CNN](#). “You can get behavioral changes, but that’s not orientation change. You can get short-term behavioral change. It’s not sustained.”

Similarly, Jack Drescher, an associate professor of psychiatry at New York Medical College, argued that, despite passing a peer review, Jones’ and Yarhouse’s research doesn’t jive with the overall body of research on same-sex attraction. “I think the authors have a bias and I have a bias,” Drescher told CNN. “Everybody has a bias. That’s why we have accumulation of data — and that doesn’t support their data.” He said that the “sum of all the literature does not indicate these treatments are effective. If one study comes out that seems to contradict the bulk of the scientific research that proves that people can change —that’s interesting, can they replicate it?”

Yarhouse conceded that his and Jones’s study isn’t “for the mainstream gay community. This is a study for primarily religious people who are distressed by their same-sex attractions. They want to know, if they were involved in a Christian ministry, is it possible over time for them to have significant and meaningful shifts along that continuum. And this data would suggest that for some that appears to be possible.”

Predictably, the study has received praise from individuals who have successfully left the homosexual lifestyle, as well as ministries that work with those wishing to deal with unwanted same-sex attraction. “This powerful study confirms what countless men and women just like me have found,” [Janet Boynes](#), a



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former lesbian who now helps others leave the homosexuality, told *The New American*. "With God's help and the support of other committed people, those who have struggled with same-sex attraction can have freedom. God is doing miracles every day."



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