

Psychology Losing Scientific Credibility,
Say APA Insiders

At NARTH Conference, APA Past-President
Charges His Association with Stifling Discourse and Distorting Research
By Linda Ames Nicolosi

In a harsh critique of his own profession, a former American Psychological Association president told fellow clinicians at the NARTH Conference that social science is in a state of alarming decline.

Speaking to a rapt audience of about 100 fellow professionals at the Marina Del Rey Marriott Hotel on November 12, 2005, psychologists Nicholas Cummings, Ph.D. and Rogers Wright, Ph.D. had much to say about the profession they had served throughout their long and distinguished careers -- charging "intellectual arrogance and zealotry" within a profession that they say is now dominated by social-activist groups.

Dr. Cummings said he has had a career-long commitment to promoting diversity. Therefore has been dismayed to see activists exploit the stature of the parent body to further their own social aims -- pushing the APA to take positions in areas where they have no conclusive evidence.

When APA does conduct research, Dr. Cummings said, they only do so "when they know what the outcome is going to be...only research with predictably favorable outcomes is permissible."

When writing their newly released book *Destructive Trends in Mental Health*, Wright and Cummings invited the participation of a number of fellow psychologists who flatly turned them down--fearing loss of tenure, loss of promotion, and other forms of professional retaliation. "We were bombarded by horror stories," Dr. Cummings said. "Their greatest fear was of the gay lobby, which is very strong in the APA."

"'Homophobia as intimidation' is one of the most pervasive techniques used to silence anyone who would disagree with the gay activist agenda," said Cummings. "Sadly, I have seen militant gay men and lesbians-- who I am certain do not represent all homosexuals, and who themselves have been the object of derision and oppression-- once gaining freedom and power, then becoming oppressors themselves."

He described his own experience of oppression and reverse bias: "This was aptly demonstrated," he said, "during an interchange that took place in a large meeting assembled by the then-current president to address the future of the APA. I was just about to agree with one of the participants, when she stopped me before I could speak: 'I don't know what you are going to say, but there is nothing you and I can agree on, because you are a straight white male and I am a lesbian.' Such blatant reverse discrimination was overlooked by everyone else in the room, but I was dumbfounded. This woman is prominent in APA affairs, is extensively published, and has received most of the APA's highest awards. The APA continues to laud her, even though recently she had her license suspended for an improper dual relationship with a female patient! What would be the response had it been a straight white male in an improper dual relationship with a female patient?"

Regarding treatment for unwanted homosexuality, the American Psychological Association has come very close to ratifying a statement which would declare therapy to modify sexual orientation "unethical." But "why does free choice go only one way?" Dr. Cummings asks.

Cummings then discussed a 2004 resolution by the APA in favor of gay marriage, which APA recommended because it "promotes mental health." What was the evidence APA offered? (Such a bold statement from APA, of course, would be used in the courts to decide key social issues.) The references APA cited, it turned out, actually proved only one claim-- that as a general matter, "loving relationships are healthy." "That was one of the worst resolutions," Cummings said.

"When we speak in the name of psychology we are to speak only from facts and clinical expertise," he explained. If psychology speaks out on every social issue, "very soon the public will see us as a discredited organization--just another opinionated voice shouting and shouting."

Cummings' co-author Dr. Rogers Wright (who like Cummings, describes himself as a lifelong liberal) notes that "psychology has been ultra-liberal" and not particularly welcoming to the views of people of religious faith.

Wright described the difficulties he has encountered with the American Psychological Association since the Association instituted a "strategic decision not to respond" to their book in an effort to avoid attracting attention to it. Initially, the APA prohibited its member-publications from reviewing *Destructive Trends*. "So much for diversity and open-mindedness," Wright added wryly.

Judicial Malfeasance by Activists

Joining them in yet another stinging critique of the mental-health profession was psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover, M.D. In his talk entitled "Judicial Abuse of Scientific Literature on Homosexuality by the American Mental Health Professional Organizations," Satinover offered a long, elaborately referenced description of ethics breaches in the recent legal cases that have set the stage for groundbreaking changes in family-law policy.

Satinover said the mental-health associations had allowed themselves to be used by gay activists who distorted the research findings to serve their own socio-political aims. This distortion of the science, he said, has been so great that it is "appalling beyond imagination."

Dr. Satinover recently taught constitutional law at Princeton University, and is presently doing research at the University of Nice. He showed the legal briefs to his students and told them, "Whether you become a leftist or a rightist, don't hold yourself to such a standard."

Given carte blanche, the activists wrote briefs that were "sophisticated, nuanced" but in many cases, almost entirely untrue. To Dr. Satinover's dismay, the brief-writers' testimony rarely matched the references they footnoted--but almost never directly cited--as corroborating evidence.

Called as an expert witness in court cases and asked to assess briefs being submitted to state and the U.S. Supreme Courts, Satinover had the opportunity to pore over hundreds of research papers offered as evidence by the gay activists who had been invited to represent the views of the major mental-health associations.

He quoted Susan Cochran, Ph.D., a lesbian activist advising the Lawrence v. Texas brief, which claimed that "Research has...found no inherent association between homosexuality and psychopathology." The references she provided were largely self-references -- referring not to corroborating sources, but directly back to her own published work. Paradoxically, in those same studies, Cochran had consistently found more mental-health problems in lesbians and gay men -- and she did not find that "social homophobia" was a sufficient cause for these problems. In fact, Cochran had concluded in one of her own referenced papers that "further research is needed to explore the causal mechanisms underlying this association." In a follow-up paper, she herself showed that the effects of social homophobia couldn't account entirely for the association.

Satinover also offered evidence from the Romer v. Evans brief that evidently came from gay-activist psychologist Gregory Herek, Ph.D., who wrote the brief on behalf of the APA. Herek, he says, distorted the findings of the authors of the research he cited; omitted available contrary evidence; and failed to mention the evidence for spontaneous changes of sexual identity. Herek also defined the term "homosexual" in an arguable manner that worked most effectively to meet the aims of his brief--a definition that was the outcome solely of his own work, and that deviated from widely-used, neutral scientific standards. In support of the argument that same-sex attracted people are as well-adjusted as straights, Satinover said, Herek also referenced the "notoriously flawed and out-of-date Hooker study, its claims long-since and multiple times overturned."

Pedophile Supporters

Offering Family-Law Testimony?

In the Romer v. Evans case, psychologist John Money, Ph.D. was referenced (also by Herek, evidently) as an expert in sexual identity. In an interview published in the Dutch journal of pedophilia (PAIDIKA), Money once said, "If it [man-boy sexual contact] is consensual, it can be constructive."

Another expert offered by Herek was John de Cecco, Ph.D., who has also written affirmatively of man-boy "intergenerational intimacy" in the Journal of Homosexuality, and is an editor of PAIDIKA.

Yet one other frequent contributor to legal testimony, the Lawrence brief included, is lesbian activist-researcher Charlotte Patterson, Ph.D., who in a landmark case of same-sex adoption was cited for refusing to turn over her research notes, contributing to her side's defeat. "Her conduct was a clear violation of a court order," said Satinover, "yet she is still writing briefs in current court cases."

In discussing the overall "scope and type of malfeasance," Satinover concluded the following:

1. "Briefs appear to be authored by a small circle of individuals who are called on repeatedly, with footnoted references that almost never properly substantiate their case."
2. A common tactic is to reference studies "that are trivial or out-of-date, while ignoring more important, recent, larger, better, and superceding research."
3. "A substantial portion of the authorities cited [through footnotes] will be themselves."
4. "The most common pattern is by far the simplest: the overwhelming mountain of contrary evidence is simply never mentioned."

"The malfeasance is relentless," Satinover concluded. "It is appalling beyond imagination."

Other Speakers

During the luncheon, Dr. Dean Byrd offered a rousing address.

"As I reviewed the brief history of NARTH," he said, "it is nothing short of amazing what has been accomplished." To continue this forward momentum, he said, NARTH members should get more involved in the public sphere; work within the national associations, and remember to continually remind those who would silence them, that "diversity includes me."

Dr. Byrd then read from a letter he wrote to the American Psychological Association:

"In your addresses and written messages, you have repeatedly focused on the importance of diversity. Even in the recent Monitor, you noted that APA has demonstrated 'a lack of sensitivity or downright rudeness' toward marginalized groups. While it is not my intent to be offensive, it seems that your response to APA members who are members of NARTH reflects that insensitivity of which you are so critical.

"Client autonomy is central to NARTH's mission. NARTH's official position is that homosexuality is an adaptation. For some men and women, this adaptation is distressful and unsatisfying. NARTH supports an individual's right to either claim a homosexual identity or to pursue change in their adaptation in accordance with the ethical principle of client self-determination.

"Though not all of the patients that NARTH members treat are religious, many are. Is it not a blatant disregard for their religious values and an affront to real diversity to marginalize these individuals by failing to acknowledge their right to choose how they will adapt sexually?"

"The focus of NARTH's attention is a 'marginalized group within a marginalized group'--those who feel that homosexual attractions are not who they are and seek help in reconciling their unwanted sexual attractions with their value systems. Would you or APA not find a place at the table for such individuals or would you add to their distress by refusing to acknowledge that they exist? Would you deny the importance of client autonomy and client self-determination?"

"APA's continuous messages of respect for diversity rings hollow if it does not represent different worldviews....either you support client autonomy or you do not; either you support client self-determination or you do not; either your actions reflect diversity, or they do not.

"NARTH members and supporters have impressive publication records in respected journals such as Professional Psychology, Archives of Sexual Behavior, Psychological Reports, Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy and the Journal of Law and Family Studies.

"Listen to one NARTH supporter," he concluded, "and tell me who you think he is. He said: 'I am here as the champion of one's right to choose...It is my fervent belief that freedom of choice should govern one's sexual orientation...If homosexuals choose to transform their sexuality into heterosexuality, that resolve and decision is theirs and theirs alone, and should not be tampered with by any special interest group.' This statement was made by Dr. Robert Perloff -- a former APA President."

Also during the luncheon, attorney Scott Lively noted that NARTH's critics are supported by tens of millions of dollars from foundations on the left, which effectively permits them to "steer the culture through grants." In an effort to begin reversing that trend, he recently created the Pro-Family Endowment, with one of its initial grants being made to NARTH.

On Sunday, Dr. Norman Goldwasser offered an address describing the use of EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing) therapy to help clients overcome the effects of trauma and to actualize their heterosexual potential. Dr. Goldwasser says he had had considerable success using the technique with same-sex attracted clients.

Also offering an address was Nancy Heche, Ph.D., the mother of actress Anne Heche, a former lesbian. In a warm, inspirational and emotionally stirring speech, Dr. Heche offered support for families who have suffered from the discovery of a loved one's same-sex attractions.

On Friday, Dr. Joseph Nicolosi offers a Men's Track workshop for in-depth training of psychotherapists, while a Women's Track training workshop was offered by Mary Beth Patton, M.A., L.P.C., Janelle Hallman, M.A., L.P.C., and Cynthia Winn, M.A., M.F.T.

Other speeches and roundtable discussions were offered by Alan Chambers of Exodus, Dr. Julie Harren, Dr. Jerry Harris, Konstantin Mascher (from Germany), Dr. Christopher Rosik, attorney Arthur Goldberg, Dr. James Phelan, and Dr. Richard Potts.