

**Letter to the President of Uganda,  
Your Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**

February 3, 2014

We, the undersigned, are responding to President Museveni's request for current and accurate scientific information about homosexuality.

**Causes of Homosexuality**

From a scientific perspective, the causes of homosexuality are only partially understood. While it is unlikely that there is one simple biological or genetic cause for homosexuality in all people, there are neural, cognitive and personality differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals which appear to have at least some basis in biology. We can add that in rams the homosexual preference of a minority of rams are unrelated to socialization but instead appear to be related to brain structures. In humans, brain scan studies show important differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Some data suggest that genetic and hormonal factors during pre-natal development have an impact on sexual orientation, in different ways for different people. For instance, homosexuality can be found at a significantly higher concordance rate among identical twins when compared to non-identical twins or non-twin siblings. However the concordance rate is not 100% among identical twins and the reasons for these differences remain unclear.

For the vast majority of people, homosexual and heterosexual, sexual attractions emerge spontaneously without any prior sexual experience, exposure or recruitment. Sexual orientation is not a matter of choice. Furthermore, despite early claims by some psychiatrists that faulty parenting causes homosexuality, there is little scientific evidence that parenting plays a role in directing a person's sexual attractions. Neither is there scientific support for theories that claim sexual abuse or recruitment causes homosexuality. Most people who have been sexually abused do not later try homosexual behavior nor do they become homosexual.

**Homosexuality is Not a Mental Illness**

Starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, psychiatrists began classifying homosexuality as a mental disorder. However scientific sex research done in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century began to change this view. For example, according to studies done in the 1950s, homosexual men showed no greater sign of psychiatric problems and seemed as well adjusted when compared to a comparable group of heterosexual

men. In 1973, a review of newer scientific research led the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its Diagnostic Manual (DSM). In 1990, the World Health Organization concurred and also removed homosexuality from the mental disorder section of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).

### **Efforts to Change Homosexual Orientation Have Been Largely Unsuccessful**

While mental health practitioners have tried to change a homosexual orientation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, those results have been mostly unsuccessful. Sigmund Freud himself once said, “In general, to undertake to convert a fully developed homosexual into a heterosexual does not offer much more prospect of success than the reverse, except that for good practical reasons the latter is never attempted.”

In 2009, the American Psychological Association issued a report that studied the peer-reviewed scientific literature to date. That study found no scientific evidence that therapies designed to categorically change sexual orientation are effective. While it is possible that some self-reports of modest change are true, science does not support the idea that sexuality is changeable for most people.

### **Homosexuality is Not the Same as Pedophilia**

While homosexuality is no longer regarded as a mental disorder in the ICD, pedophilia or attraction to minors is considered to be one. However, the available scientific research does not support the view that adult homosexuals primarily attracted to other adults pose a threat to minors any more than the threat posed by heterosexual adults to children. Homosexual adults are not attracted to children, but rather to other adults. However, it is well documented that many who are opposed to any open expressions of homosexuality often raise the possible threat to children as a scare tactic.

### **Is Homosexuality Normal?**

If by normal one means that homosexuality occurs in nature, then yes homosexuality is normal as scientific research shows it is found in many species besides human beings.

However a scientific definition of normal may not mean the same thing as a cultural definition. There are many cultures where homosexuality, once considered as an abnormal mental disorder, is now regarded as normal. Part of this change is due to scientific research that disproved many common myths and beliefs about

homosexuality. When they do not have to hide for fear of social stigma and punishment, openly homosexual individuals serve as politicians, physicians, psychologists, teachers, police, military personnel, etc. Those who know them, their families, co-workers, and neighbors, consider them normal.

We thank you for this chance to summarize scientific research on this topic. Please direct any follow up questions to either Jack Drescher, MD ([jackdreschermd@gmail.com](mailto:jackdreschermd@gmail.com)) or Warren Throckmorton, PhD ([warrenthrockmorton@gmail.com](mailto:warrenthrockmorton@gmail.com)).

(Reference list follows the signatures)

Sincerely,

Salvatore M Aglioti  
Social and Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory  
Department of Psychology  
School of Medicine and Psychology  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Via dei Marsi 78, 00185, Rome, Italy

Joanne Ahola, M.D.  
Medical Director, Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights  
Medical Director, Research Institute Without Walls,  
Trainer, Asylum Network, Physicians for Human Rights  
Adjunct Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College  
New York, NY

Theresa Aiello, Ph.D.  
Co-Director, Advanced Certificate in Child and Family Therapy  
New York University  
Silver School of Social Work  
New York, NY

Eric Anderson, PhD, AcSS  
Professor of Sport, Masculinities and Sexualities  
University of Winchester  
Winchester, Hampshire, England

Renee Anderson, Ph.D., LPCC-S  
Walden University  
Minneapolis, MN

Carl Auerbach, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology  
Bronx, NY

J. Michael Bailey, PhD  
Professor of Psychology  
Northwestern University,  
Chicago, IL

Roberto Baiocco, PhD,  
Assistant Professor, Department of Developmental and Social Psychology,  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Rome, Italy

Shirley R. Baron, PhD  
Clinical Psychologist  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine  
Chicago, IL

Stephen F Bauer, MD  
Clinical Associate Professor Emeritus  
Department of Psychiatry  
Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University  
New York, NY

Joel L. Becker, Ph.D.  
Director and Founder, Cognitive Behavior Associates and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy  
Institute  
Clinical Professor, Department of Psychology, UCLA  
Diplomate, Fellow, Certified Trainer/Consultant, Academy of Cognitive Therapy  
Asst. Clinical Professor, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA

Anabel Bejarano, PhD, psychologist  
Director, Masters programs in counseling  
Clinical assistant professor,  
School of Education & Human Development, Educational & Psychological Studies  
University of Miami - Coral Gables  
Coral Gables, FL

Max Belkin, PhD  
Adjunct Instructor  
Department of Applied Psychology  
New York University  
New York, NY

Christopher Bellonci, M.D  
Professor  
Tufts Medical Center, Tufts University  
Boston, MA

Carlos I. Pérez Benítez, Ph.D.  
Assistant Research Professor, Depts. of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Family  
Medicine at Miller School of Medicine  
University of Miami  
Coral Gables, FL

Mark J. Blechner, Ph.D.  
Training and Supervising Analyst  
William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology, and Psychoanalysis  
New York, NY

Thomas W. Blume, Ph.D., LMFT, LPC, NCC,  
Associate Professor and Coordinator, Couple and Family Counseling Specialization  
Department of Counseling, Oakland University,  
Rochester, MI

Jack W. Bonner, III, MD  
Emeritus Clinical Professor of Psychiatry  
University of South Carolina School of Medicine  
Greenville, SC

Philip M. Bromberg, Ph.D.  
Faculty, William Alanson White Institute  
New York, NY

Cecile Brennan, Ph. D  
Associate Professor  
Dept. Of Counseling  
John Carroll University  
1 John Carroll Blvd.  
University Heights, OH

Mark Brennan-Ing  
Director for Research and Evaluation  
Center on HIV and Aging  
Adjunct Professor  
New York University College of Nursing  
New York, NY

Lawrence O. Brown, Ph.D.  
Fellow, Teaching Faculty and Supervisor  
William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and Psychology  
Adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychology  
Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology  
Department of Psychology  
Long Island University  
New York, NY

Andrew M. Byrne, PhD, CRC  
Assistant Professor, Counselor Education  
The Patton College of Education  
Ohio University  
209a McCracken Hall  
Athens, OH

Edward J. Callahan, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean for Academic Personnel  
Professor of Family and Community Medicine, School of Medicine  
University of California, Davis  
Sacramento, CA

James Cantor  
Editor-in-Chief, *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*  
Psychologist and Senior Scientist, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
Associate Professor, University of Toronto School of Medicine  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Kat Carrick, PhD  
Assistant Professor of Social Work  
Arkansas State University  
Jonesboro, Arkansas

Chiara Caristo, Ph.D  
Graduate School in Clinical Psychology  
Sapienza, Rome University  
Rome, Italy

Kathryn S. Castle, Ph.D., LMHC, ACS, NCC  
Clinical Assistant Professor & Program Director  
Department of Graduate Counseling and Psychology  
Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program  
Medaille College-Rochester Campus  
Rochester, NY

Yochi Cohen-Charash, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology  
Baruch College and the Graduate Center, CUNY  
New York, NY

Rose Marie Chatterton, MA, LMHC  
Lecturer, Baruch College  
City University of New York  
New York, NY

Gary Robert Collins, MD  
Clinical instructor, New York University, School of Medicine  
New York, NY

Mary C. Commerford, PhD  
Director, Furman Counseling Center  
Barnard College  
New York, NY

Aaron Cooper, Ph.D.  
Licensed Clinical Psychologist  
The Family Institute at Northwestern  
8 S. Michigan Avenue - 10th Floor, Chicago, IL 60603  
618 Library Place, Evanston, IL

Eric W. Corty, PhD  
Professor of Psychology  
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College  
Erie, PA

Dr. Linda Davies  
Professor, School of Social Work  
McGill University  
Montreal, Canada

Dr. Adriana Davila  
Sexual Therapy  
Family and Couple Therapy  
Mexico City, MX

Hannah S. Decker, Ph.D.  
Professor of History, University of Houston  
Adjunct Professor of Medical History, Menninger Dept. of Psychiatry, Baylor College of Medicine  
Houston, TX

Alexandra Dellutri  
Director of Counseling and Disability Services  
Northwestern College  
Bridgeview Campus  
Bridgeview, IL

Ann D'ercole, PhD, ABPP  
Clinical Associate Professor, Psychology  
New York University  
New York, NY

Aaron Devor, PhD, FSSSS, FSTLHE  
Professor, Sociology Department  
University of Victoria  
Victoria, BC, Canada

Milton Diamond, PhD  
Professor, University of Hawaii  
John A. Burns School of Medicine  
Pacific Center for Sex and Society  
Honolulu, HI

Sharon Diamond  
Assistant Clinical Professor in Obstetrics and Gynecology  
Mount Sinai Medical Center  
New York, NY

Peter Doherty, PH.D.  
Associate Professor, Psychology & Family Studies  
St. Mary's University College  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Brian B Doyle MD CM FACPsych.  
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and of Family and Community Medicine.  
Georgetown University School of Medicine,  
Washington, DC.

Alice Dreger, PhD  
Professor of Clinical Medical Humanities and Bioethics  
Feinberg School of Medicine  
Northwestern University  
Chicago, IL

Jack Drescher, MD  
Past President of the Group for Advancement of Psychiatry  
Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry,  
New York Medical College  
New York, NY

Judy I. Eidelson, Ph.D.  
Adjunct Fellow, Center for Public Health Initiatives,  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA

Tatiana Aloi Emmanouil, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Baruch College  
New York, NY

Anita S Everett MD, DFAFA  
Division Director, Community and General Psychiatry  
Johns Hopkins University - Bayview  
Baltimore, MD



Ronald M Epstein MD  
Professor of Family Medicine, Psychiatry, Oncology and Nursing  
Director, Center for Communication and Disparities Research  
University of Rochester Medical Center  
Rochester, NY

Fabrizio Fabbrizzi MD  
Specialist in Sport Medicine  
Occupational Medicine  
Barga, Lucca, Italy

Antony Fernandez, MD, DFAPA, FRCPsych  
Professor of Psychiatry  
VCU School of Medicine  
Richmond, VA

Pete Finnerty MS, LPCC  
Past-President, Assoc. of LGBT Issues in Counseling (ACA)  
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor  
Counseling For Wellness  
Kent, OH

Catherine A. Fiorello, PhD, NCSP, ABPP  
Professor and Program Coordinator,  
Temple School Psychology Program  
Philadelphia, PA

Jane M. Fleishman, M.Ed.  
Widener University  
Center for Human Sexuality Studies  
Chester, PA

Ryan D. Foster, Ph.D., LPC, NCC  
Assistant Professor, Department of Counseling  
Marymount University  
Arlington, VA

John L. Frank, M.D.  
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry  
Drexel University College of Medicine  
Philadelphia, PA

Joanna Fried, MD  
Clinical Instructor, Department of Psychiatry  
New York University School of Medicine  
New York City, NY

Richard Gartner, PhD  
Training and Supervising Analyst, Faculty, and Founding Director of the Sexual Abuse Program  
William Alanson White Institute for Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology  
New York, NY

Troyann I. Gentile, PhD, LPC, NCC  
Assistant Clinical Professor  
Counseling Program  
University of Colorado Denver  
Denver, CO

Mark S. Gerig, Ph.D., LMHC  
Chair, Division of Graduate Counseling  
Indiana Wesleyan University  
Marion, IN

Esther Geva, Ph.D., C. Psych., Professor,  
Chair, Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development  
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto  
Toronto, ON, Canada

Harriet L. Glosoff  
Professor and Doctoral Program Director, Counselor Education  
Montclair State University  
Montclair, NJ

Bartosz Grabski, MD, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Psychiatrist  
Chair of Psychiatry, Medical College, Jagiellonian University,  
Krakow, Poland

Richard Green  
Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus, UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA

Robert-Jay Green, PhD  
Distinguished Professor Emeritus  
Clinical Psychology PhD Program  
California School of Professional Psychology  
San Francisco, CA

Marvin R. Goldfried, PhD  
Past-President, Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration (SEPI)  
Distinguished Professor  
Psychology Department  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, NY

Shelly Goldklank, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Director of the Psychodynamic Program  
Ferkau Graduate School of Psychology  
Yeshiva University  
New York, NY

Sue W. Goldstein, BA, CCRC, IF  
AASECT Certified Sexuality Educator  
Program Coordinator, San Diego Sexual Medicine  
San Diego, CA

Irwin Goldstein, MD  
Director of Sexual Medicine, Alvarado Hospital  
Clinical Professor of Surgery, University of California at San Diego  
Editor-in-Chief, *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*  
Director of San Diego Sexual Medicine  
San Diego, CA

Sherryl H. Goodman, Ph.D.  
Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Psychology  
Editor, Journal of Abnormal Psychology  
Emory University  
Atlanta, GA

Ellen Haller, MD  
Professor of Clinical Psychiatry  
University of California at San Francisco  
San Francisco, CA

James T. Hansen, Ph.D.  
Professor & Coordinator, Mental Health Specialization  
Department of Counseling  
Oakland University  
Rochester, MI

Gordon Harper MD  
Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry  
Harvard Medical School  
Cambridge, MA

Lawrence Hartmann, M.D.  
Past President, American Psychiatric Association  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA

Kristel Headley, Ph.D.,  
Assistant Professor, Counselor Education and Supervision  
Johnson University  
Knoxville, TN

Elizabeth Hegeman, Ph.D.  
Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
New York, NY

Ronald E Hellman, MD  
Director, LGBT Affirmative Program  
South Beach Psychiatric Center  
Brooklyn, NY

Alison Heru, MD  
Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Colorado,  
Denver, CO

Irwin Hirsch PhD  
Adjunct clinical professor of psychology and supervisor  
Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis  
New York University

Paul Hitchings,  
Chartered Psychologist. Senior Lecturer  
Metanoia Institute / Middlesex University  
London, UK

Lynda Smith Hoggan  
Professor, Biological Sciences  
Mt. San Antonio College  
Walnut, CA

Sharon G. Horne, Ph.D.  
Director of Training, Counseling Psychology  
Ph.D. in Counseling and School Psychology  
Department of Counseling and School Psychology  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
Boston, MA

Wendy J. Hoskins, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Counselor Education  
Dept. of Educational and Clinical Studies  
University of Nevada, LV  
Las Vegas, NV

Edith Imbolokonye  
Economic Development Coordinator  
Lwala Community Alliance  
Kenya

Glen Jennings, Ed.D.  
Cornaro Professor of Family Sciences  
Texas Woman's University  
Denton, TX

Paul Joannides, Psy.D.  
Psychologist  
Waldport, OR

The Rev. Dr. Richard Johnson, Sr.  
Associate Professor, Psychology, Retired,  
The University of Maine System, and  
Priest, The Episcopal Diocese of Maine, Retired  
Bangor, ME

Tracy L. Kahn, Ph.D.,  
Continuing Lecturer and Principal Museum Scientist  
Department of Biology and Department of Botany and Plant Sciences  
University of California, Riverside  
Riverside, CA

Daniel R. Karlin, MD, MA  
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry  
Tufts University School of Medicine  
Boston, MA

Gurmeet S. Kanwal, M.D.  
Past President, William Alanson White Psychoanalytic Society  
Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry  
Weill Cornell Medical College, Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY

Jerald Kay MD  
Professor and Chair, Department of Psychiatry  
Boonshoft School of Medicine  
Fredrick A. White Distinguished Professor  
Wright State University  
Dayton, OH

Susan Kellogg  
Professor of History and Director, Latin American Studies Program  
University of Houston  
Houston, TX

Robert Kertzner, MD  
Adjunct Associate Research Scientist  
Department of Psychiatry, Columbia University  
New York, NY

Howard Kirschenbaum  
Professor Emeritus  
Warner Graduate School of Education & Human Development  
University of Rochester  
Rochester, NY

Alan Koike, M.D., M.S.H.S.  
Health Sciences Clinical Professor  
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
UC Davis Medical School  
Sacramento, CA

Jered Kolbert, Ph.D., LPC, NCC  
Program Director, Counselor Education  
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education  
Duquesne University  
Pittsburgh, PA

Anne Krantz, Ph.D., BC-DMT  
Associate Professor, California Institute of Integral Studies  
San Francisco, CA

Richard B. Krueger, M.D.  
Medical Director, Sexual Behavior Clinic  
New York State Psychiatric Institute  
& Columbia University Department of Psychiatry  
New York, NY

Michael Kuban, MSc, MA, MEd.  
Coordinator, Kurt Freund Phallometric Laboratory (1990-2014)  
Clinical Sexology, law and mental health program  
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
Toronto Ontario Canada

Fiorenzo Laghi, PhD  
Researcher in Developmental Psychology,  
Department of Developmental and Social Psychology, Faculty of Medicine and Psychology,  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Rome, Italy

Amber F. Lancaster Ed.S., LPC, NCC  
Assistant Professor, Counselor Education  
Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development  
University of Central Missouri  
Warrensburg, MO

Robert C. Larsen, M.D., M.P.H.  
Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry  
University of California, San Francisco  
San Francisco, CA

Justin D. Lauka, Ph.D., LCPC, CCMHC, NCC, ACS  
Clinical Director, Northern Illinois University  
Counseling, Adult, & Higher Education I  
DeKalb, IL

Claudia Leight, MS, NCC, LCPC  
Counselor  
Morgan State University Counseling Center  
Baltimore, MD

Susan V. Lester  
Professional Writing Consultant, Center for Academic Excellence  
Adjunct Instructor, Department of Counseling and Family Therapy  
University of Saint Joseph,  
West Hartford, CT

Simon LeVay  
Salk Institute for Biological Studies, Retired  
San Diego, CA

Carol B. Levin, MD  
Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry,  
Michigan State University,  
East Lansing, MI

Claudia Lingertat-Putnam, Psy.D.  
Chair, Counseling, CSSA, EDA, LHA  
Associate Professor  
The College of St. Rose  
432 Western Ave.k  
Albany, NY 12203

Vittorio Lingiardi, MD  
Full Professor  
2006-2013 Director, Clinical Psychology Specialization Program  
Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology  
Faculty of Medicine and Psychology  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Via dei Marsi, 78 - 00185 Rome, Italy

Ilsa Lottes, PhD  
Professor of Sociology, University of Maryland, Baltimore County  
Baltimore, MD

Nita Lutwak PhD  
Associate Professor, Psychology  
Baruch College, CUNY  
New York, NY

Linda Manning, PhD  
Psychologist  
Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN

Catherine J. Massey, PhD  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Department of Psychology  
Slippery Rock University  
Slippery Rock, PA

Mary McClure, MA, LPC  
Adjunct Instructor  
Governors State University  
University Park, IL

David McDowell MD  
Assistant Clinical Professor  
Mt Sinai Medical Center  
New York, NY

Dr Alex Mcglaughlin,  
BA, PhD, Chartered Psychologist.  
Past Fellow Royal Society of Medicine  
Retired Associate Dean, now Honorary Fellow,  
Nottingham Trent University,  
Nottingham, UK

Dr. Christopher A. McIntosh, MD, FRCPC  
Head, Gender Identity Clinic, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
Assistant Professor, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Stephen McLeod-Bryant, MD  
Professor and Vice-Chair, Dept of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
Meharry Medical College  
Nashville, TN

Krista Malott, Ph.D.,  
Villanova University,  
Villanova, PA

Jennifer Mangels, PhD  
Professor, Director of Undergraduate Programs  
Psychology Department  
Baruch College  
City University of New York  
New York, NY

Lourdes Mattei, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Clinical Psychology  
School of Critical Social Inquiry  
Hampshire College  
Amherst, MA

Nancy P. McKeever, PhD  
Faculty  
Bank Street College, Graduate School of Education  
New York, NY



Priscilla Meyer  
Professor of Russian  
Wesleyan University  
Middletown, CT

William S. Meyer, MSW, BCD  
Associate Clinical Professor  
Departments of Psychiatry and Ob/Gyn  
Duke University Medical Center  
Durham, NC

Heino F. L. Meyer-Bahlburg, Dr. rer. nat.  
Director, Program of Developmental Psychoendocrinology  
Associate Director, Division of Gender, Sexuality, and Health  
Professor of Clinical Psychology (in Psychiatry)  
New York State Psychiatric Institute & Department of Psychiatry,  
College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University  
New York, NY

Ian Miller, PhD  
Trinity College,  
Dublin, Ireland

Alexis Mordoh, Psy.D.  
Clinical Psychologist  
Athens, Greece

Dr. Carol Musselman,, PhD  
Professor Emeritus, Dept of Human Development & Applied Psychology  
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
The University of Toronto  
Toronto, Canada

Lin S. Myers, PhD  
Professor, Department of Psychology and Child Development  
California State University - Stanislaus  
Turlock, CA

Nancy Nager, Ph.D.  
Graduate Faculty, Bank Street College of Education  
New York, NY

Roger S. Nathaniel MD  
Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry  
Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center  
New York, NY  
Henry Ng, MD  
Associate Professor  
Case Western Reserve School of Medicine  
Cleveland, OH

Joyce Neu, Ph.D.  
Founder and Senior Associate  
Facilitating Peace and Special Advisor, Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice  
University of San Diego  
Redondo Beach, CA

Ed Neukrug  
Professor of Counseling  
Old Dominion University  
Norfolk, VA

Melissa A. Odegard-Koester, Ph.D., NCC, LPC  
Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Counseling  
Southeast Missouri State University  
Cape Girardeau, MO

Jane Okech, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor & Coordinator- Counseling Program  
College of Education & Social Sciences  
University of Vermont  
Burlington VT

Brandie Oliver  
Assistant Professor, Counselor Education  
Butler University  
Indianapolis, IN

Christopher O'Rourke, MDiv, MSW, LICSW  
Director of Social Work Training, The Daniels Institute at Boston University  
Adjunct Associate Professor, Smith College School for Social Work  
Lecturer, Simmons College School of Social Work  
Boston, MA

Francesca Ortu  
Full Professor  
Faculty of Medicine and Psychology  
University of Rome "La Sapienza"  
Rome, Italy

Mercy Owuor  
Deputy Program Director  
Lwala community Alliance  
Kenya

John Pachankis, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Chronic Disease Epidemiology | Social & Behavioral Sciences  
Yale School of Public Health  
New Haven, CT

David Pantalone, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Psychology  
University of Massachusetts  
Boston, MA

Sujan Patel, M.D.  
Assistant Professor of Allergy and Immunology  
Department of Otolaryngology  
The New York Eye and Ear Infirmary  
New York, NY

Joseph Pequigney, Ph.D.,  
Professor Emeritus of English,  
Stony Brook University,  
Stony Brook, NY

Dr. Claudio Pestana, CPsych  
Associate Lecturer  
Queen Mary University of London  
London, UK

John R. Peteet, MD  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry,  
Harvard Medical School  
Psychosocial Oncology and Palliative Care  
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute  
Boston, MA

Sidney H. Phillips, M.D.  
Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry  
Yale School of Medicine  
New Haven, CT

Victoria Pollock  
Adjunct Faculty at the School of Theology, University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Jessica Rohlifing Pryor, Ph.D.  
Postdoctoral Resident, Counseling & Counseling Psychology  
Faculty Associate, Nicholas A. Cummings Doctor of Behavioral Health Program  
Arizona State University  
Tempe, AZ

Virginia G. Quiñonez, Psy.D.  
Associate Professor  
Counseling Department, Rm MM4114  
The Chicago School  
Chicago, IL

Therese Ragen, PhD  
Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology  
New York University  
New York, NY

Elizabeth M. Reis, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor in Psychology Department.  
Baruch College, City University of New York  
New York, NY

Christina Richards BSc (Hons) MSc MBACP (Accred.) AFBPsS,  
Senior Specialist Psychology Associate Nottinghamshire NHS Healthcare Trust,  
Clinical Research Fellow, West London Mental Health NHS Trust,  
West London, UK

Ani Ritchie  
Senior Lecturer in BA (Hons) Media Culture and Production  
Southampton Solent University  
Southampton, UK

Wilton Rodriguez MD  
Child and Adolescent, Adult, Geriatric and Addiction Psychiatrist  
Attending Psychiatrist at Maimonides Medical Center  
Brooklyn, NY

John S. Rolland, M.D., MPH  
Past President, American Family Therapy Academy  
Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurosciences  
University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine  
Chicago, IL

Prof. Luca Rollè Ph.D.  
MD in Clinical Psychology  
Aggregate Professor of Dynamic Psychology  
University of Turin,  
Turin, Italy

Lee Covington Rush, Ph.D., NCC  
Associate Professor  
Department of Counseling, Adult, and Higher Education  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL

Marilyn P. Safir, PhD  
Professor - Clinical and Social Psychology (Emeritus)  
Department of Psychology  
University of Haifa  
Haifa, Israel

Michelle A. Saint-Germain, PhD  
Professor of Public Policy and Administration  
California State University,  
Long Beach, CA

Nicholas Samstag, Ph.D.  
Clinical Psychologist-Psychoanalyst  
Associate Adjunct Professor of Psychology  
Graduate School of Arts and Science  
New York University  
New York, NY

Andrew Samuels, PhD  
Professor of Analytical Psychology, University of Essex, UK.  
Visiting Professor of Psychoanalytic Studies, University of London.  
London, UK

Sharar Sand, Psy.D.  
Associate Professor  
LaGuardia Community College  
Long Island City, NY

Jennifer Sanftner, Ph.D.  
Chair, Department of Psychology  
Slippery Rock University  
Slippery Rock, PA

Ramotse Saunders, MD  
Clinical Assistant Professor  
State University of New York (SUNY), Downstate Medical Center  
Brooklyn, NY

William Seabloom, M.Div. M.S.W. Ph.D., LICSW  
Diplomate in Clinical Sexology and Social Work  
Member, Advisory Board, the Österreichischen Akademie für Sexualmedizin, Salzburg, Austria  
Founding Member of the International Association for the Treatment of Sex Offenders  
Associate Professor, Institute for Advanced Study in Human Sexuality,  
San Francisco, CA

Scott Schaeffle, Ph.D., LPC, LMFT, NCC  
Assistant Professor, Counseling Program  
University of Colorado  
Denver, CO

Jonathan P Schindelheim, M.D.  
Tufts University School of Medicine  
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry  
Medford, MA

April A Schottelkorb, PhD  
Associate Professor of Counselor Education  
Boise State University  
Boise, ID

Guido Di Sciascio, MD  
Psychiatrist, Professor of Psychopharmacology  
School of Psychiatry  
University of Bari  
Bari, Italy

Andrés F Sciolla, MD  
Associate Professor  
Medical Director, Northgate Point clinic  
University of California, Davis  
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences  
Sacramento, CA

Christina Sekaer, MD  
Faculty, School of Medicine  
New York University  
New York, NY

James N. Sells, Ph.D.  
Licensed Psychologist,  
Asst. Dean for Academics  
Counseling Department Chair  
Regent University  
Virginia Beach, VA

Sue A Shapiro Ph.D.  
Faculty Member  
New York University  
New York, NY

Travis Sherer, PA-C, AAHIVS  
Adjunct Faculty, Pace University/Lenox Hill Hospital PA Program  
New York, NY

Kenneth Sherrill, Ph. D.  
Professor Emeritus, Political Science  
Hunter College, City University of New York

Ronny Shtarkshall  
Professor, The Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine  
Jerusalem, Israel.

Vincent M. B. Silenzio, M.D., M.P.H.  
Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Public Health Sciences, and Family Medicine  
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry  
Rochester, NY

Charles Silverstein,  
Executive Committee, LGBT Center for Public Policy,  
Roosevelt House, Hunter College.  
New York, NY

Horacio F. Sívori, PhD  
Post-Doctoral Fellow  
Latin American Center on Sexuality and Human Rights  
Institute of Social Medicine  
State University of Rio de Janeiro  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

John Sloane  
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry,  
Faculty of Medicine, at the University of Toronto  
Toronto, Canada

Lance Smith, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Counselor Education  
University of Vermont  
Burlington, VT

Prof. Anna Maria Speranza  
Psychology, Associate Professor of Psychopathology  
Facoltà di Medicina e Psicologia,  
SAPIENZA University of Rome  
Roma, Italy

Dr. Rafael Spingmann-Ribak (Ret.)  
Former Head of mental health services, Israel Ministry of health.  
Former senior lecturer on psychotherapy  
Tel Aviv University,  
Tel Aviv, Israel

Judith Stacey  
Professor Emerita of Social and Cultural Analysis and Sociology  
New York University  
New York, NY

Donnel B. Stern, Ph.D.,  
Adjunct Clinical Professor,  
New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy  
New York, NY

Tracy Stinchfield, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Immaculata University  
Immaculata, PA

Jarosław Stusiński, MD  
Psychologist, Medical Center of Postgraduate Education  
Centrum Medyczne Kształcenia Podyplomowego  
Warsaw, Poland

Frank Summers, Ph.D., ABPP  
President, Division of Psychoanalysis, American Psychological Association  
Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences  
Feinberg School of Medicine  
Northwestern University  
Chicago, IL

Dorit Szykierski, PhD  
Tel-Aviv University  
Supervisor and lecturer,  
The School of Psychotherapy in the Magid Institute.  
Jerusalem, Israel

Temma Tainow, MS, LCSW,  
Adjunct Professor,  
City University of New York  
New York, NY

John A. Talbott, M.D.  
Past President, American Psychiatric Association  
Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease  
Professor of Psychiatry  
University of Maryland School of Medicine  
Baltimore, MD

Annalisa Tanzilli, PhD,  
Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology  
Faculty of Medicine and Psychology  
Sapienza University of Rome  
Rome, Italy

C. Nolan Thomas Ph.D., D. Min.  
Professor, Counseling  
Lincoln Christian University  
Lincoln, IL

Hendry Ton MD  
Director of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry  
Medical Director of Transcultural Wellness Center  
Associate Health Science Clinical Professor  
University of California, Davis, Dept. Of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science  
Sacramento, CA

Donato J. Tramuto, CEO & Chairman  
Physicians Interactive  
Reading, MA



Warren Throckmorton, PhD  
Past President, American Mental Health Counselors Association  
Co-Author, Sexual Identity Therapy Framework  
Professor of Psychology  
Grove City College  
Grove City, PA

Marcus C. Tye, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Dowling College, Oakdale NY

Paolo Valerio, MD  
Professor of Clinical Psychology,  
Università di Napoli Federico II  
Naples, Italy

Salvatore Vascellaro, Ed.D  
Graduate Faculty  
Bank Street College of Education  
New York, NY

Carrie A. Wachter Morris, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor,  
Co-Director, School Counseling Program  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, IN

Paul Wertsch, MD  
Associate Professor of Family Medicine  
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health,  
Madison, WI

Laura S. Wheat, PhD  
Assistant Professor of Counselor Education  
Georgia Regents University  
Augusta, GA

Patricia Whelehan, Ph.D., CST/CAC, TEFL-Cert  
Professor of Anthropology/Campus AIDS Educ Coord  
Anthropology-SUNY Potsdam,  
Potsdam, NY

Mark Yarhouse, PhD  
Professor of Psychology  
Director, Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity  
Regent University  
Virginia Beach, VA

Cezary Zekanowski PhD, DSc  
Professor and Head  
Laboratory of Neurogenetics  
Dept of Neurodegenerative Disorders  
Medical Research Center, Polish Academy of Sciences  
Warsaw, Poland

Prof. Alessandro Zennaro,  
Deputy President of Italian Psychological Association  
Full professor in Psychopathology and Psychological Assessment.  
University of Turin,  
Turin, Italy

Stefan R. Zicht, Psy.D.  
Assistant Clinical Professor of Medical Psychology in Psychiatry  
College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University  
New York, NY

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