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## **NORTHWESTERN PROFESSOR TOUTS CONTROVERSIAL BISEXUALITY STUDY**

BY GARY BARLOW

Staff writer, Chicago Free Press

Former Northwestern University psychology department chairman J. Michael Bailey is at the center of controversy again, this time after a favorable New York Times article on his recent research on bisexual men was blasted as "sensationalistic" and "derogatory" to bisexuals.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation joined others in criticizing the July 5 Times article, which discussed a paper by Bailey and two colleagues to be published in August in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the American Psychological Society. The Times article was headlined "Straight, Gay or Lying? Bisexuality Revisited," a headline GLAAD said "impugns the honesty and integrity of bisexual people everywhere."

In an alert to its members GLAAD said the Times article, written by Benedict Carey, "veers toward hasty generalization."

"The sensational elements of his story, the derogatory implications of the headline and its embrace of anti-bisexual sentiment do not reflect the usual journalistic standards of The New York Times," the GLAAD alert stated.

The second paragraph of the Times article said, "But a new study casts doubt on whether true bisexuality exists, at least in men." GLAAD criticized that statement, noting, "It isn't until eight paragraphs later that readers encounter the first warning against drawing hasty conclusions based on the Bailey study's small sample."

The Times article also did not mention Bailey's controversial past. His 2003 book, "The Man Who Would Be Queen," drew fire for its characterizations of transgenders, including assertions that transgenders are "especially motivated" to shoplift and that "the single most common occupation" of transgenders is prostitution. Presented as science, the book was not footnoted, and some of the transgenders Bailey allegedly met in Chicago bars and used as research subjects for the book claimed after it was published that Bailey never told them he was using them for his research.

Some of those transgenders and two professors subsequently filed formal ethics complaints against Bailey at Northwestern and with the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation. Following an investigation, which Northwestern officials would

not comment on, Bailey resigned as chair of the university's psychology department but was allowed to remain on staff as a professor.

In April Bailey received a cool reception at a forum he arranged at Northwestern to rebut critics after gay groups on the campus and elsewhere urged GLBTs not to participate in his research. At the forum Bailey defended another of his assertions, made most notably in a 2001 paper, that "allowing parents to choose the sexual orientation of their children would be morally unproblematic."

Bailey told forum attendees that he is not anti-gay, but argued that if technology evolves to allow parents to increase the likelihood that their offspring would be heterosexual, such a choice would be "morally neutral."

"To avoid having homosexual children does no harm to anyone," Bailey said.

The paper that was the subject of last week's New York Times article was co-written by Gerulf Rieger, a graduate student who works under Bailey, and Meredith Chivers, one of Bailey's former graduate students at Northwestern who's now associated with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, formerly known as the Clarke Institute, in Toronto. The paper detailed a study Bailey and his associates conducted to measure sexual arousal in men who claimed to be heterosexual, bisexual or gay.

The study used an instrument that is itself controversial, a penile plethysmograph. The instrument was developed in the 1950s by Kurt Freund to try to determine if men who claimed to be gay to avoid military service in then-communist Czechoslovakia were telling the truth. The device has been declared too unreliable and subjective for use as evidence in United States courts. Freund later immigrated to Canada and became a sex researcher at the Clarke Institute/CAMH, which has been heavily criticized over the years by transgender activists in Canada and elsewhere.

In the upcoming paper cited in the Times article, Bailey and his co-authors assert in the abstract, "In general, bisexual men did not have strong genital arousal to both male and female sexual stimuli. Rather, most bisexual men appeared homosexual with respect to genital arousal."

But critics are claiming already that such a statement is overly broad, citing the unreliability of the plethysmograph and the small research sample, 101 men recruited through ads placed in Chicago newspapers, with 30 of the men describing themselves as straight, 33 as bisexual and 38 as gay.

Bailey and his co-authors said they had each research subject watch an 11-minute "neutral, relaxing film (e.g., landscapes)," then showed them films of men having sex with each other and films of women having sex with each other, followed by another neutral film. While the men watched the films, they reported whether they were sexually aroused while also being subjected to measurements by a plethysmograph.

Bailey and his co-authors concluded that the bisexual men's actual genital arousal, as measured by the plethysmograph, differed substantially from their reported arousal.

"Men who reported bisexual feelings did not show any evidence of a distinctively bisexual pattern of genital arousal," the paper states, but goes on to acknowledge a few sentences later, "To be sure, most men were more genitally aroused to stimuli depicting their less arousing sex than to neutral stimuli."

The sample Bailey and his co-authors based their conclusions on was also substantially smaller than the number of men recruited because the plethysmograph could not measure any substantial response to the films depicting gay or lesbian sex, as compared to the neutral films, in nine of the 30 straight men, 11 of the 33 bisexual men and 13 of the 38 gay men.

Nevertheless, Bailey and his co-researchers concluded, "Indeed, with respect to sexual arousal and attraction, it remains to be shown that male bisexuality exists."

Bailey went even further in the Times article, stating, "I'm not denying that bisexual behavior exists, but I am saying that in men there's no hint that true bisexual arousal exists, and that for men arousal is orientation."

GLAAD officials called that assertion "dubious." Another media watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting, responded July 8, stating, "That arousal equals orientation seems to be assumed, not proven."

FAIR also issued an alert heavily criticizing the Times article.

"In suggesting that men who claim a bisexual sexual orientation are liars, the Times relies heavily on a single study whose senior researcher has a career marked by ethics controversies and eugenics proposals-facts that were not presented to readers," FAIR officials stated.

In response to questions about the article, a spokesman for the Times responded July 8 with a statement.

"We thought the article was thorough and fair," the spokesman said. "It is of course only one part of the coverage we will continue to do on this issue."