

# Pro-“Gay” Activist Admits It: Bullying Hysteria May Cause Suicides, Not Prevent Them

by Peter Sprigg

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Ever since the highly-publicized suicide of a New Jersey college student in September of 2010, pro-homosexual activists have been using the issues of bullying and teen suicide as tools in pursuit of their political agenda, and as rhetorical weapons against those who oppose it. Every time another report surfaced about a suicide by a teenager who identified as or was perceived to be “gay,” and who had reportedly been bullied, the finger would be pointed directly at conservatives. Bullying causes suicides, we were told, and public expression of conservative political, social, or religious viewpoints concerning homosexuality causes bullying. Affirm homosexual conduct as morally neutral, or more kids will die.

As early as October of 2010, however, experts on suicide prevention were warning that this simplistic approach linking suicides (which are always tragic) to bullying (which is always wrong) could do more harm than good. An **article based on an interview** with Ann Haas, research director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, asked, “[W]hat if the way we’re talking about these suicides could actually be encouraging vulnerable young people to copycat the tragic behavior?”

A year later, **a commentary last month** on the website of *The Advocate*, the nation’s leading “gay” magazine, finally admitted that this is a serious problem. David McFarland is “interim executive director and CEO” of The Trevor Project, which runs a suicide prevention hotline for “LGBT” youth. McFarland cited the political and cultural “benefit from showcasing the health crisis of disproportionate rates of suicide and incidences of bullying that affect LGBT young people.” However—in an astonishing admission—he also acknowledged that “this tactic has also increased suicide risk.”

Got that? Here is a pro-homosexual activist admitting that “this tactic” (“showcasing . . . suicide and . . . bullying”) “has also *increased* suicide risk” (emphasis added).

There are three key problems with the “bullying causes suicide” theme. The first is that it ignores most of what we know about the causes of suicide. McFarland acknowledges gently that “the reasons a person attempts suicide are . . . complicated,” and notes that “suicide is closely tied to psychological well-being.” Haas was more blunt, indicating to the reporter that “underlying mental-health issues . . . are present in 90 percent of people who die by suicide.” In other words, most people who are bullied do not commit suicide. It is mental illness—not bullying—that causes most suicides.

However, the second problem with emphasizing the link between bullying and suicide is that, as McFarland states, “it can influence someone who is at-risk to assume that taking your own life is what you’re supposed to do next if you are LGBT or bullied.” Haas made the same point a year ago, warning that publicly identifying bullying as a motive for suicide can “mak[e] suicide seem like an understandable, if not unavoidable, culmination of a person’s experience.” She added, “Suicide is not a rational act.” McFarland makes the same point, declaring that “we can help avoid making suicide appear like a logical choice.”

The third problem, which flows out of the second, is what McFarland refers to as “suicide contagion.” He warns that “the more a story of a particular victim is out there, the more likely one or more people who are at-risk will also attempt suicide.” Haas warned, “Stories depicting the person who’s died by suicide as very sympathetic can

inadvertently encourage vulnerable young people to identify with him or her.” In other words, being revered as a martyr in death can appear more attractive than experiencing continuing pain in life.

We should do all we can to help young people with mental illness—whether homosexual or heterosexual—and to prevent teen suicides. And we should do all we can to prevent bullying of *any* child—for their sexual orientation, appearance, religion, or any other reason. But it is time for homosexual activists to stop exploiting personal tragedies to advance their political agenda—especially in a way that may cause more such tragedies.

Tags: bullying, Homosexuality

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