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Dr.Aubrey Levin and the Aversion Project

The Aversion Project was a collective experiment in South Africa during the Apartheid Era. Majority of the participants of the project were white males and females between the age of 16 and 24 years of age. The goal of the experiment was to try and forcefully alter the sexual preferences in homosexual males and females using induced methods to become heterosexual. There were no specific research questions in this study but the hypothesis was “exposing homosexual participants to aversion therapy would turn them heterosexual.”

 Most participants felt forced into participation, others that were suspected of homosexuality were shipped to this military psychiatric unit. Treatments consisted of electroshock therapy. During these “therapy” sessions participants were shown explicit pictures and encouraged to fantasize about the pictures shown at which point they would be shocked until it was considered unbearable. They were also subject to chemical castration and Hormone treatments many that were left unfinished or resulted in death. After these operations participants were given new birth certificates and told not to contact family and friends. They were also discharged from the army so many of them couldn’t afford to continue the hormones they had been subjected to.

 No one was “cured” from this experiment, electroshock therapy showed no desired effects. Although because of this experiment there was psychological damage which in some cases resulted in suicide. Dr.Levins hypothesis was false and caused many of his victims to undergo reassignment surgery. There were many ethical issues within this experiment. Participants did sign consent forms but there were a lot of details missing, such as the shock therapy they were subjected to, there was no option to withdraw therefore participants were essentially held against their will. This experiment also targeted a specific group of people. reassignment surgeries used in the project caused harm to the mental, physical and reproductive health of the conscripts including infertility and suicide; the procedures did not benefit participants. It did not cure homosexuality which led to the project being abandoned;