Shifting Psychological Knowledge and Conservative Christian Media Campaigns
Blaming the Judeo-Christian Tradition for Anti-Gay Prejudice in Psychiatry and Psychology

MICHAEL THORN
Shifting Psychological Knowledge and Conservative Christian Media Controversies: Blaming the Judeo-Christian Tradition for Anti-Gay Prejudice in Psychiatry and Psychology

Michael Thorn, York and Ryerson Universities, Canada

Abstract: Contrary to statements made in the media controversy surrounding the Christian ex-gay movement today, this paper will demonstrate that the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 did not amount to an instant “born again” conversion in psychological thought, nor did it signify the power of special interest politics trumping “true” science. An analysis of statements in multiple psychology textbooks and encyclopaedias published after 1970 will show that declassification initiated a near two-decade long “debate” in which conflicting scientific studies were used strategically and governmentally, sometimes in combination with the deployment of extreme stereotypes, to influence public and professional perceptions of an event with which many professionals disagreed. However, by the time the transformation in thought was complete—a transformation that was influenced by both the AIDS crisis and an antigay Christian media campaign—it had all but vanquished those who maintained a mental illness model of homosexuality from the disciplines of the psyche. It also culminated in the blaming of the Judeo-Christian tradition for psychiatry and psychology’s longstanding antigay prejudice and recognized the ex-gay movement as a contemporary problem for psychiatry and psychology.

Keywords: Homosexuality; Psychology; Psychiatry; Judeo-Christian Tradition; Ex-gay Movement; Reparative Therapy; Textbooks; Encyclopaedias; Mass Media; Antigay Media Campaign

Introduction

In the early 1970s… [p]sychiatrists and psychologists began to reassess their own convictions as the idea of homosexuality as an illness came to be seen as little more than a scientific transformation of the ancient Judeo-Christian prejudice. –Melvin Konner, M.D. Encyclopedia Americana 1995

In the media debate surrounding the Christian ex-gay movement, both sides sometimes claim that the 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association to declassify homosexuality as a mental illness was the event that changed the way homosexuality is understood psychologically in North America. For those who oppose the movement, declassification is heralded as a progressive milestone that inaugurated a new era of LGBT human rights; it stands as historical evidence proving that the psychological premises underlying ex-gay notions of pathology are wrong. For those who support the movement, the event is condemned as a politically motivated scientific capitulation to special interest pressure for which the ex-gay movement exists to set the record straight. The statement from Dr. Konner above seems to corroborate the view that a pivotal change in psychological thought occurred following declassification. Konner, however, who lays the blame for pathologizing homosexuality at the feet of the tradition responsible for creating the ex-gay movement, says that psychiatrists and psychologists merely began to reassess their views at that time. The truth is, declassification, important as it was, did not amount to an instant “born again” conversion in psychological thought, nor did it signify the power of special interest politics trumping “true” science.

An analysis of statements in multiple psychology textbooks and encyclopaedias published after 1970 will show that declassification initiated a near two-decade long “debate” in which conflicting scientific studies were used strategically and governmentally, sometimes in
combination with the deployment of extreme stereotypes, to influence public and professional perceptions of an event with which many professionals disagreed. By the time this transformation in thought was complete—influenced as it was by both the AIDS crisis and an antigay Christian media campaign—it had all but vanquished those who maintained a mental illness model of homosexuality from the disciplines of the psyche. It also culminated in the blaming of the Judeo-Christian tradition for psychiatry and psychology’s longstanding antigay prejudice and recognized the ex-gay movement as a contemporary problem for psychiatry and psychology.

Contemporary Context: The Christian Ex-gay Movement and Declassification

The Christian ex-gay movement is a loosely organized collection of church ministries and psychotherapeutic practices that promises sexual orientation change through religiously mediated psychological methods (Drescher, Shidlo and Schroeder 2002; Jones and Yarhouse 2007; Svensson 2003). It uses prayer, confession, Bible study and practices rooted in psychoanalysis and behavioural conditioning that are generally referred to in the media as reparative therapy (Besen 2003; Drescher 1998; 2006; Spitzer 2003). It seeks to facilitate the decrease of homosexual desire and the increase of heterosexual desire in a paradoxically “queer” attempt to fulfill one’s religious identity (Erzen 2006; Gerber 2008; Thorn 2011). The movement was born in 1973—within months of declassification—through the independent creation of several small church ministries across the United States and came together under the leadership of the Christian umbrella organization Exodus International in 1976 (Erzen 2006; Wolkimir 2006). It quickly formed links with several mental health practitioners who used the newly created diagnostic category “ego-dystonic homosexuality” to continue treating LGBT patients distressed over their homosexuality (Drescher 1998). The movement grew throughout the 1980s, fueled in part by an anti-gay media campaign initiated by the Christian Right in the late 1970s and by the AIDS crisis of the 1980s (Besen 2003; Fetner 2005). During those years the movement expanded internationally but remained largely unknown outside evangelical, fundamentalist and conservative Catholic Christian communities (Erzen 2006; Fetner 2005). That began to change in 1992 when NARTH (the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality) joined Exodus as a national ex-gay umbrella organization in the United States (Besen 2003; Erzen 2006). Cofounded by Catholic psychologist Joseph Nicolosi, Jewish psychiatrist Benjamin Kaufman, and Freudian psychoanalyst Charles Socarides, NARTH argues that the ex-gay movement can be justified through the science of psychology as well as through Judeo-Christian scripture (Kaufman 2002; Nicolosi 1997).

The ex-gay movement became a major factor in the American culture wars in the summer of 1998 when it joined with 15 different Christian Right lobby groups to launch a national newspaper and television advertising campaign promising “freedom from homosexuality” (Fetner 2005; Lund and Renna 2006; Stewart 2008). By then, Exodus and NARTH had also established websites on the internet, as would ex-ex-gay survivors several years later (Thorn

1 Reparative therapy is technically only one of many ex-gay psychological practices. It was developed and named by Catholic psychologist Joseph Nicolosi and is rooted in the work of evangelical psychologist Elizabeth Moberly, herself a Christian Freudian. Today, however, reparative therapy tends to be used as a catch-all label covering all forms of gay-to-straight conversion therapy, especially religiously mediated forms.

2 Although the movement is predominantly Christian, it does have a Jewish wing that operates through the ex-gay ministry JONAH (Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality).

3 Ego-dystonic homosexuality was specifically introduced into the APA’s diagnostic manual to allow therapists to continue treating gay and lesbian patients after declassification (Bayer 1987); it was removed from the manual in 1987.

4 NARTH was founded in response to the American Psychoanalytic Association’s 1992 decision to finally reject the pathological view of homosexuality; the APsaA was the last major holdout of the mainstream mental health organizations.

5 Socarides was one of the most vocal opponents of declassification in 1973.
THORN: RELIGION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN EX-GAY MOVEMENT

2012a; Toscano 2009). But it was Dr. Robert Spitzer, the psychiatrist who headed the committee that declassified in 1973, that irrevocably cemented the movement’s place in “mass media” public discourse when he presented a study in 2001 (published two years later) claiming some gay men and lesbians could change their sexual orientation through religiously mediated means (Spitzer 2003). Although the study’s methodology was severely criticized (Drescher & Zucker 2006), it created a media frenzy (Besen 2003; 2006; Drescher 2006; Lund & Renna 2006), and since then the ex-gay movement has become a regular presence in popular news and entertainment.6 Recently, the movement has faced several high profile setbacks: a 2009 American Psychological Association report found little evidence that gay-to-straight therapy is effective and suggested that it is probably harmful (APA Task Force 2009); in 2012 Dr. Spitzer publically retracted his own study, acknowledged his methodological errors, and apologized to the gay community for any harm he caused (Arana 2012; Barton 2012; Spitzer 2012); that same year California and New Jersey banned reparative therapy for minors, bans that were upheld by the courts in 2013 (Kellum 2013; The New York Times 2013); finally, Exodus International shut down in 2013, its termination preceded by apologies to ex-ex-gay survivors from Exodus President Alan Chambers both online and in an episode of the Oprah Winfrey produced documentary serial Our America (Hurst 2013; OWN 2013). Regardless, the movement continues to operate today under the leadership of NARTH and a newly formed religious umbrella organization called the Restored Hope Network (Rattigan 2012; Restored Hope Network 2012).

Clearly, declassification was a foundational event in the ex-gay movement’s development and it is still referenced today in the continuing ex-gay debate. On the pro ex-gay side, it is bemoaned as a travesty of science in which years of clinical evidence was trumped by gay rights pressure. Stephens and Giberson paraphrase Christian psychologist and ‘Focus on the Family’ radio personality William Maier as saying declassification “was a conspiracy driven by the relentless pressure of gay activists” (2011, 130). In a recent online article, ex-gay advocate and former pastor Jack Minor claims declassification occurred because of “intense lobbying by homosexual-rights groups” (2013). And at a recent Nehemiah Ministries event in Nevada, ex-gay leader Kent Paris told over 200 Christian youth that “radical gay activists” compelled psychiatrists to declassify (Ballock 2013). Yet pro-gay psychologist Joe Kort directly contradicts the ex-gay view when he writes, “gay political pressure did not play a role in the APA’s decision to have it removed. [That was] a myth… popularized by antigay therapists Irving Bieber and Charles Socarides” (2008, 10, author’s italics). Although gay rights activist Wayne Besen does not deny the role played by political advocacy, on his anti-ex-gay website Truth Wins Out he states, “modern research that relied on science, not stereotypes” led to declassification, adding, “Suddenly, gay people were no longer considered mentally ill” (Besen 2012). Political commentator Rachel Maddow references declassification as “a big deal” in an episode of her MSNBC current affairs show. She claims, “The anti-gay ‘we can cure you folks’ did stick around for years, for decades even, but, frankly, they were on the fringes of quackery” (2012). The New York Times Editorial Board corroborates her view in their support of the banning of reparative therapy in California and New Jersey (2013). Even popular entertainment sometimes references the event as sudden and decisive. For example, in a 2003 Law and Order: SVU episode, declassification is used as evidence that reparative therapy is based on outdated ideas rejected for decades.7 Thus, in the ex-gay debate today, declassification is both a triumph of science

---

6 In addition to multiple news and current affairs reports, both in print and broadcasting, the movement is frequently showcased on daytime talk shows and has been referenced, depicted and mocked in multiple film and television narratives and documentaries as well as in fictional novels and satirical magazines (Thorn 2013; 2012b). It has also spawned multiple pro- and anti- “self-help” publications (future research) and multiple pro- and anti- online websites, blogs, chat groups, and videos (Thorn 2012a; Toscano 2009).

7 In the episode “Abomination” (Season 5, Episode 8), during the trial of a reparative therapist charged with murdering his son’s gay lover, the prosecuting attorney asks a NARTH style psychologist, “So when the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973, and every other major medical association followed suit, you’re saying it’s all a big conspiracy?”
unrelated to political activism and a travesty of science caused by political activism; and yet for both sides it represents a clear, unambiguous and near-sudden change in psychological thought that either needs to be recognized and maintained or fought and reversed.

Methodology and Theoretical Grounding: Foucault, Discourse, and Governmentality

The methodology for this interdisciplinary study is a discourse analysis that borrows from the “archaeological” and “genealogical” methods of socio-historical philosopher Michel Foucault. My theoretical approach, which is “governmental,” is also rooted in the work of Foucault. Methodologically, I examine tactical and strategic statements of knowledge uncovered through a “patiently documentary” search of available texts published across time and I understand such statements as discursive “events” erupting into disciplinary discourses of power (Foucault 1972; 1998; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). Theoretically, the statements analyzed are treated as events that seek to govern thought and behaviour in a broad sense: to influence, persuade, or convince as well as to regulate and control; to encourage people to change their own thought and conduct; and sometimes such statements are themselves modified through the effects of counter-governance (Foucault 1991; 2007; 2010; see also Bevir 2010; Dean 1994; Lemke 2011). Also, while the discourse analyzed here assumes the general domain of “sexuality” to be given and universal even as the contested nature of “homosexuality” is acknowledged, it should be noted that a Foucauldian analysis does not necessarily assume “human sexuality,” “mental illness,” or even “science” are universal categories of thought (Foucault 1972; 1990a; 2006).

My choice of textbooks and encyclopaedias as my primary sources of discursive statements is precisely because of their clear governmental design. Much like statements of knowledge made by ex-gay experts in the media, statements of knowledge made by professional psychologists and psychiatrists in introductory textbooks and encyclopaedias on the nature of homosexuality attempt to govern the way people think about sex and gender and to convince people to maintain or change their own behaviour and attitudes in relation to same-sex desire. In short, they operate governmentally as ethico-discursive technologies of truth, sometimes themselves modified as the effects of other governing statements. Many scholars recognize the importance of textbooks in propagating professional knowledge so as to influence, govern, reinforce, or change thought and behaviour. In their study of the treatment of homosexuality in sociology and abnormal psychology textbooks from the 1980s and 90s, Weitz and Bryant claim, “The purpose of textbooks is to transmit knowledge from scholars to students... to replace

---

4 Foucault’s career, in which he studied (among other things) psychology, sexuality and religion in terms of knowledge, power and ethical subjectivity has been categorized into three distinct periods (Dean 1994; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Lemke 2011): 1. his knowledge period, characterized by an archaeological methodology that uncovers epistemological similarities, dispersions and changes in archived discourse between different periods of thought; 2. his power period, characterized by a genealogical methodology analyzing tactics and strategies of control in apparatuses of power across several periods of thought; and 3. his ethics and subjectivity period, characterized by an expanded genealogical methodology emphasizing different problematizations of “truth” initiated through practices of subjective self-constitution. Some scholars, however, argue that it is a mistake to see such clear breaks between his archaeological and genealogical methods and between his knowledge, power, and ethics periods (Bevir 2010; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Lemke 2011). Foucault himself sometimes suggests that archaeology is an aspect of genealogy (2003b; 2007) and in his final publications and lectures Foucault analyzes knowledge, power and ethics together (1990b; 1990c; 2011). Also, some scholars highlight Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” as key to understanding the links between his supposedly different methodologies and periods (Bevir 2010; Dean 1994; Lemke 2011). Initially developed in the late 1970s as a concept designed to elucidate the nature of liberal democratic and biopolitical government from the 17th century onward, Foucault later expanded “governmentality” to include ethics and subjectivity across multiple historical periods and redefined the concept in relation to a very broad understanding of the word “govern.” He says, “Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word [as they spoke of it in the 16th century, of governing children, or governing family, or governing souls] is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which impose coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself [sic]” (2007, 154; addition in brackets from source text).
students’ ‘commonsense’ assumptions about the world with information and perspectives grounded in scholarship” (1997, 28). In their analysis of several editions of E.R. Hilgard’s and Rita Atkinson’s *Introduction to Psychology*, Mestre et al. note that introductory textbooks play “a relevant role in creating the required disciplinary identity that helps both scholars and professionals defend their positions against attacks, interference, and competition” (2002, 810). Mestre et al. also state that in textbooks, “one may observe the depth with which different topics within the discipline are handled usually without excessive bias” (*ibid*). Weitz and Bryant, on the other hand, write that “textbooks never represent a discipline in a totally objective way, but rather present authors’ subjective decisions about what knowledge students need” (28). My analysis will lend support for Weitz and Bryant’s view as it will show 20 years of dispersion on the topic of homosexuality.

**Tracing a Psychological Shift Part I – Quantitative Results**

Although this study is primarily qualitative, a short discussion of my quantified results is relevant. I examined statements on the topic of homosexuality in over 130 general and abnormal psychology textbooks published from 1900 to the present (67 published between 1970 and 1990) as well as in several encyclopaedias of psychology published from the mid-twentieth century on and in multiple editions of three popular general encyclopaedias: *Britannica, Americana,* and *Collier’s.* Prior to 1970, nearly all abnormal psychology textbooks, nearly all general psychology textbooks that address the topic (many do not) and all general and psychological encyclopaedias agree that homosexuality is either a form of genetic degeneracy or a mental illness. No pre-1970 textbook or encyclopaedia suggests homosexuality might be a normal variation of human sexuality. After 1990, however, nearly all general and abnormal psychology textbooks and encyclopaedias agree that homosexuality is a normal variation of human sexuality. There is no general agreement among texts published between 1970 and 1990.

I sorted the textbooks published between 1970 and 1990 into five categories determined by whether they treat homosexuality: a) negatively, as a mental illness or pathological condition (including when qualified as ego-dystonic homosexuality) that can be treated with either psychoanalysis or behavioural aversion therapy; b) ambivalently, as a topic characterized by conflicting scientific studies in which both sides of the debate are treated but where the text includes positive and negative value judgements that seem to contradict each other; c) “neutrally,” as a topic characterized by conflicting scientific research in which both sides of the debate are treated relatively equally and where obvious value judgements are avoided with neither side clearly privileged (itself a political position); d) positively, as a normal variation of human sexual response capable of leading to long-term romantic relationships, and e) with silence, in that the topic of homosexuality is not addressed at all.

---

9 Weitz and Bryant compared 11 textbooks from the 1980s and 16 textbooks from the 1990s to an older study in which they compared 30 textbooks from the 1960s and 70s to determine the prevalence of the mental illness model of homosexuality across several decades. My study corroborates and adds to their study. See footnote 12 for more details.


11 Most sources were found in the Toronto University and public library systems (as the largest city in Canada, Toronto has three universities and an extensive public library system that contains a vast number of encyclopaedias and psychology textbooks). A small number of textbooks (less than 10) were purchased from local Toronto used bookstores. I sampled according to date of publication.

12 Weitz and Bryant’s (1997) smaller study of 11 textbooks from the 1980s and 16 textbooks from the 1990s compared to an older study in which they sampled textbooks from 1980 and before shows similar results to my study: 30% of the textbooks they examined in the older study explicitly describe homosexuality as a mental illness but none from their study of textbooks in use in the 1990s do. However, their sampling methods were different from my own. Their analysis is of 27 textbooks in print in 1995 published between 1980 and 1995 compared to 30 textbooks in print in 1980 published between 1963 and 1980. That is, their analysis is of textbooks in use in 1995 compared to textbooks in use in 1980. My analysis does not consider the popularity or use of the textbook, but only whether it was published in a given year.
Between 1970 and 1974 not one of the 12 textbooks examined treats homosexuality as a normal variation. Five treat it as a pathological condition that can be cured (41%), three treat it ambivalently (25%), two neutrally (17%), and two do not address the topic at all (17%). Thus, agreement leans strongly toward mental illness; however, the fact that five texts (41%), all published prior to or simultaneous with declassification, treat the topic either neutrally or ambivalently indicates a profound disagreement even at this early stage. Beginning in 1975, after declassification, the treatment of homosexuality as a normal variation begins to appear in some textbooks. Out of 20 texts examined from 1975 to 1979, four treat it as a mental disorder (20%), six with ambivalence (30%), six neutrally (30%), and four as a normal variation (20%). While it is certainly significant that a minority of texts accept homosexuality as normal, it is equally significant that most do not. There is some change in the first half of the 1980s, which coincides with the AIDS crisis and an acceleration of an anti-gay Christian Right media campaign that began in the late 1970s. Out of 19 texts examined between 1980 and 1984, four treat it as a mental disorder (21%), three with ambivalence (16%), five neutrally (26%), four as a normal variation (21%), and three do not address the topic at all (16%). We begin to see a clear move towards general mainstream agreement in the latter half of the 1980s. Out of 16 texts examined between 1985 and 1989, only one treats homosexuality as a mental disorder (6%), three treat it ambivalently (19%), two neutrally (12%), eight as a normal variation (50%), and two do not address the topic at all (12%). Thus, the normal variation model begins to dominate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Treatment of Homosexuality in General and Abnormal Psychology Textbooks from 1900 to the Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality as a Mental Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to 1970 all encyclopedia entries on the topic agree that homosexuality is a mental illness, but in the 1970s almost all entries begin to address the topic with some kind of ambivalence. Only after 1990 is homosexuality treated generally as a normal variation. The specialized encyclopaedias of psychology shift from a mental illness model to ambivalence between 1970 and 1975 but, significantly, only begin treating it as a normal variation in the 1990s having skipped any pretense towards neutrality. The shift in the general encyclopaedias, however, takes longer and some move through neutrality before shifting to a normal variation position. Britannica shifts from an explicit illness model to a profound ambivalence in its 1981 edition, treating the topic ambivalently in the Micropaedia but as a mental disorder in the Macropaedia. From 1987 to 1998 it treats the topic neutrally in its Micropaedia entries but
ambivalently in its Macropaedia entries. In its 2002 edition, the topic is finally treated as a normal variation in both entries. Remarkably, *Americana* continues to treat homosexuality as a disorder (without actually calling it that) even in its 1984 and 1990 editions, in which its entries on homosexuality are identical to its 1970 entry. In its 1995 edition, however, it treats homosexuality as a normal variation. *Collier’s* switches from a disorder model to ambivalence between 1967 and 1977 but maintains the same 1977 ambivalent entry in its 1991 edition; however, it adds a post-script describing recent additions to the scientific literature that suggest homosexuality is normal.14

### The Treatment of Homosexuality in General and Psychological Encyclopedias from 1957 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Britannica</th>
<th>Americana</th>
<th>Collier’s</th>
<th>Encyclopedias of Psychology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002: Normal</td>
<td>2010: Normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: different treatments in the same encyclopedia represent separate entries (i.e. Micropaedia/Macropaedia for Britannica) or the addition of a corrective addition to the entry (i.e. in the Collier’s 1991 edition).

Clearly, claims made by gay rights activists that declassification initiated a sudden shift in mainstream psychological opinion cannot be justified. The quantified results outlined here demonstrate a near 20-year shift in the professional discourse, one that took even longer to register in some general encyclopaedias. Of course, this finding might appear to justify claims made by ex-gay proponents that the decision to declassify was entirely political: nearly 20-years’ worth of disagreement after declassification does not seem to justify the gay rights view that declassification was rooted in a scientific re-evaluation. However, examining the statements used to quantify my results reveals the ex-gay view is also inaccurate. In addition to politics, science was indeed involved in the decision to declassify, but so too was science used to argue against declassification (as were extreme anti-gay stereotypes).

### Tracing a Psychological Shift Part II: Qualitative Results

My qualitative results corroborate what Ronald Bayer showed in his historical account of declassification, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis* (1987). Bayer argues declassification was a political decision, fueled in part by gay rights activism, but

---

13 The entries are written by Judd Marmor, M.D., who eventually came to support declassification (Bayer 1987). The entries could even be considered progressive by 1970 standards; however, in them Marmor assumes a now discredited psychoanalytic explanation of causation and he justifies treatment and prevention.

14 I could not find any editions of Collier’s published after 1991.
one still rooted in scientific debate.\textsuperscript{15} My analysis traces the implications of declassification beyond 1987 and includes important elements his analysis misses, including a reliance on stereotypes by many who reject a normal variation model.

A textbook published by psychologist Raymond J. McCall in 1975 is a good example of how science and stereotypes were used together to argue homosexuality should be considered a mental illness. McCall argues, “it seems quite unwarranted to look upon homosexuality, in the sense of a \textit{developed disposition toward an apparent preference for physical relations with persons of the same sex, as a ‘normal variation’}” (397, author’s italics). For scientific justification, he quotes psychoanalyst Irving Bieber’s position that homosexuality “is a symptom of fear and inhibition of heterosexual expression” (397; quoting Bieber 1962, 305). Bieber’s position was standard psychiatric dogma leading up to declassification and was rooted in both psychoanalytic theory and a well known psychoanalytic study he himself led. In fact, the 1962 Bieber study sits at the scientific crux of this debate and Bieber (along with Charles Socarides) was one of the most vocal opponents of declassification in 1973. His study compared 106 male homosexuals with 100 male heterosexuals and stands as a rare example of a psychoanalytic study that used empirical methods from experimental psychology in addition to (rather than just) using psychoanalytic theory and clinical case studies. Up until 1990, it was the most cited study of homosexuality justifying a mental illness model in any textbook or encyclopedia and was accepted by many as sound science—even by strict behaviourists.\textsuperscript{16} However, today the study is discredited for poor methodology (Drescher 1998; Murphy 1992; and Tozer and McClanahan 1999). It is criticized for drawing its sample entirely from patients in therapy, for relying on biased doctor reports instead of patient self-reports, and for relying only on male subjects.\textsuperscript{17} Despite being discredited, it is still used today as evidence of both pathology and successful treatment of homosexuality by the ex-gay movement (Jones and Yarhouse 2007; Kaufman 2002; NARTH 2010-11; Nicolosi 1997; People Can Change 2000-12; Satinover 1996).

Whereas McCall relies heavily on Bieber for his scientific justification, he betrays a prejudice unjustified by any psychoanalytic evidence: “As hypocrisy is said to be the tribute that vice pays to virtue, so such homosexual efforts in the direction of physical union seem to be a pitiable homage to the superiority of normal intercourse” (391). Then, while acknowledging that not all gay men and women exhibit obvious stereotypes, he nevertheless writes that “the soft-muscled, high voice ‘queen,’ with the limp wrist and the ‘swish’ walk, and the deep-voiced, hirsute ‘dyke,’ in tweeds and brogues, tend to be irreversibly and exclusively contrasexually homosexual” (395). Stereotypical statements like McCall’s differ little from statements that can be found in most pre-1970 textbooks, such as Berg and Pennington’s 1954 \textit{Introduction to Clinical Psychology}: “thighs pressed together, a mincing walk, and fluttery feminine gestures in a male should lead the interviewer to suspect and investigate the possibility of homosexuality”

\textsuperscript{15} Interestingly, NARTH co-founder Joseph Nicolosi and Dr. Jeffrey Satinover (an Orthodox Jewish psychiatrist) both quote Bayer to support the ex-gay position; however, they misuse his work when they do so. Bayer writes, “[Declassification] was not a conclusion based on an approximation of the scientific truth as dictated by reason, but was instead an action demanded by the ideological temper of the times” (Bayer 1987, 3-4; quoted in Nicolosi 1997, 9 and Satinover 1996, 35); however, he later acknowledges and discusses in detail all the scientific evidence used to argue for and against declassification. His conclusion, that politics exceeded science, does not deny science an important role; rather Bayer’s study demonstrates how politics played a role on both sides of the debate in addition to science. He argues there was no way it could have been otherwise because “the status of homosexuality is a political question, representing a historically rooted, socially determined choice regarding the ends of human sexuality” (5).

\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{Americana} entries from 1984 and 1990, for example (which, as already noted, are identical to the 1970 entry and still treat homosexuality as a mental illness), rely heavily on the Bieber study claiming, “Many homosexual men possess a family background of a dominant, possessive, highly seductive mother and a weak, hostile, detached, or absent father”; similarly, although this does not come directly from Bieber, \textit{Americana} claims homosexual women often have “anti-heterosexual, hostile, domineering mothers and unassertive, detached, and pallid fathers” (1970, Vol. 14: 345-6; 1984, Vol. 14: 333-5; 1990, Vol. 14: 333-5). The entries do draw from Bieber (at least in part) the following statistics of change: “According to various reports, 25% to 50% of homosexual male patients under 35 years of age who strongly wish to change can do so” (ibid).

\textsuperscript{17} Even today, research on homosexuality still strongly privileges the male experience.
Many similar statements, most rooted in extreme anti-feminine stereotypes, proliferate in twentieth century textbooks and encyclopedias. Even *Britannica* resorts to stereotypes as late as 1981. On the one hand, it states in its ambivalent Micropedia entry, “It may well be that a preference for one sex or another is the only obvious or even determinable difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals” (108). But on the other hand, its Micropaedia entry makes the ridiculous claim that “the effeminate homosexual loves his penis and abhors penisless creatures” (604). Even as late as 1989, Costin and Draguns, in their introductory textbook, refer to “the effeminate role that [some] homosexual individuals adopt as a ‘caricature of femininity, a subtle angry mimicry’” and add, “It is important for them to have an audience, to amuse and baffle onlookers” (231). Many more textbooks maintaining a mental illness model, or exhibiting ambivalence on the issue, do so based on Bieber’s extremely problematic study and rely on inaccurate stereotypes for additional evidence. Some that do not rely on Bieber’s study rely instead on now discredited experiments testing behavioural aversion therapy in which patients were conditioned with drugs or small electric shocks to be repelled by gay pornographic images (Gazzaniga 1973; Fantino and Reynolds 1975; Lefton 1979; Meyer and Salmon 1984); and some rely on both (Ullman and Krasner 1975; Landy 1984). In all cases, “science” and stereotypes are used together to convince and persuade; to govern in the broad sense of the word.

A 1984 mental illness model textbook by Dember, Jenkins, and Teyler, however, does not explicitly state that homosexuality is a mental disorder, nor does it deploy stereotypes, include obvious negative judgements of homosexuality itself or cite Bieber or behavioural experiments. Rather, it questions the legitimacy of declassification so as to disqualify arguments suggesting that schizophrenia might not be a mental illness either. The authors state (foreshadowing accounts from those who support the ex-gay movement today) that declassification was the result of “pressure emanating from ‘gay’ activists” (695) and ask what that means scientifically: “Are there other forms of behavior, now classified as ‘disorders’ but that also ought to be ‘declassified’? If so, what will remain of the core of psychopathology?” (695). Even though the primary topic is schizophrenia, the governmentality of their associating homosexuality with schizophrenia so as to question declassification strongly supports a mental illness model even if they do not rely on stereotypes, aversion therapy experiments, or the Bieber study.

Most mental illness model textbooks, however, and even some ambivalent and neutral textbooks draw on the Bieber study. For example, a 1976 ambivalent text by Desiderato, Howieson, and Jackson describes “sexual immaturity [that] was manifested especially in failure in masculine identification, with inadequate sexual behavior or homosexual relationships” (438-39). Such a description, rooted in Bieber’s conclusion that most gay men did not properly identify with their fathers in childhood during the Oedipal crisis, might appear to support a mental illness model; however, a later chapter devoted to the topic of love notes, “Normally this intense attraction develops between persons of opposite sexes, although homosexuals of both sexes may also have intense and long-lasting love affairs” (512). Such statements technically contradict each other and reveal a governmental uncertainty because Bieber’s model assumes long-term loving relationships are impossible for homosexuals. Contradictory research, however, is treated differently in neutral textbooks. The following is a statement from 1976:

In the past, homosexual behavior and even homosexual fantasies were considered shameful and perverse—but so was all sex outside marriage. Today the controversy centers not on whether having intercourse with someone of the same sex is sinful but on whether it is a psychological problem. Many people feel that any activity between two

---

18 Associating homosexuality with schizophrenia and paranoia was remarkably common prior to 1970 and vestiges of that can still be seen in several textbooks published between 1970 and 1990.
consenting adults that brings them pleasure is normal. Others argue that homosexuality is biologically unnatural and neurotic. (Morris 1976, 508)\(^{19}\)

The remainder of the text outlines descriptively, avoiding value judgements, the then-conflicting science on the topic of homosexuality, contrasting with the Bieber study research by Evelyn Hooker that demonstrated gays and lesbians are no more pathologically inclined than any other segment of the population.\(^{20}\) Thus, governmentally, neutral texts choose not to persuade directly, but merely to establish the parameters of the debate so readers can decide for themselves, which on this issue still betrays uncertainty.

One of the earliest textbooks to consider homosexuality positively is *Living Psychology: Research in Action* (2nd ed.) published by Lugo and Hershey in 1976.\(^{21}\) It includes a sympathetic discussion of the negative impact of antigay societal and religious attitudes: “These social attitudes, as well as the real and imagined reactions of parents, friends, employers, neighbors, mental health workers, and religious leaders present significant challenges to the homosexual person’s successful adjustment and development of a meaningful life-style” (252). Even though this text does not say outright ‘homosexuality is a normal variation of human sexuality,’ because it treats the topic with sympathy and questions the then-mainstream mental illness model, it seeks to govern thought towards a normal variation model. Textbooks sympathetic to same-sex love published after 1980 are more explicit, as in McConnell’s 1983 4th edition of *Understanding Human Behavior*, which says, “the majority view now is that homosexuality is an ‘alternative life style,’ and not a ‘condition that requires punishment or therapy’” (574). It is interesting that some early 1980s normal variation textbooks state that theirs’ is the majority view even though the evidence suggests otherwise, thus foreshadowing the contemporary gay rights position that declassification initiated a sudden transformation. But McConnell took a much more ambivalent position in 1974 when he emphasized a now rejected behavioural theory once used to justify aversion therapy: “If, later in life, the person’s first heterosexual contacts are psychological disasters, the person may revert or regress back to homosexuality as a less threatening and more rewarding way of behaving” (1974, 967). In other words, as McConnell’s thought changed, so too did he seek to change the thought of others towards a normal variation model.

The Hilgard/Atkinson series of textbooks provide the most interesting example of a shift from ambivalence to normal variation across multiple editions of the same textbook. The 1975 edition is the first to address homosexuality, treating the topic ambivalently. In its chapter on motivation, an important anthropological study by Ford and Beach (1951)\(^{22}\) is cited to show that homosexuality “is viewed by some nonliterate societies as an essential part of growing up” (Hilgard et al. 1975, 324). The text then notes that “homosexuality is viewed with greater tolerance than it was 25 years ago” (325). But in a later chapter, the authors discuss how deviant labels can negatively affect processes of attribution, especially in young people. They write, “[the] gay sexual orientation… becomes the scapegoat for any behavior that seems to require explanation. If he gets a bad grade on an examination… [t]he gay student… may be tempted to assume he flunked the exam because he is gay” (543). The authors thus deploy an example that stereotypes gay students as confused and self-loathing (and male) but they do so without suggesting that homosexuality is a mental illness.

In the 1979 edition there is a clear shift. In that text’s chapter on motivation it says, “Although much of society still views homosexuality as unhealthy and unnatural, most psychologists consider it a deviation from the norm, rather than a perversion” (Hilgard et al. 1979, 307). Yet, in its chapter on abnormal psychology, the authors write, “Until quite recently,\(^{19}\)

---

\(^{19}\) This statement is also interesting for its reference to “sex outside marriage” and “sin,” implicitly suggesting a religious influence upon the controversy without explicitly blaming the Judeo-Christian tradition for what is not yet called a prejudice.

\(^{20}\) That research, by the way, was key scientific evidence used in the declassification debate (Bayer 1987).

\(^{21}\) The first edition from 1970 is ambivalent, but it stands as one of the earliest ambivalent texts (Hershey and Lugo 1970).

\(^{22}\) This study was another key piece of science deployed in the declassification debate (Bayer 1987)
homosexuality was regarded as a ‘mental disorder’ and homosexuals as ‘sick’ people in need of treatment. But research findings conflict over whether homosexuals show more evidence of personality maladjustment than would be expected in a matched group of heterosexuals” (442). Even though this text governmentally overestimates the number of psychologists accepting a normal variation model at that time, because it addresses both sides of the debate without obvious value judgements, it leans more towards neutrality. But the 1983 edition (the first with Rita L. Atkinson as lead author—see note 10) drops all reference to homosexuality in its abnormal psychology chapter and repeats the above cited normal variation statement in its motivation chapter, now justifying it with evidence from two studies published by the Kinsey Institute in 1978 and 1981 (usually called the Bell studies) that challenge both psychoanalytic and behaviorist theories of homosexuality (305-306). The Bell studies, which were based on interviews with 979 gay and 477 straight men and women in the San Francisco area, are cited in nearly every neutral and normal variation textbook published in the 1980s as well as in most neutral and normal variation encyclopedia entries in the 1980s and 90s. In fact, they are deployed in the 1980s specifically to contradict the Bieber study—a governmental strategy clearly rooted in empirical research.

Thus, although this analysis confirms much of Bayer’s (including, by the way, showing a profound disciplinary shift away from psychoanalytic and strict behavioural forms of “science”), it points to further empirical studies beyond those used in the declassification debate. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the governmental use of stereotypes by those promoting either a mental illness model or ambivalence, including extreme anti-feminine stereotypes, continued until as late as 1989. However, Bayer does make an important point that can also be found in the textbooks, something that becomes near official dogma in the 1990s. He argues that even though the modern psychological prejudice against homosexuality tried to replace “a Divinely determined standard of sexuality [with] one thought to exist in nature” (18), that standard was nevertheless still firmly rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition (4; 15-18). That is to say, like Dr. Konner, Bayer governmentally lays the blame for pathologization at the feet of the tradition responsible for creating the ex-gay movement.

The Politics of Blame: The Disciplines of the Psyche, the Judeo-Christian Tradition, and the Ex-gay Movement

One of the earliest examples of mainstream psychology blaming the Judeo-Christian tradition for anti-gay prejudice occurs in a 1977 abnormal psychology textbook called *The Disorganized Personality*. There George W. Kisker writes, “The Judeo-Christian tradition… has considered homosexual behavior to be morally wrong from biblical time to the present day. The concept of wrongness and sinfulness inevitably led to the consideration of such behavior as deviant and abnormal” (178). Kisker’s appears to have been a minority view at the time, as it is not common in any other textbooks from that period; however, similar such statements begin to appear in the 1980s. Houston et al.’s 1985 *Essentials of Psychology* says, “Prejudice against homosexuality has existed in western culture for thousands of years. Organized religions have condemned homosexuality as sinful and immoral. The medical profession has long looked upon homosexuality as a disease” (238). Price and Lynn’s 1986 *Abnormal Psychology* claims, “We can trace the roots of our current views of sexual behavior to the beliefs of the ancient Israelis

---

23 Collier’s, for example, cites the Bell studies in its 1991 normal variation postscript to its otherwise ambivalent entry (Vol 12: 218). In fact, from 1980 forward, an increasing number of scientific studies showing evidence that homosexuality is a normal variation are cited in many textbooks, albeit mostly neutral and normal variation texts.

24 Blaming the Judeo-Christian tradition for psychology’s anti-gay prejudice can actually be traced back to the work of psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1960; 1965; 1970; see also Bayer 1987); however, Szasz’ views are by no means “mainstream” (he is sometimes labelled an anti-psychiatrist) and he is almost never cited in mainstream statements blaming the Judeo Christian tradition.
[sic] and medieval Christians... As the church became less powerful, the psychiatrists became the new authorities about sexual matters and translated the old religious doctrine into medical terminology” (404). Encyclopaedia Britannica begins referencing the Judeo-Christian tradition’s model of sin in its 1981 edition, albeit without direct blame (Vol. 16: 604); but by 1987 it becomes more explicit: “Judeo-Christian culture has generally perceived it as sinful, and thus homosexuality was traditionally viewed as socially unacceptable through most of Western culture” (Vol. 6: 31).

Yet, even in the 1980s, that was not a mainstream view. Rather, it operated as a tactic designed to change the mainstream view. The notion that religion is to blame for anti-gay prejudice does not become “official” psychiatric/psychological dogma until the early 1990s. By that time, the contention continues to appear in textbooks (Rathus and Nevid 1991, 377; Bootzin, Acocella and Alloy 1993, 334) but also finds its way into general and psychological encyclopaedias, thus indicating general authoritative agreement on the matter. For example, there is the above quoted Americana entry by Konner and continued reference in Britannica. Also, in the 1994 Encyclopedia of Psychology edited by Rayond J. Corsini, it says, “By the end of the 19th century... societal discourse about homosexuality expanded from the realms of sin and crime to include that of pathology” (Vol. 2: 152). In the 2000 edition of the Encyclopedia of Psychology edited by Alan E. Kazdin it says, “Labelling homosexuality as a form of psychopathology reflected psychiatrists’ value assumptions derived from longstanding religious and legal traditions” (Vol. 4: 151). The notion can be found in more specialized psychological literature as well. In a book on gay affirmative therapy, psychologist Joe Kort proclaims that the “pathologizing of homosexuality in psychiatry and psychology can be traced back to religious edicts and beliefs, which were eventually incorporated into legal sanctions, including stiff criminal penalties for sodomy” (5).25 A connection between religious condemnation and the pathologizing of abnormal sexuality in general is drawn in a very recent Journal of Sex Research article, even if direct blame is avoided (De Block and Adriaens 2013). After noting that prohibitions against deviant forms of sex in the Hebrew Bible influenced societal views until 1850, the authors write, “From then onward, the increased popularity and authority of psychiatry resulted in a new conceptualization of certain forms of sexual deviance as medical or psychological problems” (277). The notion even finds its way into Weitz and Bryant’s analysis of textbooks, this time clearly implying blame, as an entire section of their article is devoted to the treatment of “homosexuality as sin” (36-8). Although no textbook from the periods they analyze literally calls homosexuality “sin,” according to the authors, any textbook that associates homosexuality with AIDS or the molestation of children implicitly suggests such a model. Even Jewish psychiatrist and ex-gay apologist Jeffrey Satinover agrees: “the entire debate about homosexuality is inextricably rooted in the Judeo-Christian concept of sin because the idea that homosexuality is wrong has entered our culture from the Jewish and Christian faiths” (146). Of course, for Satinover, such influence is entirely positive, demonstrating that similar governmental statements can be deployed for opposite purposes. In general though, and in contrast to the 1980s, blaming the Judeo-Christian tradition for pathological models of homosexuality operates in the 1990s less to change thought than to maintain and reinforce already changed thought.

Problematizing the ex-gay movement is another tactic involved in maintaining and reinforcing the psychological change in thought traced here. Britannica’s 2002 edition, which describes homosexuality positively and discusses homophobia and heterosexism as negative phenomena, also notes, “some religious groups continue to emphasize reparative therapy in the attempt to ‘cure’ homosexuality through prayer, counseling, and behaviour modification. Their claims of success, however, are controversial” (2002, Vol. 6: 30). That is a striking shift given that only five years early this same encyclopedia cited Bieber and stated that, “The minority who continue to be discontented [with their homosexuality] will be able to seek sex therapy and

25 Kort cites therapist Charles Silverstein as well as a University of California psychology department webpage written by psychologist Gregory M. Herek (who wrote the 2000 Kazdin Encyclopedia of Psychology entry referenced above).
change their erotic preference” (1998, Vol. 27: 252). In contrast to an ambivalent first edition (1984) the 1994 second edition of Corsini’s *Encyclopedia of Psychology* also treats homosexuality as a normal variation, blames religion for the earlier prejudice, and references the ex-gay movement, perhaps the earliest to do so directly: “Even today, some psychotherapists and religious counselors try to change people in this way. The ‘success’ of their techniques, however, is highly doubtful and the ethics of their therapies have been challenged by many mental health professionals and human rights advocates” (Vol 2: 155). More direct references can be found in textbooks published after the ex-gay movement entered mediated public discourse in 1998. In his 2004 textbook, pro-gay Christian psychologist David G. Myers undermines the Spitzer study by noting that most of Spitzer’s subjects were located “with assistance from ‘ex-gay’ ministries and therapists specializing in sexual conversion” (476). Carole Wade et al. discuss Christian reparative therapy in their 2009 textbook, explicitly referencing the ex-gay movement’s 1998 ad campaign when they write that reparative therapies “are often promoted in campaigns by conservative Christians who believe that homosexuality is a sin” (683).

While most direct references to the ex-gay movement do not appear until after the ad campaign and the 2001 media frenzy surrounding the Spitzer study, the ex-gay movement may be a factor in explaining why some mental health practitioners began to blame the Judeo-Christian tradition in mainstream psychological publications as early as 1977. Although the movement was little known among the public at that time, it was not unknown among some psychiatrists and psychologists. In the already referenced 1977 ambivalent edition of Collier’s, author Lawrence J. Hatterer alludes to the movement in a very indirect way: “In modern cultures that deem homosexual practice to be outside the norm of sexual behavior, the religious, medical, and psychological practitioners may sometimes be called upon to counsel persons troubled by their homosexuality… to help such persons adapt to, modify, or alter their homosexual practices” (Collier’s 1977, Vol. 12: 218, my italics). It is doubtful Hatterer references pre-ex-gay religious practices here because there is significant evidence that prior to 1973 Christian ministers confronted with the problem of homosexuality either ignored it, expelled it through excommunication, or quietly relegated it to secular psychiatry (Capps 2003; Perry & Swicegood 1990; Weatherhead 1937; 2010; Wood 1960). However, by 1974 relationships between conservative Christians and some psychiatrists and psychologists opposed to declassification were beginning to form. In addition to the introduction of the replacement category “ego-dystonic homosexuality,” we can see the forging of that relationship in publications from the then newly established *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, which between 1974 and 1980 published three positive psychological articles on the Christian therapy of homosexuals (Powell 1974; Evans 1975; Strong 1980). Furthermore, the first peer-reviewed study of ex-gay practices suggesting change is possible was published in 1980 in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* (Pattison and Pattison).

The forging of links between the ex-gay movement and those in the psychological community maintaining a mental illness model, however, is not the only event that would have caught the attention of psychologists shifting away from a mental illness model. In 1980, soon-to-be expelled from the American Psychological Association Christian psychologist Paul
Cameron began “publishing pseudo-scientific pamphlets ‘proving’ that gay people commit more serial murders, molest more children, and intentionally spread diseases” (SPLC 2005). His work is still cited in some ex-gay literature popular in the movement today (Satinover 1996; Van Den Artrdweg 1997), but as Besen points out, in the early 1980s several psychologists whose work Cameron had cited began accusing him of manipulating their data (2003, 110).

Also important were a series of very public anti-gay media campaigns initiated in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the rising Christian Right that very few psychologists concerned about the issue of homosexuality would have been able to ignore. Stephen and Giberson note that the Christian Right, which considered “AIDS to be God’s punishment on the gay community for a sinful lifestyle” (2011, 14), used popular culture, through media savvy Christian therapists like James Dobson and Christian leaders and televangelists like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, to “zero in on abortion, feminism, and homosexuality as the chief enemies of the traditional family” (2011, 106; see also 116-128, 224-232). The rise of this very public anti-gay media campaign began in earnest between 1977 and 1979 when born-again singer Anita Bryant founded the anti-gay group “Save Our Children” and successfully crusaded to overturn anti-discrimination laws protecting gay men and lesbians in Dade County, Florida (SPLC 2005; Fetner 2001; Stephens and Giberson 2012). Following that, Dobson founded the anti-gay Christian lobby group “Focus on the Family,” which today has its own ex-gay wing, and Falwell founded the Moral Majority, a national Christian movement that included a public “Declaration of War” on homosexuality that was only augmented by the AIDS crisis of the 1980s (SPLC 2005; Stephens and Giberson 2012). Those events were so widely reported in the media, and the media was used by Christian groups so efficiently to propagate their anti-gay message, that some 1980s normal variation psychology textbooks begin to reference them in their discussion of anti-homosexual prejudice (Schumer 1983, 419; Price & Lynn 1986, 420). Significantly, some argue that the ex-gay ad campaign was (and is) a direct continuation of the earlier Christian Right campaign (Fetner 2005). In other words, the ex-gay movement and the Christian Right’s anti-gay media campaigns may very well have provided pro-gay mental health practitioners a very convenient scapegoat for their own discipline’s longstanding prejudice against homosexuality. Although governmentally the Christian Right sought the opposite effect, the extreme negativity of their first campaign and the controversy surrounding the ex-gay movement operated like a wedge in a debate that, given the political climate prior to 1990, could have gone either way (Bayer 1987).

Conclusion

The shift in psychological thinking from understanding homosexuality as a mental illness to seeing it as a normal variation of human sexuality was by no means instant and certainly did not occur suddenly in 1973. However, when the shift was finally complete it culminated in the blaming of the Judeo-Christian tradition for modern anti-gay prejudice. Along with that shift came the recognition that the Christian ex-gay movement is a serious problem for psychology and psychiatry today, which is ironic given that the movement was formed in the 1970s with the professional help of those very disciplines. The fact that this shift in thought took several years to complete problematizes arguments made by both sides in the debate over the movement’s legitimacy. Pro ex-gay arguments are particularly problematic because their claim that declassification was a betrayal of science is completely unjustified even if they are correct that gay rights activism played a significant role in the event. Gay rights activists, while correct that mainstream psychiatry and psychology has now completely and empirically rejected the pathological view of homosexuality, exaggerate the number of decades since that agreement was

[30] In fact, given the Christian Right’s emphasis on AIDS and associating homosexuality with child abuse, it seems very likely that their campaign influenced the Weitz and Bryant study in which psychology textbooks that associate homosexuality with AIDS and pedophilia are labelled as “sin model” textbooks.
reached and sometimes erroneously suggest that gay rights advocacy played no role in the process. However, the disciplines of the psyche blaming the Judeo-Christian tradition for a century’s worth of anti-gay prejudice is itself problematized by the relationship between psychology and religion in the ex-gay movement.

Dr. Konner and others suggest that the Judeo-Christian tradition has always been prejudiced against homosexuality and that said prejudice has always been religious in nature. If true, the emergence of the ex-gay movement within months of declassification should come as no surprise—it could be argued the prejudice simply returned from whence it came. However, I argue that the situation is more complicated. There is no doubt some truth to the blame psychiatry and psychology lays at the feet of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but their attempt to completely divest themselves of responsibility for the specificity of their own prejudice is at best convenient and at worst disingenuous. Specialized psychological anti-gay discourse, which includes gender-based stereotypes not necessarily rooted in religion, carries over into the ex-gay movement in psychological form and ex-gay discourse continues to rely on the psychological language of pathologization even within a primarily religious movement. Such discourse strongly indicates that in addition to a religious foundation there is also a strong psychiatric and psychological foundation to anti-gay prejudice. Although space does not allow me to summarize, research by Michel Foucault concerning the historical relationship between psychiatry, psychology and the Judeo-Christian tradition provides further evidence of such a co-constituted foundation (1990a; 2003a; 2008). Finally, even though the American Christian Right may exemplify anti-gay religion today, they do not and cannot speak for the entire Judeo-Christian tradition. In short, today the Christian ex-gay movement stands as testimony (albeit in spite of itself) that psychiatry and psychology cannot divest themselves of their own history of homophobia as easily as they would like.
Appendix: Complete Categorized Bibliography for the Treatment of Homosexuality in Psychology Textbooks, 1970-1989 (categorized by treatment and ordered within each category by date of publication)

1970-1974

Treated as a Mental Disorder (5):


Treated with Ambivalence (3):


Treated Neutrally (2):


Treated as a Normal Variation (0):

None

Not Treated (2):


THORN: RELIGION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHRISTIAN EX-GAY MOVEMENT

1975-1979

Treated as a Mental Disorder (4):


Treated with Ambivalence (6):


Treated Neutrally (6):


Treated as a Normal Variation (4):


Not Treated (0):

None.

1980-84:

Treated as a Mental Disorder (4):


Treated with Ambivalence (3):


Treated Neutrality (5):


**Treated as a Normal Variation (4):**


**Not Treated (3):**


**1985-89:**

**Treated as a Mental Disorder (1):**


**Treated with Ambivalence (3):**


**Treated Neutrally (2):**


Treated as a Normal Variation (8):


Not Treated (2):


REFERENCES


http://narth.com/?=Bieber&x=0&y=0.


http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/08/opinion/sunday/banning-a-pseudo-therapy.html?_r=0


http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/13/alan-chambers-apology-exodus-international-lisa-ling_n_3428824.html


http://www.restoredhopenetwork.org/index.php/who-we-are/what-is-rhn


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Thorn: A PhD candidate in the joint York/Ryerson program in Communication and Culture in Toronto, Canada, Michael Thorn’s research into the mass media discourse surrounding the Christian Ex-gay Movement employs a Foucauldian governmental approach. His general area of research is Media, Religion and Culture with a specific interest in Christianity and Popular Culture.
The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society aims to create an intellectual frame of reference for the academic study of religion and spirituality, and to create an interdisciplinary conversation on the role of religion and spirituality in society. It is intended as a place for critical engagement, examination, and experimentation of ideas that connect religious philosophies to their contexts throughout history in the world, places of worship, on the streets, and in communities. The journal addresses the need for critical discussion on religious issues—specifically as they are situated in the present-day contexts of ethics, warfare, politics, anthropology, sociology, education, leadership, artistic engagement, and the dissonance or resonance between religious tradition and modern trends.

Papers published in the journal range from the expansive and philosophical to finely grained analysis based on deep familiarity and understanding of a particular area of religious knowledge. They bring into dialogue philosophers, theologians, policymakers, and educators, to name a few of the stakeholders in this conversation.

The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal.