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# Curing Gayness? The Medical World and the Medicalisation of Gay/Bi Men

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# What is medicalisation?

- **“‘Medicalisation’ describes a process by which nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems, usually in terms of illness and disorders” (Conrad, 2007: 4). To ‘make something medical.’**
- **“A problem...defined in medical terms, described using medical language, understood through the adoption of a medical framework, or ‘treated’ with medical intervention” (Conrad, 2007: 5). Causes iatrogenesis...**
- **The historical growth of medical power has grown to include new problems that were previously not deemed to fall into the medical sphere (Conrad, 2007). In this case ‘homosexuality...’**



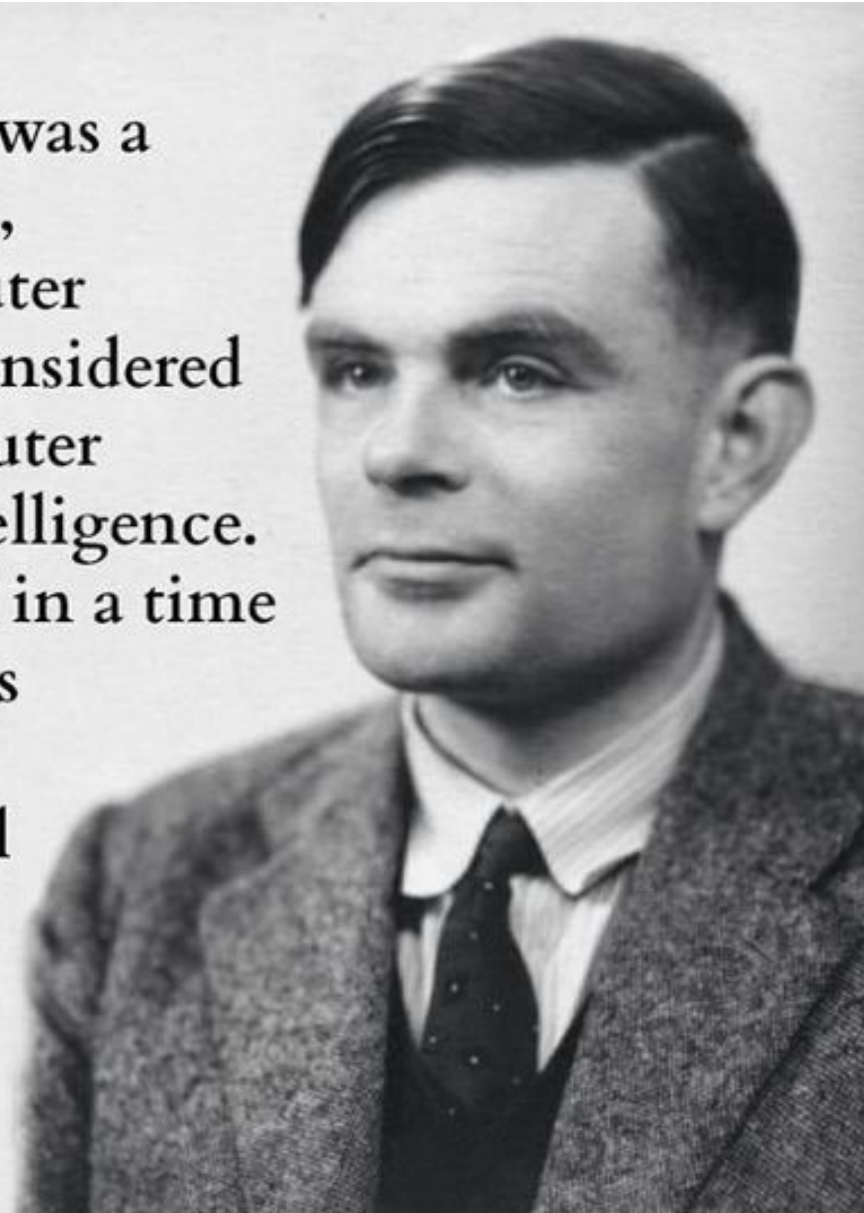




**Dr Carl Jensen**  
**SS Nazi Doctor**  
**Hormonal experiments**  
**Forced castration**  
**Most men died...**



This is Alan Turing. He was a mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst, and computer scientist and is widely considered to be the father of computer science and artificial intelligence. He was also homosexual in a time when homosexuality was illegal. He was given a choice between chemical castration and prison. Instead, he chose to kill himself.



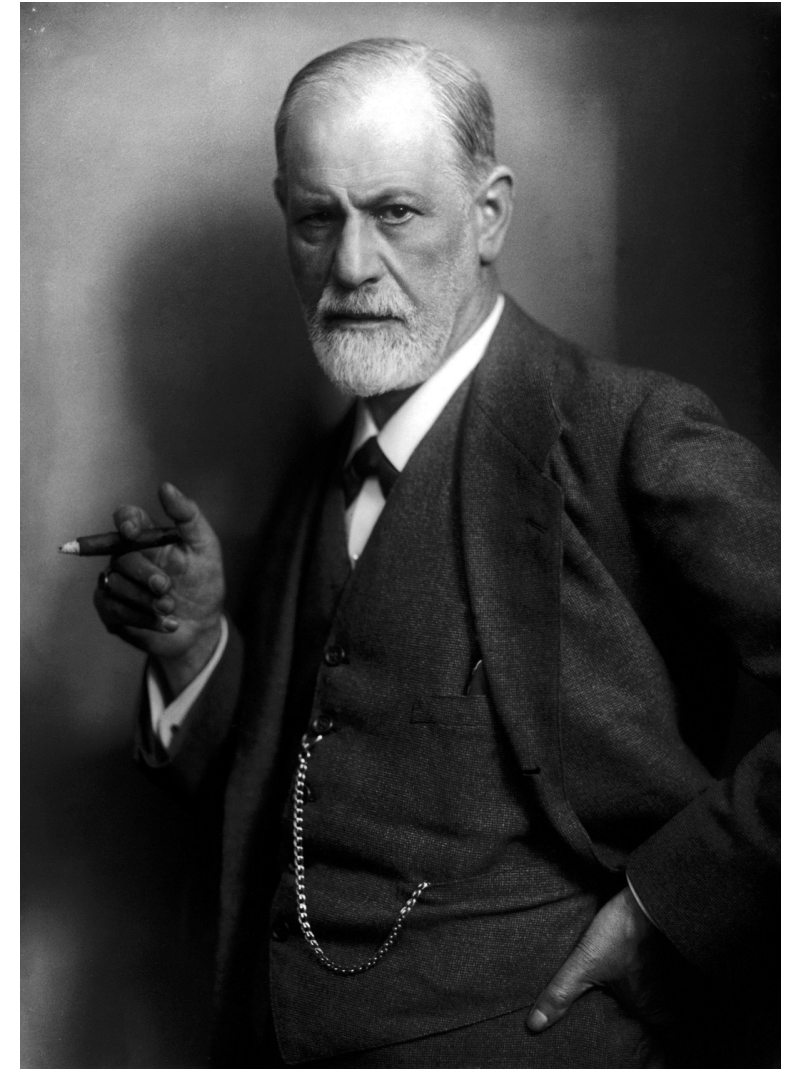
# But hasn't 'homosexuality' been demedicalised?

- Demedicalisation occurs when a problem is no longer defined in medical terms and the involvement of medical personnel is deemed no longer relevant. Not the case across the world...
- We have seen this with masturbation and it has been suggested, that homosexuality is the same in the UK.
- There have been four fundamental changes which have taken place over the past thirty years which have affected the demedicalisation process. They are:
  - 1) Shifts in psychiatry;
  - 2) The emergence of HIV and AIDS;
  - 3) Discoveries in genetics;
  - 4) Changing perceptions of language.
- **MAIN QUESTION: Has medicine relinquished its control of gay and bi men or is there potential here for the remedicalisation of them? Is this happening in a different guise?**



# 1. Shifts in psychiatry...

- The term 'homosexuality' was coined in 1869 by Hungarian physician K.M. Benkert, who argued against the repressive legal codes of Prussia.
- Argued that penal codes were too harsh as homosexuality was congenital and not acquired.
- Homosexuality was redefined as a medical pathology rather than a criminal offence.
- Kreft-Ebbing (1886) suggested that 'sexual inversion' was an 'abnormality' because of a problem of the nervous system. Called not for sympathy but for understanding.
- Influenced Freud, who saw homoerotic desires as part of normal childhood development, but were immature and then abandoned in most people.





# However...

- Other psychologists re-established homosexuality as a psychiatric pathology and claimed to possess treatments which had a cure.
- Bergler (1956) gave a negative portrayal of homosexuality – describing gay/bi men as ‘megalomaniacal,’ ‘free-floating malice,’ ‘unreliability’ and ‘superficial.’
- Argued that all gay people had a deep sense of guilt about their ‘perversion,’ which was located within a disease.
- Socarides (1968) believed that psychiatric treatment could cure a mental illness and transform homosexuals into heterosexuals.
- Homosexuality appeared in the American ‘DSM’ (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

## **How Homosexuality Endangers Your Children!**

Are your children really threatened by homosexuality? Are the more than 8,000,000 actual or potential homosexuals in the U.S. a personal danger to your home life? For the frank facts—for the shocking answers—don't miss the "New Moral Menace to our Youth" in

SEPTEMBER **Coronet** Now on Sale



The Proof that Perversion

is a Mental Illness . . .

# HOMOSEXUALS

## WHAT IS A HOMOSEXUAL?

According to popular belief:

HOMOSEXUALS ARE:

- ... a third sex
- ... born with bodies of the wrong sex
- ... hereditarily incapable of normal love
- ... easily recognized by one another
- ... impotent men and frigid women
- ... feminine men and masculine women
- ... highly talented and creative

ALL OF US HAVE HOMOSEXUAL TENDENCIES:

But only a few are bold enough to express them.

SOME PEOPLE ARE BISEXUAL:

Equally able to enjoy relations with their own or the opposite sex.

AMONG HOMOSEXUALS, MEN OUTNUMBER WOMEN

**None of these is true!**



By B. RICHARD PETERSON

**I**F YOUR SEX DRIVE goes into high only when pointed in the direction of the opposite gender, it's a good bet that just about everything you think you know about homosexuals is untrue.

And if you yourself are a homosexual, it is a sure thing that you do not understand your perversion. Because, if you did understand it, you would be well on your way to recovery!

Yes, homosexuals can now be cured! For the first time, psychoanalysts are able to prove that homosexuality is a mental disease with the only proof that a sex pervert is willing to accept—a complete cure!

### Homosexuality Was Considered Incurable

A homosexual is not any of the things he would like you to believe. Not a member of a third and superior sex. Not a freak of biology with a built-in sex-compass that inevitably steers his love in the wrong direction. Not the pitiable victim of an incapable heredity.

*He is just mentally ill!*

Until quite recently, analysts considered his disease incurable. Sometimes, treatment succeeded in removing the guilt feeling for those who resorted to their unnatural ways. Sometimes the feeling of

# CAN BE CURED!

- A famous psychiatrist destroys the fairy tale of a "third sex" by treating homosexuality as a curable disease!

guilt could be strengthened to a point where the patient renounced the practice of his perversion, but there was always a relapse. Sometimes, treatment consisted of a male homosexual (or a female heterosexual) going with a woman, or he could hide behind the false front of marriage and children. But he, like the others, remained a homosexual.

To explain their failures, the analysts declared: "Homosexuals don't really want to be cured." The myth of incurability sprang from the wish, following the pervert's dream that he is a different kind of being, deserving of sympathy and understanding instead of moral condemnation.

In the analysis themselves, we partly responsible for the alarming average that sometimes is actually nearly ninety per cent. The high figure of six will be practicing male homosexuals.

Fortunately, during the past 20 years of greatly increased homosexual activity, a new and different method of treatment has begun to emerge. Not just a new cure, but a new way of understanding the perversion, for a clearing-up of the average is steadily toward a normal relation with members of the opposite sex.

The report, "Homosexuality, Disease or Sin?" by L. S. S. & Wang, M.D., on this revolutionary new approach to the problem is by Dr. Edward Sagarin, a brilliant New York analyst who specializes in

"incurable" therapy with the incredible dynamics of new theories. The more than 100 cases he has drawn from his own personal practice include Les. Sims as well as male female, approximately bisexual women and also female homosexual women, male homosexuals who founded their "conversion," and still-practicing males (with whose kinds of female observers were surprised why their advances were so miraculously rejected).

### Men Fall into a Personality Pattern

Being in on the truly exciting of some of Dr. Sagarin's work dealing with the wide variety of homosexuals, even a reader with no knowledge of psychology can understand how the cases are selected. Sims's love is a lesbian night therapist is.

From personal observation of hundreds of cases, Dr. Sagarin built up a picture which he says has never been seen: "The homosexual is a creature, possessing him and by utilizing 'adjustment' which never an amount, one for his self-pity. He always an aggressively 'heterosexual' goes to cover his feelings of guilt and to provide himself the superior feeling 'superior.'" He believes that his "adjusting" gives him the right to believe not just the usual code but all the moral standards of a world that does not understand him.

These psychiatric principles truly are clinical evidence of mental disease. (Continued on page 45)

# Gay 'conversion' advocates...

# NEW THEORY CLAIMS



PFOX

PAID FOR BY PFOX

QUALITY

...ve been a vice rather than an illness, the deviate  
...s lived in a shadowy half-world of fear.

UNCENSORED MAGAZINE OCT. 1969

# Resistance to medicalisation?

- Those who fought against the pathological label were the 'gay liberation' movements of the 1960s. These were shaped by the 1969 Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village.
- New self-definition of 'gay pride' and a 'healthy homosexual' emerged which contradicted the medical view and those of religious leaders (Conrad, 2007).
- Pressure to remove mental illness from the DSM. Re-classified to only include individuals who were unhappy with their sexual orientation – which would be kept as a disorder, and thus an illness.
- Homosexuality as an 'illness' which covered 'all gay/bi men' was demedicalised. Symbolic victory (Conrad, 2007). Positive steps?

## POLICE AGAIN ROUT 'VILLAGE' YOUTHS

Outbreak by 400 Follows a  
Near-Riot Over Raid

Heavy police reinforcements cleared the Sheridan Square area of Greenwich Village again yesterday morning when large crowds of young men, angered by a police raid on an inn frequented by homosexuals, swept through the area.

Tactical Patrol Force units assigned to the East Village poured into the area about 2:15 A.M. after units from the Charles Street station house were unable to control a crowd of about 400 youths, some of whom were throwing bottles and lighting small fires.

Their arms linked, a row of helmeted policemen stretching across the width of the street made several sweeps up and down Christopher Street between the Avenue of the Americas and Seventh Avenue South.

The crowd retreated before them, but many groups fled into the numerous small side streets and re-formed behind the police line. The police were not withdrawn until 4 A.M.

A number of people who did not retreat fast enough were pushed and shoved along, and at least two men were clubbed to the ground.

Stones and bottles were thrown at the police lines, and the police twice broke ranks and charged into the crowd.

Three persons were arrested on charges of harassment and disorderly conduct.

The crowd had gathered in the evening across the street from the Stonewall Inn at 53 Christopher Street, where the police staged a raid early Saturday. The police were denounced by last night's crowd for allegedly harassing homosexuals. Graffiti on the boarded-up windows of the inn included: "Support gay power" and "Legalize gay bars."

Saturday's raid took place when about 200 people were in the bar. Plainclothes men, with a warrant authorizing a search for illegal sales of alcohol, confiscated cases of liquor and beer.

A melee involving about 400 youths ensued, a partial riot mobilization was ordered by Police Headquarters, and 13 persons were arrested on a number of charges. Four policemen were injured, one suffering a broken wrist. Among those arrested was Dave Van Ronk, a folk singer.



## SPECIAL NOTE—SEVENTH PRINTING

Since the last printing of this Manual, the trustees of the American Psychiatric Association, in December 1973, voted to eliminate **Homosexuality *per se*** as a mental disorder and to substitute therefor a new category titled **Sexual Orientation Disturbance**. The change appears on page 44 of this, the seventh printing. In May, 1974 the trustees' decision was upheld by a substantial majority in a referendum of the voting members of the Association.

## 2. Then HIV and AIDS arrived...

- Some people have argued that HIV/AIDS remedicalised homosexuality as being defined as biologically and psychologically sick (Kayal, 1993).
- Epstein (1988) argued that because gay men were seemingly the first to contract HIV/AIDS, the illness was framed as a 'gay disease' amongst the public and health workers.
- Being gay was perceived in popular culture as a 'symptom' of AIDS
- GRID! (Gay Related Immune Deficiency)
- A 'gay identity' and 'gay lifestyle' became medicalised.



*THE NEW YORK TIMES,*  
*FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1981*

A20

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### **RARE CANCER SEEN IN 41 HOMOSEXUALS**

**Outbreak Occurs Among Men  
in New York and California  
—8 Died Inside 2 Years**

**By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN**

Doctors in New York and California have diagnosed among homosexual men 41 cases of a rare and often rapidly fatal form of cancer. Eight of the victims died less than 24 months after the diagnosis was made.

The cause of the outbreak is unknown,

# A medical problem?

- Whilst the media portrayed HIV and AIDS as a 'gay disease' and the religious right saw gay people as a public health menace, LGBT rights activism was invested in taking up HIV and AIDS as a central cause.
- Medical responses were two-fold – both medical neglect and medical surveillance of gay men's behaviour (Conrad, 2007).
- Gay activists were at forefront in pressurising the government, scientists and physicians to develop and deploy new treatments for HIV/AIDS (France, 2016).
- But medical surveillance affected blood donations (banning gay and bi men) and brought in mandatory HIV testing and distribution of public health guidelines amongst LGBT communities (Shilts, 1987). Gay/bi men still viewed as a 'medical problem.' Heterosexual population ignored!



### 3. Discoveries in genetics... 'gay gene'

- **Studies opened up debate. Such as Hamer, et al (1993) who claimed to have discovered a genetic marker for homosexuality in Xq28 region of the X chromosome. Reported in academic journal 'Science.'**
- **Second study by Hamer, et al (1995) with similar findings with different sample. Not a gay gene, only a 'marker.'**
- **Another research team attempted to find them, but could not replicate it (Rice, et al, 1999).**
- **They maintained there was a genetic link to homosexuality but could not find them. Language of the 'gay gene' picked up by LGBT community.**
- **Very tentative notion. It may create increased medicalisation or lead to genetic therapies and abortions for the 'disorder.'**





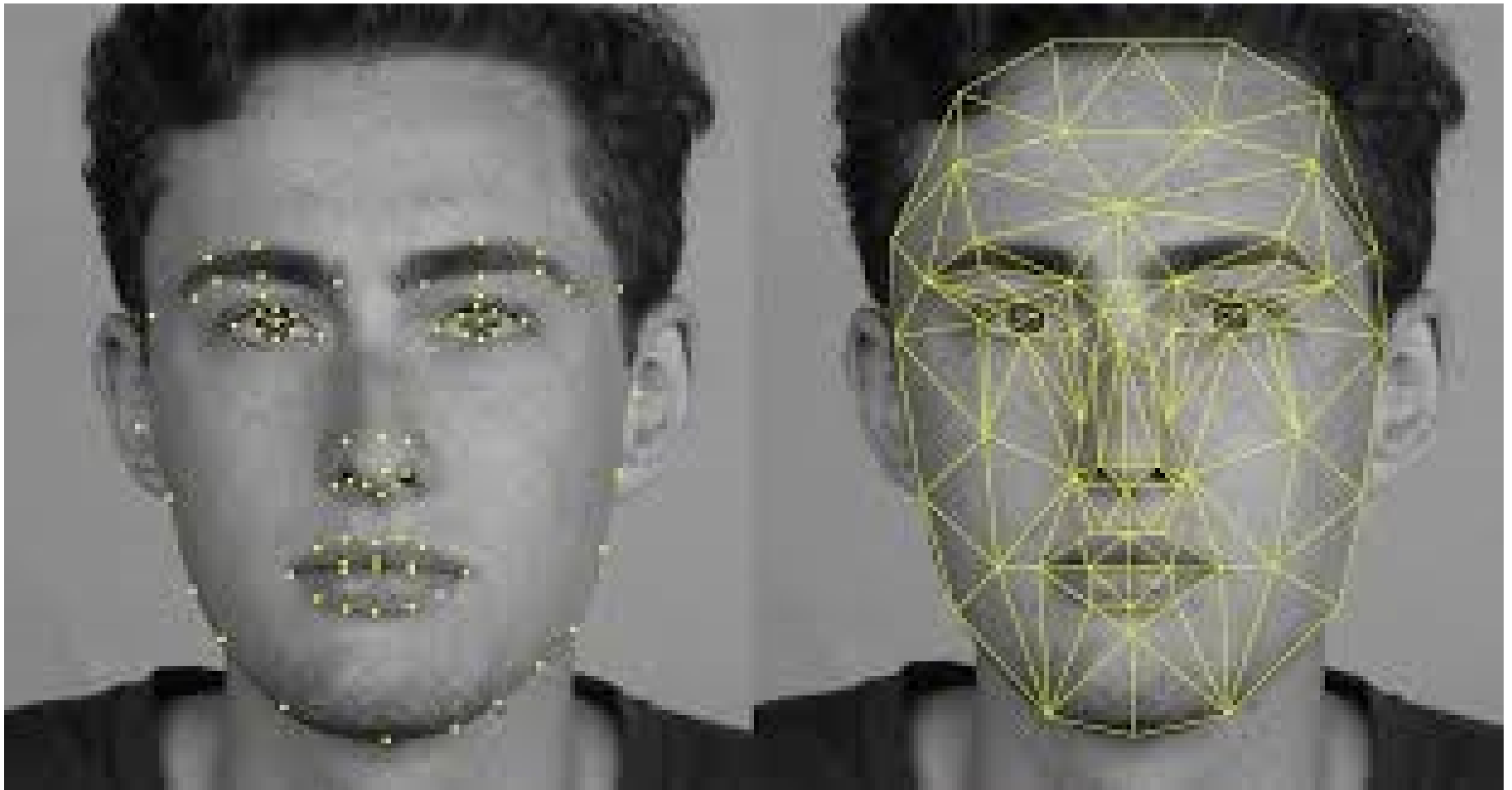
## 4. Changing perceptions of language...

- In late 1960s, many LGBT people (mainly gay men and women) openly critiqued biological theories of sexuality. Argument was that sexuality was more fluid than fixed.
- By 1980s 'sexual orientation' and 'sexual identity' were increasingly used – 'born gay' philosophy became fashionable in the 1990s.
- Purposeful move to this as if an identity is seen as fixed, it cannot be corrected by 'treatment.' Many gay men support this belief through feeling that they have been 'born gay.' Language has changed...does this not reinforce medical control?

### Final thoughts:

- We have an underexplored history of gay/bi men and medicine...
- Have we really removed the medicalisation and medical control of gay and bi men?
- Or... in our quest to push for the 'born this way' argument are we pushing ourselves back under the control of medicalisation? Tensions here!
- What are the dangers of this moving forward for gay and bi men? Wider community?





## Stanford University: Artificial Intelligence 'Gay Faces' (2017)

