

A Review of
The Un-affirmed Core: Understanding the Factors
behind and around Homosexuality¹

by **Bryan Shen**

*Keith Vennum*²

At 138 pages, this book by a professional counselor from Singapore distills many years of experience working with men who grapple with same-sex erotic attraction. Shen gets it as he dedicates his book to those who he continues to serve with this quote: “while the rest of the world tries to remember that ‘to err is human, to forgive is divine’, they have a guillotine consciousness that ‘to err is unforgivable’.” Shen aims to change the views of leaders—whether they be religious, social, political, or cultural—in regard to those affected by homosexuality. With a forward by the president of the Singapore Counseling Association, Shen is respected among the helping professionals in Southeast Asia. With a brief review by a doctoral

candidate priest at the Catholic University of America, Shen’s Catholic worldview is revealed; however, this book is by no means a religious approach to this topic, and Shen brings insight from not only the Christian viewpoint but also Muslim and Hindu viewpoints with whom he frequently interacts.

In his introduction, Shen uses the example of leprosy to highlight how discoveries in science may affect the methodology for dealing with a condition. While very familiar with religious and social approaches to this topic, Shen believes psychology must be included if one is to fully understand sexual and gender confusion and to effectively ameliorate it. Shen cautions

¹ *The Un-affirmed Core: Understanding the Factors behind and around Homosexuality*, by Bryan Shen. Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2018.

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against the partial relief of finding acceptance in any community without digging deeper into underlying psychological antecedents. He closes with a quote from Leanne Payne, “The healing of homosexuals is the healing of mankind.”

This is a book for helping professionals who are interested in serving this population. It is not necessarily for the struggler/overcomer—although there is much to learn here, which could be of help.³

Shen is a licensed therapist and supervisor who has made this population his life’s work, and because of his wide travels in Southeast Asia, he shares considerable experience and success with especially male clients from Eastern cultures. Although most of his work is with Catholic clients, he also has extensive experience working with Muslims. Shen’s real passion is to reach the social, cultural, political, and religious leaders of the world to help them understand the LGBTQ minorities and, therefore, to more effectively be of assistance to them.

To set the stage and to be clear, Shen offers precise definitions for commonly used terms open to misunderstanding. One of the vivid features of this book are stories of real people, which flesh out the concepts elaborated, offering a wealth of new material in this regard. Shen effectively represents the psychological theory within a context of traditional sexual ethics. He hopes to offer readers a new compassionate and forward-looking way of dealing with those who are affected by homosexuality.

Shen’s chapter on “Normal Gender Identity Development” posits suggestions for

the development of gender dysphoria, and male and female same-sex erotic attraction. His following chapter which outlines some of the common denominators to having same sex-erotic attractions is very helpful for professionals. He describes eight factors in four distinct groups. Case scenarios of several of these are given. In chapter four Shen looks at why people with homosexuality are so talented. He presents three core concepts that drive talented individuals to excel. In this section he discusses attachment styles that are key to understanding the title of his book. In chapter five he touches on “Stages of Homosexual Awareness” and how this impacts various case scenarios. Chapter six deals with cognitive dissonance and how this may diverge into four different life paths. In chapter seven he touches on intersex and gender dysphoria, giving a good overview for the uninitiated but admits he has had little experience in dealing with these individuals. Chapter eight addresses commonly asked questions, and in chapter nine, “Social Dimensions” alludes to the Catholic context which is Shen’s forte. In the concluding chapter, the author identifies eight issues in society of which homosexuality is but one symptom, and he promises to deal with some of these in his next book.

I would recommend this book especially for its counseling insights from an Asian cultural perspective, realizing that the issues are similar in Christian and Muslim contexts. The book may be obtained from <http://www.armourpublishing.com/product/the-un-affirmed-core/>

³ A warning to parents: It is not necessarily your fault that your child is same-sex erotically attracted, but understanding some of the factors that lead many in that direction and understanding many of the common dynamics would help you relate better to your child.

