

## **BPC PPNOW Homosexuality Statement of Regret**

Today, this BPC conference on Sexuality is continuing the process which was begun in 2011 when the BPC issued a Position Statement that said, “The British Psychoanalytic Council does not accept that a homosexual orientation is evidence of disturbance of the mind or in development”. This statement made clear the BPCs opposition to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Freud himself said that homosexuality was “nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development.”

Despite his final qualification: “a certain arrest of sexual development”, Freud was clear that homosexuality was not an illness, an incredibly progressive attitude for his time, and one that for the most part, psychoanalysis continued to advocate. However, in the decades that followed, there were some in the psychoanalytic and psychoanalytic psychotherapy community who moved to a more conservative place.

We know that in America, psychoanalysts played a significant role in ensuring that homosexuality was included in the psychiatric diagnostic nomenclature and opposed its removal. While in the UK, the situation was different, with several psychoanalysts involved in the Wolfenden Report that led to the decriminalising of homosexuality. Nevertheless there were also some within the profession that conceptualised homosexuality as evidence of psychopathology.

This stigmatising of same sex desire, led to some individuals with a gay, lesbian or bisexual orientation, suffering as a result of therapies which represented and treated their sexuality as evidence of a disorder and encouraged them to mistrust their own feelings. Because of these views, there were even instances of gay men and lesbian women being denied the opportunity to train as psychoanalytic therapists. This has been painful and hurtful for the individuals concerned but has also resulted in the loss of a historically more inclusive and diverse contribution to the professional life of many of our psychoanalytic organisations, impacting on the scientific life of our organisations.

Those of us practising now cannot speak on behalf of our analytic parents and grandparents. They are no longer alive and, it seems, they genuinely thought the theories they subscribed to were helpful and relevant. We can however, on the occasion of this Conference, express our profound regret that it has taken so long for more appropriate and progressive theories and practice about homosexuality to evolve and gain support within the profession. We can also express our profound regret that in the past there have been men and women who have been deprived of an opportunity to develop their interest in, and curiosity about psychoanalytic/analytic theory and practice.

However confident we may be that this could not happen today, we must recognise that there were some problematic episodes in our history, and we want to make it clear that the BPC, together with the support of our Member Institutions, will continue our work to ensure we provide therapeutic and training opportunities that reflect psychoanalytic principles which are non-discriminatory, and non-



stigmatising.

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