

TRAINING IN PSYCHOTHERAPY: A RESPONSE TO KOTTLER

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In addressing herself to a topic referred to as the "widespread exclusion of homosexuals from psychoanalytic training" Amanda Kottler (**PINS 22**, 1997) mentions the Letter of Concern (LOC) sent by a group of UK psychoanalysts and psychotherapists to prominent British journals about a forthcoming public lecture by Charles Socarides, whose views on homosexuality are well known for being controversial. In a footnote Ms Kottler finds it noteworthy to state that "people working at the Tavistock Institute are conspicuous by their absence from the list of signatories". Ms Kottler must mean the Tavistock Clinic not the Tavistock Institute - the only Tavistock Institute is an independent organisation which runs group relations conferences in the UK and internationally, while the Tavistock Clinic is the largest national training school for psychoanalytic psychotherapy in the UK. Yet several of the signatories to the LOC clearly mention their association, either as present or past staff members, with the Tavistock Clinic - while many others are well known graduates of the Clinic. I wish this misrepresentation to be noted by your readers.

In passing it may also be worth informing **PINS** readers that in his paper "Is 'perversion' obsolete?" (**PINS 21**, 5-26, 1996), which Ms Kottler cites as one of the springboards for her paper, Robert Young draws extensively for his enlightened reappraisal of the concept of "the perverse" upon a revision of psychoanalytic theory of psychosexuality by Margot Waddel and Gianna Williams - two longstanding faculty members at the Tavistock Clinic.

Of course a small misrepresentation ought to be relatively unimportant in view of the serious topic under consideration - the issue of whether psychoanalytic trainings discriminate against homosexual persons - were it not for the fact that the reader is likely to be distracted by Ms Kottler's not-so-thinly-veiled polemic throughout her paper against international psychoanalytic trainings, particularly if they happen to be of a non-Self Psychology orientation. It seems doubtful that polarized thinking can contribute very much to a debate on such an obviously sensitive subject.

The reader is likely to be further confused by Ms Kottler's concern for "better and more ethical practice in the field of psychotherapy" when she quotes, apparently without permission, from a private conversation between two fellow professionals at a conference she attended - a Dr T and a named Sharone Abramowitz. I hope Ms Kottler is not recommending we add this unusual practice to our academic conventions

because it clearly offers no one, not even herself, any immunity from its application. Perhaps the editor of **PINS** might consider offering these far flung professionals the courtesy, or at least the choice, of adding to or subtracting from Ms Kottler's account of their private conversation.

A debate on the criteria for selection of candidates for psychotherapy training is always going to be "fraught" - as Bob Young puts it, and it is right to draw attention to the need to demystify some of the selection criteria. It is a pity that Ms Kottler adopts a fly-on-the-wall approach and introduces this subject as if she were conducting an expose, or as if she were coming to it for the first time. She might better achieve her objective for a "debate" by telling us what criteria she employs at her own training school for the selection of candidates for a Masters training in clinical psychology. While this is not a psycho-analytic training, nor a psychotherapy training, it is a postgraduate training in psychology which qualifies people locally to practice psychotherapy. Does the sexual orientation of the applicant come into the equation? If so, how? Are there aspects of a person's sexual orientation that are considered more felicitous than others? If so, what are these, and what concepts are used to guide thinking in this area? Does gender come into it, for example, when considering a homosexual person for training? Are allowances made for personal development during training?

Bob Young (1996:7) contends that for lesbians and gay men seeking psychoanalytic training the type of scrutiny around sexuality has not been on a par with heterosexuals. This may be true but it does not follow that all homosexuals make up a distinct group who are excluded from training. All postgraduate trainings in psychology, whether in psychotherapy or in clinical psychology, seem to employ criteria for the selection of candidates - and these criteria differentiate one person from another - one homosexual from another and one heterosexual from another (if the focus happens to fall on sexual orientation). This is the painful nub of the matter, but it is also true that a great deal of unnecessary distress and self-doubt is caused by a vagueness in the selection criteria, and that everyone, selectors and candidates alike, would benefit from these being more transparent. Of course there may be no particular mystery why some people, whatever their sexual orientation, get selected and some people not, just as there is no guarantee against disappointment however clearly and transparently the criteria for selection are laid out.

REFERENCES.

Kottler, A (1997) Homosexuality and psychoanalytic training: Struggles in England and North America - what implications for South Africa? **PINS**, **22**, 60-71.

Young, R (1996) Is "perversion" obsolete? **PINS**, **21**, 5-26.