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Homosexualities, Homoparentalities

Introduction

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This special edition, focused on homosexuality and the family, is yet further confirmation of the important work that is currently taking place within the field of psychoanalysis, as it attempts to redress the shameful neglect and pathologizing of gender and sexual minority individuals, couples and families over many decades of practice. Freud's own struggle, for instance, to integrate his ideas that we are all inherently bisexual, within the powerful forces of mono and heteronormativity, and the subsequent colonization of his thinking, has resulted historically in psychoanalysts holding views, as outlined by Giffen (2017, p. 28) in which homosexuality is seen as a "developmental arrest" (Segal, 1990), bisexuality as an immature regression to fantasy (Rapoport, 2009) and transsexuality as a marker of a psychotic structure (Millott, 1990). Unsurprisingly, therefore, psychoanalytic thinking and practice in regard to gender and sexuality has found itself under increasing scrutiny and in 1991 the American Psychoanalytic Association was forced to issue a statement opposing and deploring public and private

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discrimination against male and female homosexual oriented individuals and in 1999 it went further in opposing reparative therapy. Similarly, in 2011 the British Psychoanalytic Council made its own statement opposing “discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation” and refusing to accept a homosexual orientation as evidence of “disturbance of the mind or in development”. Yet, in their preface to a recently published edited volume, Waddell et al. (2020) draw attention to the editors reminding us «that while we live, increasingly, within political and social cultures whose official language oppose discrimination and celebrates difference, the effects of prejudice continue to be felt in subtle and more explicit ways by those whose sexuality and gender do not fit within heterosexual norms» (p. xii).

The field, therefore, is actively engaged in a crucial and painful process of ‘working through’ its own internal conflicts in regard to its failure to fully and respectfully engage with gender and sexuality; a process that ironically is so much at the heart of psychoanalytic thinking and practice. The increasing number of publications over the past few years provides further evidence of the fact that much thought and attention is now being focused on the development of theory and practice in regard to psychoanalysis with LGBTQ individuals, couples and families, including: *Uncoupling Convention: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Same-Sex Couples and Families*, 2004; *Sexualities: Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 2015; *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Practice and Queer Theory*, 2017; *From Psychoanalytic Bisexuality to Bisexual Psychoanalysis: Desiring in the Real*, 2019; *Sexuality And Gender Now: Moving Beyond Heteronormativity*, 2020; *Same-Sex Couples & Other Identities: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, in press. Taken together, these publications, along with ones contained in this special edition, helpfully point the direction in which the field must move if it is to recover its reputation for cutting edge thinking and practice with this particular population. After all, psychoanalysis has a long history of raising some profound and difficult questions for us all to think about and it must not fight shy of continuing to do so. Indeed, LGBTQ individuals, couples and families seek our help precisely because of deep discomfort, distress, and disturbance. However, we must all resist the pull towards heteronormative thinking as well as the temptation to pathologize difference.

Moreover, when thinking about practice, we wonder whether training and the embodiment of theory continues to perpetuate heteronormative thinking. For instance, given the suggestion that well over 50% of gay men and bisexuals are in open relationships, psychoanalytic couple psychotherapists’ focus on dyadic functioning has inevitably limited its interest in and understanding of the relevance of the application of its theory to those in non-exclusive relationships. This failure may be viewed as an unconscious denial or discomfort, evidenced in the way in which the consulting room is arranged for couple therapy, who is invited to the session, and assumptions regarding monogamy. Similarly, same-sex parents and couples may be viewed through a universalist lens, resulting in a failure to fully



understand and engage with the unique qualities and differences between, for example, straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer parenting. Given its importance, this oversight may be seen to represent a failure in mirroring and attunement in the therapy itself. Hopefully, the papers in this special edition, will prove helpful to us all in developing a more responsive and sensitive fit when offering therapy to those gender and sexual minority individuals, couple and families seeking our help.

We are very pleased to open this issue, with the re-publication of a work by Miguel Spivacow, recently deceased. His article, *Nuevas familias. Un desafío para el psicoanálisis*, discusses the psychic development of children raised in homoparental families. The author wonders about the subject constitution (for these children) as well as what place oedipal issues have in these new family configurations. Without being able to arrive at a predictive evaluation of the impact of these changes on subjectivity, or of the effects on personality development, it is nevertheless necessary, in the event of applications for adoption, to take into account, among other things, the functioning of applicants' potentially destructive behaviour and their ability to respect the subjectivity of others.

In their article, *Responding to the challenge that same-sex parents pose for psychoanalytic couple and family psychotherapists: Confronting Implicit Bias!*, Damian McCann and Colleen Sandor highlight the persistence of a belief that sees the traditional nuclear family as the best environment for raising children. In light of data from psychoanalytic literature and research on the subject, the authors conclude that the quality of family relationships and the social environment have more influence on the psychological development of children than the number, the gender, or the parents' sexual orientation.

The article by Alain Ducouso-Lacaze and Marie-José Grihom, *Homoparentalité: apports d'une approche psychanalytique*, analyses the changes that homoparentality produces in the family and filiation. Drawing on the distinction between affiliation and parenthood, the authors highlight the permanence of the unconscious issues linked with becoming a parent. They conclude that homosexual adults seem to create new bonds that serve to support the establishment of the psychic processes of parenthood.

In her article, *Psychoanalysis with new families and couples*, Hanni Mann-Shalvi addresses the question whether the principles guiding the treatment of heterosexual families and couples are sufficient to understand unconscious dynamics in new couples and families. The author touches on the traditional concepts of fatherhood and motherhood, as well as psychoanalytic theorising about the couple and the family which serve as the basis for her clinical and theoretical perception. Finally, the author examines whether this can be applied to the psychoanalytic treatment of two same-sex couples, who have established a family of their own.

Susann Heenen-Wolff, in her article *Same Sex Parenthood*, proposes that it is no longer possible to describe and understand homosexuality as resulting from regression or a fixation at a stage in development before the resolution of the



Oedipus complex, or in the end as a failure of oedipal rivalry leading to identification with the parent of the opposite sex. The author concludes that psychoanalysts are obliged to take another look at the importance of the theory of the Oedipus complex in its simplified form.

Anne Loncan in her article *De la bisexualité psychique à l'homoparentalité* considers how recent family metamorphoses incline towards undifferentiated parenthood so questioning the nature of family ties. In its rich exposition, retracing numerous conceptualizations: from identifications, to the transmission of parenthood, to maternal and paternal roles and functions, to the importance of ties, to that of ideals and, in particular, to the concept of psychic bisexuality, it seeks to shed more light on the metapsychological understanding of family ties and parental functions.

In her article *Parentalidad del mismo sexo. Construcción de la categoría de la Diferencia. Funciones parentales, organizadores del psiquismo del infans*, Eva Rotenberg, who for many years has been working on the themes of same-sex parenting and sexual diversity, begins with a historical introduction to the development of these questions within the international scientific community which has led to a depathologising of homosexuality, trans identity and other definitions of gender identity. For the author, in psychoanalysis, the deconstruction of a binary vision related to biological sex is now part of an intersubjective perspective. The departure from binarism, supported by a psychosexuality in psychic reality, permits our thinking about new current clinical situations that the author proposes to call “complex psychosexuality”.

Christiane Joubert, in her article *Parentalités contemporaines: naître dans une famille homoparentale* presents detailed psychoanalytic clinical work by a female couple, who sought consultation for their suffering caused during repeated IVF. A break in biological parenting awakens failures in generational transmission and a rupture in the imago couple (two women together) transforms the phantasy of the primal scene. What emerges out of this presentation is the homosexual couple's need to join society, as a parental couple; a difficult registration, which weakens the narcissistic contract, but one that is nevertheless possible. The author emphasises how she might have represented a benevolent support for the child, like a “psychic cradle”.

Finally, Leezah Hertzmann's article *Objecting to the object: encountering the internal parental couple relationship for lesbian and gay couples*, using a combination of concepts from couple psychoanalysis, French psychoanalysis and contemporary theories of psychosexuality, offers some psychoanalytic reformulations about desire for the same sex in couple relationships. She aims to explore problems for lesbian and gay couples of encountering the internal parental couple relationship and the impact of this internal object in the couple's shared unconscious world.

In the Book Review, Giorgio Giaccardi offers a detailed presentation of the book



Sexualities: Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspectives by Alessandra Lemma and Paul E. Lynch, underlining how the authors highlight in various respects the importance of getting rid of the illusion of fixity and normality of sexuality, and reinvesting it with centrality and plasticity, which was well understood by Freud, but then lost in the American traditions of ego-psychology and of British object relations.

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