

Letter of Apology to LGBTQ+ Communities and APA Division 39 Members (past and present)**On Behalf of the Board of Directors, APA Division 39 - Society for Psychoanalysis and
Psychoanalytic Psychology****Task Force Chairs: Matt LeRoy & Usha Tummala-Narra**

APA Division 39 and the field of psychoanalysis needs to apologize to gay men, to lesbians, to bisexual people, to transgender individuals, to those who are gender queer, asexual, and intersex. As the Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology, we apologize for adopting theories that discriminate against, pathologize, and marginalize gay men, lesbians, bisexual, queer, asexual, intersex, transgender, gender expansive, and gender queer people, whether those individuals are clients, students, therapists, researchers, educators. We apologize for personal biases and prejudice that have often been couched in theoretical rationalizations used to justify conscious and unconscious discrimination and hate in interpersonal spaces and systemic attitudes and behavior. With this formal apology comes a real recognition of the harms done and a delineation of meaningful steps forward.

One letter can never capture every wound that is carried, but this is our attempt to acknowledge and begin a process for us to name and begin to heal. The hurt can be rationalized, particularly when the harm was caused in a subtle manner. For example, the speed at which an audience member at a Spring Meeting moves to pathologize members of the LGBTQ+ community, couching bias in rationalization and theory. The hurt can be ignored when an LGBTQ+ colleague is tokenized on one hand, and idealized and objectified on the other hand. The pain can occur in innumerable ways, some that are systemic, and some that are more interpersonal in nature. The harm has been done in the past, harm is still done, and collectively

we need to recognize and work to undo that legacy. We need to do this as Division 39, and we need to do this individually as the members of the Division.

In apologizing to a diverse community, we underscore the importance of the intersectionality of oppression. The hurt of a White gay man is different from the harm caused to a Black Trans woman. This apology is meant to be inclusive, however difficult it may be to acknowledge the different wounds. The pain of heterosexism, transphobia and homophobia present within the purview of psychoanalysis is a wound that spans generations. In addition to different identities experiencing harm differently, there is a difference of the injuries that have been done to clients by heterosexist and transphobic theories and practitioners.

In our attempts to understand the harm that has been done we have listened to the perspectives of some members of the Division's LGBTQ+ community. Frequently, we heard how in the past, it was inconceivable for members of the queer and trans community to be out as themselves within psychoanalytic spaces. It was a different Division in the 1980's and 1990's than it is today. We recognize that the voices of those most hurt and most vulnerable, were voices we could not hear. Voices that psychoanalysis, and its practitioners, have lost the privilege of hearing. Voices that may have advanced our theories, opened our minds, and educated us in ways that we do not and sadly can never know. Some of these individuals felt that psychoanalysts thought they didn't love the right people, or yearned to show their true selves in a way they knew would be unacceptable to the broader membership. We recognize the harm this has caused to those whose voices we could not hear. There were also those who persisted, who as the Division changed, were able to be more completely themselves. Their

resilience and strength is something to be admired. However, they too deserve an apology for the way they had to hide in the past.

The phenomenon continues to this day. Some younger clinicians may come to a Spring meeting and experience that they do not belong. It is easy for us to ignore their disappearance; particularly as other younger clinicians choose to stay. It is important for us to wonder if it is possible that some clinicians may leave because they feel they do not belong. It is impossible to separate their sense of not belonging from who they are as people, whether that be queer, whether that be trans, or whether that be BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color), or as often times happens, whether that is because they hold several marginalized identities.

Although some of the most radical questioning of sexuality and sexual norms came from Freud and psychoanalysis, much of the history of psychoanalysis is filled with the pathologization of homosexuality. The shoulders that we stand upon are shoulders of flawed individuals who stigmatized and shamed LGBTQ+ people. These include authors who invalidated trans identities, with some wielding a universalized belief of developmental theory, and not listening to the impact this theory had on people. In 1973 there was a process to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) written by the American Psychiatric Association. After this depathologization, theories continued to view LGBTQ+ members to be morally or socially problematic or wrong in some way. Unlike other professionals, including those who follow feminist frameworks, psychoanalysis continued to pathologize LGBTQ+ communities with theories that could leave them feeling that there is something psychologically different about them.

We now turn to injuries that are interpersonal in nature. These everyday injuries accumulate over time and can scrape away at someone's sense of resilience and connection. Within the LGBTQ+ community, they can include misgendering someone, objectifying someone based on their identity, pathologizing someone's sexual behavior, making a joke about the use of "they" pronouns, or just remaining silent when one witnesses and recognizes discrimination and bias in an interaction. These injuries occur in person and in our Division Forum. The impact of these microaggressions is meaningful not only because LGBTQ+ folks are not only coping with these hurtful interactions in their daily life and in the broader political climate in the U.S. and globally, but also because they cannot secure a safe home in the Division when they are targeted by these microaggressions. As these microaggressions accumulate, they are no longer micro. Instead, they grow to leave lasting scars on individuals and on our community.

While there is much to name with regard to pain caused, we also want to acknowledge the growth of the Division, and recognize some of the many people who were responsible to make the Division a more inclusive and queer- and trans-affirming space. This work has been done by the Sexualities and Gender Identities Committee, including the chairs of that committee, Dennis Debiak, Scott Pytluk, Shara Sand, Martin Devine, and Liz Clark, and the co-chairs of the Dialogues Across Difference Task Force, Kori Bennett and Mamta Dadlani. We recognize that these are only a few members among many other unnamed members who have made significant and noteworthy contributions.

For there to be meaningful healing, changes need to occur. We are aware that healing will take time, that first the depth of the apology needs to be felt. To begin that conversation we would quote Audre Lorde. She states that survival is "learning how to stand alone,

unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those...who still define the master's house as their only source of support."

This quote illustrates how similar what Lorde describes is to the psychoanalytic enterprise. To shift one's history by new insights, to grieve our past misdeeds and treatments, one needs to utilize new ways of thinking, to move towards healing through remembering instead of towards reliving without insight. Psychoanalysis could deconstruct the heterosexism, racism, sexism and other biases that are internalized inside all of us. However, that needs to be an actively chosen path, one that too often has not been chosen.

To continue to build on the progress forward, we believe that certain changes need to occur to help create safety within the Division and to honor inclusivity and interconnectedness. An example that has been positive is the recent adoption of pronoun stickers and the availability of a gender neutral bathroom at the Spring Meeting. We recommend the following as important steps in reckoning with the harm caused by bias, homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia in psychoanalysis and the Division, and with moving forward to securing more safety, inclusion, and dignity of LGBTQ+ people.

- 1) The Division will designate reparative and conversion therapy as a form of deception and harm, and a form of violence, not therapy.

- 2) An area of current concern is the listserv that Division 39 employs. The listserv can be a contentious place where diverse thinkers present differing and sometimes conflicting perspectives. At times, something is shared that has a differential impact on those who receive it, piercing those who are the most vulnerable and marginalized while ignored by many with more privilege. We propose a change to the listserv rules, to engage with these moments in a different manner, that centers the impact on people, moving away from explanations of intentionality to a place of community. To do this, we believe there need to be clear guidelines that prohibit speech that is injurious to LGBTQ+ members. We hope that this work will create fruitful, engaging and inclusive dialogues. We fear that, if it does not, harms will continue.
- 3) The Division recognizes that taking action toward inclusivity is a task that belongs to all members, and efforts to engage in examining one's own privilege and standing up for the dignity of LGBTQ+ folks is a responsibility shared by all members. The Division will identify ways to communicate the importance of shared responsibility to all members.
- 4) Relatedly, the Division will identify ways to promote awareness of prejudice and discrimination toward LGBTQ+ people, including intersectional discrimination (e.g., racism and heterosexism, homophobia and ableism). Raising awareness could potentially involve social media or other online platforms where experiences can be shared safely and anonymously.

- 5) The Division will affirm its commitment to APAGS Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity recommendations regarding communication, including identification and use of pronouns. Relatedly, the Division will review language used in its publications and in the call for proposals for the Spring Meeting and the APA Convention, with regard to issues of sexuality and gender identity, and intersecting identities.
- 6) The Board will request that our journal, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, develop a special issue focused on the experiences of LGBTQ+ therapists. The journal could also make a public statement recognizing social injustice related to sexuality and gender identity, race, immigration status, social class, religion/spirituality, and disability.
- 7) The Board will engage in conversations with the Program Chair in order to review programming concerning LGBTQ+ experiences during the Spring Meeting and APA Convention.
- 8) The Division will engage local chapters in focusing on issues of sexuality and gender. This would support a system-wide approach, rather than centering discussions regarding these issues solely or primarily in the Spring Meetings.
- 9) The Division will declare the need for sexual and gender freedom in order for the United States to live up to its 1st Amendment commitments (Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2003).
- 10) The Division will name support for the Equality Act (H.R. 5), which was passed on 5/17/19 by the House of Representatives. The Equality Act amends the Civil Rights Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity

in employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, credit, and the jury system. It is worth noting that the Senate has not taken up the bill in the 116th Congress.

This is an official statement of the Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology, Division 39 of the American Psychological Association, and does not represent the position of the American Psychological Association or any of its other Divisions or subunits.