

Lesbians, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis:

The Second Wave



Judith M. Glassgold *and* Suzanne Iasenza
Editors

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of
Adria Schwartz
1946-2003

Her life made lesbians and feminism more visible in psychoanalysis.

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Introduction: Lesbians, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis: The Second Wave

Judith M. Glassgold
Suzanne Iasenza

SUMMARY. This volume presents a collection of psychoanalytically influenced authors writing about lesbian concerns. Profound changes have occurred within psychoanalysis due to the efforts of lesbian, gay, and bisexual scholars and the evolution of psychoanalytic theory away from classical models. The writers in this volume represent a second generation of scholars who have more latitude in using psychoanalysis to study sexual orientation and gender. The article summarizes the major changes in this field and outlines areas where further improvements in psychoanalysis can occur. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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KEYWORDS. Lesbians, feminism, psychoanalysis

This volume presents a new collection of psychoanalytically influenced authors writing about lesbian concerns. In the 1990s, the first wave of women writers, many of whom were lesbian and bisexual themselves, made their first contributions to rethinking sexual orientation, sexuality, and gender (Butler, 1990; Chodorow, 1994; de Lauretis, 1994; O'Connor & Ryan, 1993). By the mid to late 1990s, the works had multiplied and many seasoned educators, researchers, and practitioners published works in this area (Burch, 1997; Dominici & Lesser, 1995; Glassgold & Iasenza, 1995; Gould & Kiersky, 2001; Magee & Miller, 1997; Schwartz, 1998).

Currently, these writers have less of a struggle for legitimacy or a need to focus on debunking older theories. They have found a place at the table as there is a greater acceptance of theories challenging heterosexuality's monopoly on normalcy, and same-sex desire is viewed as part of the continuum of human experience. Many psychoanalytic institutes have abandoned restrictions on accepting openly LGB candidates¹ and some have instituted courses and programs on LGB issues or have open lesbian, gay, and bisexual faculty.² The American Psychoanalytic Association has a strong resolution denouncing efforts to use psychoanalysis to change sexual orientation (2000) and has had a resolution deploring discrimination against LGB individuals since 1991. There is a rapprochement between organized psychoanalysis and LGBT issues within psychology and concerted efforts are being made by psychoanalytic psychologists, Division 39-Psychoanalysis, of the American Psychological Association, to focus on issues of multicultural diversity and social justice (Division 39, 2002). These successes are due to the pioneering efforts of many of the writers cited above. Many have written eloquently about their struggles to survive in hostile times (Decker, 1995; Magee & Miller, 1997; Martin, 1995; Goldman, 1995) or described long-held bias against LGB professionals within psychoanalysis (Drescher, 1995).

However, the acceptance of a new view of same-sex desire is due to a profound evolution within psychoanalysis. When psychoanalytic writers first published on lesbian issues (Deutsch, 1932/48; Freud, 1920/61) their writings were overwhelmingly negative and reinforced oppressive stereotypes. This trend only worsened with negative and homophobic distortions of lesbian identity and desire (Eisenbud, 1969; McDougal, 1964/70; Socarides, 1968). However, in the late 1970s, feminists began creating a more accurate representation of female psychology free of misogyny and distortion, integrating ideas from object relations

(Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976), creatively rethinking theory (Irigaray, 1975/87) or challenging Freud's dominance of theory (Mitchell, 1982). Chodorow and Dinnerstein (to name only a few) also rejected some American feminist beliefs that psychoanalysis could not be reclaimed so as to reflect women's lives and attempted to creatively use psychoanalysis to understand human problems. Yet, lesbians were not full beneficiaries of the feminist psychoanalytic revolution as significant works in the 1980s continued to pathologize lesbian development (Eisenbud, 1982; McDougall, 1980; Siegel, 1988) and the new feminist works ignored lesbians almost entirely.

Into the 90s lesbians continued to be marginalized within psychoanalytic institutions, with few affirmative publications, no visibility within training institutes, and few openly lesbian analysts. Within training institutions, homophobia still resulted in the exclusion or harassment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual applicants (Decker, 1995; Drescher, 1995; Martin, 1995). It was in fields such as philosophy, women's studies, and criticism (Butler, 1990; de Lauretis, 1994; Foucault, 1980) where psychoanalysis' relevance to feminist, lesbian, and gay issues first emerged. Post-structuralism, de-constructionism, and postmodernism were critical movements for transforming psychoanalytic theory into an analytic tool to challenge sexism and heterosexism (Butler, 1990; Trask, 1987). These fields incorporated psychoanalysis while transforming it, and when psychoanalysis integrated these new philosophical movements via feminist and postmodernist writers and thinkers, the new formulations of psychoanalysis re-entered the field.

Meanwhile, psychoanalysis had undergone changes in its clinical theories that allowed for new perspectives on human sexuality. Object relations theory and self-psychology presented the beginning of theoretical and therapeutic views that held potential for inclusion, but the ascendancy of intersubjective and relational approaches have been extremely important (represented by seminal writers such as George Atwood, Jessica Benjamin, Adrienne Harris, Stephen Mitchell, and Robert Stolorow).³ These theories have led to the development of new views of humanity that are less focused on determining what is normative and to new therapy practices that resist attempts to make individuals fit prescribed developmental models. This change of understanding of the role of the therapist, the process of therapy and theory has been extraordinarily profound. Many of the authoritarian and pathologizing views (Gould, 1995) that falsely claimed objective scientific status (Lesser, 1995) have no place in these new theoretical viewpoints.

Credit must also be given to the new generation of leaders within psychoanalysis. For reasons perhaps as basic as the evolution of genera-

tions, those who are now in senior positions in many analytic institutions are part of a generation whose own life experiences have been influenced by the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the LGBT liberation movement. These experiences have made them more open to challenging orthodoxy, more capable of creating theories that support new views of identity and sexuality, and more able to be welcoming of those who are different. Ultimately, we are in a period where there is a synergy for the development of new views of gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, and diversities within psychoanalysis.

However, many challenges remain. Progress within psychoanalysis remains uneven. There are still pockets of institutions that are not yet publicly inclusive in terms of sexual orientation. Venues for writing, studying, and training still need to increase and spread beyond the U.S. coasts. Women, in particular, may need support to write and take their place in leadership of institutes and organizations. A recent article in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* (JAPA) entitled "Can We Be Both Women and Analysts?" (Wilkinson et al., 1996) discusses the challenges some women candidates still face in becoming analysts, particularly in this example given that the Topeka, Kansas, psychoanalytic institute had not had a woman training analyst for more than 20 years.

Psychoanalysis is still perceived in some parts of the feminist and LGBT communities as hostile, as the damage done to psychoanalysis's credibility by older theories is hard to undo and while a few vocal members of the profession still advocate anti-homosexual practices such as conversion therapy. Thus, a rapprochement between psychoanalysis and feminist and LGBT psychologies through organizational ties, advocacy, and scholarship is still necessary.

Further, ethnic, cultural, and class issues are still underrepresented in psychoanalytic writing, training, and practice. As Greene describes in this volume, issues of privilege still pose problems. Further self-criticism and self-analysis may be necessary to promote more diversity within training institutions and to refocus education so as to be a process of liberation (hooks, 1994), as well as to reexamine the impact of prejudice (Young-Bruehl, 1996). This would require a greater focus in psychoanalysis on the impact of social reality on individuals, particularly issues of power, difference, (in)justice, and (in)equality.

This underrepresentation of diversity and multicultural elements is particularly problematic as the omission of these issues continues to marginalize historically oppressed groups and reinforces stereotypes about elitism within psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis united with post-

modernism and social constructionism provides very powerful theories to understand reality, particularly social reality (Trask, 1987); however, this potential has yet to be fully realized. As psychoanalytic theory is still seen as an individual intervention, its application to social issues and concerns is often doubted. Further changes need to occur in training and practice, so that these areas of diversity are fully integrated into curriculum in psychoanalysis at all levels. It is our hope that even in undergraduate programs, as well as graduate and post-graduate programs, older views of psychoanalysis will become a tiny part of how psychoanalysis is defined and new theories will take their place as the key ideas.

Some clinicians struggle to reconcile the new integration of post-modern theory in psychoanalysis with clinical practice. The post-modern deconstruction of identity and subjectivity may appear to be in conflict with clinical concerns of identity development and self-cohesion (Flax, 1991, 1993; Layton, 1998). We believe that for LGBT people these issues are inseparable, sometimes problematically and sometimes not, as with all those who simultaneously hold memberships in multiple cultures. As Flax (1993, 1991) and we (Glassgold & Iasenza, 1995) previously described (Glassgold, 1995; Stack, 1995) social change, new and fluid models of gender and sexuality can be incorporated into psychotherapy. As Flax (1993) states: "Therapy can make more dimensions of subjectivity available to people. It can encourage the development of the aspects of subjectivity that evoke and enjoy multiplicity. People can develop more tolerance for and appreciation of differences, ambiguity, and ambivalence" (p. 107). These tasks could be seen as part of the strength of psychoanalysis: its rejection of predetermined goals and its embrace of psychic creativity, which inevitably respects an individual's agency in their own self-creation.

We need to be careful, however, that our love affair with post-modernism, which abolishes sex/gender categorization, does not cause us to neglect the particularities of women's sexual subjectivities, especially the continuing influences of sexism, homophobia, and misogyny in many women's lives. Postmodernism and deconstructionist theories have been criticized for minimizing issues of power and political oppression (Alcoff, 1988) and de-emphasizing structural inequalities in society.

Some residual issues between heterosexual and lesbian feminists reminiscent of the "lavender menace" days of the 1970s feminist movement are evident in critiques of heterosexist assumptions in contemporary feminist psychoanalytic work (Decker, 1995; O'Connor &

Ryan, 1993; Schoenberg, 1995). These issues have yet to be adequately explored. Is it possible that conflation of feminism and lesbianism caused by societal sexism and homophobia make feminist analysts concerned about being seen as too pro-lesbian and lesbian analysts concerned about being seen as too separatist? How does that affect our work? Can we analysts create honest dialogues about how our own internalized sexism and homophobia operate in the consulting room as well as in our organizations? We need to establish means to discuss and understand these issues and find ways to encourage continuous change and development through new theory and practice that considers both feminism and lesbianism within psychoanalysis.

We conceive of this volume as a way to build on the initial progress of the 1990s as a second wave builds on the one preceding it. Now that lesbians have entered the psychoanalytic field, we now need to expand and deepen our self-examination and our own dialogues. For this volume, we have welcomed those who wish to write and tried to create a more supportive venue than traditional journals. We have tried to present a variety of works that address both new areas and traditional ones by writers who represent a diversity of backgrounds (psychiatry, psychology, and social work), analytic training (formal institute training, study groups, and supervision), and theoretical perspectives (self-psychology, object relations, relational psychoanalysis, feminist theory, queer theory, postmodernism, and Lacanian theory). The one commonality among authors is their belief in the potential healing power of psychoanalytically-informed theory and practice.

This volume includes three sections: Community: Personal and Political, Ongoing Clinical Issues, and New Thinking on Sexuality and Gender. Stressing the importance of documenting our history and the creation of community, Iasenza focuses on training by recognizing the work of lesbian psychoanalytic foremothers, Joanne Spina, Lee Crespi and Judy Levitz, who created safe analytic training environments for the next generation of lesbian (bisexual and gay) analysts by creating LGBT inclusive analytic training programs. Gair illustrates how new conceptualizations of psychoanalytic theory can provide understanding about the role of social factors in intrapsychic development. In an ongoing attempt to consider ethnic and cultural diversity, Greene writes on entrenched problems within psychodynamic theories relating to privilege and diversity, and the limitations and usefulness of psychodynamic therapies for African American lesbians and other culturally diverse people. Decker writes about the impact of Stephen Mitchell's (one of the founders of relational psychoanalysis) early papers on homosexual-

ity on personal and professional development. Bjork further expands our understanding of the therapeutic dyad by examining the clinical impact of a therapist's own experiences with social and cultural influences over the past forty years. Illustrating the utility of psychoanalysis for social problems, Neilson, an expert in domestic violence, describes how psychoanalytic theory can enrich the treatment of volatile relationships between lesbians. Igartua and Des Rosiers discuss transference and countertransference issues with lesbian patients by heterosexual and lesbian woman analysts. Coining a new term "evolutionary butch," Zevy writes about therapy, gender, and the developmental experiences of tomboys who become lesbians. Kassoff discusses how queer theory and relational psychoanalysis have influenced each other and bring new insights into gender and sexuality. Filling a need for debate within the queer theory field, Roth, presents a critique of one of Butler's concepts, the lesbian phallus. Finally, Kiersky offers some new ideas on gender as it is interwoven with identity and desire. We hope this volume creates new dialogues and ways of conceptualizing these above issues, thereby deepening the therapeutic endeavor.

NOTES

1. For instance, the following, amongst others, have nondiscrimination policies that are LGB inclusive: Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy, New York University Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, American Psychoanalytic Association; William Alanson White Institute; National Institute for Psychotherapies; National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis.

2. Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Study Center, New York University Post Doctoral Program in Psychotherapy & Psychoanalysis, San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, William Allison White Institute, Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity, to name a few.

3. These authors are only some of many, whose work can be found in progressive journals and at many of the newer psychoanalytic institutes. One journal in particular is relevant for this volume, *Studies of Gender and Sexuality*.

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COMMUNITY AND HISTORY: PERSONAL AND POLITICAL

Lesbian Psychoanalytic Foremothers Making Waves: Interviews with Joanne Spina, Lee Crespi and Judy Levitz

Suzanne Iasenza

SUMMARY. The progress lesbians have made within psychoanalysis is in its infancy since the first wave of gay/lesbian affirmative literature be-

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gan to surface in the early 1990s. The author stresses the need to document the history of the development of this long overdue movement. Three lesbian psychoanalytic foremothers are interviewed who offer glimpses into the psychoanalytic community from the early 1970s to the present giving us a deeper understanding of courageous acts that helped create gay and lesbian affirmative space within psychoanalysis. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Lesbian foremother, psychoanalytic training, gay/lesbian affirmative psychoanalysis

INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the recent death of Harry Hay, Richard Goldstein wrote an Op-Ed article in the *New York Times* (10/30/02) advocating the need to document gay history, not just for members of the gay community, but for all of our citizens. Educating our children about gay history, he asserts, is the single most powerful tool with which to combat homophobia. It is a compelling argument.

Hays was “the first American to imagine a gay community.” In the spirit of not letting our history remain invisible, I embarked on this interview project to begin documenting stories of how the first wave of lesbian affirmative psychoanalytic work came into being.

All three of these lesbian psychoanalytic foremothers, like Hays, were some of the first American lesbians to imagine a gay and lesbian affirmative psychoanalytic community. They set their minds, talents, and energies to creating safe psychoanalytic spaces on both interpersonal and institutional levels.

Joanne Spina

Joanne Spina is a graduate of Hunter School of Social Work and the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy (ICP). She cofounded GALA (Gay and Lesbian Analysts) for which she served as Chair for 10 years and GLAP (Gay and Lesbian Affirmative Psychotherapy) division of ICP. She is a recipient of a GALA distinguished contribution award. She was member of the Board of Directors of ICP for 15 years

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S—Tell me how you got interested in psychoanalysis in the first place.

J—This is a hard question.

S—Why?

J—Why, because I got into psychoanalysis as probably most people do, as a patient.

S—Not knowing that you were going to practice it.

J—I was involved in a lot of community work. Most of the community organization and outreach work I was doing was about taking care of others. I was working with drug addiction and community building. I found my work very gratifying. My first job was in Puerto Rico and then for the Lower East Side Service Center where I worked with a drug-addicted population. After that, I went to Hunter School of Social Work and after I graduated, I worked on the Lower East Side for many years in a city hospital. My life felt turbulent. There were a lot of things I was going through emotionally. I gravitated to therapy and in the process found that it was something that I would like to do myself. I continued working while I attended analytic training.

S—Did your therapist suggest that you go for analytic training?

J—No. I think the reason I chose analytic training was because a friend of mine who was in graduate school with me had a very dear friend who was starting an institute, which was the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy. I was one of the first patients at that institute in 1971. I was also in a woman's group that was connected to the Institute and Hunter College. So I began to know about the Institute, and I was encouraged to train there.

S—So you were there as a patient around 1971, when did you start training?

J—1973. One year after I graduated from social work school.

S—And two years after you started your own therapy. That was pretty quick.

J—Yes. I was older, in my early thirties, and I appeared to be competent and unflappable, as they say, but internally it was another story. I also started to come out, which was a whole other process.

S—At that time, most training institutes would not accept people who were out. In 1973, did you apply as an out lesbian?

J—No. I wasn't quite out myself. It was the end of 1973 or in 1974 when I lived with someone for the first time. I switched analysts to somebody who was a bit Freudian and a bit homophobic. Her office was on Christopher Street and Oscar Wilde bookstore was down the block. I would go for my sessions with her and then I would go to Oscar Wilde to shore up my own identity and calm myself about what I was doing in therapy.

S—So, why wouldn't that have turned you off about doing analytic training, if you were having a therapy experience with an analyst who was a bit homophobic?

J—I think there is such value in psychotherapy. I was in such desperate need. There were many things going on besides my sexuality that I needed to work on and the work itself was terrifying but challenging. I don't think it occurred to me not to be in analytic training.

S—That is interesting because that is what some lesbian therapists say about why they stuck with analytic training or theory even with all the homophobic parts, that the process of psychoanalytic work is compelling. They feel that other forms of training are not as deep, not as involving . . . exploring the unconscious, dream analysis and other ways we examine issues in psychoanalysis. Some people just don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

J—My institute was an eclectic institute—it wasn't just Freudian, but certainly in those years being a lesbian was not a good thing.

S—So, in 1973 if you applied for admission as an out lesbian you probably would not have been accepted.