



AGAINST CONVERSION PSYCHOTHERAPY

Philosophical Foundations

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A SUPPORTIVE FRAMEWORK

- Psychotherapy bodies support survivors and targets of conversion therapy by taking a stance against conversion psychotherapy
- Articulating the philosophical foundations of this stance is essential to supporting survivors and targets
 - It can help in **sustaining** the protective stance
 - It can help in **implementing** the protective stance
 - It can help in **developing public policy** on conversion therapy

THE PROTECTIVE STANCE

- [The Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK](#) takes a stance against conversion therapy, where

‘conversion therapy’ is an umbrella term for a therapeutic approach, or any model or individual viewpoint that demonstrates an assumption that any sexual orientation or gender identity is inherently preferable to any other, and which attempts to bring about a change of sexual orientation or gender identity, or seeks to suppress an individual’s expression of sexual orientation or gender identity on that basis

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS (I)

- Sexuality and gender identity are not illnesses or disorders
- This is not enough to protect against conversion psychotherapy:
 1. In general, psychotherapy covers more than psychopathology
 2. One may seek therapy for the consequences of homosexuality or transgender identity in discriminatory societies

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS (II)

- So why should psychotherapy bodies endorse the protective stance?
- **Two strategies** for articulation of these philosophical foundations:
 1. From the outside – impose general moral ideas onto psychotherapy, so as to rule out conversion practices
 2. From the inside – look into psychotherapy itself to discern principles that suggest rejection of conversion practices

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS (III)

- Psychotherapy requires a strong relationship between therapist and client – **a therapeutic alliance**
- My claim is that achieving a therapeutic alliance is hard to reconcile with practicing conversion psychotherapy
- This holds most obviously in coercive cases, but, I suggest, even in non-coercive cases

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- [The UK Government plans](#) to: “target talking conversion therapy with a new criminal offence where it is committed against under 18s under any circumstance, or committed against those aged 18 or over who have not consented or due to their vulnerability are unable to do so.”

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- A question that arises in the light of our discussion is:

Why not legislate for more protection of even those who genuinely consent to conversion therapy?

SOURCES

- Bordin, E. S. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 16(3), 252–260.
- Orlinsky, David E (2017). "Unity and diversity among psychotherapies". In Consoli, Andrés J; Beutler, Larry E; Bongar, Bruce Michael (eds.). *Comprehensive textbook of psychotherapy: theory and practice* (2nd ed.). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 11–30.
- Wampold, Bruce E. and Zac E. Imel (2015). *The Great Psychotherapy Debate: The Evidence for What Makes Psychotherapy Work*. 2nd. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.
- [UK Government Proposals on Banning Conversion Therapy](#)
- [BACP Resources](#)
 - Including the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK, and BACP response to the UK Government Proposals



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THANK YOU!

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