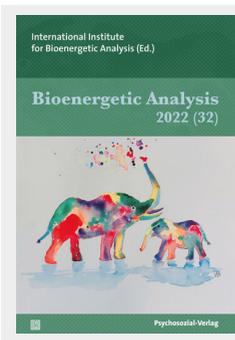


*Susan Kanor*

## Bioenergetics Going Forward



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## Abstract

Given the cultural, political, environmental and health challenges we face in 2021, we have become even more deeply aware of our own prejudices and fears. In the bioenergetic community we are called upon to respond— within ourselves, with our clients and with society at large. Bioenergetic Analysis gives us a unique and important perspective to be used as we move forward in this decade. This article asks us to consider the call to become more aware and to expand our work to include those who do not have privilege. We can look to the social clinics in Brazil as a model for reaching out beyond our middle-class private practice work.

*Keywords:* prejudice, domination, suffering, chaos, social clinics

The cultural reality we now find ourselves in is one that requires a greater understanding of how domination and degradation of one group based on any of these factors – their birthplace, nationality, biology, age, ethnicity, personal history, refuge or immigrant status, class, behavior, skin color, gender, sexual preference, religion, belief system, education, ability or disability, or size – negates their humanity and our own and interferes with a real sense of our interdependence. We are all imperfect—no one is superior or inferior to another. We, in the Bioenergetic community, have a depth of understanding of human wounds that knows no boundaries. We respond with empathy as our shared needs are voiced. We resonate with the words of James Baldwin, an African American writer, who said “The interior life is the real life.” We know that prejudice leads to dangerous negative judgments of people and causes great suffering. We feel the suffering of our clients and one another. We know how disrespect, hatred and domination affects people and believe that the Bioenergetic approach to emotional pain is a truly

human and accessible method. As we interact with our environment and learn more about the nightmarish effects of climate change and of the pandemic, we have become more and more frightened. This sense of chaos and uncertainty that we face is universal. We know that staying grounded, self-regulating, and keeping our breathing open is necessary as we navigate the difficult changes we must face.

Looking ahead, we would benefit from addressing some crucial questions, such as:

- How can we in our relationships help individuals become more sensitive to the feelings of others? (It certainly happens in our training groups, therapy groups and workshops.)
- How can we facilitate learning about our own prejudices? (Workbooks like *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla Saad can be very helpful in this regard.)
- How can we spread our work beyond our small circle?
- How do we become a less middle and upper middle class, white, heterosexual organization?
- How can our international Bioenergetic organization bring more people who do not live in privileged communities into our circle?

There are models for us to learn from in Brazil. On the website for Latin America's bioenergetic community, FLAAB (Federação Latino-Americano de Análise Bioenergética), members report that in Recife, Brazil, beginning 40 years ago, social clinics were established to give less privileged sections of society, including children and adolescents, the opportunity to access Bioenergetic psychotherapy. The work is offered to pregnant women, families, institutions, schools, and others. Between 2005 and 2015, 5167 people were treated. When the program began, most of the demand came from students, domestic workers, doormen and others who earned roughly a minimum salary. As the economic, financial, and social crisis in Brazil at the time became worse, this profile began to change and people who had not previously been included, such as public sector employees, bank staff, teachers and other professionals sought out the service. In West Central Brazil – Brasilia – in 2014 a social clinic opened, following the example of other bioenergetic societies in Brazil. "Its aim is to contribute to people's physical, mental and emotional health and to extend access to psychotherapy in and around the capital to sections of the population with limited financial resources" (IIBA clinical journal, 1999). There are similar social clinics in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and the area surrounding Sao Paulo.

In addition, there are bioenergetic training programs in Russia and China that serve people who had not been able to afford our services in the past. Al-

though wonderful, it is still not nearly enough to meet the need. In order to move forward, here are some questions we must address:

- Can we offer training programs in Africa or in other parts of Latin America or the Caribbean? Can we offer scholarships and/or free programs to those who want to grow with our work?
- Is there the interest and the energy to do the fund raising it would take to create clinics in under serviced areas in other parts of the world?
- Can we offer free or very low-cost workshops in our own communities?
- Can we offer more pro-bono individual or group Bioenergetic therapy sessions?

## Conclusion

Are we able to take up this kind of challenge? I believe that with an intention to be more inclusive, to “think outside the box” and with our collective creative capacities we can meet this challenge. These questions and the answers we find can help Bioenergetic Analysis develop and become more accessible to a broader population. As we face a world in which it is becoming more and more difficult to remain grounded and open to “the other”, the first thing we must encourage is the incorporation into our hearts of the statement written by Helen and Scott that echoes the social justice statement of the IIBA. That would give us a strong starting point from which to address and act on the need to be a more open and inclusive organization in the future.

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