

Vincentia Schroeter, Margit Koemeda-Lutz, Mãe Nascimento (Eds.)  
Bioenergetic Analysis 2018 (28)

The Clinical Journal of the  
International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis

Vincentia Schroeter, Margit Koemeda-Lutz,  
Maê Nascimento (Eds.)

# **Bioenergetic Analysis**

**The Clinical Journal of the  
International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis  
(2018) Volume 28**

Psychosozial-Verlag

*Reviewers for this issue were:*

Margit Koemeda, Maê Nascimento, Laura Partridge, Leia de Cardenuto, Garry Cockburn

*Translators of abstracts for this issue were:*

Margit Koemeda, Maê Nascimento, Maria Rosario Filoni, Louise Frechette,  
Guy Tonella, Maryse Doess, Claudia Ucros, Rejean Simard, Jörg Clauer,  
Vita Heinrich-Clauer, Angela Klopstech

Submissions for consideration for the next volume of *Bioenergetic Analysis* must be sent to Leia Cardenuto (leiacardenuto52@gmail.com) between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

Bibliographic information of Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (The German Library)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the  
Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data  
are available at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Original edition

© 2018 Psychosozial-Verlag, Gießen, Germany

[info@psychosozial-verlag.de](mailto:info@psychosozial-verlag.de)

[www.psychosozial-verlag.de](http://www.psychosozial-verlag.de)

All rights reserved.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any manner  
without the written permission of the publisher.

Cover: Vincentia Schroeter: *Autumn by the Lake*, 2017

Cover design & layout based on drafts by Hanspeter Ludwig, Wetzlar

ISBN 978-3-8379-8223-7

# Content

<b>Letter from the Editor</b>	7
<b>Historical and Contemporary Psychoanalytic and Bioenergetic Perspectives of Sexuality</b>	11
Lets Bring it Back into the Therapy Room <i>Helen Resneck-Sannes</i>	
<b>The Mysterious Life Energy</b>	27
On the Validity of the Bioenergetic Concept <i>Arild Hafstad</i>	
<b>Examining Traumatic Memories</b>	45
Re-Encoding and Reconsolidation <i>Homayoun Shahri</i>	
<b>Fleas on the Back of a Wild Dog</b>	63
Five Skulls and Human History <i>John Conger</i>	
<b>Aggression as a Significant Factor in the Formation and Expression of the Self</b>	75
<i>Anat Gihon</i>	
<b>Uses of the Sphere as a Motherfied Object in Bioenergetic Analysis</b>	99
<i>Julia Cegatti and Leticia Polosecki</i>	



# Letter from the Editor

This 2018 volume marks my final year at the helm of *Bioenergetic Analysis*, and I am happy to pass the job to the next team of editors, Leia Cardenuto, Garry Cockburn and Maê Nascimento. This volume has six articles. The first paper follows the history of sexuality in psychoanalysis and implores us to bring somatic work with sexuality back into our clinical practice. The next paper explores empirical validation of the bioenergetic concept by using research on Reich's orgone box. A new technique that may rewrite traumatic memories is offered in the third paper. The fourth paper is a short essay examining human skulls to promote the relevance for somatic therapists of attending to the "historical body". The concept of aggression in relation to bioenergetic theory and treatment is provided in the fifth article. The sixth and final paper provides new clinical techniques using "biospheres", which are various size rubber balls. I want to thank the authors, the team of reviewers, the editors and all the translators of abstracts. For the first time, the abstracts will be translated into an additional language, Russian, to be coordinated by Svetlana Dinaburg. The entire volume will be translated into Spanish, coordinated by The Madrid Institute of Bioenergetic Analysis (IMAB).

As I say farewell I will also include a note from Margit Koemeda, who is also leaving. Margit was chief editor before me, she passed the baton to me, and I pass it to Leia, Garry and Maê, who generously agreed to stay on the editing team for continuity. It has been a labor of love – lots of hard work, some papers taking 20–30 hours of work each but it has also been enriching to be steeped in the richness of content, helping me think and learn. I also found it satisfying to copy-edit and make some pieces more readable to English speakers. When translations were introduced, that added more work but also more visibility. In the spirit of inclusiveness and diversity we endeavor to spread modern Bioenergetic ideas to a broader audience.

I so enjoyed the editing sisterhood with Margit and Maê over these ten years. I inherited Margit's excellent system of organization to keep all tasks manageable. Thank you, Margit. I could always rely on both Margit and Maê for candid, hon-

est, bold yet constructive criticism of papers, which gave our reviews integrity. In strong disagreements, we kept going until a decision was reached. We had to deal with the occasional disgruntled or hurt author, when they faced criticism or rejection. We strived to handle those difficulties with compassion. Remember to get your papers in for the 2019 volume between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. Please send them to Leia Cardenuto at leiacardenuto52@gmail.com.

The next IIBA conference will be in Lisbon, Portugal in 2019.

A Warm Farewell to all my Bioenergetic Colleagues,

Vincentia Schroeter, PhD  
October 25, 2017

## **Farewell Statement from Margit**

I am resigning from the editorial board of Bioenergetic Analysis after almost 15 years.

When John Conger after eight years announced that he wanted to resign as Editor-in-Chief, Hugo Steinmann who at that time was president of the IIBA, asked me if I was willing to take over. I owned all issues of *Bioenergetic Analysis* from its beginning and appreciated having available this collection of articles from my bioenergetic colleagues. Since I also had some experience of working in editorial boards of two European journals, I accepted. In fall 2003 I was appointed to be the new editor.

In Europe we believe books should be issued by a professional publishing company rather than self-published; therefore I asked if the Psychosozial-Verlag would be willing to do this for us. A contract was negotiated and signed. And since 2005 *Bioenergetic Analysis* appears in Gießen, Germany, by Psychosozial-Verlag.

From the beginning it seemed important to have an editorial board, which well represented our international membership. I was therefore very happy that Helen Resneck-Sannes from North America and Maê Nascimento from South America joined the board. After a couple of years Vincentia Schroeter succeeded (replaced) Helen, and after having become acquainted with the task took over the Editor-in-Chief's position. If English is the language of a journal it made sense to have an Editor-in-Chief whose native language is English. The working routines seemed to get easier that way.

Maê, Vincentia and I had a very productive time on the editorial board, always respectful of diverging opinions. As I remember, our collaboration was inspiring, supportive and inseminating. And every year we were rewarded with a new issue of *Bioenergetic Analysis*. My special thanks go to Vincentia, who from 2007 conducted our board in her very reliable, competent, unobtrusive and friendly way.



Our collaboration on the board was a pleasure to me, supported by friendship. In passing on the task to our successors, I hope the journal will continue to prosper, and that the new editors will experience the job as challenging and inspiring as we did.

*Margit Koemeda*  
*July 2017*



# Historical and Contemporary Psychoanalytic and Bioenergetic Perspectives of Sexuality

## Lets Bring it Back into the Therapy Room<sup>1</sup>

*Helen Resneck-Sannes*

*Abstract:* In the late 60s and 70s sexuality occupied center stage in psychoanalysis and then retreated as a focus of inquiry. The increase of claims against therapists for sexual violations, as well as the emergence of more relational analytic therapies, contributed to the avoidance of addressing sexuality in the therapy room. During this time, the psychoanalytic definition of “normal” sexuality was evolving, as well as our notions of gender. Reichian psychotherapy, and its offshoot Bioenergetic Analysis have always seen sexuality as integral to the healthy functioning of the individual. This paper translates current psychoanalytic concepts of healthy sexuality into its somatic counterparts in bioenergetic theory. A case is presented illustrating how these concepts manifest in practice. Exploring sexual fantasies and clients’ preferences for certain types of pornography is viewed as helpful for understanding the dynamics of parenting, and for clarifying transference and countertransference issues.

*Key words:* sexuality, psychoanalysis, Reich, Bioenergetic Analysis sexual abuse, shame, pornography, gender identification.

## Introduction

Wilhelm Reich is the only person whose books were burned by the FDA. And as one psychoanalyst asked me when I was presenting Bioenergetics to an analytic group: Do you really believe that orgone energy was that threatening?” Freud believed that sex and aggression were the two most threatening drives, and the culture’s role was to manage and control them. “It was Freud who first bravely placed sex at the heart of psychic development and highlighted its destabilizing power in our psyche and hence the defenses brought into play to manage it. As

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from keynote address at IIBA conference, May, 2017, Toronto, Canada

one contemporary psychoanalyst has stated: “His corpus of work might even be described as the result of an internal need for regulation of the sex drive. (Lemma and Lynch, p. 2)

Reich also saw the danger of the sex drive. As we know from Sharaf’s biography (1983), Reich discovered his mother having sex with his tutor and told his father of the affair. His father began treating his wife badly, and Reich’s mother was driven to committing suicide. However, Reich believed that the problem was repression of sexuality, rather than it needing to be more controlled.

Bioenergetic analysts view that how we organize ourselves sexually plays a key role in our feelings of aliveness and in our somatopsychic organization. In *Fear of Life* (1980), Lowen states: “Sex is the most intense manifestation of the living process. By controlling sex one controls life.” (p. 122) Two factors have the greatest impact on our attitudes regarding sexuality: cultural attitudes and our attachment histories. In this talk I trace what has happened in the field of psychotherapy regarding sexuality from the 60s when sexual attitudes began to be more open, to the present. Focus is on the necessity to be alert to feelings of shame, the importance of grounding especially in relation to the pelvis, and the role of sexual fantasies in revealing attachment histories.

The following concepts are key when discussing sexuality from a Bioenergetic perspective.

1. Reich’s concept of orgasmic potency is a yardstick for health in that it describes the capacity for aliveness and pleasure in life.
2. Lowen’s (1980) addition of the concept of grounding enables a person to take a stand to feel his bodily separateness.
3. Bodily boundaries enable the client to merge and recover his separate bodily integrity.
4. Opening the blocks in the body in the presence of a highly skilled Bioenergetic therapist reveals to the person his needs and emotions that he has cast out, enabling him to be in as much contact with his deepest self and to experience as much as he can of his partner’s emotions. Baum (2016) has elucidated the requisites for creating the optimal environment for this deep work. Bioenergetics therapists are skilled in knowing how to support the diaphragm through the terror of the heart and pelvis opening and flowing together, enabling feelings of passionate love, which is sometimes a roaring train and other times a sweet melting.

## History

Let’s go through a little history about how Bioenergetics, with its emphasis on emotional expression and sexuality came to be popular and then retreated from a prime position on the therapy stage. By the mid 1960s the Kinsey Report had

been published and its findings disseminated. Birth control was widely available, as well as mind altering drugs, great music, economic prosperity, and feminism. Without the fear of pregnancy or HIV, cultural attitudes regarding sexual expression loosened. Reich's ideas were attractive because they promised freedom to discover our real selves, separate from the culture's restraints. However, the culture was still saying that sexuality was dangerous and women's role was to create boundaries.

I remember when I told my parents my sophomore year of college, that I wanted to move off campus and needed their signature, my father first accused me of wanting to put a red light in front of my door, and then the next day offered to help me get birth control pills. I was in love but not certain I was ready to have sex yet. Fifteen years later I entered Bioenergetic therapy and training. I remember when I first felt the sweet vibrations emanating from my pelvis, trying to work its way through the block at my shoulders. My therapist told me that this was my energy, and that it belonged to me. I had been masturbating since the age of 4 and enjoying orgasms, had been active sexually since the age of 21 years, and had been married 5 years and had given birth. However, I began to cry, as for the first time, I really felt that this energy was mine. Of course, there lies the danger. If I felt that this was my sexual energy, how was I to control it, and to keep it from being expressed when it shouldn't? After all, the culture had told me that I am a woman and I must set boundaries. There was that ominous red light problem. As the sexual charge increased, the more shame I felt with my desire not to manage it. I asked my therapist what she thought about shame and she replied: "that it was just a racket that parents run on their children". My parents did not want to shame me, but there it was. I felt terrible, so, I decided to explore it: How it was held in my body? What were its early manifestations? In 1981 I published my article: "Shame, Sexuality, Vulnerability". Shame had not been explored much before then in the psychological literature, so other authors began calling me, wanting to talk about it.

In 1988, my friend, Ellen Bass published the book: *The Courage to Heal* (which I helped edit, but only the body work section). It alerted the culture to the widespread occurrence of sexual abuse. She has a statement in the book, which sounds innocent enough:

"If you don't remember your abuse, you are not alone. Many women don't have memories, and some never get memories. This doesn't mean they weren't abused. If you think you have been sexually abused, you probably have." (p. 81)

This became the sentence that caused a public outcry. During those subsequent years, many women and men for the first time began to tell people about their sexual abuse histories. Even before the book had been published, I was inter-

viewed by a magazine and asked how many of my clients reported sexual abuse. I went through my notes. It was 80% of women. I was asked if that seemed disproportionately large. I had never even thought about it before then. Interestingly, if I look at my cases now, it is probably only 35% of women and 10% of men.

After the book was published, therapists were alerted to the sexual abuse they had been missing. I had clients coming in reporting that previous therapists were telling them that they had been abused and as a somatic therapist, perhaps I could help them recover their memories. No memory of a sexual abuse incident emerged, although somatically the clients were experiencing the same bodily sensations and emotional fears of clients who had a memory of at least one specific incident of sexual abuse. Two parenting events were a parent, who was also violently punishing them. Now, we know from working with the body that two things flood the pelvis: Sexuality and aggression. And as I mentioned previously, Freud believed that these were the two most difficult and potentially dangerous drives to control.

I then published the article: "A Feeling In Search Of A Memory", which was immediately picked up by the Utne Reader. I state in that article:

"The current debate in the field of psychotherapy and child abuse is a difficult one. The question is: Can therapists know about a client's sexual abuse before the client is aware of it? Several of my clients have seen therapists who decided that they had been sexually molested. The therapists began to work toward enabling the clients to retrieve the abuse memories. One client produced memories for the therapist. Later, in therapy with me she admitted that these events could never have really happened. For the others, no memory ever emerged. All of the clients became more and more confused and ashamed of their sexual feelings.

No memory of sexual abuse ever emerged because there was no incident. These clients had all grown up in families in which boundaries weren't respected. Many of them were emotionally flooded by one of the parent's needs. The threat of violence was present, often from a parent who was also seductive. They grew up in an atmosphere of emotional and sexual abuse, but there was not a physical incident of sexual abuse to be remembered. There was no memory because there was no incident." (1995, p. 97-98)

The culture, especially the therapeutic field had become hyper vigilant to issues of sexual abuse. Therapists were being reported to licensing boards for sexual violations and day care centers were being closed due to charges of sexual abuse. The False Memory Association was formed. Bob and Virginia Hilton published the book: *Therapists at Risk* (1996) to help us navigate this territory.