

## **The future of psychoanalytic education: thoughts on exclusion**

by Jane S. Hall

In this short essay I share some thoughts about the future of institutional psychoanalytic education which I believe must change for it holds the present and future life of psychoanalysis in its hands. I base these ideas on over 40 years of teaching.

A while ago I started to explore the roots of exclusionary practices and how prevalent they are in our lives. The whole world seems engaged in one form of exclusion or another, making the planet a more dangerous place due to our advanced weaponry. Many of the young men who became school shooters had been excluded by their peers. Exclusionary practices have haunted almost every group, including psychoanalytic societies and institutes.

Exclusion is the first thing that happens to us all. Pushed out of a safe, comfortable womb where nothing was expected of us, we are forced to face the world. After a period of time, we are denied the breast or bottle that gave us that blissful feeling of oneness. Some babies graduated to the cup with ease or at least we adults like to see it that way. And we will never really know if part of the infant's willingness is based on the wish to please and the praise involved. Yes, independence is exciting but there is always a pull backwards. Sometimes the pull is countered by a reactive motion forward. Those who get their thrills by gambling, and those who feel soothed by drugs are trying to find solutions to this wish to be cared for and ways to conquer the pain of exclusion.

Next we had to face excluding a part of ourselves by using the toilet. This requires facing loss, disappearance, along with achieving mastery. But flushing away part of ourselves evokes many varied feelings.

Then, off to school most of us went – feeling a mixture of excitement and exclusion from our own homes. During those early years we all felt various degrees of exclusion by our parents who did things together that left us out. Sometimes siblings took their attention, leaving us excluded again.

And so it all began.

No matter how gentle or difficult those first years were – exclusion is a hallmark of development. Exclusions are inevitable and necessary for growth. We marvel at our toddlers who take huge delight in exerting their independence but, hopefully, with mother in sight. The child's love affair with the world is accompanied by the pull to the safety of merger. Conflict is born.

Adam and Eve expelled from the garden of Eden are prototypes. Biting the apple (infant biting the breast?) propelled them forward consequently excluding them from that heavenly, special place.

Life is necessarily built on exclusion and we repeat it over and over sometimes with creativity, sometimes with cruelty. Need I list the ways?

Clubs, cliques, frats, social classes, castes, farmer in the dell with the cheese standing alone, circle games, teams, all hierarchies, nations, contests, spelling bees, gymnastics, olympics, segregated public bathrooms, country clubs, political parties, organized crime and disorganized brutality, religions, and gangs, training analysts, all in the service of overcoming the loneliness of exclusion while at the same time excluding others. Our lives are repetitions of the original exclusions. One team has to be best by winning. We develop sportsmanship or we bear grudges. And we learn that aggression serves separation. But we also know that libido binds and I wonder how comfortable we are with our

loving natures. Perhaps the original exclusion is the template for life. Attachment studies are proving how crucial loving acceptance is to the formation of character.

People adjust to exclusion in various ways. Those whose exclusions were tempered by steady, empathic love are less prone to exclude others in hurtful ways. Those who felt prized by one parent over the other, or felt like a favored child, or teacher's pet pay the price with feelings of entitlement and with guilt. And those who were traumatized by exclusion find ways to retreat completely or to wreak vengeance.

I am not suggesting that the world order be any different because we all share the effects of primary exclusion. But I wonder if we become more aware, we can consciously and willfully re-think and soften some of our practices. As psychoanalysts we should understand the hurt and destructiveness of exclusion. Do you remember how exciting it felt like as a kid to be chosen to be on a team or how painful it was not to be? It had nothing to do with winning after you were on the team - it was the feeling of inclusion that mattered most.

But sometimes inclusion blinds us. Being "in" means that others must be "out." We can all rationalize that being chosen or "in" requires effort or skill or specific talent. Not everyone has the right to use a scalpel. Training is required. As psychoanalysts we must be cautious about stamps of approval because our forefathers were often wrong. We have a history of excluding those who disagree and this prevents us from learning. Freud was a master at that. And we have a history of ordaining certain people to measure others based on scant evidence. Our gatekeepers are too often insensitive and intent upon their jobs. I suggest we monitor the arrogance that often creeps in when we are in the position of measuring another. This especially hold true in psychoanalytic education.

When an institute accepts a student – a learner – it becomes its duty to offer a generative atmosphere. Most institutes assign or make available mentors, readers, teachers, supervisors, liaisons etc. to guide the learner along the path. If one or more of these aforementioned people sees a difficulty, he or she is in the best position to discuss it with the mentee, face to face, individually, privately and in the service of growth. Sometimes a learner may not be able for whatever reason to make use of this guidance so rather than blame, we must explore.

I would like to offer a few ideas that would effectively make psychoanalytic institutes thrive by lessening their exclusionary practices, practices that often do more harm than good.

Recognize that accepted candidates are adults. Enlist them instead of infantilizing them.

Respect their ability to select an appropriate analyst and the privacy that this entails.

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Reassess the role of progression committees. Either do away with them or change their mission to promoting growth. Too many mistakes have been made by evaluative groups of three or more people, basing their decisions on one or two meetings. Consider using written exams so that group dynamics and individual proclivities are avoided.

Rotate committees on education. Here is especially where chairs can rotate off so that new people can participate. This practice favors inclusion.

Welcome and interact with other institutes in order to expand ideas. Each institute might have a sister institute.

Last but certainly not least, change prevailing atmospheres from measurement to generativity; from isolationism to inclusivity; from hierarchy to democracy; from superiority to humility; from the insistence on being right to the agreement that there is no right; from complacency to searching; from 'looking down on' to partnering; and always exercising respect, patience, tact, self- reflection, and manners.

These are just a few things that would improve morale at all psychoanalytic centers/societies/institutes in my opinion - and good morale inspires growth. If psychoanalysis is to survive, a new ethos must be embraced - one that centers on inclusivity and generosity. Clinging to the old is sure to sink the profession.