

#9. Estelle Shane:

The dichotomies posed on this panel each addresses the paradox of the enormous demands placed on creating curricula for today's psychoanalytic institutes — curricula that, ideally, encompass contemporary pluralism and a grounding in relevant scientific fields, while also conveying the history and basic concepts of Freudian theory. And all in four years!

At ICP, which views itself as a contemporary pluralistic psychoanalytic institute with requisite training standards, we have struggled to generate a curriculum that includes **required** courses on Freud and classical theory, attachment theory, object relations theory, self psychology, intersubjective systems theory, and Relational theory, while offering a variety of **elective** courses with more intense examination of important psychoanalytic contributors, in-depth study of particular frames of reference, as well as neurobiology, infant research, and dynamic systems theory. But, as we all know, there is never enough time.

Despite difficulties, including inevitable candidate confusion, some of us argue for a pluralistic approach for both course offerings and instruction itself. Seminar instructors make the effort to compare, investigate, and bridge alternative conceptual formulations coming from differing psychoanalytic perspectives, being careful not to minimize important distinctions between and among constructs embedded in differing theoretical traditions.

A given psychoanalytic perspective must be taught and learned first from within that perspective. Yet we take the approach that the biases and deficiencies inevitably found within any single theoretical approach might be corrected by integrating ideas available in alternative models. To my view, we should seek to develop a sensibility among candidates that minimizes the certainty and complacency inherent in a dedication to one framework, and the suspicion and hostility that such theoretical loyalty encourages towards competing frameworks.

While we all prefer one way of conceptualizing over another, we know that individual theories, even our own, are only alternative narratives, alternative ways of organizing or conceptualizing understanding, and that each theory inevitably has its advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, to eliminate one perspective means losing something that the discarded perspective embodies.

Candidates should be supported early in their training to recognize that differences among patients demand that we possess alternative ways of thinking. Candidates should be encouraged to consider that what

emerges conceptually in the clinical engagement as appropriate for therapeutic efficacy with one patient may be very different from what is fitting for another patient. Openness and flexibility are required.

How does one hold all these constructs from different models as potentially useful, though they derive from incommensurable conceptual frameworks?

I believe this requires featuring dynamic systems theory in the curriculum. A systems sensibility helps us hold in mind a variety of conceptualizations, however apparently opposed their conceptual origins may seem. As a particular and salient moment emerges in the clinical dyad, the experiences these concepts elucidate may come to mind as apt descriptors of the exchange.

A candidate schooled in a systems sensibility may be in a better position to address what is happening in the moment, with more choice. This is because a systems theory exists on a different level of conceptualization — an explanatory, theoretical level, in contrast to clinical concepts drawn from singular theories, such as selfobject experience, projective identification, or doer/done-to dynamics. These latter concepts exist on a different level of abstraction, a phenomenological, experiential level.

I believe that holding a systems model as overarching theory, and the concept that emerges in the patient-analyst system as phenomenological experience, benefits a candidate by increasing the sense of analytic flexibility and vitality, openness to change, spontaneity in the moment, and the discovery and creation of novelty through all channels of communication.