

Summary of APsaA Institute Survey

February 2018

The future of the field of psychoanalysis is interwoven with the ongoing success of APsaA's institutes. At each institute, new candidates are trained, those who have practiced for years can pass on their wisdom, and in building the next generation of those who practice psychoanalysis, an institute also contributes to the improved mental health of individuals in their local community. Each institute is faced with specific opportunities and challenges that reflect both their own local circumstances as well as factors that face the entire field of psychoanalysis.

As APsaA continues to explore how it can best serve and support those who practice psychoanalysis, and the field as a whole, a key place of focus is to build stronger relationships with its institutes. Through dialogue and inquiry, APsaA can serve as a hub of collective thought and perspective, bringing together the viewpoints that each institute faces daily and identifying where those concerns and opportunities overlap.

In the late Fall of 2017, APsaA sent a brief survey to its institutes, requesting their local perspectives on the field as a whole, and psychoanalytic education specifically. They were asked to respond to three questions:

- What are the top three challenges facing psychoanalysis today?
- What are the top three challenges facing psychoanalytic education today?
- What is the greatest opportunity where we should focus to see our profession flourish?

Each institute decided whether to participate in the survey, and whether they would have one representative respond or share the survey with multiple representatives. 34 individual responses were received, representing 18 institutes. Institutes were given the choice whether to submit a single response reflecting their overall institute viewpoint or to allow multiple responses/perspectives from their institute. As such, the feedback below should be taken as qualitative responses from the field rather than a quantitative/statistically-significant research study.

Although the questions were asked separately, many of the answers echoed between them. As such, this report summarizes the perspectives that were submitted whose themes were repeated time and time again.

CHALLENGES

Lack of Public Awareness/Lack of Relevance – Garnering the largest number of responses was the need to raise general awareness in the public eye of psychoanalysis as a viable and meaningful treatment approach that is not defined by antiquated perceptions. No matter where an institute is located, a national (global?) campaign for the face of psychoanalysis today is a universal desire.

“Lack of public awareness that psychoanalysis is alive and well, and a general impression that it is unscientific, passe, not effective, etc. We need to be actively combatting these impressions, including with outcome studies...”

“To communicate to the mental health professions and the public at large the value of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic intervention and psychoanalytic thought as a foundation for understanding social, cultural, and political life.”

“We haven’t developed enough capacity to communicate with the lay public. There is misinformation in the public dialogue, characterizing psychoanalysis as stuck in 19th century Vienna.”

“Liberating psychoanalysis from the exclusion and marginalization of cultural history and its trauma may revitalize its creative potential and relevance to the culture in contrast to its shrinking identity in our current culture.”

Fewer Patients – Correlated to the concern above, but distinctive is not just the need for greater awareness, but for those who could benefit from psychoanalysis treatment to seek it out. Finding patients crossed into areas such as stronger connections with correlated mental health fields, medical fields as well as universities and medical training institutions. If there is not a demand for the application of psychoanalysis in treatment, why will those considering candidacy enter the process?

“Countering negative attitudes or the absence of awareness in the general public which has limited members’ ability to have a viable analytic practice.”

Lack of Internal Organizational Cohesion – Some of these comments reflected infighting within APsaA, some within institutes, and many weren’t specific as to which. No matter the audience, there is a general sentiment that to succeed, the field as a whole has to move past elitism and overall tone and commentary that is perceived as attacking, negative, or demeaning. The APsaA listserv was a particular platform cited as an example of where these incidents can be found.

“Continuing internal bickering within APsaA, distracting us from addressing our “PR” problem as a united front.”

“Psychoanalysts being focused more on internal politics than joining together to communicate the deep and unique power of psychoanalysis.”

‘Embittered colleagues in their 70’s and 80’s who are stuck fighting battles from old wounds and/or old cultures, lashing out in destructive posts, rather than engaging their colleagues (candidates, TA/SA faculty) to collegially embrace a new period of creative thinking about psychoanalysis.’

“The listserv reveals the persistent ad hominem attacks dismissive of other points of view and calls to a return to an ossified orthodoxy.”

“Divisive and “rush to judgement” rhetoric on the listserv. It is inflammatory and turns members off. Many of my colleagues rarely open their emails any longer. And those who do, like myself, have little inclination to join in listserv discussions. As one of my colleagues has said to me, “To do so is masochistic. It changes nothing.”

“There is really only one challenge – trying to unify the disparate elements in a respectful manner.”

Affordability of Psychoanalysis – Simply put, there is an obstacle to getting psychoanalytic treatment covered by insurance. This barrier makes treatment inherently higher cost for the patient, limiting treatment either to those who have the greatest means, or to psychoanalysts who are willing to take minimal compensation. In either scenario, those who could truly benefit from treatment may not have

access, and those in the field who can provide may not be able to afford to do so while still making a livable salary.

“Obtaining reasonable fee for sessions given length and expense of training.”

“Lack of support, an outright opposition from several quarters: insurance companies, pharma, academia...”

Research Demonstrating Efficacy of Psychoanalysis – Significant research findings that demonstrate the impact of a psychoanalytic treatment approach are needed if psychoanalysis is going to have greater integration into broader academic training settings as well as the wider medical field. Without the research as proof of the value of treatment, it will be a harder task to resolve many of the issues cited above.

“Lack of research support for psychoanalytically informed treatments.”

“Recognizing and further establishing the scientific (“biological”) basis of psychoanalytic treatment. This includes establishing methods of comparing differing theories of technique via clinical material.”

Need for Candidates – Institutes, on the whole, are struggling with recruiting and enrolling new candidates. The entire pipeline to candidacy needs to be considered from how early psychoanalysis should be introduced as a field to pursue to how to provide an entry path for those interested by not yet willing to fully commit to candidacy. There was an acknowledgement of the aging nature of analysts, APsA membership, leaders and faculty.

“Obtaining quality candidates for training.”

“The value of psychoanalytic education needs to be communicated to mental health professionals, especially early career professionals. A psychoanalytic education should be available to those in allied disciplines who can apply this knowledge to work in their professional or academic roles.”

In the area of candidacy, one specific challenge cited was:

Financial/Time Struggles of Candidates – The cost of training is significant, and a number of institutes reflected that it was prohibitive for candidates. Additionally, the constraints of work/life balance of candidates are often out of sync with the elders that run many institutes. The balance of wanting to support candidates that may not be able to fully afford training while still requiring income to run an institute is difficult at best.

“More and more we find that candidates who would like to be analysts cannot find the money or time to do it.”

“We need to design more flexible models for educating a mobile and financially strapped generation.”

“We need to find a way to address ourselves to a generation that does not share the work/life balance commitments of the elders who generally control the institutes.”

Diversity – A prominent theme was the need to see greater diversity. While the definition of diversity varied from response to response, what seemed to be universal is that a more inclusive field will only be possible if those of all backgrounds and demographics can see themselves as part of psychoanalytic community, as well as having a path to a voice of leadership. Additionally, a diversity of thought and

background was shared as a need – whether that meant from study as a social worker or psychologist to the wide range of perspectives on psychoanalysis and how it connects with psychodynamic psychotherapy.

“Improve the diversity of candidate groups and faculty at APsaA institutes, and arrange panels of diverse presenters, so that the value of cultural differences in viewpoint can be demonstrated.”

“Encourage diverse candidates cases and develop the availability of diverse consultants for candidates to consider different cultural/racial/ethnic/religious aspects of the case, even if they are not analysts.”

Not Enough Teachers/SA/TA – As the field continues to age, there are not enough faculty to replace those who are retiring from their posts at their institutes. Additionally, there are institutes where there are not enough supervising analysts or training analysts to accommodate the number or needs of candidates. Overall, there were two areas raised:

- 1. Instructor Recruitment & Retention** – How do institutes find enough faculty to replace those that can no longer keep the same schedule? For many institutes that ask faculty to teach gratis, is this a viable model going forward? How do institutes evaluate and align not only those who have the greatest depth of knowledge, but those who also are the most adept at teaching/imparting that knowledge?

“Masochistic norm of teaching for free.”

“Finding ways to pay teachers so as to increase professionalism.”

“...It is often a challenge to find teachers, especially if we want to start a class while one is already going. Some who can teach are too committed elsewhere including other facets of institute or national functioning. Perhaps technology can be part of the solution allowing us to tap into instructors or classes at other Institutes.”

- 2. Overall SA/TA System** – There were diverse responses around the supervising and training analyst systems, from the need to abolish the TA system, to need to provide greater flexibility in the system, to a general sense that the criteria for TA appointment have become blurred. A host of thoughts and approaches was expressed, with an underlying call for clarity and, where possible, consensus.

“Blurring of criteria for appointing training and supervising analysts.”

“TA system antiquated and cumbersome, creates a shrinking of viable growth potential in our field.”

“No freedom to choose one’s own analyst and supervisors if they are not accredited by the institute.”

“Altering the TA system so that more analysts would opt in, and prospective candidates would have a much broader choice for their personal analysis and supervision.”

Improved Teaching Techniques and Curricula – While institute teachers have a robust knowledge of the subject matter, a number of respondents shared the opportunity to develop training on modern teaching techniques to help better impart that knowledge. A focus on training teachers on using modern technology in their classes could help increase the impact of their courses. Additionally, institutes expressed a desire for updated curricula, considering such factors as how/when to teach Freud or the

integration of neuroscientific work and/or psychodynamic psychotherapy into psychoanalytic work & clinical practice.

"We need to teach teachers how to teach. How to enliven their classes rather than just read and discuss the article."

"Developing new models of education that continue to support the development of a psychoanalytic identity while sharing educational resources with scholars and psychotherapists."

"Many curricula start with historical Freud; it may be better to have introductory courses in addressing contemporary clinical questions – psychoanalytic understanding/contributions of substance (e.g. opioid abuse), early childhood education, early parenting support for depressed mothers, etc. and do not only use U.S. but international views on these topics."

"Develop educational paradigms that reflect the psych-social to expand one's identity as a psychoanalyst and citizen. Linking culture and psychoanalysis literature as apart of psychoanalytic training, unsettling the boundaries of the psych-social to create greater connection to the world at large (global community)."

GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES

Morale – As institutes see aging faculty, fewer cases, a struggle for candidates, and constrained resources, how do they create a culture of hope and excitement for psychoanalysis that will reinvigorate and revitalize their community and the field?

Engaging the Public/Local Community – Whether it is through writing books or articles, public relations campaigns, or creating/working in local, free clinics, the greatest opportunity cited in the feedback is to better engage the public to build awareness of and need for psychoanalytic treatment and points of view. This would coincide with the desire to see a diversity in patients and candidates alike.

"A well organized and perhaps even well-funded project to educate the lay and professional communities around us about the value and effectiveness of analysis and to overcome our current image as a dinosaur."

"More efforts to promote psychoanalysis in our communities as an accessible, effective, and valuable mental health treatment."

"I would invest in the most gifted writers and speakers to develop a campaign of engagement with media outlets, humanities departments, medical schools, psychology departments, and social work, and LPC training centers."

"Promoting the recognition and value of what psychoanalysis can offer patients, community organizations, and society in general."

Start Early – Many institutes expressed a desire to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of psychoanalysis early – whether that is in high school or university curricula. Planting the seeds of understanding earlier in a student's academic pursuit could lead to a greater number of candidates once they reach a stage of study where they qualify for consideration.

“The single greatest opportunity to focus is on engaging the next generation: training outreach. Our flourishing will emerge from engaging young psychotherapists who may develop to analytic training...we need to invest energy, resources, and creativity into engaging early-career psychoanalytic psychotherapists.”

“Reaching younger clinicians and scholars to be exposed to and join in psychoanalytic community.”

Inclusive and Respectful – On the whole, institutes want to see a field that has fewer hierarchies and greater mutual respect. This is a universal desire – at that national level in APsaA itself as well as echoed in the individual institutions in their leadership and programs they create.

“Decrease hierarchy so as to increase mutual respect.”

Larger Footprint – Part and parcel of a desire for inclusivity is the potential for APsaA to be greater than what it is today. Institutes shared the idea to see APsaA form stronger relationships with non-affiliated institutes. Additionally, they expressed a desire to see an expanded connection of psychoanalysis with those outside of North America, perhaps through a stronger integration with IPA activities.

“Expand the perspective from U.S. to international differences in theoretical approaches to analytic treatment and involved candidates with IPA workshops and presentations when possible.”

“Help find ways to communicate with unaffiliated organizations and build bridges with them.”

Focus on Finance – How can institutes and APsaA continue to shape insurance coverage to make psychoanalysis more accessible for patients and profitable for analysts? How can institutes ease the cost of training while demonstrating the financially solvent career that will be found once training is complete?

“Let’s be more generous by offering reduced fee or free psychoanalysis to candidates. Reasonable charges for classes should be the major cost of training rather than the lengthy and expensive training analysis. Younger people have long careers ahead of them. Senior analysts who have substantial practices need to foster the younger generation. Otherwise psychoanalysis will disappear due to the limitations of age (older therapists who enter institutes when they can afford it but who have limited time to teach and practice) and affordability.”

Focus on Future – Many of the issues to resolve are based on past disagreements, disparity, or stagnation that has left psychoanalysis in a moment of recovery rather than leadership. The greatest opportunity is to keep a focus on the future, respecting and honoring what has brought the field to this point, but building for the needs of analysts and society tomorrow.

“De-idealizing the psychoanalysis of the past and rethinking its future.”

“Psychoanalysis continues to be a vibrant and creative field. A search of the PEP web reveals the amount of rich thinking and dialogue that characterizes psychoanalysts of all levels of seniority. The people who make up our field are our greatest resource, and the field will continue to flourish if we engage our members productively, while creatively engaging our differences and tensions.”