Thirty Methods To Destroy The Creativity Of Psychoanalytic Candidates
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The author explores formal aspects of psychoanalytic education relevant to the fostering or inhibiting of creativity in the work of candidates. He refers to thirty features of psychoanalytic institutes that inhibit candidates' creativity and, by implication, illustrate problems in psychoanalytic education that require our attention. These features include systematic slowing down of institutional progression of candidates, repetitive and unquestioning teaching of key papers by Freud, monolithic tendencies regarding theoretical approaches, isolation of candidates from the professional and scientific activities of the psychoanalytic society, accentuation of the hierarchical relations among the psychoanalytic faculty, graduation rituals, discouragement of original contributions by candidates, intellectual isolation of institutes, lack of full presentation of clinical work by senior members of the faculty, neglect of studies of controversies regarding psychoanalytic technique, ‘paranoiogenic’ features of the relationship among faculty and regarding requirements for candidates, the ‘convoy’ system, neglect of exploration of the scientific and cultural boundaries and applications of psychoanalysis and the effects of institutional conflicts around the appointment of training analysts.

Some years ago, in the context of a discussion with a colleague about ways to increase the creativity of candidates in psychoanalytic training, that colleague told me, with a smile: ‘Our problem is not so much to foster creativity but to try not to inhibit the creativity naturally stimulated by the nature of our work’ (Lore Schacht, personal communication). Her comment triggered memories and observations in the course of my studying, teaching and participating in psychoanalytic education in different psychoanalytic societies and institutes. I decided to gather these observations, discuss them with colleagues, and finally, put together in a negative format what is essentially a plea for the fostering of psychoanalytic creativity. For a positive format of this study, I refer the reader to a 1986 paper in which I present a systematic analysis of the relationship between organisational structure and functioning of psychoanalytic institutes, on the one hand, and their effects on psychoanalytic education on the other. As an excellent overview of present-day problems in psychoanalytic education, Wallerstein's (1993) summary of the fifth IPA Conference of training analysts in Buenos Aires may serve as an important background to what follows.

The following list of ways to inhibit the creativity of psychoanalytic candidates is not expected to be exhaustive, although, I hope, it covers dominant problems. Here, then, is my advice on how to inhibit creativity effectively in the learning process in our institutes:

1. Slow down the processing of applications; delay accepting candidates; slow down the provision of information to candidates:

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this will help to slow them down in turn. If candidates' progression is systematically slow and cumbersome, if their written case material is subjected to numerous revisions and, particularly, if long periods of waiting in uncertainty become a regular part of their progression experience, they will tend, in turn, to become slow to respond and to take initiatives. The slower the process of acceptance and progression, the more candidates themselves will avoid the final steps to graduation, autonomy, and joining the membership of the society; and, of course, the longer it will take them to produce scientific contributions, if indeed they ever do.

2. Freud's writings can be put to good use in damping candidates' interest in thinking for themselves. Instructors should insist that candidates read Freud carefully, in historical order, completely and exhaustively, making sure that the candidates learn exactly what his theory was at any point. Teachers should convey the clear message that any critical analysis of Freud's conclusions has to be postponed until students have read Freud completely (and until they have much more experience and knowledge in the psychoanalytic field). To begin with, they need to know what Freud thought, and as much of it as possible: it is helpful, therefore, to disconnect the teaching of Freud's writings from any outside or contemporary critique of his work, or from contemporary controversial issues, or from clinical problems of burning actuality. The protection of Freud's work from contamination with other theories or critique will do wonders to decrease gradually candidates' interest in further developments of psychoanalytic thinking.

It is important for the instructor to keep in mind that it is the conclusions that Freud arrived at that have to be taught and memorised, not the process of Freud's thinking: in fact, if the students acquire a grasp of the methodology of Freud's thinking, which was unavoidably revolutionary, this may lead them to dangerous identifications with his originality and thus defeat the purpose of the isolated and exhaustive focus on his conclusions (Green, 1991).

3. A helpful reinforcement of the deterioration of any possible excitement about Freud's writing may be achieved by assigning some of Freud's most creative and important papers at the beginning of each new seminar, going in great detail over everything Freud said in these by now familiar articles and stressing his conclusions. This reassuring repetition of permanent aspects of Freud's works, combined with a very special emphasis given them in the curriculum, desensitise the students to his contribution, a lulling process much enhanced by asking the students to write extensive summaries of Freud's work, or to summarise to the rest of the class what everybody has already read. One may further the process by setting up specific examinations on the content of the entire work of Freud as a precondition for progressing to other seminars.

4. Be very attentive to candidates who tend to question the views of any major theoretician or contributor who is a favoured author of your particular psychoanalytic institution. Convey clearly the message that critical thinking is welcome as long as it leads to a confirmation of your dominant leader's views. Make sure to reward those students who are excited and fully convinced by what you assign to them (except, of course, the contributions of 'deviant schools': these should be expected to arouse appropriate incredulity and indignation among the students). If, tactfully but consistently, you show your appreciation of those students who agree with the official view of your institution, the temptations to develop new, different, questioning or divergent views may gradually disappear (Giovannetti, 1991; Infante, 1991; Lussier, 1991).

5. Try to protect your candidates from participating too early in scientific meetings of your psychoanalytic society, or from being invited to gatherings where respected colleagues may sharply disagree with each other. This may be justified by pointing to the
advisability that the personal training analysis be undisturbed by premature external influences, particularly those that might disturb the anonymity of the training analyst. Within a small psychoanalytic society, it is always possible to justify forbidding candidates to attend psychoanalytic society meetings because such a small group might not be able to avoid contacts between candidates and their analysts outside the sessions, and this justifies perfectly the isolation of the institute teaching from the active scientific world of psychoanalytic thinking.

6. Carefully control optional courses: these are often used by junior members of the faculty to present new and challenging ideas. Watch carefully over optional seminars in general and remain alert to the possibility that they may disturb the harmonious, integrated approach to psychoanalysis that corresponds to your society’s or institute’s dominant views.

7. Maintain a strict separation between undergraduate and postgraduate seminars. Fortunately, most psychoanalytic institutions have an intuitive understanding of the importance of avoiding a premature mixing of candidates and graduate analysts in the same seminars: the candidates are too likely to discover uncertainties and questioning attitudes in the graduates that candidates are learning to suppress. This may disturb a healthy idealisation of the effectiveness of psychoanalytic training, and the illusion of enormous differences between candidates and graduates.

8. The preservation in the students of a healthy respect for their elders may be achieved by assembling teams of senior training analysts and junior analysts interested in becoming training analysts to teach certain courses or seminars. Keep a clear hierarchy of older and younger members of the faculty. If the junior analyst respectfully bows to the senior analyst’s views, and conveys by his total behaviour his unquestioning acceptance of senior authority; if, in fact, he shows uncertainty as to the extent to which he may take initiatives in teaching any particular seminar, the message of the need to accept and not to question established authority will be strengthened. You may accentuate hierarchy by simple means: for example, reserving the front seats of professional meetings for senior faculty.

9. Strengthen the graduation rituals by whatever intelligent means you find: this is a field with great potentialities. For example, you may ask the candidates to write up a case for graduation, and then subject their manuscripts to numerous revisions and corrections. Through this experience the candidates acquire a healthy respect for the enormous difficulties in writing an acceptable paper for publication. Or else, require the candidate to present a paper before the psychoanalytic society. The discussants should be the most senior members of that society (who may not have written a paper themselves for a long time). Their demanding expectations of what a scientific paper should include may be communicated by the exhaustive criticism of the candidate’s presentation. Or else, a committee constituted by such senior psychoanalysts may convey the same message. In some countries, the same effect has been obtained by a secret vote on the part of all the society members of whether a candidate’s paper is acceptable to fulfil criteria for admission to the psychoanalytic society itself. When significant political divisions within the society make young graduates automatically drift to the power group of their own training analysts, the qualifying scientific paper may become an excellent source of anxiety about the dangers connected with scientific work (Bruzone et al., 1985).

10. Stress the message that it takes many years of clinical experience before one’s understanding of psychoanalytic theory and technique, not to speak of applications of psychoanalysis to other fields, are profound and solid enough to justify one’s attempt to contribute to the science of psychoanalysis. Raise delicately but early the question as to what extent candidates’ attempts not only to present papers but to have them published(!) may reflect unresolved oedipal competitiveness

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or narcissistic conflicts. If junior psychoanalysts publish sparsely, and make sure to have senior members of their society approve their manuscripts before they submit them for publication, this custom should become common knowledge among the candidates, and it may reinforce their fear of publishing. Naturally, avoid stimulating candidates to put any new, original idea of their own into writing: writing should be a chore, an obligation, never a pleasure, an early source of pride in contributing to the science of psychoanalysis while still being a student (Britton, 1994).

11. It may be very helpful to point out that psychoanalysis is understood and carried out properly only in places far away from your own institution, and preferably in a language not known by many of your students. If the demands of the training are such that the students would not be able to spend an extended part of the time in that distant ideal land, they may become convinced that it is useless to attempt to develop psychoanalytic science in a place so far from where the true and only theory and technique are taught. And that conviction will last.

12. Candidates should be discouraged from premature visits to other societies or institutes, from participating in congresses and meetings or in analytic work in other institutions. This holds true particularly for those gatherings in your own city, region or country, and complements the idealisation of places that are far away or have a different language and are inaccessible to your candidates. Fortunately, some psychoanalytic societies and institutes have erected powerful walls against intrusion by foreign visitors—except the very occasional ones to be shot down in a well-prepared meeting; and in many parts of the world it would be very difficult for a candidate to transfer from one institute to another, from one country to another, and even from one city to another without having to overcome multiple obstacles. This helps to avoid potentially damaging comparisons, the awareness of psychoanalytic institutes' and societies' experimentation with new educational methodologies, and the contamination by a questionable spirit of change and innovation.

13. Assign always double the number of publications that one could reasonably expect students to absorb from one seminar to the next. Ask them to present summaries to their colleagues, test the extent to which they have read these papers in detail, and as mentioned before, don't forget to throw in those papers of Freud's that they have already read in many seminars. Another helpful message may be not to assign any paper that has been published less than twenty years ago: this conveys the message that the really important contributions have already been made, and that little is to be expected from recent or new developments in theory or technique, including, of course, any ideas that might be germinating in the minds of the students.

14. In contrast to some institutes that leave the decisions of whether candidates should attend seminars given by their own training analysts open to the joint exploration of that issue by that analyst and his analysand, make it a strict principle that candidates should never participate in a seminar given by their own training analyst. In fact, make sure that candidates do not show up at meetings, panels or any other professional gatherings where the transference might be disturbed by objective information about their analyst's professional work, lest the anonymity desirable for analytic training be disturbed. Anonymity fosters unanalyzable idealisation and healthy insecurity (Kernberg, 1986).

15. It may be very helpful to give prominence, in the reading lists, to the works of the leading members of your own institution, ideally to be taught not by themselves but by their own current or former students. Make sure to assign concordant papers that reinforce the views of the local leaders, and only include one or two dissident views—in order to expose their weaknesses. This
focus on the reference lists may be complemented by the assignment of a scientific paper or a case study as part of the progression requirements, with a careful emphasis on the need to quote the locally preferred theoreticians in support of the observations of the student's paper.

16. Ideally, exposure of the students to alternative psychoanalytic schools should be avoided for as long as possible. In seminars for advanced students particular papers representing dissident or deviant approaches should be reviewed briefly, in the context of balancing opposite views, and appropriately criticised. It is very helpful to invite leaders of different viewpoints for brief seminars which may, as an exception, include students, graduates and course instructors. The latter may participate to make sure that the students can witness the merciless dismantling of the representative of the alien view. One-day seminars with a leading dissident whose views are attacked in a respectful but unwavering way may contribute to the reassurance that the local school knows best, that the student's mind can rest at peace and that new ideas, though dangerous, can be robbed of their subversive potential.

17. Always have the least experienced candidates present cases in the presence of more experienced ones and of the faculty. It should never be the most experienced analysts who present a case to a candidate's group: the uncertainties of the work and the inevitable mistakes of senior analysts may erase the sense of self-criticism, the fear over reprimands and the natural modesty of candidates who are starting their professional work. The conviction that graduates do much better work than candidates, that training analysts do much better work than graduates and that the older training analysts do much better work than the younger ones assures the self-doubts of the candidates.

18. Make sure that some unusually critical or rebellious candidates who threaten the atmosphere of harmony at seminars, challenge their senior instructors or dare to talk publicly against training analysts in the presence of their analysands (likely, of course, to report such conversations in their sessions) are gently kept back or stimulated to resign. It is not too difficult to do this, for example, by long delays in approving their supervised analytic cases. One may also arrange meetings of their seminar leaders in which the problematic candidates are critically discussed. The information about these discussions gets back to the candidates in question only indirectly through personal advisors or ombudsmen, who, in friendly ways, convey the negative attitude that exists in the institute towards them. If a candidate receives sufficient information through third and fourth parties of what is said about him, it will eventually either change his attitude about the institute in the desired direction or else it will stimulate him to resign. Once a candidate has resigned or been asked to resign, don't mention his name again, and maintain a discreet silence about the whole affair: the message that something frightening and dangerous has occurred about which, mercifully, nobody wants to talk, will have a powerful impact on the student body.

19. In recent years, a wonderful new method for dampening the excitement with psychoanalytic training has been devised in the form of an introductory informal, preparatory year of classes: here the entire psychoanalytic theory and technique may be briefly summarised at a simple, introductory college level, already referring to the highlights of Freud's thinking that will be discussed in detail later on, as well as providing the students with a brief introductory history of psychoanalysis from its beginning to the present, while stressing that all of these areas in which their knowledge will be deepened later on. As many candidates will have studied psychoanalytic theory already at various levels, the process of dulling by repetition will begin already at this introductory level. The effect of a sense of not really knowing fully what will be taught and impatient wishes for deeper exploration may
be induced in this way, together with a routinised simplification of basic concepts that will rob them of the excitement when, much later, they are explored in detail. And, naturally, you may use this method for inducing the loss of interest by any course taught at an ‘introductory’ level, insinuating that the ‘real stuff’ will be presented elsewhere.

20. Don't teach an up-to-date course on psychoanalytic technique. Concentrate the teaching of psychoanalytic technique on Freud's introductory papers on the psychoanalytic method and on his case studies: the Ratman, the Wolfman, Dora, Little Hans will, of course, already have been covered in the comprehensive study of Freud's work; but now, these papers may be read again with the purpose of teaching general principles of psychoanalytic technique. If the candidates acquire knowledge from elsewhere (as, unfortunately, is almost unavoidable at this time) about new developments and alternative approaches to the psychoanalytic process, their anxiety over their own lack of familiarity with the different approaches of, say, ego-psychology, the French schools, the British schools etc. will motivate an increased insecurity about their work. This will dampen their confidence in contributing to the challenges that our present-day patient population presents to us. If, at the same time, the subtle message is conveyed that psychoanalytic work is really an art that will be mastered intuitively and that growth and intuition will depend on the progress in their personal analysis and in supervision, this anxiety may maintain its helpful inhibitory effects for a long period of time (Arlow, 1991).

21. Supervisors may carry out a crucial function in inhibiting candidates' trust in their own work and in the possibility of learning by means of their own experience. It is important that supervisors talk as little as possible. In fact, it may help if the candidate experiences a natural continuity between being a patient in analysis and the relationship with his supervisor. The supervisor's careful and silent listening to the candidate's presentation of work with his patients, with an occasional comment illustrating what the candidate has done wrong, may keep the candidate in a healthy uncertainty and humility regarding his work. His effort to construct, for himself, the mental frame that determines his supervisor's views will occupy his mind to the extent of influencing significantly his work with his patient. The candidate should feel that following his supervisor's advice without questioning and demonstrating to the supervisor that he has made the kind of interpretation that he understood the supervisor would have done will absolve him from severe mistakes in his work. This development will prevent the dangerous process by which the candidate might otherwise integrate for himself a theory and a personal frame of technique that evolves and changes creatively as he tests his views in the treatment situation while respecting the patient's autonomous development. If supervisors never come together to discuss their educational approaches to supervision, and if a complete split is maintained between the faculty who teach psychoanalytic technique and the supervisors of control cases, a productive chaos and confusion may bring about the candidates' awareness that it will take many years before they will master the analytic skills sufficiently to dare to contribute creatively to them.

22. A certain degree of paranoid fear, the counterpart of the idealisation processes fostered by the training analysis, permeates most psychoanalytic institutions—but it is important to remember, in fact, that all social organisations struggle with such developments. Such paranoid fear may contribute to discouraging candidates from independent work, from courageous initiatives, from challenging inquiries. Fortunately, it is not difficult to increase paranoid fears by multiple measures: the most effective has been the reporting by training analysts on the development of the candidates in analysis with them.

The tradition of reporting training analysts,
that is, of training analysts informing the education committee about the readiness of their analysands to start classes or to take a first control case etc. has been the most paranoiacogenic instrument invented as part of psychoanalytic education. It is regrettable that this instrument has now been eliminated and even declared unethical by most psychoanalytic institutes. Fortunately, the irrepressible tendency of some training analysts to indicate with slight gestures and without a word what their true feelings are about various candidates is still being kept alive: this attitude may be fostered by the use of the system of ‘unhooked telephones’, that is, the utilisation of what candidates tell their training analysts about what other candidates have been saying about them, as an inspiration for retaliatory moves on the part of these training analysts. At least, the fear about such consequences of a careless comment is a healthy support for paranoid developments (Dulchin & Segal, 1982a, b; Lifschutz, 1976).

23. Another perfectly legitimate method for increasing paranoid fearfulness in candidates is simply not conveying full and adequate information about requirements, expectations, rules, regulations and channels for redress of grievances. To begin with, don’t inform candidates regularly about how they are progressing, nor how they are viewed by teachers and faculty at large, and only let them know about their shortcomings or failures in the indirect ways already described. That supervisors should not be outspoken and explicit with their supervisees, so that these only learn indirectly from the candidate advisor, the director of the institute, or through the rumour-mill how they are being evaluated may contribute powerfully to reinforcing paranoid attitudes. It is perfectly legitimate to refer all candidates’ questions to the official brochure, and to avoid periodic information-gathering and information-sharing meetings. In some institutes, the director meets with the entire candidates’ body, which tends to produce an atmosphere of relaxation, autonomy and potential challenges of authority, all of which is dangerous!

24. The messages conveyed by senior leaders of the local psychoanalytic community are extremely important. Manifest outspoken indications of great insecurity and fearfulness over writing on the part of the most senior and powerful training analysts may foster a healthy identification with them. An even more effective example may be represented by the old fashioned but, fortunately, still existing ‘convoy’ system: a small number of very senior training analysts are the most desirable analysts in their local group, and have such a large number of candidates in personal analysis that they do not have any energy left to go to scientific meetings, let alone participate actively in the scientific work of the society. In order to protect the purity of the transference, they never open their mouths in public, and the mutual friendships, alliances as well as rivalries among those candidates fortunate to be in analysis with one of the great masters feeds into a stabilising idealisation and passivity. This model is highly effective in inhibiting candidates’ independent and critical thinking.

25. Try to maintain a relatively uniform student body in terms of the professional aspirations of your students. The true analyst should only wish to do psychoanalysis, to experience the freedom of working in his office with analytic patients, and should be very averse to diluting true analytic work by applying it to other aspects of his professional background such as carrying out psychotherapeutic work with severely regressed patients, or with children, or with psychotics, or participating in academic pursuits outside the psychoanalytic setting, carrying out research, assuming institutional leadership or participating in the arts.

Major challenges to psychoanalytic theory and technique occur at the boundary of our professional field, and the avoidance of investment in such boundary pursuits protects not only the purity of psychoanalytic work, but also the raising of challenging and potentially...
subversive questions regarding the limits as well as the applications of psychoanalysis. Avoid accepting and training the maverick who wishes to learn psychoanalysis to apply it to another realm of professional endeavour, the philosopher interested in the boundaries between philosophical and psychoanalytic understanding, the empirical researcher wishing to complement his neuropsychological background.

If such a protective selection of candidates has been carried out effectively, then you may tolerate a few ‘special students’ interested in the intellectual aspects of psychoanalysis. But you must clearly keep them separate from the true student body, limit their attendance at clinical seminars, and in short convey the message that a gulf exists between true analytic training and ‘secondary’ enterprises. Don’t give ‘partial clinical training’ to academicians from other fields, who always should feel your wrath about unauthorised clinical work and realise the impossibility of ever understanding psychoanalysis fully if they are not in a fully-fledged clinical training programme.

26. By the same token, all interdisciplinary scientific inquiry should be relegated to very advanced stages of the training, tucked into optional seminars in the last year of courses, once the basic identity of the candidate is assured enough to be able to withstand the diluting and potentially corroding effects of the psychoanalytic approach to art, societal problems, philosophy and research in the neurosciences. The opposite approach would be to bring in studies of peripheral sciences at a point when psychoanalytic theory is just beginning to be explored, for example, when psychoanalytic drive theory needs to be assimilated without contamination or questioning from alternative models or schools of human motivation: or else, relating psychoanalytic technique to alternative psychotherapeutic methods. Or, for example, when teaching the psychoanalytic theory of depression, premature introduction of the relationship between psychodynamics and biological determinants of depression might threaten an authentic psychoanalytic conviction.

27. Refer all problems involving teachers and students, seminars and supervision, all conflicts between candidates and the faculty ‘back to the couch’: keep in mind that transference acting out is a major complication of psychoanalytic training, and that there are always transference elements in all students' dissatisfactions. A candidate's inordinate pressure towards challenging questions, imaginative thinking or developing alternative formulations usually has profound transference roots and should be resolved in the personal analytic situation. This means also that the faculty has to remain united, that teachers faced with challenges from individual students or from the student body at large have to stick together. A united faculty provides a firm and stable structure against which the transference regression of the student body can be diagnosed and referred back to their individual psychoanalytic experience.

28. All the principles and recommendations outlined would not suffice if the teaching faculty were imbued with a spirit of creativity of their own. It is a difficult but not impossible task to inhibit the creativity of the faculty: faculty whose creativity is inhibited will be the best guarantee to reproduce such a process unconsciously in the relationship with the students. This is your major challenge: what can you do in the psychoanalytic society to inhibit the creativity of its members? Fortunately, long experience has taught us that the hierarchical extension of the educational process into the social structure of the psychoanalytic society is easily achieved and can be most effective. Here, what is particularly helpful is the development of powerful barriers at each step of the candidate’s progression from institute graduate to associate member of the society, to full member, to training analyst, to becoming a member of the education committee and/or in charge of a major ongoing seminar. Make sure that it is clear that the
allegiance to powerful political groups is more important in fostering such a development than actual professional or scientific achievements. Make sure that the ways to proceed from one step to the next are uncertain and indefinite enough to maintain a constant air of insecurity and paranoia in the society. Have frequent secret votes determining progression at all levels, with a clear message to everybody that such votes are influenced by the political processes in your group.

29. Above all, maintain discretion, secrecy and uncertainty about what is required to become a training analyst, how these decisions are made, where and by whom, and what kind of feedback or mechanism for redress of grievances anybody can expect who is fearful of the traumatic implications of being considered and rejected as a training analyst. The more the body of training analysts maintains itself apart and cohesive as the holders of authority and prestige, the more the inhibitory effects of the selection process will influence the entire educational enterprise. This is your most reliable and effective tool for keeping not only candidates but the entire faculty and the entire society in line.

30. Keep in mind, when uncertain about dangerous developments that may challenge proven methods of inhibiting the creativity of candidates, that the main objective of psychoanalytic education is not to help students to acquire what is known in order to develop new knowledge, but to acquire well-proven knowledge regarding psychoanalysis to avoid its dilution, distortion, deterioration and misuse.

Always keep in mind: where there is a spark there may develop a fire, particularly when this spark appears in the middle of dead-wood: extinguish it before it is too late!
References
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