

February 2023 Newsletter



From the Directors

By Sophia Coudenhove, LCSW-C



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In recent weeks, conversations and decisions around Dr. Lara Sheehi's engagement as a speaker at our February 11 roundtable have tested what we have been learning about inclusivity and belonging.

The purpose of this letter is twofold: To explain the reasoning behind the board's decision to uphold Dr Sheehi's invitation, and to share some thoughts around how, as a community, we might be able to bridge the gaps between different ways

of looking at inclusion and diversity at ICP+P.

As many of you know, several months ago we invited Dr Lara Sheehi, of George Washington University, to present at our February 11 anti-racism roundtable. Dr Sheehi is an esteemed clinician, writer and activist whose expertise includes the role of oppression in psychoanalysis. Recently, we learned that a pro-Israel advocacy group, citing unnamed students from her class, accused her of anti-Semitism. Some ICP+P members asked us to rescind, or postpone our invitation, others wanted the institute to support Dr Sheehi. The board engaged in earnest consideration and discussion and decided last weekend to continue with the event.

The vote was almost, though not completely, unanimous. Among reasons that board members gave were the following:

- False equivalence - equating political opinions with antisemitism, or anger with dehumanization, undermines the seriousness of the growing number of incidents where the safety of Jewish people is actually being threatened by bigotry and violence. We condemn not only antisemitism but also violence that has been committed against Muslims, Arabs and supporters of Palestinian rights.
- Context - where we see wider attempts by political forces to influence education, sometimes by means of unfair accusations of antisemitism.
- Dr Sheehi's contribution to psychotherapy and antiracism. Support from colleagues, who know her, including students who attended her class, other GW students and alumni and the board of Division 39 (the psychoanalytic branch of the American Psychological Association).
- Recognition of Dr Sheehi as an authority on Frantz Fanon and decolonizing psychotherapy, the subject of her ICP+P talk.
- Dialogue, and resistance to "cancel culture" - Some board members saw Dr Sheehi's comments as misguided or inappropriate but not deserving of silencing. Others saw them as manifestations of an appropriate rage that has its place in the context of oppression.
- Privacy - We did not consider tweets, quoted without context, from a private account, to be fair game.
- Good faith - Given that we were not privy to all the facts, we saw giving a respected

colleague the benefit of the doubt as far preferable to silencing her over anonymous and in many cases, vague, accusations.

Several board members voiced concerns and doubts.

- Trusting people when they say they have been harmed and thus giving the students the benefit of the doubt.
- Putting our decision on hold until the matter has been resolved.
- Valuing civil discourse, particularly in academia.
- Seeing Dr Sheehi's actions, as described in the allegations, as discriminatory.

We recognize that the choice to hold the roundtable is also causing pain, and that not everyone will want to continue a dialogue. But I hope with all my heart that such a dialogue will be possible.

As I try to summarize these views, I am aware that I risk rekindling what in some ways feels calmer than it did a week ago. But trying to keep our process transparent is a part of engagement and inclusion, which feels vital at this difficult and transitional time. As a community, we risk becoming polarized between those who want ICP+P to look at our own whiteness and those for whom this process feels judging and shaming. Some of this dichotomy has played out in how we have talked in recent weeks about Dr Sheehi, about racism and about antisemitism.

My questions are: Given that all of us want ICP+P to be more welcoming and inclusive, how can we reframe this division? How can we, leadership, board and members, help build the trust needed to create a sense of safety, without requiring comfort? And how can we make room for the justified anger of those who have been oppressed?

Warmly and gratefully,

Sophia
sophiacoudenhove@icloud.com



Short Course: "The Full Spectrum of Shame and Humiliation: High impact affectivity from the intrapsychic to the geopolitical, a workshop" featuring Richard A. Chefetz, MD
By Sophia Coudenhove

Dr. Richard Chefetz opened his conference with a picture of a Namibian Goshawk clinging to a branch. He described watching the bird grip this branch, with no intention of letting go. As we know from the therapy room, and from our own lives, so it is with the human propensity to hold on to shame and guilt.



Chefetz, a founding member of ICP+P, took us on an extensive tour that covered physiology, neuroscience, attachment theory, the mind-body connection, political bullying, and oppression. Linguistically, he emphasized the need for precision in distinguishing shame from humiliation, and emotion from affect. He sees shame as relational, always involving an actual or internal other.

Treatment, he said, includes compassionately identifying and containing affects that feel overwhelming; helping the patient understand shame-producing enactments as they occur in the session; staying alert to the use of anger and other intense affects as deflection against shame; tolerance of own's own experience of shame; and helping the patient recognize that shame has its use as a regulating emotion for relational distance.

He links shame, dissociation, and obsession, all of which he said protect people from feelings that can be unbearable in both character and intensity. If you follow people with unfathomable pain, he said, you find yourself studying shame, sadomasochism, and fear. Some of the group discussion centered on the pain of working with these feelings, and the shame that can come up for the therapist.

But he also spoke, with much warmth, about the ways in which seeing the effects of unspeakable sadism have helped him value the good in people. The opposite of shame, he said, is dignity and love, and these are what we are helping patients build in a relational context.



New Member Spotlight: Ryan Hofrichter, LPC



Ryan Hofrichter joined ICP+P for a very specific reason. He wanted to be a part of Alison Howard and Raquel Willerman's study group on **Racism in the Field of Psychotherapy**. "I wanted to be in a group that had a designated leader, and I was impressed with Alison and Raquel's facilitation," he said in a telephone interview. "I wanted to explore how I participate in racism, work to minimize these harms, and to do that work in community."

Ryan is a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice in Portland, Oregon. He was drawn to becoming a therapist via his own experience as a client. "I was interested in what my therapist was doing. It was compelling to me," he said.

Ryan works with individuals, couples, and groups and integrates a variety of psychodynamic, experiential, somatic, attachment, and trauma-informed approaches in his work. He is currently enrolled in the **Group Therapy Training Program** at The Psychotherapy Institute and the **Supervision Training Program** at The Washington School of Psychiatry.



UPCOMING ICP+P EVENTS

Roundtable Series Psychoanalysis Begins with Fanon

Featuring Lara Sheehi, PsyD (she/her)
Saturday, February 11th, 2022
3:00 – 5:00 pm ET
Online via Zoom

*This roundtable is appropriate for clinicians at all levels of experience.
No CEs will be offered.*

As part of our diversity and outreach work, ICP+P is pleased to offer a series of four round tables. We hope that these topical events will promote discussion and engagement about racism and other forms of exclusion in the mental health field. The intent of a round table is to generate exploration and intimate discussion of a particular topic, in an egalitarian forum. As we prepare for the next phase of our consultative work with Vision 4 Equity, we think that the round tables will create an avenue for on-going discussion and learning that

will enrich our organization.

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ICP+P Short Course **Transforming the Negative Sense of Self after Childhood Trauma**

Featuring Cynthia Margolies, PhD
Friday, March 3rd, 2023
12:30 pm – 3:45 pm ET
Online via Zoom

This conference is appropriate for clinicians at all levels of experience and offers 3.0 CEs.

A profound legacy of early trauma is often a shame-ridden sense of self. Clients blame themselves for their abuse, neglect and helplessness. Such a negative view of self is a defensive strategy for young trauma survivors and adaptive to protect their attachment relationships. However, the distorted meaning they draw from their experience interferes with their adult functioning because it is oriented to the past.

This course will present a method therapists can use to guide such clients to update their traumatic memories. We can tap into a client's unconscious internal resources to facilitate spontaneous visualizations of what needed to happen to support the helpless child. This does not change the actual memory, but does affect the meaning about the self. An earned secure attachment to the self can also emerge. Further, the experience of therapy for patient and therapist becomes more playful (cf. Winnicott). Both can take pleasure in witnessing the client's creativity, empowerment and resulting relief, pride and hope. Case examples will illustrate the method and its effectiveness.

A neurobiological explanation for these clinical breakthroughs will be discussed. Research findings about a recently discovered innate updating process, *memory reconsolidation*, show how the brain can build new patterns of synaptic connection. As therapists we can take advantage of this process to help our clients transform the meaning of their disturbing memories.

At the conclusion of this conference, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the floatback method of revising traumatic memories to update a distorted, negative sense of self.
2. Describe a method of working with inner parts to develop an earned secure attachment to the self.
3. Describe *memory reconsolidation*, an innate neurobiological process of updating the brain.

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ICP+P Conference

From Reactivity to Empowerment in Couple Therapy: An Integrative Relational-Neurobiological Approach

Featuring Mona D. Fishbane, PhD and Constance Cannon, PhD
Sunday, March 26th, 2023
9:00 am – 1:30 pm ET
Online via Zoom

This conference is appropriate for clinicians at all levels of experience and offers 4.0 CEs.

Couples in distress often get caught up in cycles of emotional reactivity, each blaming the other and seeing self as victim—a linear view. This lecture explores ways to identify and diagram the couple's dance using the Vulnerability Cycle Diagram first described by Mona Fishbane and Michele Scheinkman in 2004. The therapist helps the couple understand the circular nature of their impasse, and the ways in which both are victims of and the (inadvertent) cocreators of the cycle. We will explore ways to identify and work with each partner's vulnerabilities and survival strategies, often rooted in the family of origin, and situated within the larger sociocultural context. The discussion will be informed by the latest research from interpersonal neurobiology, including the dynamics of emotion dysregulation, techniques for emotion regulation, and the tension between habits and change. Dr. Fishbane's approach enhances partners' relational empowerment, including self-regulation, choice, living according to one's higher goals and values, and reaching for one's "best self." Dr. Constance Cannon will be presenting a middle-aged, heterosexual couple. She and Dr. Fishbane will discuss how the concepts presented can be applied to the clinical case material.

At the conclusion of this conference, participants will be able to:

1. Identify & diagram the couple vulnerability cycle, including roots of vulnerabilities and survival strategies in partners' families of origin.
2. Identify the neurobiology of couple reactivity and facilitate emotion regulation with clients.
3. Utilize interventions for change based on couple research & interpersonal neurobiology.
4. Discuss ways in which the speaker's concepts can be applied to the case material.

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