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GUEST EDITORIAL

AN EMERGING CULTURE FOR PSYCHOANALYTIC RESEARCH?

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Psychoanalysis has had a difficult time promoting research. As a profession, we are deeply committed to concerns that involve individuality, struggles with conflict, and constructing psychological meaning in the midst of the surrounding culture and life context. Moreover, the calls for attention to such concerns are likely to increase as the public becomes aware of the complexities of our increasing knowledge of genetics, the neurosciences and development. There will be demands to know more about the implications of such knowledge in terms of an individual's experience and in terms of the potential for improvement in particular environmental transactions. There will also be demands to know more about the usefulness of various psychological therapies as new forms of disorder and risk are specified. In furthering research that responds to these demands in ways that extend our humanistic and therapeutic interests psychoanalysts have much to offer. But our history and our organisational structures have placed the field of psychoanalysis in a paradoxical position.

Call for Papers

The Editor and Regional Editors wish to announce a special interest in encouraging papers discussing empirical research in psychoanalysis and in debating their value. The Editors applaud the efforts demonstrated in this Guest Editorial and hope to publish work as it becomes available. Clinical research and critical comments on it are both specially welcome.

Although it began by generating an extraordinarily innovative body of knowledge, psychoanalysis grew in isolation from universities and focused on one method of enquiry, namely, the psychoanalytic situation. Moreover, psychoanalytic training and continuing education has focused until now on the art of clinical practice and neglected empirical research. All too often we teach that enquiry is confined to our one method, and that the evaluation of theory is confined to judgements of narrative coherence. Correspondingly, the culture we often reflect in our training is one that values confirmation and closure rather than exploration and systematic investigation of what we do not know. This leads to a paradox because psychoanalysts are among the most curious and investigative of professionals, and because research, by its nature, is 'multi-method' and must make use of multiple settings.

A special seminar has been initiated by the International Psychoanalytical Association and co-sponsored by University College London in response to a need for education

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about research. An intensive eight-day programme known as the Research Training Program (RTP) was begun in London during August in 1995 and 1996 and there are plans to continue it annually. Trainees who come to the RTP are involved in a research project related to psychoanalysis that they bring to the programme for consultation. Most arrive seeking advice about focusing questions, evaluating research designs and ways of generating useful 'next steps' in research. As a result of discussions before, during and after these seminars, it seems appropriate to reflect upon the question: is there an emerging culture for psychoanalytic research? Before describing the characteristics of our programme and its discussions, it may be useful to draw together some ideas about the characteristics of a culture of scientific thinking as it exists today in our field.

For many, a culture of research in psychoanalysis involves a shift from choosing between useful theories according to the cogency of argument (as in much of our past discourse) to choosing between useful theories according to evidence. Judgements of the latter sort often involve developing alternative hypotheses and selecting from them. The scientific attitude, in other words, involves a fundamental commitment to following rules of evidence. It is also the case that a scientific culture in psychoanalysis contains a relational principle. Evidence can be understood only in relation to the methods that are used. Our 'post-modernistic' twentieth-century science has taught us that all fields of observation are influenced by the method of observation and the observer. We are continually in the position of estimating observer influences, and multiple methods of observation are therefore required for knowledge.

In a similar vein, scientific efforts in psychoanalysis deal with meaning (i.e. the hermeneutic dimension as reviewed by Steiner, 1995) and we know that meaning is profoundly influenced by personal, historical and cultural contexts. The consequence of this is that useful knowledge that is meaningful across contexts must involve replication and multiple methods and we must therefore be cautious about generalising from particularities.

A culture for psychoanalytic research also values surprise. The thrill of surprise occurs as an accompaniment to the researcher's discovery that previous expectations and theory are countermanded or violated. Surprise happens when one has a 'prepared mind', but the culture of surprise also values pleasure in the experience of disconfirmation.

Collaboration is also valued in today's scientific culture. Collaboration brings multiple points of view to the kinds of complex research in which we are involved. It often involves the use of one or more common measures to link efforts and it requires open discussions about the problems of research. Collaborative discussions about problems can be energising when they are constructive in tone—that is, when alternative ways of overcoming problems or identifying limitations are suggested. Collaboration thrives on modern communications. The use of the internet and electronic mail and its emergent technologies provide remarkable opportunities.

Another way of characterising a culture is to enumerate the dialectical tensions that appear in discussions of participants who may be immersed in such an emerging culture. Our discussion themes in the RTP provided a window on the current tensions and challenges faced by psychoanalysts who are actively engaged in research across the three regions of the IPA. We shall return to this topic after describing the Research Training Program and our discussion themes.

THE RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM

In its first year, the programme drew seventeen trainees with varying levels of research experience from eleven countries, and in the second, sixteen trainee-participants

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from nine countries. Participants came from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uruguay. Faculty for the two years of the RTP has included those working in different areas of research from three countries—Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.[1] Since participants of the RTP have expressed strong enthusiasm for the programme and about the continuing need for learning about research, this seems an appropriate time to reflect upon the early experience of the RTP. Accordingly, we will provide a brief description of the programme, review discussion themes of participants (including what is being learned about doing research in vastly different settings) and attempt to characterise the features of an emerging culture of research for psychoanalysis.

A framework for the RTP has included engaging attendees in some of the rigours of scientific thinking as it exists today for our field. Specific goals of the faculty have been three-fold: (1) to provide consultation on projects, tailored for individual phases of learning; (2) to provide familiarity with some of today's questions, methods and exciting directions of research related to advancing psychoanalytic knowledge; and (3) to indicate ways of networking for getting help and enhancing scientific communications. The format of the programme has included daily sessions that begin with faculty presentations, overviews and perspectives on various topics. As with all presentations during the training programme, these have been followed by vigorous discussion from participants. Faculty topics reflect the current concerns of psychoanalytic researchers and have included those related to basic research methods, recording in psychoanalytic research, computer text analysis, coding and measuring psychoanalytic process variables, overviews of outcome research and topics in developmental research, including attachment and socio-emotional development. They have also included presentations with respect to the historical contexts of psychoanalytic research, research using small numbers of subjects, psychodynamic research with borderline patients and perspectives on future directions for research in psychoanalysis.

The vast majority of the RTP was occupied by vigorous discussions centred around participants' research. Two to three sessions per day were dedicated to trainees' presentations and critical discussions of their projects with all participants present. The scheduled format also included time for individual and smaller group discussions with particular faculty members. Participants' research topics also provided an interesting perspective on the active interests of psychoanalytic researchers. These included: a variety of outcome studies of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy; treatment studies of conditions such as post-traumatic stress, psychosomatic disorder, severe personality disorder and various childhood disorders; process and recording studies of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy; studies of preventive interventions involving children and

[1] Faculty have included Horst Kächele, Erhardt Mergenthaler, and the late Adolf Ernst Meyer from Germany; Peter Fonagy and Peter Hobson from the United Kingdom; Wilma Bucci, John Clarkin, Robert Emde and Otto Kernberg from the United States; Stuart Hauser of the United States will be joining the faculty in 1997. Peter Fonagy is Founding Director of the Research Training Program and serves as its host; Robert Emde serves as Head of Faculty. Applications to the RTP are solicited through all societies and institutes of the IPA and enquiries are directed to the office of Dr Fonagy at: IPA Standing Conference on Psychoanalytic Research, Psychoanalysis Unit, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT; fax: 44 171 916 1989; e-mail: p.fonagy@ucl.ac.uk. Selection of trainees is made in March by the current faculty of the programme and the IPA research committee, which includes: Ricardo Bernardi, Wilma Bucci, Robert Emde, Peter Fonagy, Stuart Hauser, Horst Kächele, Otto Kernberg, Rainer Krause, Guillermo Lancelle, Joy D. Osofsky and Robert S. Wallerstein.

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parents at risk for disorder; as well as research related to particular cultural and historical contexts. As the wide span of topics indicates, the RTP has encompassed a broad view of psychoanalytic research; it includes research that is of interest to psychoanalysts and may lead to useful knowledge for our field. While research in psychoanalytic settings predominates, it is clearly not possible to limit a definition of psychoanalytic research to work done in any pre-specified context.

Discussion themes

Discussion in each year of our summer RTP was lively throughout and contained an extraordinary level of commitment, creativity, intelligence and energy of participants. All the sessions began on time and scientific conversations continued through coffee breaks and into the evening hours. General discussion themes had common elements across the two years but there were also differences, not surprisingly, as individuals brought a variety of research problems each year and the faculty mix was also different.

In the first year of the RTP, a number of points of consensus emerged. Among these were: the need for focusing questions and establishing step-by-step procedures for research; the importance of using multiple methods in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic research; the importance of finding ways to record psychodynamic processes and the need for studying different kinds of recording. Discussions also highlighted the value of establishing methods for systematic description, case-centred approaches and approaches using a small number of subjects. Throughout the first few days, a number of individuals (including two presidents of national societies who were trainee-participants) asserted a strong opinion that if we did not do research and evaluation (including research related to 'quality assurance' in psychoanalytic treatment), less informed individuals outside our field would do it instead and this was likely to be to the detriment of our field. Most importantly, variants of this opinion were expressed by individuals from six different countries. All attendees told us they learned about the value of consultation and the availability of continuing exchanges with colleagues, and there was discussion about how to share opportunities for research in particular IPA psychoanalytic training programmes and societies. At least two new research collaborations across countries were formed during the first RTP.

In the second summer RTP, participants spoke about a relative isolation they felt from colleagues they could relate to, consult with and collaborate with in carrying out psychoanalytic research. Points of emphasis during discussions included the importance of doing research one cares about; the necessity of focusing one's research; and the value of keeping up with it programmatically over time. The importance of the culture of research was also highlighted, with participants identifying its language and attitudes that include a commitment to empirical testing and following methods of enquiry; such discussions led on to the need for theory and measures that can guide research in psychoanalysis, where they are for the most part lacking. A provocative question was also raised by one participant: why is research in psychoanalysis necessary? The answer came in pointed responses. Although psychoanalysis has increasingly been left out of scholarly and research discourse (as a recent citation review has shown), it does have particular contributions to make to such discourse. Examples include: unconscious motivation, individuality, meaning and transference. Moreover, there are practical considerations to the need for outcome research; psychoanalytic forms of treatment must continue to receive support from third-party providers, governments and individuals.

Several areas of discussion in the second annual RTP took us beyond the particulars of constructive criticism of individual re-

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search projects. Not surprisingly, discussions about method were pervasive. It seemed clear that we need multiple methods and windows of observation in order to answer the complex questions that are relevant for psychoanalytic work. Multiple methods include not only the quantitative, but the qualitative. There is a particular need for ethnographic studies and methods that take cultural variation into account, which is especially relevant in the international context in which psychoanalysis is practised. Exploratory methods, aimed at discovery, can be distinguished from hypothesis-testing methods, in the context of confirmation. Both kinds of method are best when they are theory-driven. Systematic description is highly valued and needs to be verifiable.

How many measures or variables should one study? On the one hand, it is useful to have more than one measure of an idea at the focus of an investigation and we often need a number of measures to capture the richness of our treatment situation. On the other hand, there is the disadvantage of having too many measures, which can discourage patients and researchers and introduce statistical problems. This dilemma is sometimes helped by acknowledging the phase of one's research. In exploratory research, it is often useful to have a larger number of variables in order to preserve the complexity of one's interests, whereas in hypothesis-testing research, it is usually strategic to focus questions and limit the number of variables. As in the first year, discussions in the second RTP identified the value of case-centred or case-study approaches, and participants recognised that more needs to be done to develop methods that are specific to individuals as well as methods of study across individuals.

Focused discussion on method led to another point: it is important not to get distracted by the method of measurement or, worse yet, to reify it. An example was given in terms of many people thinking of 'attachment security' as an outcome measure. In a related vein, there is a saying: 'Beware of the person with *the method*!' A commitment to a single method can lead to isolation from context and meaning.

There were many discussions about the varying climates for a research environment in our societies and institutes. How does one get research going in one's own setting? Several local efforts were described in which 'getting going' consisted of: (1) organised discussions of the literature; (2) consultations with others in the field around a particular problem area; (3) local group discussions between psychoanalytic colleagues; (4) local group exploratory work by some; (5) the use of a range of experts for judging recorded data (such as with a section of a psychotherapy transcript or a videotaped interview) in order to explore issues of reliability and meaning. Participants emphasised the importance of a local setting that valued creativity and discovery. To encourage research in local settings, it is important to tap motivations of individuals and to 'lead from strength' wherever possible. Many local needs and opportunities for study can be identified and, considering the richness of its varying perspectives, the IPA can encourage studies of cultural context and cultural change. An important area of research that can be studied without a great deal of technology in local settings concerns the judgements of the analyst and other processes involved in 'the mind of the analyst' during psychoanalytic treatment. New quantitative measures of psychoanalytic constructs require qualitative elaboration using the expert judgements of experienced clinicians. The development of explicit operational criteria for making evaluations in traditional areas such as transference, countertransference and object relations remains a challenge despite recent advances in the field. Such topics could be a priority for new research efforts.

To what extent should one articulate an epistemology and theoretical position before beginning research? Some gave emphasis to such a strategy, whereas others discussed not worrying about this so much but instead be-

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ginning by doing exploratory research and engaging the process of discovery. This issue reflects a difference between so-called 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up' approaches. To some degree, these approaches are a matter of individual taste and style, but it is also true that productive research necessarily moves back and forth between theoretical and empirically driven opportunities. The important thing is that thoughtful empirical enquiry takes place and that correction according to systematic experience is also undertaken.

A broad multidisciplinary perspective on psychoanalytic research was endorsed by the participants. It is useful to have psychoanalytic research that draws on more than one intellectual tradition, and we need to attend to social, political, economic and educational issues as they influence treatment and the meaning of our work. Both RTP groups discussed the value of doing educational research in psychoanalysis, as is done in other fields. In a broader sense, discussions reflected the importance of including the hermeneutic dimension in psychoanalytic research by studying personal, historical and current contexts as part of our research in the manner indicated in the recent *IJPA* guest editorial by Riccardo Steiner (1995; 'Hermeneutics or Hermes-mess?' *IJPA*, 76: 435-445).

Both summer programmes included a good deal of discussion about the use of different kinds of recording techniques, not only audiotape recording, but process notes, diaries, observations, checklists, video recording and observer ratings. A substantial number of participants now audio-record psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalytic sessions. This allows for case-study research and many were introduced to computer-assisted text processing and data banks that give access to computer databases and audio-recorded transcripts from more than one case. In one discussion it was suggested that all our psychoanalytic institutes should have a commitment to gaining new knowledge for psychoanalysis, and that many should include training in research and recording techniques as part of their curricula.

Vigorous discussion also took place concerning therapeutic outcome research. Can we use random control group comparisons for assessing treatment outcome? Random control or comparison groups, although considered the 'gold standard' for evaluating treatment efficacy by many today, raise difficulties for psychoanalysts. Such designs may be conceptually inappropriate if the match between analyst and patient is crucial to engaging the process of treatment and if self-selection is central to the nature of what is being studied.

Difficulties also arise concerning other kinds of comparison groups for treatment outcome such as waiting list controls. Such control groups are difficult to maintain and often 'collapse like a bad soufflé', in the words of one of our presenters. Alternative strategies for research comparison were discussed, including looking for subgroups across subjects in treatment. In a related vein, it is important to measure degrees of treatment implementation and acceptance in outcome studies. Collection of data at several time-points permits the exploration of differential rates of change as well as the persistence of treatment effects and the association of process and outcome variables across time. Taking account of 'dosage effects' in treatment may lead to useful comparisons that reveal the influences of active agents of psychic change.

A related design question is the means of estimating whether the treatment is doing what we think it is. One participant pointed out that sometimes a comparison treatment cannot be distinguished by independent judges from a study treatment. The development of treatment manuals for work with specific patient populations is a research need, and moves us away from the 'one size fits all' attitude of much of our technical literature.

The 'horse race problem' was a label given

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to another issue. This has to do with the fact revealed by recent research (over and over again) that when two psychotherapy or related treatments are compared with a no-treatment comparison group, the two treatment groups are hard to distinguish but that both are better than the no-treatment control. Such findings add to the reason why outcome studies need to contain process measures over time. Only by studying process can one understand what leads to what under what circumstances with whom.

Much of our discussion concerned what we are beginning to learn about research on psychoanalytic process. It is important to get multiple data points over time. Research need not be highly technical: one can look for co-variations of phenomena over time, using multiple time-points, and sketching plots in a simple graphic form. With recorded patient material, process research can use measures of the therapist's reactions and contributions in addition to assessing repeated conflicts and transference themes. One participant started a discussion about measuring the free associations of the analytic therapist. It is also important not to leave out process variables from transactions between patient and analyst or therapist in such an account.

Another prominent theme concerned the usefulness and importance of assessing the cost of treatment in one's study designs. Cost–benefit comparisons should be made wherever possible when assessing process and outcome if we are to advance our field in today's world.

DIALECTICAL TENSIONS

As we have already noted, a research culture is open, welcomes multiple points of view and new methods and is continually questioning. Another way of characterising the new research culture emerging in the training programme, therefore, is to review some of the dialectical tensions in discussions of participants. Several permeated the two RTPs.

One dialectic concerned the use of simple versus expert systems with respect to methods and research technology. Technical advances are important for any scientific enterprise. Still, many participants found it discouraging that much text-recording and analysis seemed so 'high-tech'; thus, it appeared that if individuals did not spend most of their time doing research, research seemed impossible. What could participants learn from this? In addition, there were other problems of 'expert systems'. Extensive training is often needed for coding and observation, which can lead not only to isolation but to shared assumptions that are unspecified among those doing the research. Most felt, however, that even in considering 'high-tech' aspects of text analysis, simpler, more 'user-friendly' systems could be developed for teams of clinician-researchers; examples were then discussed. Moreover, there are methods that do not require extensive training for observation and recording. The commitments to a programmatic effort over time, to learning how to observe and to following rules of evidence, are more important factors than technical skill in a particular method.

A second dialectic concerned the use of exploratory versus hypothesis-testing strategies in the course of 'well-designed' research. Discussion revealed that this dialectic, which often represents the different styles of individual investigators, is really a dimension of all research. Sometimes research is exploratory; sometimes it becomes hypothesis-testing, though many do not move beyond the exploratory phase. What is important is that both kinds of research should be thoughtful. There was much discussion, however, of the degree to which exploratory research needs to be 'theory-guided'. A related question is: how much does one need to know before beginning to do research? On the one hand, discovery comes only to a prepared mind; on the other hand, one can be too hard on oneself by de-

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manding too much preparation. 'Perfectionism', as psychoanalysts know, can inhibit creativity.

Finally, there was a dialectical tension regarding implementation. Some felt that we need to articulate clearly the need for research and the criteria for good research; we should not tolerate inappropriate inference. Others, however, felt that we need to 'deal with resistance', to understand it and provide opportunities for gradual assimilation or accommodation and for working through —just as we do in the rest of our psychoanalytic work. Working with our colleagues over time would be more effective for integrating research than taking positions about what research was, and pointing out how others could not do it. The latter view gained momentum in our discussions. We need to maintain our working alliances with colleagues and expand them on behalf of research approaches both within psychoanalysis and across other disciplines. It will be helpful if we can develop more 'user-friendly' approaches and technologies for research and if we can encourage more dialogue between clinical work and research.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Is there an emerging psychoanalytic culture that can aid research? Participants of the first two RTPs would probably endorse such a view as they continue their efforts through a collaborative 'fellowship' of e-mail, meetings and work. But science in our field has lagged. Most of those trained as psychoanalysts are practitioners, not academicians, nor are they in a position to devote the majority of their time to research. It should also be mentioned that most of our attendees were also psychoanalytic practitioners, engaged part-time in collaborative research projects. Still, most have been energised about doing research and they communicate with excitement about the process of discovery. Their motivations are not just abstract, they are also practical: to improve our abilities to help others and to justify our work in a world that is increasingly cost-conscious and one that expresses scepticism about the usefulness of our discoveries.

More efforts are needed. On the one hand, we have grounds for some cautious optimism about emerging research in our field. Most of us are attracted to psychoanalysis by a curiosity and a thirst for knowledge about the mind. When this is combined with the curiosity of a researcher, we believe there is a unique and highly potent intellectual mix that is energised by surprise and the possibilities of discovering what is counter-intuitive. In contrast to many who deny the scientific status of psychoanalysis, we felt that our experience in the RTP showed that psychoanalytic researchers were among the best-suited to systematic investigative work.

On the other hand, resources remain a major issue. Curiosity alone is not enough. Discovery can only come about as a consequence of long-term commitment, whether in the clinic or the laboratory. We also realise that the intensity of psychoanalytic practice can be an obstacle to research as well as its most important source. Research requires time, assistance and opportunities to answer questions and, correspondingly, researchers need consistent economic support. Most clinical disciplines provide for a subgroup who pursue ideas systematically on behalf of the rest and most have a substantial number who are engaged in full-time research. Historically, psychoanalysis has not done well in this regard. In a related vein, training in psychoanalysis needs to include training about research and available research methods. Committed researchers in our field deserve a designated place of esteem in our psychoanalytic institutes.

Clearly, the RTP is but one small step along the road to addressing such limitations and it could do more. It could expand its number of topics and disciplines, to include historical research, a broader array of the behavioural and social sciences and applica-

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tions to the arts and literature. Certainly, psychoanalysis as a field could do more. We could all work to increase resources committed to research and to diversify them so as to include visiting scholarships and costs related to networking and collaboration. Still, in spite of the modesty of our small step, we conclude that the Research Training Program can be considered a successful experiment of the IPA. The extent of its contribution to an emerging culture of research for our field will become apparent in the years to come. Many of us believe that the vitality of psychoanalysis depends upon such a culture.

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