

Archiving Psychoanalysis¹ -

Horst Kaechele

Step 1 The discovery of a narrative science

Freud's resignative statement in the "Studies on Hysteria" (1895) that his case reports lack the stern character of true scientific reports but read more like novellas could be made responsible for an unnecessary continental divide between science and hermeneutics.

Thus psychoanalysis became a field based on narration - hearsay evidence retreating to narrative truth (Forrester 1980; Spence 1982). To highlight the importance of this methodological decision, imagine a science of musicology with musicians sharing their most personal experiences by writing case histories, or by letting consumers tell their emotional involvements after a piano concerto. What is wrong about such an approach? It well could be that one could build a science of musical experience by collecting a large sample of these reported subjective testimonies. Let me remind you of the German professors Grimm from Göttingen who systematically started out to collect orally transmitted fairy tales. Today we have a well developed field of fairy tale research with highly sophisticated methods to analyze the available large collections from all over the world (Propp 1928).

Take as example S. Freud's case report on the Ratman 1909 and go to E. Zetzel's Additional notes from 1966

"It was my intention when I first undertook this study to base my discussion primarily on the 1909 report published in Freud's Collected papers. Fortunately, however, I decided to reread the case history in the Standard Edition. I was surprised and excited by the discovery I made - namely the unique salvage of Freud's daily notes covering the first four months of this analysis"...."In striking contrast with the 1909 publication, there are more than

¹Hommage to Joe Sandler

forty references to a highly ambivalent mother-son relationship in the original clinical notes".

Conclusion: there is nothing wrong with clinical notes as long as they are available for public scrutiny - this constitutes the essences of any scientific enterprise.

Step 2 A Research Institute in Psychoanalytic Psychology

One of the first book I happened to study when entering the field of psychoanalytic process research were the "Hixon Lectures on the Scientific Status of Psychoanalysis" (ed. Pumpian-Mindlin 1952). Lawrence Kubie expressed the hope that this series of lectures may point the way to the more systematic researches in this field which are long overdue, and may even help to indirectly to stimulate the organization of adequately staffed and financed institutes for research in psychoanalytic psychology"(p.46). Later in these lecture he points out that " a fundamental defect of research in analysis,..., has been the fact that only one person could observe the empirical data of the therapeutic process, and that only once.....Such data give rise to controversies, but they are hardly the stuff out of which fundamental scientific advances can be fashioned.

It seems clear, therefore, if we are ever to understand psychoanalysis deeply, we must begin by solving the problem of how to make adequate recordings of the therapeutic process without at the same time distorting the process"(1952, p.1118/119). Kubie calls it a dream for the future ! This future has partially become true through the initiatives of many colleagues including Joe Sandler.

Step 3 The battle for tape recording

The struggle to introduce corresponding technical aids into the analytic interview was begun by E. Zinn in 1933 (Shakow and Rapaport 1964, p.138). Although it is not over yet, the opportunities offered by the tape recording of analyses for psychoanalytic training and practice were first mentioned in positive terms by McLaughlin at the International Psychoanalytic Congress held in Helsinki in 1982.

Psychoanalysis did not take advantage of these numerous possibilities for a long time. At the core of many misgivings was the concern that the presence of a tape recorder could have consequences similar to those of a third party, namely that the patient "would become silent as soon as he observed a single witness to whom he felt indifferent" (Freud 1916/17, p. 18). Yet it has long been known that patients, with few exceptions, readily give their approval to having the interview recorded, discussed in professional circles, and evaluated scientifically. It is not unusual for patients to - correctly - expect to profit therapeutically from having their analyst concern himself especially intensively with their case. Of course, the patient's initial approval and his motivations are just one aspect; another and decisive question concerns the effects of the tape recording on the psychoanalytic process. One of the early pioneer, Paul Bergmann (1966) made the following succinct observations:

"A research setup puts the therapist in the center of a triangular field with each point of the triangle representing a potential source of disturbance, namely, the relationship with the patient, , the relatin with professional colleagues, and the machinery of the setup. Surely, as long as the therapist can clearly evaluate thew threats emanatng from each of these sources his response is amenable to rational control and repair. Under the impact of anxiety, however, he becomes less able to balance the stresses, he perceives less clearly, and he tends to use pathological mechanisms of defense" (P. Bergmann 1966, p.39)

Pioniers of
Tape recording:

Earl F. Zinn 1933
Paul Bergmann 1966
Merton Gill 1964
Hartvig Dahl 197
Helmut Thomä
Adolf-Ernst Meyer

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Step 4 Archives of psychoanalyses

In the first edition of the Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change (Bergin & Gariel 1971) Luborsky and Spence complained the paucity of primary data - data accumulated during actual analytic sessions. "Ideally, two conditions should be met: the case should be clearly defined as analytic,....., and the data should be recorded, transcribed. and indexed so as to maximize accessibility and visibility"(1971, p.426). That deplorable situation has changed. Some institutions have embraced the conception that archiving clinical data provides a secure base to overcome the deficiencies not in fruitful heuristics, but in hypothesis testing.

While I was in training analysis recording my first two analytic cases and at the same time working as a junior research fellow together with Dr. Mergenthaler we were faced with the sheer amount of transcribed sessions from our first research case treated by Dr. Thomä. Out of the necessity of how to handle the data of some 500 sessions we developed the daydream of having as a tool a computer based storage device. My analyst - a seasoned clinician - never missed an opportunity to interpret the grandiosity of this idea in various ways as you all may surmise. I do admit that the very fact that the Ulm cathedral boasted to have the highest spire in Christianity built and paid for by the citizenship of Ulm gave my high rising thoughts some grandiose nourishment. Something like the Hampstead Index (Sandler 1962) was in my mind; yet it should be more basic providing the raw material for any scientist who would come along. Happily my analysis came to an end and I still indulged in these daydreams - Wolkenkuckucksheim. So finally the German Research Society supported the development of the ULM TEXTBANK, a computer based archive with built in tools for retrieval and text analysis.

The Hampstead Data Base London
Columbia Psychoanalytic Clinic
Menninger Foundation Psychotherapy Research Project

Penn Analytic Research Group Philadelphia
Brookdale Hospital Group
Research Center for Mental Health, New York
Ulm Textbank, Ulm

Step 5 From soft to hard methods

Public availability of data is crucial, not the kind of material. For each material, be it case reports, therapist notes, diaries of patients, or transcribed tape-recorded sessions modern social science offers a vast choice of methods. One of my favourites demonstrating the power of textual critique as a soft tool is Steven Marcus re-analysis of Freud's Dora-case (1974). That psychoanalysis essential but not only is a conversation has pointed out by Freud (1916/17) however the various methods of discourse analysis are just beginning to be recognized by analysts. A few fine examples have been provided by Labov & Fanshel (1977) and by Flader et. al. (1982). Viktor Rosen (1977) initiating the New York Study Group on linguistics made the point that the study of language should be at the forefront of our work.

Ever since social science had invented the Likert rating scale technology there is no psychoanalytic concept that could not in principle be studied. And with the introduction of computers in the early seventies psychoanalytic process research hooked up with a technology that had paved its way in the historical and political sciences where archives are the sine qua non for researchers.

So when learned from the psychoanalyst Donald Spence at a summer school for computational linguistics in Pisa in 1971 how to write a simple program in PL-1 for counting words that had been stored on key punched cards I felt that I had discovered a new way for analyzing the form and content of psychoanalytic sessions.

textual critique

discourse analysis

ratings of variables

application of scales

qualitative and quantitative content analysis

computer text analysis

Step 6 The need for specimen cases

Research findings have to be replicated in order to prove their value. The core idea of having a specimen cases allows not only testing individual hypotheses

for single cases, but allows testing the comparative fruitfulness of various methods. Most likely the Schreber case (Freud 1911) has stimulated the largest amount of critical discussions just because it was a publicly available document (Kächele 1981). As single case research repeatedly has been called the most suitable approach for evaluating psychoanalytic treatments (Wallerstein & Sampson 1971; Edelson 1988, p. 234) what we are are well documented single cases. There are some examples like Mrs.C that has served as material basis for a diversity of approaches and has demonstrated the fruitfulness of this type of research activity. Recently at the George Klein Study Group meeting in New York (1997) we have presented a German case, Amalia X, that has served similar purposes among the German psychoanalytic research community.

Nothing has changed our psychoanalytic thinking and doing more than the public exposure to friendly critics and critical friends. We say this in order to encourage other psychoanalysts to open the privacy of their clinical work in the endeavor to improve clinical work by letting it scrutinize by others.

P. Bergmann - Pat. Anna

M. Klein 1961

D. Winnicott 1972

P. Dewald 1972

H. Dahl - Pat. Mrs. C

H. Thomä - Amalia X 1999

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