354. Kächele H (2001) Book Review: Does psychoanalysis work? By Robert M. Galatzer-Levi, Henry Bachrach, Alan Skolnikoff, and Sherwood Waldron. New Haven, Yale University Press. *J Am Psychoanal Ass 49: 1041-1047*

Does Psychoanalysis Work? By R. M. Galatzer-Levy, H. Bachrach, A. Skolknikoff and S. Waldron

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Psychoanalytic outcome research got off to a good start when the Berlin Institute commissioned Fenichel and his colleagues to prepare an evaluation of therapeutic outcomes. In 1930 they jointly and proudly published their report. Things looked less cheerful when Eysenck (1952) published a very negative evaluation of the Berlin data. Bergin (1971), however, summarized his own evaluation of the Berlin data as follows: "The four divergent but equally reasonable tabulations of the Berlin data clearly establish my point that there is no valid way to assess the effect of psychoanalysis from the information available. I can see no clear justification for choosing one interpretation over another, even though I do have personal biases in certain directions. The ambiguity in these data cannot be resolved" (p. 225).

Bergin´s careful and sophisticated evaluation contained some other observations, namely that the divergence of the tabulations was more pronounced with regard to the psychoanalytic treatments than to the more eclectic therapies. Even though Bergin does not identify himself as a friend of psychoanalysis, he concludes that the results up to the time until 1952 the results must be considered encouraging, if not dramatic "It is of particular interest, however, that the longer and more intensive the treatment, the better the results" (p. 227).

Now we are in the year 2001, thirty years later. Why are we still in doubt about the outcome of psychoanalytic therapies? In their introduction, the authors of this timely book state that "Over the past thirty years psychoanalysis has lost much status. No longer the sole rational therapy for psychological distress, today it competes with many other treatments" (p. x). To alter this sad state of affairs an American Psychoanalytic Association Committee on

Scientific Activities was asked to "critically review the existing literature on psychoanalytic outcomes." The resulting report was condensed into a paper (Bachrach et al. 1991). Now its authors have expanded upon their task, and have produced a state of the art book written for and directed to a clinical audience.

Part I deals with "What psychoanalysts want to know about the therapeutic effects of psychoanalysis." The authors assume, surprisingly, that most psychoanalysts want to know more about their work. If this were true, however, we would have a huge number of outcome studies, which we do not in fact have; from this discrepancy I infer some wishful thinking on the part of the authors. In this section they compile a long list of important concepts and issues of theory and practice that do cry out for more systematic clarification if the psychoanalytic community is in truth to be a profession based on science, and not just a trade.

The opening discussion contrasts the field of psychotherapy research with the field of psychoanalysis, and suffers from an unjust simplification: "Psychoanalysts tend to value complexity, while psychotherapy researchers work to produce quantitatively meaningful measurements" (p. 3). We might remember that the field of psychotherapy research in the United States was initiated by the research-minded psychoanalysts like Robert Wallerstein, Lester Luborsky, and Otto Kernberg, who worked on the Menninger Psychotherapy Research Project, the showcase of psychoanalytic research. Other —psychodynamically oriented researchers like Hans Strupp, Ken Howard, and David Orlinsky, have started the the Society for Psychotherapy Research. This society has generated a research culture where a relentless attitude of "Show me your data" prevailed over clinical opinions. Evidence, not conviction, was respected.

This contemporary research climate has set new standards for the evaluation of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis cannot escape the demands of social science methodology, be it qualitative/narrative or quantitative/psychometric in its approach. So the authors' distinction between the quantitative and the qualitative seems somewhat misleading and even outdated, given that qualitative methodology has come to the fore in the nineties (Stiles 1993). The authors' conclusion that "most of the results of the

massive research efforts in psychotherapy are therefore not methodologically and conceptually comparable or translatable to psychoanalysis" (p. 3) is really astonishing since the studies that are reported in Part II ("Empirical studies of psychoanalytic outcome and efficacy") rely almost exclusively on methodological tools that have long been part and parcel of the field of psychotherapy research. It is no wonder that the authors fail to mention Luborsky and Spence's (1971) chapter on "Quantitative research on psychoanalytic therapy" in the book that is the bible of the field, the "Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change" by Bergin and Garfield.

Part II provides a well-written, informative summary of empirical studies of psychoanalytic outcome and efficacy. It is awkward that the authors do not use the distinction, by now well-established, among efficacy (what works on average in an experimental treatment setting), effectiveness (what works on average in the clinical routine), and efficiency (what works for one patient) (Howard et al. 1996). The studies discussed in detail by the authors are all typical effectiveness studies (from Menninger, Columbia, Boston, New York). "The investigations we have described so far are disappointing in that they do not provide an empirical basis for the decision of whether to recommend psychoanalysis for a particular patient" (p. 95).

To a reader who is aware of the methodological limitations of group-oriented efficacy and effectiveness studies, this complaint seems misguided. The positive findings are diverse, and are instructive about how methodology could be improved. And as there are many things to be improved, the review is a helpful guide for furthering the development of better research. What is really surprising, however, is that the authors do not even mention the "Open Door Review of Outcome" compiled by Fonagy et al.(1999), where quite a number of methodologically more advanced studies, mainly European in origin, are delineated.

The special chapter that deals with findings in child analytic studies reports on the retrospective study from the Anna Freud Centre, and concludes that: "The monumental efforts. . . . produced monumental results" (p. 111) in its demonstration that carefully collected systematic data on large samples are one way to provide the answers that clinicians are eagerly seeking. It is surprising to hear the authors' criticism that the "cases were not randomly

assigned to intensive and non-intensive treatment groups"—an objection that was not raised against any of the aforementioned studies from the United States. The authors could have made use of this opportunity to discuss the issue of randomized design in psychoanalytic treatment, and whether it is viable at all. In light of the ongoing trend for empirically supported treatments (Chambless 1998; Strauss & Kaechele 1998) this would have been an important issue not to avoid.

The next chapter deals with series of patients with specific conditions, and makes a case for narrowing down the research approach. Instead of trying to solve the issue of the effectiveness of psychoanalytic therapy in general, it might be more productive to consider the controlled treatment of special groups such as borderline patients, as the London Partial Hospital Study (Bateman and Fonagy 1999) neatly demonstrated.

This chapter ends with a sad note on the rather small contribution of case studies to systematic psychoanalytic investigation. One wonders why psychoanalysis has not learned how to build up an open, accessible, systematic corpus of well-coded, anonymized clinical material. The worldwide systematic collection of such material in, for instance, the field of academic folktale research has led to some very distinct scientific achievements (Propp 1928).

The methodology of Pfeffer serves as a good example of how a genuinely psychoanalytic interview strategy has been used as a fruitful research tool. Although the authors praise the rich clinical data generated with this method, they undermine their praise by adding that the studies detailed in the book "rely almost exclusively on candidate cases" (p. 120). This is a telling point and a stringent lesson: a field that relies on its beginners to demonstrate its scientific merits is caught in a self-destructive logic.

The authors' conclusions on the systematic studies listed so far are from a friendly perspective, and are partially reassuring that " the majority of patients selected as suitable for psychoanalysis derive substantial therapeutic benefits from it." They also remind the reader that "the findings of the clinical follow-up studies caution against perfectionistic expectations" (p. 123). With regard to the relation of analyzability and therapeutic benefits, the authors conclusion that "the studies seem to show a substantial relation" may be contradicted. The available studies show that "only half of the cases selected as suitable for

psychoanalysis were judged to have developed a psychoanalytic process" (p. 125). It might well be that the two dimensions have to be disentangled theoretically and that other factors (as identified in psychodynamic psychotherapies) contribute to the benefits of psychoanalysis as well.

Part III deals with future directions, and serves as a primer on the methods and pitfalls of psychoanalytic research. It honors the work of a small, dedicated group of psychoanalytic investigators who have been exploring promising methods for studying psychoanalytically significant issues" (p. 133). Important issues are tackled, such as research ethics, methods of data collection and analysis, and the relationship of research to concepts. The authors' hope "to provide an up-to-date overview of the tools currently available for systematic research on psychoanalytic outcomes and process" is weakened by the modest claim "not to present an exhaustive survey of relevant methods" (p. 133). They introduce many issues by referring to other fields with similar methodological problems whenever suitable. Again and again the line of demarcation between "ordinary" psychotherapy research methodology and "assumed" specifically psychoanalytic approaches is transgressed, as no specifics by which to define psychoanalytic empirical research ever do materialize. The specifics of psychoanalysis reside in its concepts, not in its research tools, once the clinical method is excluded as a reliable tool of research. There is no way to escape the fact that Freud´s "inseparable bond" between therapy and research has been broken in psychoanalysis, for better or worse (Thomae and Kaechele 1987, p.371). An extensive discussion on the merits of the systematic single case method—constrasted with the traditional clinical case vignette—point to the authors' vision of the future of psychoanalytic research: "Single case study provides a bridge between the idiosyncrasies of individuals and generalizations about them" (p. 235). However, they are aware that many questions cannot be resolved by the single case method; at the very least there is a need to aggregate single cases, as demonstrated by the Ulm study on dreams as process indicators (Leuzinger-Bohleber 1988, 1989). Outcome issues will have to be resolved by large-scale longitudinal observations, prospective or retrospective, of large databases.

In exploring some dimensions of the psychoanalytic process, the authors review a number of prominent methods that have been developed by the

aforementioned "dedicated group of psychoanalytic researchers." They rightly give Lester Luborsky's work on transference measurement pride of place, leaving out other aspects of the work of this "Nobel Prize-worthy" person in our field; others people and methods get a much shorter review. These passages would have profited if the authors had consulted the creators of these methods and backchecked their texts. Some of them may feel that they have not been well represented.

The same criticism that I leveled at the outcome section applies here as well. European developments and findings are seldom mentioned; the few exceptions—like the Ulm Textbank, or Fonagy´s single case research—underscore this point. It cannot be only a language barrier; perhaps the authors felt that there was no need to cover a broader view.

I recommend this book highly. It is a timely book, expressing the deep concern that psychoanalysis deserves more systematic empirical research treatment. There are handbooks available for advanced researchers (Dahl et al. 1988; Miller et al. 1993); this, however, is a very useful textbook for enthusiastic psychoanalysts, young ones and their seniors, that describes comprehensively what is required if psychoanalysis is to find a place in today's research world.

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