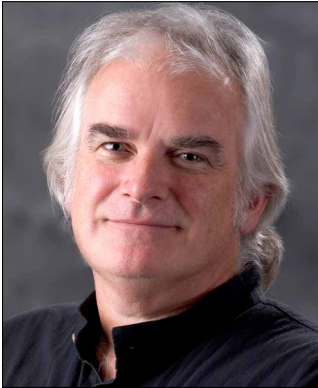


Why Research?

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It is an honor to be invited to write an introduction for this Special Issue of the *IBPJ* on the importance of research. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the dedication of the EABP Science and Research Committee, chaired by Dr. Herbert Grassmann, who is founder of the SKT Institute (for Structural Core Therapy and Somatic Memory) and Director of the European Institute for Somatic Trauma Therapy, as well as Professor of Psychosocial Studies and Body-Mind Healing at the Parkmore Institute. Under the devoted editorship of Madlen Algefari, this Committee generated the papers for this most important issue of our *Journal*. Allow me to explain why I write “most important,” and why I believe that the work of this Committee is crucial

to the future of the clinical practices that we cherish.

As I have suggested elsewhere (Barratt, 2010, 2015), the challenge of research in body psychotherapy meets with a paradoxical attitude on the part of many practitioners. On the one hand, there is the attitude: “We know what we do, and we know that it is effective, so why worry about research?” Sometimes there is a secondary aspect to this attitude, which says: “In any case, research from the neurosciences, from attachment studies, on the psychodynamics of embodied sensuality, and so forth, shows that we are on the ‘right track,’ so why worry further about research?” On the other hand, there is the attitude: “We are doing research with every client or patient that we engage in treatment, so why does it need to be formalized?”

Here I would like to suggest that the former attitude is, especially in the context of the current socioeconomic developments of capitalist structures throughout the North Atlantic regions, short sighted, as I will soon indicate.

The latter attitude is perhaps understandable, but also needs to be challenged. There is an important sense that it is indeed the case that we are, as practitioners, all doing research. With every client or patient that we see (I prefer the term “patient;” after all, these are people who come to us as healers because they are suffering), we listen to understand their dynamics, we consider and reconsider the theoretical assumptions we bring to address their plight, and we are open to modification of the underlying theorizing that might inform our engagement with them. This is indeed the essence of a research attitude! Hopefully, we treat each patient afresh, and we try diligently not to impose upon them dogma that has been generated by previous theorizing, even as we try to make use of the wisdom inscribed in the theorizing that we have learned. But keeping our efforts within the confines of our consulting rooms is not going to advance the precious field of body psychotherapy; we need case histories, and we need them accessible in a systematic and thoughtfully reflective as well as self critical form. This is, I believe, the importance of the work of Dr. Courtenay Young (and all those who have supported him) in his ardent appeal for the systematic collection of carefully crafted descriptions of the treatments we do.

The former attitude – “We do good work that seems aligned with important findings from other disciplines, so why worry?” – could well forecast the virtual disappearance of our field and of the wisdom we have accumulated. Consider it this way. There are two reasons that other fields of scientific endeavor do research: first, to advance the knowledge within that field; second, to advance that field in relation both to competing disciplines and in relation to the wider forum of societal recognition and respect.

Body psychotherapy, as a discipline that we know to be of invaluable worth to our patients, cannot advance unless we know ourselves to be advancing. As I have written previously, one of the main impediments to this field is that it is organized into fiefdoms (I intend no disrespect, but sociologically this surely does describe our organizational history thus far). The only way to transcend this problem is for us to have articulate research by which we can compare and appreciate our different theories and methodologies, thus empowering us to communicate better with each other.

Finally, let us address bravely the fact that we need research if we are to advance our modes of healing against the mainstream current. The latter favors the quick fix of manipulative “therapies” and the blandishments of the unbelievably powerful pharmacological industry. The capitalist force of European and North American cultures is not going to value body psychotherapy because we are more existentially relevant, or because our healing is psychodynamically deeper and more spiritually refreshing. (Here I will skip the issues facing the Southern hemisphere, although they are parallel in most respects.) Rather, the prevailing cultural force is, for example, going to favor drugging the traumatized patient, coaching him or her with carrot and stick technologies, and engineering his or her return to functioning as “another brick in the wall.” The only way to combat the malignant force of current socioeconomic and political trends is for us to take a stand outside our consulting rooms, and for this, we need research and the publication of research.

It is for these reasons that I urge us all to support the sort of work that is addressed in this issue of our *Journal*. Our work is a precious gift to humanity. We need to unite in sustaining it, promoting it, and advancing it.

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