



New Center for Psychoanalysis
Spring 2020: Psychoanalytic Training Program
Time: 9:00 AM – 10:50 AM
Date: February 5 – February 26, 2020

Course #116: Research and Critical Thinking in Psychoanalysis

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Sessions: 3

Introduction:

Gerber and Knopf wrote that “when empirical evidence (however limited and imperfect) is excluded from the discussion [in psychoanalytic training], initiates are immersed in “a totally uncritical pluralism” of poorly differentiated ideas, and left to make decisions about clinical technique based on “the power of the opinion of one or another psychoanalytic authority.” (Gerber and Knopf, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 2015).

In his paper provocatively titled “Suicide Prevention for Psychoanalytic Institutes and Societies,” Otto Kernberg recommends institutes to “inject a research orientation into your psychoanalytic life.” (Kernberg, *Psychoanalytic Education at the Crossroads*, Routledge, 2016, p245). Specifically, he suggests that institutes create and develop a research thrust as a major institutional goal, support a research focused group, and explore the boundaries of psychoanalysis by keeping in mind the importance of developing new knowledge, not just clarifying the old. In another paper, “The Pressing Need to Increase Research,” (same reference, p103) he writes that “a consistent education process is required to acquaint psychoanalysts with research developments in related fields with important implications, if not for psychoanalytic technique, at least for (or against) the validity of psychoanalytic findings and psychoanalytic theory.”

For these and other important reasons, it is vital that psychoanalytic training includes the study of the principles and methods of empirical research, an understanding of the history of those

efforts, its status today, and an exposure to various empirical efforts whose results have a direct impact on our understanding of the mind, human development, psychopathology, and clinical technique. To that end, NCP offers the Psychoanalytic Training Program research curriculum. This curriculum brings relevant empirical research into a number of applicable courses throughout your four year didactic program, illuminating those topics from a scientific perspective.

This three session course initiates this curriculum, introducing you to the relationship of psychoanalysis to research, to issues in the use of single case studies, and to discoveries in neuroscience that bear on psychoanalytic theory and technique. Through these explorations we will consider what it means to approach your psychoanalytic studies as a critical thinker.

Session 1, February 5, 2020:

The Status of Empirical Research and the Role of Science in Psychoanalysis

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Understand what is meant by the “rejectionist” position
- 2) Consider how theoretical fragmentation in psychoanalysis can be addressed by a scientific orientation.

Required Readings:

Fonagy, P. (2015). A new epistemic framework for psychoanalysis. Open Door Review, Third Edition. p 42 (Forward) and pp 48-53

Chiesa, M. (2010). Research and Psychoanalysis: Still Time to Bridge the Great Divide? Psychoanal. Psychol., 27(2):99-114.

https://www.csun.edu/science/ref/reasoning/critical_thinking/index.html (see both definitions and elements)

Optional Readings:

Fonagy chapter above, pp 42-47 (recommended)

Session 2, February 19, 2020:

The Central Role of the Clinical Case Study

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Understand the differences between clinical case reports and empirical clinical case studies.
- 2) Appreciate what features of a case study enhance or weaken its evidentiary value.

Required Readings:

Willemsen, J., Rosa, E. D., & Kegerreis, S. (2017). Clinical case studies in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic treatment. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, Article 108.

Gazzillo, F., Waldron, S., Genova, F., Angeloni, F., Ristucci, C., & Lingiardi, V. (2014). An empirical investigation of analytic process: Contrasting a good and poor outcome case. *Psychotherapy*, 51(2), 270.

Optional Readings:

Eagle, M. N., & Wolitzky, D. L. (2011). Systematic empirical research versus clinical case studies: A valid antagonism?. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 59(4), 791-818. **(especially pp 805-813)**

Session 3, February 26, 2020:

Advances in Neuroscience and Their Implications for Psychoanalytic Technique

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Consider that psychoanalytic concepts should be framed in a neuroscientific model
- 2) Understand the basics of various affect theories rooted in recent neuroscientific research
- 3) Appreciate the role of emotion arousal and processing in yielding good outcomes in psychoanalytic treatments.

Required Readings:

Subic-Wrana, C., Greenberg, L. S., Lane, R. D., Michal, M., Wiltink, J., & Beutel, M. E. (2016). Affective change in psychodynamic psychotherapy: Theoretical models and clinical approaches to changing emotions. *Zeitschrift für Psychosomatische Medizin und Psychotherapie*, 62(3), 207–223.

Solms, M. L. (2018). The neurobiological underpinnings of psychoanalytic theory and therapy. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 12, Article 294

Optional Readings:

None

Additional Bibliography:

Shedler, J. (2015). Where is the evidence for “evidence-based” therapy?. *The Journal of Psychological Therapies in Primary Care*, 4(1), 47-59.

Abbass, A., Luyten, P., Steinert, C., & Leichsenring, F. (2017). Bias toward psychodynamic therapy: framing the problem and working toward a solution. *Journal of psychiatric practice*, 23(5), 361-365.

Safran, J. D. (2003). The relational turn, the therapeutic alliance, and psychotherapy research: Strange bedfellows or postmodern marriage? *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 39(3), 449–475.