

APsaA's DPE Research Education Section (RES): Mission, Activities, Plans

Morris N. Eagle and Linda S. Goodman

Morris N. Eagle, Ph.D., co-chairs the DPE Research Education Section and the New Center for Psychoanalysis Research Committee. He is senior faculty at NCP, 2009 recipient of the Sigourney Award, and the author of numerous books and journal articles.

Linda S. Goodman, Ph.D., co-chairs the DPE Research Education Section. She is a psychoanalyst in LA, senior faculty at the New Center for Psychoanalysis, past president of NCP, and co-chairs the NCP Research Committee.



Morris N. Eagle



Linda S. Goodman

Recent efforts to include research material and critical thinking in a psychoanalytic curriculum began modestly as a grassroots initiative at the New Center for Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles (NCP). Members of the Research Committee of NCP (Barton Blinder, Allan Compton, Beverly Feinstein, Andrei Novac, Joshua Pretsky, Richard Rosenthal, Jeffrey Seitelman) promoted the idea through a small pilot project that drew interest from the leadership of the Department of Psychoanalytic Education (DPE). Would it be possible to enhance critical thinking in psychoanalytic education, and build an awareness of research by including relevant research papers in the curriculum where instructors were open to this idea? What other initiatives might activate an awareness of research education for candidates and members of APsaA? The DPE Research Education Section (RES) was established to address these questions.

The aims of the RES include facilitating critical thinking to further ground psychoanalytic training and education in a framework that integrates a psychoanalytic perspective and knowledge with relevant findings from other disciplines. We hope to encourage interested psychoanalytic institutes to include critical thinking and research studies in courses where such material is relevant. When the course instructor does not have the necessary background or knowledge base to integrate such material into the course, guest lecturers could be invited to present their research work and/or their knowledge regarding research findings. Since such lecturers are not always available, one possibility is to make use of online or videotaped presentations, some of which we hope to make available.

We do not limit 'research studies' to experimental designs, but also include systematic case studies, particularly those that integrate research findings, N of 1 studies, epidemiological studies, and qualitative as well as quantitative methods. We are aware that the findings of research studies, particularly group findings, cannot be applied indiscriminately to clinical work with individual patients. However, such findings can contribute to one's general background of knowledge and to an open-minded and critical perspective. There are also many research studies that report individual differences and interaction effects, rendering these studies more directly relevant to clinical work.

With the above aims in mind, RES has undertaken the following projects and is developing the following

plans:

1. Organization of a videotaped yearly panel at the APsaA National Meeting called “Research Education Dialogue.” The varying topics of the panels would aim to address important dimensions of research education, and over time, the videotapes could serve as an archive of research education materials.

At the 2018 National Meeting, the topic of the panel was “Critical Thinking and Research in Psychoanalytic Education.” Papers were presented by Otto Kernberg and Ellen Rees, and discussed by Andrew Gerber. Kernberg highlighted his long-standing and passionate call for integration of research findings into psychoanalytic education. Rees described a curriculum she and her colleagues at the Columbia University Psychoanalytic Institute have developed on critical thinking that might serve as a model for other institutes.

The topic for APsaA’s 2019 National Meeting panel was “Another Look at Therapeutic Action: Implications for Psychoanalytic Training and Education.” The panelists were John Clarkin and Leon Hoffman, and the discussant was John Porcerelli. Clarkin presented on “Therapeutic Action in the Treatment of Personality Pathology” and Hoffman’s topic was “A Clinician Looks at the Referential Process as an Indicator of the Analytic Process in Conflict and Interpersonal/Relational Theory.” Both 2018 and 2019 panels were well attended and stimulated productive discussions. We plan to post videos of both 2018 and 2019 panels on our RES web-presence.

2. Members of the RES participated in IPA’s international conference. The two of us and Joshua Pretsky presented papers on psychoanalytic training and education at a panel on “Outcome Research and the Future of Psychoanalysis: Researchers and Clinicians in Dialogue” at the 2018 Joseph Sandler Psychoanalytic Research Conference in Los Angeles organized by Marianne Leuzinger-Bohleber and Mark Solms. [See “Joseph Sandler Research Conference” TAP 53/1, page 21.] The papers given at the conference are to be organized as a book to be published by Routledge.

3. Development of a RES web-presence dedicated to the posting of an annotated research bibliography relevant to topics covered in institute curricula. We will attempt to periodically update this bibliography. Material for the website will be suggested by members of the RES consultation group, who will also provide an abstract and brief comments on the particular psychoanalytic content area to which the material is relevant. Our hope is that the availability of this web-presence will facilitate the use of research material in the curricula of different institutes. The utility of this resource will be enhanced by appropriate linking with other DPE sections such as Training and Education.

One of our aspirational goals is to develop and make available videos of interactional discussions between researchers and clinicians that can be used in psychoanalytic education. If financial support for this initiative can be found, it may provide an enduring educational resource for institute classes.

The RES believes an emphasis on critical thinking as well as exposure to thinking and findings from relevant disciplines can contribute to the increased vitality of psychoanalytic training and education. We realize the goals of the RES may be challenging for institute faculty. We want to make it clear that our goal is not to emphasize systematic research at the cost of clinical experience and knowledge, but rather to facilitate integration between the two perspectives. To some extent, such integration may already be taking place. For example, it would be difficult to imagine discussing the use of transference focused psychotherapy (TFP) or mentalization based therapy (MBT) in treatment of borderline conditions without including reference to research, respectively, by Kernberg, Clarkin, and their colleagues, and Peter Fonagy, Anthony Bateman and others. A central aim of the RES is to contribute to furthering of such integration.

