

This Week's Citation Classic

Strupp H H & Bergin A E. Some empirical and conceptual bases for coordinated research in psychotherapy: a critical review of issues, trends, and evidence. *Int. J. Psychiat.* 7:18-90, 1969.

[Vanderbilt Univ., Nashville, TN and Teachers College, Columbia Univ., New York, NY]

The article was perhaps the first comprehensive critical review of the psychotherapy research literature. It was part of a larger effort to explore whether large-scale collaborative studies by independent investigators were feasible, and it proposed several possible research studies for investigation. Since that time the field has undergone considerable growth and development, based in part on our effort to synthesize results and point new directions. [The Science Citation Index™ (SCCITM) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI™) indicate that this paper has been cited over 210 times since 1969.]

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"The history of psychotherapy research, which began in the 1940s, was significantly influenced by three National Institute of Mental Health-sponsored national conferences, held respectively in 1957, 1961, and 1966. Following the third conference in Chicago, a small informal committee of prominent researchers, chaired by Joseph D. Matarazzo, was formed for the purpose of exploring the feasibility of collaborative research among independent investigators. Would researchers collaborate? Was the field sufficiently developed to make collaborative efforts productive at that time? The committee judged that exploration of the problem called for a major commitment and that no single person was likely to be equal to the challenge.

"With the active support of A. Hus-sain

Tuma and Donald Oken, representing the Clinical Research Branch of the NIMH, the committee invited a behaviorally and client-centered researcher (Allen E. Bergin) and a psycho-dynamically oriented researcher (myself) to undertake, as a first step, the task of critically reviewing the extensive research literature. The result was the subject review article, in which we interpreted the empirical status of the field and outlined several possible collaborative projects that might significantly advance knowledge of therapeutic effects. Additional products were invited critiques by recognized researchers¹ and a comprehensive bibliography.²

"Phase 2 involved a more intensive exploration of the feasibility issue. It encompassed traveling nationwide to visit research centers, consult with a sizable group of experts, draft discussion papers, and eventually formulate a set of recommendations. Our main conclusion,³⁻⁴ as of 1970, was essentially negative. (A decade later, however, NIMH launched the first large-scale collaborative study in psychotherapy, aimed at the treatment of major depressions.)

"Our collaboration was a tremendously enriching personal and professional experience, an opportunity that comes one's way perhaps once in a lifetime. Our odyssey was enormously exciting. Best of all, we became close friends and our friendship has endured. We remain grateful to Matarazzo, whose vision brought us together, to Tuma, and to many other colleagues who broadened our horizons. It is deeply gratifying that our own collaboration has apparently stimulated the thinking of numerous colleagues and thus played a part in furthering research in this important area. Psychotherapy research has clearly ceased to be an esoteric pursuit by a few specialists; it has become a respectable area of scientific investigation."

1. Critical evaluations of: Some empirical and conceptual bases for coordinated research in psychotherapy: a critical review of issues, trends, and evidence. *Int. J. Psychiat.* 7:116-68, 1969.
2. Strupp H H & Bergin A E, eds. *Research in individual psychotherapy: a bibliography.* Bethesda, MD: NIMH, 1969. 167 p.
3. Bergin A E & Strupp H H. New directions in psychotherapy research: a summary statement. *J. Abnormal Psychol.* 76:13-26, 1970.
4., *Changing frontiers in the science of psychotherapy.* Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972. 468 p.