The Evidence-Base for Body Psychotherapy

Preamble:
Psychotherapy research in general terms is a relatively young and fairly controversial scientific discipline; the questions as to whether the notion of “Empirically Supported Treatments / ESTs” or even “Evidence Based Treatment” can be applied remains a subject for intensive debate within the psychotherapy community.

Lambert (2011) emphasised major goals of psychotherapy research as an applied clinical science, namely, “protecting and promoting the welfare of the client by identifying the principles and procedures that enhance positive outcomes”. The literature on the history of psychotherapy research usually distinguishes between four phases, beginning with the systematic case study approach introduced by Sigmund Freud in the 1920s. The first systematic outcome studies were conducted by Carl Rogers and team in the 1950s with an emphasis on psychotherapy processes, as well as conceptual issues in psychotherapy. From 1970 onwards, the focus shifted towards establishing specific effects of psychotherapy interventions in treatment-outcome studies, culminating in the famous ‘Dodo-Bird-Verdict’: “At last the Dodo said, ‘Everybody has won, and all must have prizes’” (from Alice in Wonderland). This verdict considers decades of large-scale, so-called “meta-analytic” studies, suggesting that although psychotherapy is effective, no single approach is consistently more effective than another (Luborsky et al., 1975; Smith & Glass, 1977; Wampold & Imel, 2015). Other researchers, predominantly those representing Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy, concluded their studies as supporting modality specific evidence (e.g. Chambless & Ollendick, 2001). From about the mid-1980s however, the perspectives in psychotherapy research shifted, and is now characterized by an intensive effort to distinguish general and specific psychotherapy process and change factors in the context of mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) research approaches (see Laska et al., 2014).

The contemporary discourse in psychotherapy research has therefore emphasised the importance of context factors such as: intercultural issues, client-therapist interaction, the matter of choice (matching of therapist-client perspectives), as well as the transfer of experiences from psychotherapy into day-to-day life. From a perspective of Body Psychotherapy (BPT), it is furthermore important to acknowledge the growing influence of a theory paradigm shifts towards a notion of embodied cognition in psychology, philosophy and corresponding findings in (affective) neurosciences (e.g. Panksepp, 2004) and neuropsychology (e.g. Schore, 2012), emphasising the crucial role of creative, embodied engagement as well as emotional regulation and corresponding resource-oriented, approaches in psychotherapy.

Some additional dimensions have to be considered for BPT: the embodied and experiential nature at the core of the psychotherapeutic process in BPT, the interactive, participatory therapeutic relationship as well as the interface between subjective feeling states/affect regulation and movement behaviour – all these aspects, specific for the work in BPT, make it difficult to apply EST criteria to determine an evidence-base for efficacy and effectiveness. Tantia (2019) accordingly suggested to extend the research perspective in Body Psychotherapy and introduce a “somatically informed paradigm”.

For the purpose of this EABP website section, we however decided to group the literature according to a standard approach, because we came to the view that the EABP website, as an outward facing information platform, and for those who are not familiar with the specific Body Psychotherapy modality, will benefit from a summary that can be compared with other psychotherapy modalities.

We would like to however clearly state, that we agree with the critical appraisal of the state of the art in psychotherapy research, i.e. supporting the notion that a wider and methodologically equivalent perspective should be considered whilst determining as to how and to what extent Body Psychotherapy “works” for the people that come to seek support and help provided by our Body Psychotherapy colleagues. After all, and as emphasised by Leichsenring et al. (2014): “Plurality and Diversity Matters”, not only in psychotherapy research but also for clinical practice.

Frank Röhricht (on behalf of the EABP Science & Research Committee (SRC))
Introduction & Background:

There are very many different types (methods or modalities) of Body (or Body-Oriented) Psychotherapies and/or Somatic Psychotherapies: [1] some of these are ‘intervention’ techniques or body-therapies that have added on (or integrated) a psychotherapy training component and not many of these Body Psychotherapy methods or modalities have been subjected to any form of proper ‘scientific’ evaluation (i.e., their ‘efficacy’ and ‘effectiveness’ has not been established), but this does not mean that they are not effective or efficacious: these have yet to be established.

However, Body Psychotherapy itself (as a mainstream branch of psychotherapy) has been validated as a scientifically validated and sufficiently ‘grounded’ form of psychotherapy by the European Association of Psychotherapy (EAP); and several of the Body Psychotherapy modalities have also independently gone through the EAP’s ‘Scientific Validation’ process. [2] This ‘scientific validation’ process involves making substantive answers to the EAP’s “15 Questions on Scientific Validity”. [3]

The current ‘evidence-base’ of Body Psychotherapy (as shown here) does not differentiate between the different types of Body Psychotherapy [4] — although some studies refer to just one (e.g., Bioenergetic Analysis); nor does it differentiate between qualitative or quantitative research or different types of research: both can be valid, if the design is appropriate and applicable to Body Psychotherapy.

‘Science’ requires the establishment of measurable standards and values. [5] Nearly all the different theories, methods and modalities of Body Psychotherapy (in Europe) now have similar standards of training (see EABP Training Standards [6]), with increasingly ‘core’ elements in their curricula, common theoretical grounds and underpinning (see: Marlock, Weiss, Young & Soth, 2015), and they are also developing similar professional competencies.

The listing of ‘The Evidence-Base of Body Psychotherapy’ here is a result of an extensive and informed search strategy of members of the EABP’s Science & Research Committee (SRC) with submissions from EABP members and others; it is not based upon a systematic review of all available literature and we may have therefore missed out some publications. There are – obviously – many more other Body Psychotherapy research articles ‘out there’ (many in non-English languages; many confined to specific universities or training schools); so – if anyone reading this is aware of any other similar studies that may be relevant and have been over-looked or left out of this listing – then we ask you to send us the details and then we can / will check them out and add them in to this ‘evidence-base’.


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1 It should also be noted that all the methods or modalities of Body Psychotherapy are all very different and distinct from the wide variety of (bodily-oriented) physical therapies (e.g. massage, yoga, Feldenkrais, Rolfing, Alexander Technique, Hellerwork, etc.), which do not incorporate any training in psychotherapy.

2 For generalized information about the Scientific Validity of Body Psychotherapy (in accordance with the EAP’s 15 Questions about Scientific Validity) (see here); and for the (1999) responses from EABP about the Scientific Validity of Body Psychotherapy - as a mainstream branch of psychotherapy (see here).


4 Some of the different Body Psychotherapy modalities include: Ola Raknes’ ‘Character Analytic Vegetotherapy’; Reich’s ‘Orgonomic Therapy’; Alexander Lowen’s ‘Bioenergetic Analysis’; John Pierrakos’ ‘Core Energetics’; David Boadella’s ‘Bio-synthesis’; Gerda Boyesen’s ‘Biodynamic Psychotherapy’; Ron Kurtz’s ‘ Hakomi’; Charles (Chuck) Kelley’s ‘Radix Therapy’; Jay Stattman’s ‘Unitive Psychotherapy’; Paul Boyesen’s ‘Psycho-Organic Analysis’; Ilana Rubenfeld’s ‘Rubenfeld Synergy’; Lisbeth Marcher’s ‘Bodydynamic Psychotherapy’; Jack Lee Rosenberg’s ‘Integrative Body Psychotherapy’; Pat Ogden’s ‘Sensorimotor Psychotherapy’; Peter Levine’s ‘Somatic Experiencing’; Christine Caldwell’s ‘Moving Circle Psychotherapy’; Susan Apostyan’s ‘Body-Mind Psychotherapy’; Nick Totton’s ‘Embodied Relational Psychotherapy’; the Chiron Centre’s ‘Contemporary Body Psychotherapy’; etc., etc.

5 Theoretical propositions consist of relationships between abstract constructs. Testing theories (i.e., theoretical propositions) require measuring these constructs accurately, correctly, and in a scientific manner, before the strength of their relationships can be tested. Measurement refers to careful, deliberate observations of the real world and is the essence of empirical research. While some constructs in social science research, such as a person’s age, height, weight or something’s size, may be easy to measure, other constructs, such as creativity, prejudice or alienation, may be considerably harder to measure.

6 EABP Body Psychotherapy Training Standards: https://eabp.org/training-standards
References to above:


Luborsky, L., Singer, B. & Luborsky, L. (1975). Comparative studies of psychotherapies: Is it true that everyone has won and all must have prizes? *Archives of General Psychiatry, 32*(8), 995–1008.


“The heterogeneous field of Body Oriented Psychotherapy (BOP) provides a range of unique contributions for the treatment of mental disorders. Practice based clinical evidence and a few empirical studies point towards good efficacies of these non-verbal intervention strategies. This is particularly relevant for those disorders with body image aberration and other body-related psychopathology, but also for mental disorders with limited treatment response to traditional talking therapies, e.g. somatoform disorders, medically unexplained syndromes, PTSD, anorexia nervosa or chronic schizophrenia. However, the evidence base is not yet sufficiently developed in order to get BOP recognised as suitable mainstream treatment by national health services and their commissioning bodies. Strong academic links are urgently required in order to support practitioners in their efforts to evaluate the clinical work in systematic research. The field would greatly benefit from the development of international higher education training in integrated clinical body psychotherapy, enabling practitioners to obtain a master’s degree. From a scientific perspective, projects on the interface between neuroscience and psychotherapy research should be conducted in order to understand more fully the therapeutic processes in BOP, particularly with regard to emotional processing, movement behaviour and body- & self-perception. Qualitative research is needed to further investigate the specific interactive therapeutic relationship, the dynamics of touch in psychotherapy and the additional self-helping potential of creative/arts therapy components. Provided that these requirements will be fulfilled, BOP could be established as one of the main psychotherapeutic modalities in clinical care, alongside other mainstream schools such as psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and systemic.”

(Abstract in (3) Frank Röhricht, 2009)

**Note:** Currently, we cannot store copies of all available texts on the EABP website. So, **Links** (are to another website’s listing), **Abstracts** and **Downloads** (to an abstract or download of the full text); these are – of course – dependent on another organisation's website maintaining accessibility to these references.
Different Forms of Body Psychotherapy:

As mentioned, there are many different forms (methods, modalities) within the mainstream of Body Psychotherapy. All these different forms share certain common features.

The basic assumption within body psychotherapy is that bodily experience is the foundation of subjective experience. Our body-self experience constitutes the core of our sense of identity. And - Our body holds thousands of untold stories.

Body Psychotherapy is a distinct branch of the main body of psychotherapy with a long history and a large body of knowledge based upon a sound theoretical position. At the same time, it involves a different and explicit theory of mind-body functioning that takes into account the complexity of the intersections of and interactions between the body and the mind, with the common underlying assumption being that a functional unity exists between mind and body. The body does not merely mean the “soma,” which is separate from the mind, the “psyche”. Although many other approaches in psychotherapy touch on this issue, Body Psychotherapy considers this principle to be fundamental.

Body Psychotherapy involves a developmental model, theory of personality, hypotheses about the origins of psychological disturbances and alterations, as well as a rich variety of diagnostic and therapeutic techniques used within the framework of the therapeutic relationship. Many different and sometimes quite separate approaches are found within Body Psychotherapy, as there are in the other main branches of psychotherapy. Body Psychotherapy is also a science, as well as an art, having developed over the last seventy-five years from the results of research in biology, anthropology, proxemics, ethology, neurophysiology, developmental psychology, neonatology, perinatal studies, and many more disciplines.

A wide variety of techniques are used within Body-Psychotherapy, including those involving touch, movement and breathing. There is, therefore, a link with some body-oriented therapies, somatic practices, and complementary medical disciplines, but although these may also involve touch and movement, they are very distinct from Body Psychotherapy. Body Psychotherapy recognizes the continuity and the deep connections that all psycho-corporal processes contribute, in equal fashion, to the organization of the whole person. There is no hierarchical relationship between mind and body, between psyche and soma. They are both functioning and interactive aspects of the whole.

Here are some of the various body-oriented psychotherapy modalities and their founders (in no particular order) with links for further information – and this list is not totally inclusive as new Body Psychotherapies can ‘pop up’ every day:

- Wilhelm Reich’s USA-based ‘Orgonomy’; see here
- Alexander Lowen’s ‘Bioenergetic Analysis’; see here
- Gerda Boyesen’s ‘Biodynamic Psychology & Psychotherapy’; see here
- Neo-Reichian (Ola Raknes) ‘Character-Analytic Vegetotherapy’; see here
- Nick Totton ‘Embodied Relating’; see here
- Chuck Kelley’s ‘Radix’ work; see here
- John Pierrakos’s ‘Core Energetics’; see here
- Ron Kurtz’s ‘Hakomi’; see here
- Jay Stattman’s ‘Unitive Psychotherapy’; see here
- Lisbeth Marcher’s ‘Bodydynamic Analysis’; see here
- Julian de Ajuriaguerra’s psychoanalytically-oriented ‘Psychomotor Therapy’; see here
- David Boadella’s ‘Biosynthesis’; see here
- Ilana Rubenfeld’s ‘Rubenfeld Synergy’; see here
- Malcolm Brown’s ‘Organismic Psychotherapy’; see here
- Luciano Rispoli’s ‘Functional Body Psychotherapy’; see here
- Jerome Liss’s ‘Biosystemic Psychotherapy’; see here
- Al Pesso’s ‘Pesso-Boyden Psycho-Motor System’; see here
- Peter Levine’s ‘Somatic Experiencing’; see here
- Jack Lee Rosenberg’s ‘Integrative Body Psychotherapy’; see here
- Jack Painter’s ‘Postural Integration Psychotherapy’; see here
• Thomas Pope’s Lomi Psychotherapy; see here
• NeuroPsychoSomatic Institute; see here
• Pat Ogden’s ‘Sensorimotor Psychotherapy’; see here

There are a number of different European Body Psychotherapy Training Institutes, often representing a different specific type of Body Psychotherapy, that are all gathered together in the EABP FORUM of Body Psychotherapy Training Institutes (see here) or are listed in the USABP’s Somatic Psychology Education & Training (see here).

European Body Psychotherapy Training Institutes (accredited by the EABP FORUM)

• Bulgarian Institute of Neo-Reichian Analytical Psychotherapy (Sofia, Bulgaria)
• Centre for Integrative Development – Educa (Zagreb, Croatia)
• Integral Personal Development – Centre & School (Zagreb, Croatia)
• Ecole Biodynamique (Montpelier, France)
• IFCC Institute de Formation en Thérapie Psychocorporelle (Strasbourg, France)
• Aus- und Fortbildungszentrum Transformative Körperpsychotherapie (Berlin, Germany)
• Europäische Schule für Biodynamische Psychologie (ESBPE) e.V. (Gronenberg, Germany)
• Hakomi Institute of Europe e.V. (Germany)
• International Institute for CoreEvolution & CoreSoma (Esen, Germany)
• Zentrum für Integrative Körperpsychotherapie und Humanistische Psychologie (Frankfurt, Germany)
• E.I.N.A. – Greek Institute of Vegetotherapy & Character Analysis (Athens, Greece)
• Hungarian Association for Body Psychotherapy (Budapest, Hungary)
• Karkur College of Holistic Therapy (Karkur, Israel)
• Reidman International College – School for Body-Centered Psychotherapy (Tel-Aviv, Israel)
• European School of Functional Psychotherapy (SEF) (Napels, Italy)
• Institute of Neuropsychosmatics (INP) (Bagni di Lucca, Italy)
• SIAB – Società Italiana de Analisi Bioenergetica (Rome, Italy)
• SIAR – Società Italiana di Analisi Reichiana (Rome, Italy)
• SIB - Società Italiana di Biosistemica (Rome, Italy)
• Escuela Española Reichiana (ES.TE.R) (Valencia, Spain)
• NIB – Nederlands Instituut voor Biodynamische Psychologie (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Non-accredited FORUM Training Institutes

• IKP Institut für Körperzentrierte Psychotherapie (Zurich, Switzerland)
• Cambridge Body Psychotherapy Centre (Cambridge, UK)
• London School of Biodynamic Psychotherapy (LSBP) (London, UK)

USA College & University Training Programs

• California Institute of Integral Studies; see here
• Naropa University – Somatic Counseling: Body Psychotherapy; see here
• Parkmore Institute; see here

Other USA Body-oriented / Somatic Psychotherapy trainings and institutes include:

• Judith Blackstone’s The Realization Process; see here
• Anna & Daria Halpin’s Tamalpa Institute; see here
• Steve Hoskinson’s Organic Intelligence; see here
• Eugene Gendlin’s Focusing Institute; see here
• The NeuroAffective Relational Model (NARM); see here
• NeuroSystemics (Swiss Institute of Mindfulness); see here
• Radical Aliveness Institute; see here
• Seattle School of Body-Psychotherapy; see here
• Somatic Therapy Center; see here
• Center for Mindful Body Awareness; see here
• Integral Somatic Psychology; see here
There are also a couple of branches of body-oriented psychotherapy that have evolved from other disciplines, like the dance and movement therapies, like:

- Christine Caldwell’s *Moving Cycle*, see here
- Susan Aposhyan’s *Body-Mind Psychotherapy*, see here
- and *Concentrative Movement Therapy*; see here

There are, as well, many splits, amalgamations with other psychotherapies, and other variations of the above, so new Body Psychotherapies continually emerge.

However, a clear distinction must be made between Body Psychotherapies (as above) and the very many different body therapies. [9]

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[9] It should also be noted that all the methods or modalities of Body Psychotherapy are all very different and distinct from the wide variety of (bodily-oriented) physical therapies (e.g. Massage, Yoga, Feldenkrais, Rolfing, Alexander Technique, Hellerwork, etc.), which do not incorporate any training in psychotherapy.
§A: Articles & Chapters about Body / Somatic Psychotherapy Research (inc. Overview and Meta-Studies)


§B: Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles & Theses on Body-Psychotherapy Research Projects (efficacy and effectiveness) (inc. RCTs)


Section B: Body Psychotherapy Research Studies


B(39) Lazarewicz, S. (2016). Embodied Healing: Clinician’s Perspectives on Somatic Interventions for Trauma. Sophia, St Catherine’s University: Master’s degree research paper. (Abstract) (Download)


Section B: Body Psychotherapy Research Studies


§C: Journal Articles (peer-reviewed) about other Body-Oriented Therapy Research Projects (including dance-movement therapy, dance-movement psychotherapy, ‘mind-body’ psychotherapies)


Section C: Other Body-Oriented Psychotherapy Research Studies


C(111) Stockheimer, B. (xxxx). Erlebte Entwicklungsprozesse von Klientinnen und Klienten mit Multipler Sklerose in körperpsychotherapeutischer Behandlung. [Subjective processes of development of clients with Multiple Sclerosis in body-psychotherapeutic treatment]


Section C: Other Body-Oriented Psychotherapy Research Studies
The on-line version of the **EABP Bibliography of Body-Psychotherapy** is a searchable on-line database with about 5,000 entries (or listings) of various different types of Body-Psychotherapy (published) material *(Access)*.

There are separate & distinct listings for different types of ‘publications’ about Body Psychotherapy: *(1)* Books & Chapters; *(2)* Journal Articles; *(3)* Theses & Dissertations; *(4)* Conference Reports & Papers; *(5)* Films / Tapes / Videos; and *(6)* (Specialised) Websites.

In order to ‘search’ this database of the EABP Bibliography, just type any word: e.g. ‘Research’ (or any other key word: e.g. ‘Reich’, ‘Bioenergetic’, ‘London’, ‘Birth’, Outcome, etc.) into the ‘Search’ box; or you can browse through the different sections (as mentioned above).

You can also add new entries into this database. Please feel free to do so: we are especially interested in **non-English language** entries: however, we **also** require a parallel “English Entry”, as well as the original ‘mother-tongue’ entry.

**Note:** There have not been any new entries since (about) 2010, so this Bibliography is now essentially archived. It will still be kept available / accessible so that it can still be used for reference purposes and any entries dated prior to 2010 will still be entered, but any entries after 2010 will not be entered, unless this project is restarted.