

Different Types of Research Appropriate for Body Psychotherapy SRC Resource 4

There are – of course – many and various different types of research. They may all be scientifically valid, but they may not all be appropriate: it depends on what you want to explore and demonstrate. These various major ‘types’ can be shown hierarchically, below. There are also widely differing views about the value of qualitative and quantitative research (see Resource 2 & Resource 9). Additionally, for psychotherapy, the primacy of the gold standard (RCTs) is increasingly being challenged, since more and more psychotherapy research utilises qualitative research studies, validated and tested for reliability.

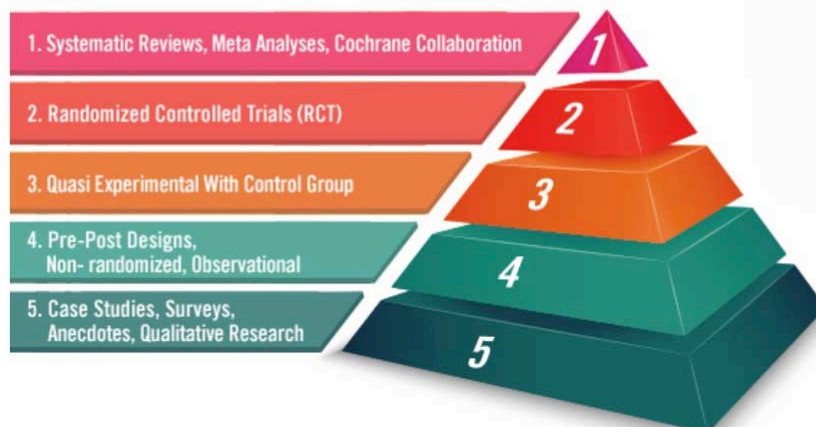
In Body Psychotherapy, there have been some meta-studies (Level 1) and also some Level 2: Randomised Controlled Trials, demonstrating the efficacy or effectiveness of Body Psychotherapy for certain conditions (see ‘[The Evidence-Base for Body Psychotherapy](#)’). Some of these are very interesting – but they may not necessarily help the individual Body Psychotherapist.

Some people – for their academic studies – (M.Sc. / Ph.D.) might want to undertake some research in Body Psychotherapy practices. This might be more at Level 3.

The practitioner is often confounded by research studies – there is a traditional gap of understanding between research and practice – and even attempts to bridge that gap (like trying to coordinate evidence-based practice & practice-based evidence) would be more at Level 4.

There has also been a recent (2018) collection of Body Psychotherapy Case Studies – another form of qualitative research (sometimes put at Level 5).

PYRAMID OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE



LEVEL 1. These are reviews of a number of studies and are an even higher standard than RCTs. This can involve a pooling of the data from a number of studies (a meta analysis) or a critique / analysis / summary of multiple comparable studies to draw a conclusion or recommendation.

LEVEL 2. “Randomized Clinical Trials” or RCTs are the gold standard of research. Such an approach randomizes people into two or more groups for comparison of outcomes. Randomization serves to minimize biased or unpredictable effects on the outcome.

LEVEL 3. This kind of study has a matched control group for comparison but participants are not randomized into the comparison groups.

LEVEL 4. Research based on following a group of individuals before and after an intervention or service. Each person as their own baseline and control but there is no formal control (ie, comparison) group.

LEVEL 5. Single case reports, anecdotes, observations, and series of self reports. This is how scientific inquiry begins with observations and subsequent inquiries.

So, what Science & Research methods can be best used for Body Psychotherapy – and especially for Body Psychotherapists?

Firstly, we need to be very sure that we know ... (1) that what we **do** actually works; and we also need to know ... (2) **how** it works and **why** it works; and we also might want to know ... (3) **how** we make it work even better. That's on a very basic level.

We also might be interested in discovering ... (4) what other people in our particular field are doing and (5) what is happening in other fields that might be of interest in our field of work. In order to answer some of these questions, we may need to be more specific about (6) **what** we know and (7) **how** do we know what we know, and finally ... (8) **how** do we find out what we *need* to know. On the surface, this can be quite confusing.

In **Resource 1** – the initial PowerPoint – we introduce you to some of the language of science & research, terms relating to: ... quantitative, qualitative, induction, deduction, evidence-based practice, practice-based evidence, effective, efficacious, competency, empirically-supported, assessment, intervention, case formulation, observation, enumeration, analysis, systematic, documented and measured, research subjects, controls, theoretical framework, research method, scales, feedback-informed, reflective practitioner, placebo effect, etc.

Rae Johnson wrote a seminal article, '*Somatic psychotherapy and research: Walking the common ground*', which we presented as **Resource 2**, as it links: "... the values, attitudes and skills of somatic psychotherapists with specific research methodologies. It traces the similarities between doing therapy and doing research, with a focus on the role of the therapist/researcher and outlines a research method that somatic psychotherapist might consider as a basic framework when undertaking their own formal research." She suggests a general outline with some special considerations for each phase of the research that could help bring such a study into greater alignment with an approach focused on engaged and embodied relationships as an agent for change. This dilemma between research and practice echoes throughout the whole field of the science of psychotherapy.

In this **Resource (No. 3)**, we look at different types of research methods. There are several different forms of research:

- **Quantitative Research** (which refers mainly to where data is collected based on numbers, and then a summary is taken from these numbers) ...
- **Qualitative Research** (which is when the information or data cannot be grasped in terms of numbers. Though sometimes not as reliable as quantitative, qualitative research helps to form a better summary in terms of theories in the data) ...
- **Descriptive Research** (Facts are considered in descriptive methods and surveys and case studies are done to clarify the facts. These help to determine and explain with examples, the facts, and they are not rejected. Many variables can be used in descriptive research to explain the facts) ...
- **Analytical Research** (which uses facts that have been confirmed already to form the basis for the research and critical evaluation of the material is carried out in this method. Analytical methods make use of quantitative methods as well) ...
- **Applied Research** (is where only one domain is considered and mostly the facts are generalized. Variables are considered constant and forecasting is done so that the methods

can be found out easily in applied research. Technical language is used in the research and the summary is based on technical facts.

- **Fundamental Research** (is the basic or pure research done to find out an element or a theory that has never been in the world yet. Several domains are connected and the aim is to find out how traditional things can be changed or something new can be developed. The summary is purely in common language and logical findings are applied in the research) ...
- **Exploratory Research** (is based on theories and their explanations and it does not provide any conclusion for the research topic. The structure is not proper and the methods offer a flexible and investigative approach for the study. The hypothesis is not tested and the result will not be of much help to the outside world. The findings will be topic related that helps in improving the research more) ... and
- **Conclusive Research** (aims at providing an answer to a research topic and has a proper design in the methodology. A well-designed structure helps in formulating and solving the hypotheses and give the results. The results will be generic and help the outside world).

Some of these are more – and some are less – appropriate to Body Psychotherapy.

So, one possibility is to start at the bottom of the pyramid above and then discover ways to make one's professional work better. **Case Studies** (see below) can be used by an individual psychotherapist, working clinically. There have been several good published Body Psychotherapy case studies (see Young, 2018), however few have been subjected to any further study or analysis.

Case Studies: A Qualitative Research Method

In our community of Body Psychotherapists, we have found increasing resonance to write case studies. Case studies are considered as a form of qualitative research method. There are several types of case study that can be used, depending on what is wanted to be researched. Some case studies search for commonalities between people, others are used to prescribe further research, or elaborate on a particular method.

Basic Categories of Case Study

- (a) '**multiple-case**' is where several cases are selected to develop a more in-depth view of a phenomenon; a '**collective**' case study involves more than one case, which may or may not be connected to other cases, sometimes used to compare what happens differently at one site or in one collective; or '**cumulative**', collecting information from different sources at different times for future research;
- (b) '**descriptive**' case study is about a real-world situation, often used for teaching purposes than for research; or '**illustrative**' used to examine a familiar case in order to help others understand it; or '**instrumental**', which uses a case to gain further insights into a phenomenon;
- (c) '**exploratory**', which are precursors of a more formal, structured, large-scale research project; or '**explanatory**', which looks for an explanation of a question or phenomenon; and
- (d) '**critical instance**' case studies that are used to determine the cause and consequences of an event; or '**single-study**' or '**intrinsic**', which is where the subject of the case study is the primary interest.

Case studies can be about a person, a group, a particular location, organization, or an event.

Methods of Case Study

The 'researcher' usually provides a description of behaviour. This comes from actual observation, or interviews (structured or unstructured), and/or from documentation, or from 'reconstructing' what happened from a multitude of sources. Since most of this information is verbal (rather than measurement), case studies form part of qualitative research, rather than quantitative.

Another method is to use a **case-control study**, comparing two groups of people retrospectively, one set with a particular condition and another similar set, but without the condition, in order to try to identify any possibly causal factors. (Lewallen & Courtright, 1998)

Analysis of Case Study Data

The data can be analysed using different theories: e.g. grounded theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis, text interpretation (thematic coding), etc. All these approaches use reasonably preconceived categories in their analysis and they are usually quite ideographic, in that they focus on the individual case without reference to a comparison (control) group. The research then 'interprets' the data, deciding what to include or leave out; to focus on (as significant) or ignore. A good case study should be clear what is factual and what is inferred or is the opinion of the researcher.

Strengths & Weaknesses of Case Studies

Case studies provide: detailed information (rich, qualitative, individualistic); information for further research; and permit investigation of otherwise impractical, unethical or very complex situations. They also allow an individual researcher to investigate a topic in more detail and to a greater depth than a large-scale research project. They are an important way of illustrating theories and can help show how different aspects of a person's life are related to each other. They can shed light on aspects of: the subjective dimensions of experience; details of human behaviour; individualistic components and professional techniques that can be useful for further research. Case studies are often used in exploratory research. They can help us generate new ideas (that can later be tested by other methods).

Alternatively, they can be criticised for lacking scientific 'rigour' and cannot easily be 'generalised' to wider populations. They can easily be influenced by the researchers' perspectives, both in the collection and analysis of data. They can be difficult to replicate, can be time-consuming and expensive; and the volume of data can be quite limited.

A useful variation of a clinical Case Study is where the practitioner creates a 'narrative' – with the client – so as to help the client understand their history and process (Narrative Therapy). This helps the client to gain a perspective on their own situation and encourages self-reflection.

Grounded Theory: Another qualitative research method

Grounded theory is a systematic methodology that has been largely applied to qualitative research conducted by social scientists. The methodology involves the construction of hypotheses and theories through the collecting and analysis of data. Grounded theory involves the application of inductive reasoning. A study based on grounded theory is likely to begin with a question, or even just with the collection of qualitative data. As researchers review the data collected, ideas or concepts become apparent to the researchers. These ideas/concepts are said to "emerge" from the data. The researchers tag those ideas/concepts with *codes* that succinctly summarize the ideas/concepts. As more data are collected and re-reviewed, codes can be grouped into higher-level concepts and then into categories. These categories become the basis of a hypothesis or a new theory. Thus, grounded theory is quite different from the traditional scientific model of research, where the researcher chooses an existing theoretical framework, develops one or more hypotheses derived from that framework, and only then collects data for the purpose of assessing the validity of the hypotheses. According to Glaser (one of the founders of Grounded Theory), the strategy of grounded theory is to interpret personal meaning in the context of social interaction. The grounded theory system studies the interrelationship between meaning in the perception of the subjects and their action.

Researchers using grounded theory methods do not aim for the "truth." Rather, those researchers try to conceptualize what has been taking place in the lives of study participants. When applying grounded theory methods, the researcher does not formulate hypotheses in advance of data collection as is often the case in traditional research, otherwise the hypotheses would be ungrounded in the data. Hypotheses are supposed to emerge from the data.

A goal of the researcher employing grounded theory methods is that of generating concepts that explain the way people resolve their central concerns regardless of time and place. These concepts organize the ground-level data. The concepts become the building blocks of hypotheses. These hypotheses become the constituents of a theory.

Other Types of (Qualitative) Research Methods

- **Observation:**
 - **Controlled Observation:** is where the researcher decides where the observation will take place, at what time, with which participants, in what circumstances and uses a standardized procedure. Participants are randomly allocated to each independent variable group. The researcher systematically classifies the behaviour they observe into distinct categories. Coding might involve numbers or letters to describe a characteristic, or use of a scale to measure behaviour intensity.
 - **Naturalistic Observation:** is a research method commonly used by psychologists and other social scientists.
 - **Unobtrusive measures** involve observing social behaviour of people who do not know they are being studied.
 - **Participant Observation:** In participant observation, the researcher participates in a research setting while observing what happens in that setting: 1. Generalizability, which is the extent to which the findings from one group (or sample) can be generalized or applied to other groups (or populations), is a problem in participant observation studies; 2. Results of participant observation studies can stimulate hypotheses and theories that can be tested in other settings, using other research methods ...
- **Surveys:** These often play a large role in research methodology. They help to collect a vast amount of real-time data and help in the research process. It is usually quite low cost and can be done faster than any other method. Surveys can be done in both quantitative and qualitative methods) ...
- **Phenomenological studies** examine human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved. These experiences are called lived experiences. The goal of phenomenological studies is to describe the meaning that experiences hold for each subject. This type of research is used to study areas in which there is little knowledge
- **Random samples** are those where everyone in the target population has the same chance of being included in the study. A stratified random sample is a sample of specific subgroups (e.g. freshmen, sophomores, juniors) of the target population (a college or university) in which everyone in the subgroup has an equal chance of being included in the study. The respondents (people who respond to a survey) must be allowed to express their own ideas so that the findings will not be biased. The questionnaires can be administered either by asking respondents to complete the survey themselves (self-administered questionnaires) or by asking respondents the questions directly (interviews). The researcher must consider the effects that interviewers have on respondents that lead to biased answers (interviewer bias) and whether to make the questions structured (closed-ended questions in which the answers are provided) or unstructured (open-ended questions which people answer in their own words). It is important to establish rapport, or a feeling of trust between researchers and subjects.
- **Interviews:** Interviews can be used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individual participants
- **Focus Groups:** A focus group is a group of deliberately selected people who participate in a facilitated discussion to obtain perceptions about a particular topic or area of interest. Focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's

experiences and points of view. The method is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and also why they think that way.

- **Experiments:** Experiments are especially useful in determining causal relationships. In social studies: 1. These involve independent (factors that cause a change in something) and dependent variables (factors that are changed). 2. They often require an experimental group (subjects exposed to the independent variable) and a control group (subjects not exposed to the independent variable).
- **Documents,** or written sources, may be obtained from many sources, including books, newspapers, social reports, and records kept by various organizations.
- **Secondary Data Analysis:** Secondary analysis, which is the analysis of data already collected by other researchers, is used when resources are limited and/or existing data may provide excellent sources of information. However, because the researcher did not directly carry out the research, he or she cannot be sure that the data were systematically gathered, accurately recorded, and biases avoided.
- **Mixed Methods:** (combinations of some of the above)

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