

Advances in play therapy research: an intercultural dialogue

The field of play therapy contains a diverse range of approaches to helping children develop, find well-being, and overcome challenges. Despite this diversity, there is also a guiding philosophy that is central to the play therapy way of helping: that we should meet the child where they are, in order to help them. We focus on play because it engages children: they express so much of themselves when playing. We focus on making a special kind of relationship with the child, in which we see, accept and value them as they are.

This guiding philosophy is part of what makes play therapy stand apart from other ways of helping children. In a world where children are so often seen in terms of what is expected of them, play therapists often need to become advocates for valuing and connecting with children as they are. Whether engaging with children, caregivers, educators, communities, or the scientific world, the core philosophy of play therapy has an important message about what children need to grow, develop, and be happy and healthy.

Play therapy research has come a long way in supporting the value of play therapy for children and their families. A large and continually growing body of evidence shows that play therapy practice really works to help children overcome many challenges, and in diverse contexts. Research also holds the potential to further develop our understanding of why play therapy works, by studying its psychological, neurobiological and interpersonal processes. Advances in digital technology continue to offer new possibilities for play therapy intervention, and what they might bring.

Hong Kong Shue Yan University will hold a conference entitled 'Advances in Play Therapy Research: an Intercultural Dialogue' over the period of 25-28th July 2024. The aim of this conference is to connect both international and local practitioners and researchers of play therapy, and to share the fruits of their work with one another, and an interested audience of students, professionals and members of the public. It is hoped that the activities may create facilitate future collaboration between practitioners and researchers to continue to develop the field. Hopefully the conference provides an opportunity to find ways in which play therapy can be most relevant and effective in helping children and their families meet the challenges of

contemporary society in Hong Kong, China and other places in the world. It is hoped that by creating dialogue between local and international experts around the challenges of culture in play therapy practice, this aim can be realized. We are looking forward to submission of abstracts of presentations and research forums from world play therapy practitioners and researchers.

The conference activities will span four days:

Date	Activity
25 July 2024	<u>Education day: Preconference Workshops</u>
26 July 2024	<u>Conference Day 1:</u> Opening ceremony and Keynote Addresses
27 th July 2024	<u>Conference Day 2:</u> Keynote Addresses and Intercultural forum
28 th July 2024	<u>Research and Education day: Post-conference workshops</u>

Key speakers at the conference will include:

Professor Dee Ray

Professor Sue Bratton

Dr Judi Parson

Dr Akiko Ohnogi

Dr Tom Yuen

To support the aims of the conference, presentations will be invited around the following themes.

Theme 1: The evidence for play therapy

This theme addresses the need for evidence for the effectiveness for various forms of play therapy practice (including filial therapy and work with parents and families) in addressing various problems faced by young people and their families. Under this theme, presentations are invited that share results from systematic reviews, or studies of the evidence of play therapy, including randomized control trials, cohort studies and case studies.

Theme 2: The relationship and process of play therapy

This theme includes contributions that further our understanding of the process of play therapy, as well as work with caregivers and families, such as filial therapy. This may include process or process-outcome studies that clarify the progress towards change in play therapy. Studies that explore the therapeutic relationship and interpersonal processes are included within this theme.

Theme 3: Cultural contextualization in play therapy

This theme invites contributions which focus on play therapy practice (involving children as well as caregivers) in cultural context. Presentations which offer the effectiveness of play therapy models with particular cultural groups, or that demonstrate culture-informed intervention, or that suggest adaptations to technique, or highlight the challenges of therapeutic relationships with children and families are all welcomed under this theme.

Theme 4: Advances and digitalization of play therapy practice

Under this theme, contributions are invited which may demonstrate advances in play therapy practice, particularly those that make use of digital technologies for play therapy, or related play-based intervention. Contributions which highlight the novel uses of digital technology, and its influence on outcomes or the interpersonal process are encouraged.

Theme 5: Play therapy education and training in cultural context

Contributions under this theme include those that may enhance play therapy education. This may include studies focused on aspects of play therapy education and training, or that address the role of culture in play therapy training, as well as digitalization in contemporary training are all invited under this theme.