

Let's play: exploring playfulness in adulthood

Tobias Constien & Rinat Feniger-Schaal

“To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain, and play with it!” ~ Charlie Chaplin

Being able to play and be playful in difficult times can be the transformative factors in therapy. As Winnicott argues: “Playing is itself a therapy”. Play and playfulness have emerged as core factors in drama therapy both in intervention and assessment. Play was specified as one of the shared factors of the creative arts therapies in a recent scoping review on mechanisms of change reported in the literature (De Witte et al., 2021). In addition, in an ongoing qualitative meta-analysis of client's experiences of drama therapy, play emerged as one of the main supportive experiences of drama therapy (Constien et al., ongoing).

Yet, tools of assessment and measurement of play in drama therapy practice and research are lacking. Therefore, the next stage calls for the systematic assessment of playfulness in drama therapy studies specifically and for arts therapies studies more broadly. While there is a multitude of research on playfulness in children, studies on playfulness in adults are less common. For this purpose, we systematically summarized the current research literature on the use of playfulness in adulthood, that we will be presented (playfully) in this talk. This summary focuses both on the conceptualization of playfulness in adulthood as well as the measurement of playfulness, hence the assessment tools that have been used so far for adults. The broader goal of this research will be to develop a comprehensive tool for the assessment of play and playfulness in the arts therapies for adults, that can be used both clinically and in research.

Biography

Tobias Constien is a research associate at the Institute for Research and Development in the Arts Therapies (IKTn) at the Nürtingen-Geislingen University. He is a graduate of the drama therapy program in Nürtingen and the psychology conversion course at Trinity College Dublin

(Ireland). He is head of the Young Research working group of the Scientific Association of the Creative Arts Therapies (WFKT). Currently, he is pursuing a Masters of Psychological Science at University College Dublin while continuing his research in drama therapy at the IKTn.

Rinat Feniger-Schaal PhD is a certified drama therapist (a registered supervisor), a developmental psychologist and a senior lecturer (tenured) at the School of Creative Arts Therapies, University of Haifa, Israel. Rinat established the MA program in Drama Therapy and Psychodrama in Haifa university and acts as the director of the program. Her main research interests are in the areas connecting research and clinical work, focusing mainly on play, drama and movement and its connection to the theory of attachment. Rinat has an extensive clinical experience as a dramatherapist in the public and private practice, specialising in working with people with cognitive impairment and mental health problems.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Feniger-Schaal, R., Stern, A., & Elizarov, E. (2023). **The effect of medical/therapeutic clowns on the playfulness of children with intellectual disabilities.** *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 36(1), 186-195.

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Feniger-Schaal, R., Orkibi, H., Keisari, S., Sajjani, N.L., & Butler, J.D. (2022). **Shifting to tele-creative arts therapies during the COVID-19 pandemic: An international study on helpful and challenging factors.** *The Arts in psychotherapy*, 78, 101898.

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<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/GQPHK>

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