
In Memoriam

CHARLES E. SCHAEFER

CHARLES E. SCHAEFER, the eminent psychologist whose work helped lay the foundation for the field of play therapy, died on September 19, 2020. He was a charter member of the editorial advisory board of the *American Journal of Play*. Through his advocacy, leadership, and more than one hundred research articles and dozens of authored, coauthored, edited, and coedited books, he shaped the growth and professionalization of the field of play therapy.

Born November 15, 1933, Schaefer earned a bachelor's degree from Fairfield University in 1955 and a doctorate degree in clinical psychology from Fordham University in 1967. He later worked with children as the director of psychological services at The Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry, New York. In 1982, he cofounded with Kevin O'Connor the Association for Play Therapy and served on its board of directors until 1996. In 1986 he joined the psychology department at Farleigh Dickinson University and later served as the director of its Center for Psychological Services until he retired in 2007.

Schaefer's first book, the 1976 edited collection *The Therapeutic Use of Child's Play*, grew out of his experiences supervising clinical interns who were often familiar with only psychologist and play therapy pioneer Virginia Axline's nondirective, or child-centered approach to using play in therapy. Schaefer marshalled decades of research from scholars and clinicians, including Axline, Erik Erikson, Anna Freud, Brian Sutton-Smith, and Louise Guerney, into a single volume that illustrated the wide assortment of therapeutic play approaches clinicians could use to meet a child's needs. This early effort to define, redefine, and expand the field characterized the rest of his career.

Perhaps Schaefer's most significant scholarly contribution came in his 1993 book *The Therapeutic Powers of Play*. In it, he introduced a list of the major therapeutic powers of play to describe the active ingredients in play that help

produce change in clients and to encourage further research about them. The list later grew to more than twenty, and included “change agents” such as self-expression, resiliency, stress management, and empathy. Schaefer and coeditors Heidi Gerard Kaduson and Donna Cangelosi detailed the application of these powers in their 1997 book *The Playing Cure: Individualized Play Therapy for Specific Childhood Disorders*. In the more than two decades since, what the coeditors described as prescriptive play therapy—an eclectic, evidence-informed approach that focused on the individual needs of the client—evolved into the leading form of play therapy.

A celebrated play therapy scholar and advocate, his research and organizational leadership helped professionalize the field through training, credentialing, and establishing forums for new scholarship. For his contributions, he received Farleigh Dickinson University’s distinguished faculty award for research and scholarship in 1994 as well as the title of professor emeritus. In 1996 the Association for Play Therapy honored him with its distinguished service award and the title of director emeritus. Ten years later, the organization presented him with its lifetime achievement award.

—Jeremy K. Saucier