

Descriptive Data

Total Studies	93
Total Subjects	3263
Mean # of Sessions	16
Mean Age	7.0
Gender of Subjects	2/3 male, 1/3 female

Results

EFFECT SIZE FOR THE TOTAL (93 STUDIES)

* Effect Size for Play Therapy by Professional (n=67)	ES=.80 P<.001
* Effect Size for Play Therapy by Paraprofessionals (n=26)	ES=.72 p<.05
* (Filial therapy studies conducted by parents, teachers, mentors – mostly parents)	ES=1.05 p<.05
* Effect Size for the <u>Parent only</u> Filial Therapy (n=22)	ES=1.15 p<.05

Interpretation of Effect Size

According to Cohen (1977), $d = .2$ represents a small effect size; $d = .5$ represents a medium effect size; and $d = .8$ represents a large effect size; therefore, the results of the meta-analysis of play therapy outcome research studies (n=94) reveal a large treatment effect for children receiving play therapy intervention when compared to children receiving no treatment or a non-play therapy intervention.

Implications for Practice and Further Research

- Play therapy is an effective intervention for a broad range of children's problems – across both behavioral and humanistic schools of thought, in various settings, across modalities, across age and gender. However, better designed studies are needed that examine the questions of, is play therapy more or less effective with regard to gender, age, and presenting issue? In addition, an investigation of different theoretical and technical approaches to play therapy and effect on children's outcome related to the above factors would better address the age-old question, which treatment is most effective with which clients, under what circumstances?
- These results strongly point to a greater utilization of Filial Therapy over Play Therapy: Training parents and involving them in their child's play therapy is highly effective, and also has the potential benefit of preventing more severe and costly problems across the lifespan. However, is filial therapy the treatment of choice for all children presenting for play therapy? Studies comparing filial therapy to play therapy by a professional with the same populations are needed to determine if the factors of presenting issue and child's age influence outcome.
- The identified crises in children's mental health services, including the need for more developmentally-responsive interventions that involve the family, provides a sense of urgency for play therapists to utilize these research findings to educate other mental health professionals, third party payors, the legal community, school administrators/teachers and parents to ensure that more children and families receive the help they need.

Note: This information provides a brief summary of an article in press (August, 2005) with *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, entitled, The efficacy of play therapy with children: A meta-analytic review of treatment outcomes, and contains updated information from the preliminary results presented in Ray, D., Bratton, S., Rhine, T., & Jones, L. (2001). The effectiveness of play therapy: Responding to the critics. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 10(1), 85-108. For related information, view research at www.a4pt.org.