

Note on The Dissemination and Development of the Winnicottian Paradigm in China

Zhao Chengzhi

Winnicott Study and Research Group/IWA

On March 8, 2024, we will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Winnicottian Training Course, delivered today by the Brazilian Institute of Winnicottian Psychoanalysis (IBPW). On this auspicious occasion, I would like to offer some thoughts about the dissemination and development of the Winnicottian paradigm in China. Professors Loparic, Elsa Dias, and the team of teachers from IBPW have accomplished something truly remarkable by introducing the Winnicottian paradigm to the Chinese public.

On behalf of the Beijing group, I express our profound gratitude to them for their outstanding contribution.

The spread of, and training for, psychoanalysis in China began in the 1980s. During the twenty years of the 1980s and the 1990s, psychoanalysts, mainly from Germany, came to China to teach psychoanalysis in what we refer to as Sino-German psychoanalytic training course, focused on Freudian psychoanalysis. At the beginning of our own century, the China Working Group of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) began organizing teams of teachers from Northern Europe (mainly Norway and Sweden), Europe itself (mainly the United Kingdom), North America (the United States), and France, who started, respectively, the Sino-Norwegian, Sino-European, Sino-American and Sino-French psychoanalytic training courses, which have continued to this day. The content of the training focused mainly on Freud, Klein and Lacan's psychoanalysis. Starting in 2008, the International Psychoanalytic Association gradually also began to train potential psychoanalysts in China. Once again, the content of the training involves Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysis, with eventual references to Winnicott basically limited to understanding him within the Kleinian framework.

In June 2013, Professors Loparic, Elsa, and Roseana, from Brazil's Winnicottian Institute, travelled to China and brought to Beijing the results of their many years of research on the Winnicottian paradigm. As a psychiatrist at Beijing Huilongguan Hospital, I had the privilege of hosting them and organizing a case supervision session for them. I intentionally arranged for a therapist to report a case of borderline personality disorder, as at that time psychiatrists and psychotherapists in China were basically helpless in treating such cases and

could only resort to ineffective treatment with large amounts of medication. Professor Loparic and Dr. Elsa jointly presided over and supervised this difficult case, showing how Winnicott's theory can be used in understanding the patient. The setting and treatment procedures of the Winnicottian paradigm were eye-opening for me, and I saw hope in treating such patients. I felt that the theories and methods we had been searching for years might be in the hands of these two senior professors. So during lunch, I asked Elsa if she would be interested in coming to Beijing to teach Chinese doctors and psychotherapists how to implement Winnicottian therapy. She readily agreed. Thus, the door was opened for South American psychoanalysts to teach, clinically practice, and promote the Winnicottian paradigm in China. Subsequently, the joint China-Brazil Winnicottian psychoanalytic training program opened a new chapter for the Chinese psychotherapy community, bringing in a breath of fresh air. These teaching activities were conducted under the auspices of the International Winnicott Association (IWA) and were provided by the teaching team from the Brazilian Institute for Winnicottian Psychoanalysis (IBPW), under the joint organization of the Beijing Winnicott Study and Research Group.

These teaching courses and academic activities include:

1. The three-year Sino-Brazilian International Winnicottian Psychotherapy Continuous Training Program at the Huilongguan Psychiatric Hospital in Beijing, offered from 2014 to 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was halted at the end of 2019. Two classes, comprising approximately 200 people, have been trained.

2. The four-year International Winnicottian Psychoanalytic Candidates Full Training Program, started in 2017 with a new class every two years. Four classes have been trained so far, instructing approximately 80 people.

3. Sino-Brazil International Winnicottian Child Psychiatry Theory and Practice Two-Year Continuous Training Program, which started in 2020 as a remote online training course. The first class has graduated, and the second will graduate this year, with plans for a third one next year. Approximately 200 people have been trained so far.

4. The Beijing International Winnicott Colloquium was held for three consecutive years, from 2017 to 2019. Each colloquium lasted for two days and was attended by a mix of mental health workers and kindergarten, primary, and secondary school teachers from Brazil and China. The themes were "Winnicott in China," "Clinical Winnicottian Paradigm," and "Winnicottian Approach to Patients", respectively.

5. The 2019 Winnicottian Psychotherapy Workshop, titled "Psycho-Somatics and Psycho-Somatic Disorder", held with great success in Beijing by professor Vera Laurentiis, representing the IBPW.

6. The 4th Congress of the International Winnicott Association (IWA), hosted online by the Beijing group in 2021, with the topic "Environment Setting and Therapeutic Process in the Winnicottian Paradigm."

In 2018, with the support of the International Winnicott Association, the Beijing Mental Health Facilitating Center had the honor of becoming China's first IWA member. At the same time, the Beijing Winnicott Group was established with the objective of further promoting international and domestic research, practices and training activities related to the Winnicottian paradigm. Since 2020, four generations of approximately 500 individuals have been trained – 30 of them now fully capable of engaging in clinical psychotherapy using the Winnicottian paradigm.

All in all, over the past decade, we have achieved significant and highly satisfactory results in teaching, research, and clinical practice. In particular, we have helped many emotionally and psychologically immature young individuals and their parents. Indeed, many Chinese parents have now embraced the parents-related concepts of the Winnicottian paradigm. Moreover, we have found that Winnicottian theory resonates well with Chinese culture. Many ask us, "Why promote the Winnicottian paradigm in China?" Our answer is that the practice of the Winnicottian paradigm yields excellent clinical outcomes and is congenial to our patients.

As a clinical psychiatrist and psychotherapist with 30 years of experience, I have indeed witnessed the effectiveness of the Winnicottian paradigm in clinical practice over the past decade. I myself and my students and collaborators have been able to provide significant help to children, adolescents, and adult individuals with mental illness, assisting them on the journey towards independence, helping them to improve their relationships with their parents, enhancing their interpersonal relationships, and fostering their emotional and psychological maturity. This new type of psychotherapy is completely different from medical drug therapy and other schools of psychology and psychoanalysis. This approach does not focus on curing symptoms of diseases but rather on helping individuals to become whole persons. It aims to assist those who have been stuck in emotional and personal immaturity due to inadequate nurturing by their families to regain their way to maturity.

We are deeply grateful to professors Loparic and Elsa, these two significant figures in the field of psychoanalysis, as well as to all the teachers in their team. We have benefitted much from their deep understanding of Winnicott, which is the result of their steadfast study of his writings. They have selflessly contributed and imparted their research findings to us. They have brought to China what we have needed in many areas of maturational health care. The Winnicottian ideas they have taught us have helped us discover our own thoughts and methods

for providing our numerous patients and immature individuals with the opportunity to find themselves.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to them!