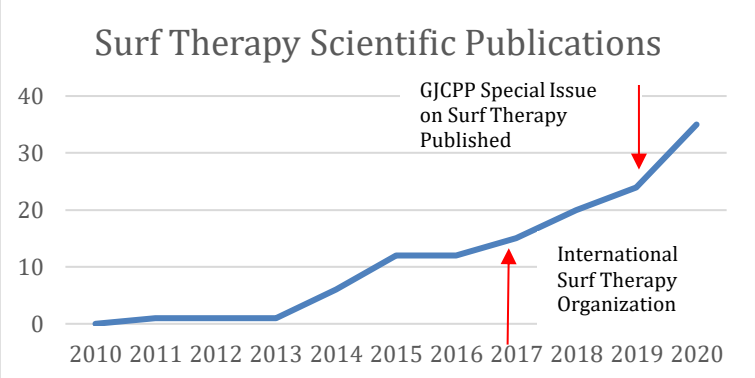
Reading Guide for the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice Special Issue on Surf Therapy

Welcome to this reading guide for the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice (GJCPP) Special Issue on Surf Therapy. This document aims to provide a summary of the contents of the GJCPP wherever possible, avoiding scientific jargon. A journal is a collection of scientific articles, each from different authors. The GJCPP Special Issue opens with a short introduction including, its importance for surf therapy around the world and a reading guide's synopsis of each article.

What is a Special Issue Journal? One of the main ways that scientists share their discoveries is by publishing their work in peer-reviewed journals. The peer-review process consists of experts in the subject, recruited by the journal, to check the legitimacy of articles submitted for publishing. Their job is to ask questions or suggest changes, verify the accuracy of research conclusions, and then decide whether the piece should be approved and published. When you hear about scientific breakthroughs on the news, they are usually based on findings from a recent journal publication. A 'Special Issue' is an academic journal issue that focuses explicitly on a particular topic. In this case, the topic was surf therapy.

Why is the GJCPP Special Issue on Surf Therapy significant? Because of its contribution to the 'evidence base' for surf therapy. For any intervention or treatment to be widely accepted, used, and eventually prescribed, it needs to be based on a body of verified and high-quality scientific work, which is called an 'evidence base.' The GJCPP Special Issue is a considerable increase towards the evidence base in surf therapy, a stepping-stone to widespread acceptance and eventual prescription. The graph below highlights how scientific momentum builds around surf therapy and the GJCPP Special Issue's place on this timeline.

The first academic publication focused on surf therapy was published in 2010. The International Surf Therapy Organization (ISTO) was established in 2017, to promote collaboration in the sector, with a specific aim to build the evidence base. This aim appears to have been fulfilled, as the rate of publication increased, doubling the total number of publications in the two years following ISTO's establishment. This rate of growth further increased by April of 2020, solely due to the publication of the GJCPP's Special Issue on Surf Therapy, bringing with it the contribution of 11 articles. This Special Issue continues to build the momentum of high-quality surf therapy research, representing an important step towards the global acceptance and eventual prescription of surf therapy.



Tips for reading Scientific Journal Articles

Below are a couple of tips for reading articles from the GJCPP if you do not have previous experience of academic journal articles or articles in this research field:

- Do not worry about any technical language or 'jargon' that you do not understand. This is especially true for anything in the methods section!
- Two pieces of jargon that are unavoidable are 'validated measures' and 'significant change.' A validated measure is a tool that has been specifically designed and tested for scientific use. They can measure a range of things, most commonly in surf therapy they measure elements of well-being and/or symptoms of specific illnesses (such as depression or anxiety). A 'significant change' means that we know, through statistical analysis, any changes measured in the data are not explainable by chance alone.
- The **Abstract** is a short summary of the article including all of the key points. It is like a trailer for a movie that does include spoilers to the ending! It is good to read this and get an overview of what the article is about. Do not worry about any jargon under the methods heading of the abstract. There are even briefer summaries for all of the published articles in the following section of this document.
- The **Introduction** includes a description of the background to the work and why the work is required. Make sure to give this a good read to understand the article's place within the wider scientific landscape.
- The **Methods** section can look like it is written in a different language (this is equally true for researchers reading about methods they have little experience in). It is a very important part of any paper as it allows other researchers to judge the validity of conclusions made and, enhances transparency as to how the research was carried out and importantly how to replicate the study to further test results. Do not worry about skipping this section if your primary interests are the papers conclusions and implications for practice.
- The **Results** section includes, surprisingly the results! It can be worth reading this section, followed by the conclusion to see the bigger picture, and then re-read the results to better understand the study's overall findings.
- The **Discussion** section will discuss the findings, any limitations to the study and what they mean for practice. If this is what primarily what you are looking for, scan to find the implications or a similarly headed section.

GJCPP Summary

This section gives a brief overview of each article in the GJCPP Special Issue on Surf Therapy in no more than 3 sentences and avoiding all technical language or jargon. The aim of these summations is to help guide your reading of the GJCPP Special Issue. The summaries are laid out in the same order as the Special Issue and have a link to the full text PDF. Some articles have associated videos linked to them.

Article 1: *Introduction to the Special Issue on Surf Therapy Around the Globe.* This article highlights the background to surf therapy research and its place within community psychology practice. The article also provides more in-depth summations of all the following articles in the GJCPP Special Issue.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/SurfTherapyIntro_SarkisianeEtAl.pdf

Article 2: *Surf Therapy: A Scoping Review of the Qualitative and Quantitative Research Evidence.* This article is a scoping review, that is a structured exploration of the state of research into surf therapy up until the present day. It examines the broad scope of locations that surf therapy works in, the wide range of different people it supports and the positive benefits it is reported to lead to. Finally, the paper highlights what kinds of research are missing from the evidence base in the current day and recommends ways to change this.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/BenningerEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 3: *Coalition Building in Surf Therapy: A Case Study on Collective Impact.* This article explores the development of the International Surf Therapy Organization and the model it used to bring surf therapy organizations from around the world together to work towards common goals. It explores the benefits and the difficulties of this approach, how ISTO has and is seeking to overcome these difficulties and finally recommendations for others trying to establish similar collaboration.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/Mattila-FinalFinal.pdf

Article 4: "*When I was surfing with those guys I was surfing with family." A Grounded Exploration of Program Theory within the Jimmy Miller Memorial Foundation (JMMF) Surf Therapy Intervention.* This article explores the process behind how JMMF supports military veterans to improved mental health and well-being. Participants were interviewed in depth about their experiences with JMMF and through analysis these responses were linked to established psychological theory. These theories included an escape from negative emotions through 'flow' or being in the zone, access to psychological safe space, social support improvements and mastery of a new skill.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/MarshallEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 5: *Surfing and the Senses: Using Body Mapping to Understand the Embodied and Therapeutic Experiences of Young Surfers with Autism*. This article explored the use of body mapping, that is drawing on or adding to body outlines (on paper and in the sand) to explore emotions and feelings associated with surf therapy, alongside observation and interviews with participants, parents, and instructors. It highlights the potential that embodied approaches such as body mapping have in providing in-depth and richer understanding of the health benefits of surf therapy.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/BrittonEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 6: *Effects of PTSD and MDD Comorbidity on Psychological Changes during Surf Therapy Sessions for Active Duty Service Members.* This article used validated measures to explore and compare the impact of surf therapy sessions on active duty US service personnel with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), or both. It found significant positive changes to mood and reductions in depression and anxiety for all groups with the biggest changes to participants with both PTSD and MDD. The article then discussed the potential positives surf therapy may have for broader mental health in contrast to particular disorders.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/OtisEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 7: *Emerging Hope: Outcomes of a One-Day Surf Therapy Program with Youth At-Promise.* This article used a validated measure and analysis of participant drawings to explore changes to hope (an established psychological metric) for youth at-promise attending JMMF surf therapy. A significant positive change to hope was found for participants that was maintained a month after exposure to surf therapy. Analysis of participant drawings highlighted the importance of fun, opportunities for learning, positive self-identity, feeling safe and social support within the surf therapy process.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/SarkisianEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 8: *SURF.ART in Portugal: Daring, Accomplishing and Transforming Portuguese Youth and their Communities.* This article explores changes to youth participants within a 3-year surf therapy intervention in Portugal using validated measures. It found significant reductions in emotional, conduct and social challenges and significant impact on positive social behaviours. The study also explored how these changes were affected by the amount of time participants had spent with the program, one of the first studies to explore dosage in relation to surf therapy. This article has an accompanying video.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/GomesEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 9: *The Wave Project: Evidencing Surf Therapy for Young People in the U.K.* This article used validated measures, interviews, and word association to explore changes to well-being across 5 years in a UK based surf therapy intervention. Significant positive changes to well-being were found while analysis of interviews highlighted the importance of a range of social, behavioural, and emotional processes within surf therapy. Word association highlighted the importance of fun for participants, a notion all surfers can probably relate to.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/Devine-Wright_Godfrey-Final.pdf

Article 10: *Positive Effects of Surfing on Psychological Wellbeing of Children with Developmental Difficulties.* This article used a validated measure to explore quality of life for surf therapy participants in Holland. It found significant improvements in 3 domains of life; psychological well-being, social support and school, there was a near significant improvement to the autonomy and parent relation domain while no change was noted in the physical well-being domain. Evaluation alongside parents further explored positive participant experience. This article has an accompanying video.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/VanEwijkEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 11: *More than Surfing: Inclusive Surf Therapy Informed by the Voices of South African Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.* This article used Makaton word association for participants alongside focus groups with parents, caregivers, teachers, and occupational therapists to explore the benefits of surf therapy for young people with Autism in South Africa. The study maps how participants' emotional experiences went from nothing, through happiness to feelings of bravery by the end of the intervention which matched with focus group data highlighting positive changes to confidence, identity, relationships, and communication. The article also discusses how an existing intervention was adapted for neuro-diverse participants. This article has an accompanying video.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/Van%20der%20Merwe_Yarrow-Final.pdf

Article 12: *Intervention Mapping: Using Theory and Evidence to Inform the Ocean Mind Surf Therapy Program for Improving Youth Mental Health.* This article explores the success of a framework that was utilised to translate an existing surf therapy model from the UK to Australia. It highlights how this model was applied in a lived example alongside challenges faced in the process. It also includes key learnings from the process and recommendations for others wishing to translate interventions between different contexts.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/OliveEtAl-Final.pdf

Article 13: *Surf Therapy Practice, Research, and Coalition Building: Future Directions.* In this concluding article the editors of the GJCPP Special Issue on Surf Therapy reflect on the combined

knowledge presented. The impact these articles have on the growing surf therapy evidence base is discussed, while future research priorities are highlighted. The article concludes with discussion of the future of surf therapy and the role that research and collaborative work spearheaded by ISTO have to play.

https://www.gjcpp.org/pdfs/WalterEtAl-Final.pdf

How the Special Issue can support your surf therapy program:

The final element of the GJCPP Special Issue is how this ground-breaking document can be useful to yourself and your Surf Therapy practice. We have listed a few ways in which we see the special issue supporting the global Surf Therapy family:

- Explore the measures used in studies about populations you work with, potential measures you could adopt within your program evaluation.
- Contact existing programs in the special issue that you may wish to collaborate with, in terms of measurement and evaluation.
- Use findings from similar populations to support grant applications or to highlight the scientific basis for surf therapy in the face of doubt or detractors. The scoping review will also direct you to further research that exists outside of the Special Issue.
- Use the articles to help engage with your local academic institution and propose evaluation collaborations.
- Conduct your own research to help answer some of the questions highlighted in the final article and assist in growing the evidence base for surf therapy. Engage with ISTO through its webinars and its soon to be released evaluation framework will also help support you in this journey.

We hope you have enjoyed reading the world's first academic Special Issue on Surf Therapy and that this guide has been helpful. ISTO would like to say a huge **THANK YOU** to the Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice for hosting this incredible Special Issue on Surf Therapy Around the Globe. To all of the contributing authors, the editors, and especially Professor Gregor Sarkisian, whose vision was realized in the publication of this document, **MAHALO**!