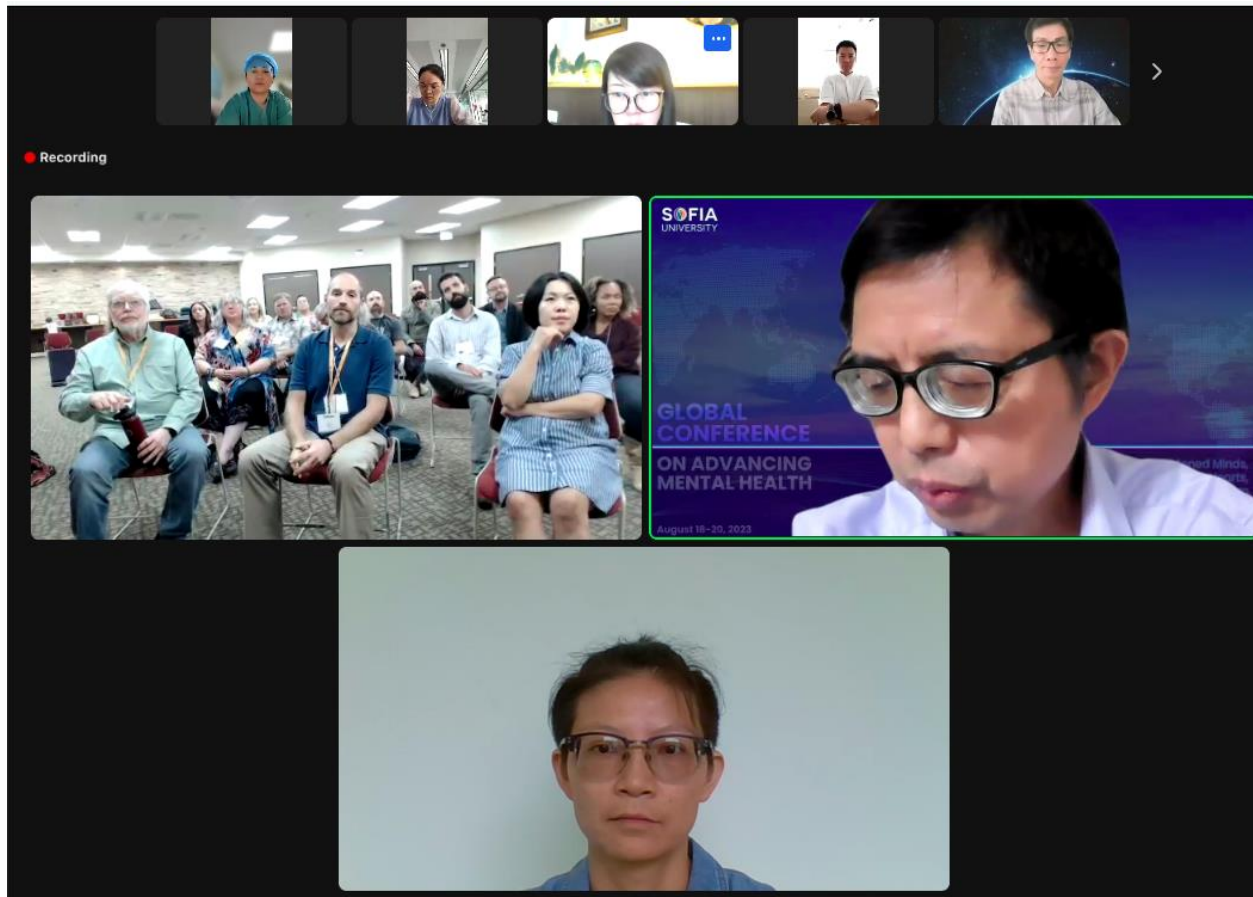


Post conference workshop: Fireside Chat: EDD on Dual Relationship

Sofia University Facilitates Cross-Cultural Exchange on Ethical Guidelines in Psychological Counseling

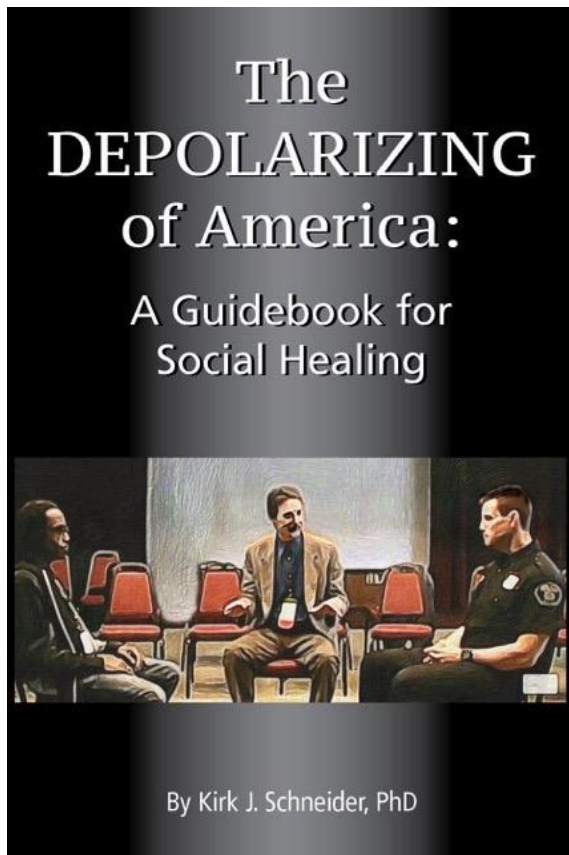
In a groundbreaking event, Sofia University hosted the “Fireside Chat: EDD on Dual Relationship” on September 23, 2023. This fireside chat held both in Costa Mesa, California, and online, delved into the intricate realm of "Dual Relationships in Counseling" using experiential democratic dialogue.



The fireside chat, a post-conference workshop following the 2023 Sofia University Global Conference on Advancing Mental Health, united more than 180 international students from countries including China and the United States, providing a platform for cross-cultural dialogue and bridging the gap between students from these two nations.



The central theme of the conversation revolved around the ethical guidelines in the field of psychological counseling, with a specific focus on the concept of dual relationships. Dual relationships refer to situations in which a therapist or counselor has a relationship with a client that goes beyond the professional therapeutic one. This workshop adopted an innovative approach called "experiential democratic dialogue," a method pioneered by Dr. Kirk J. Scheider. This method involves one-on-one interactions and uses rich psychological knowledge to present the backgrounds of dialogue participants, fostering meaningful communication and conflict resolution.



The dialogue process consisted of six stages:

- 1. Visualizing the Dialogue:** Participants began with a meditation exercise, visualizing the topic of discussion.
- 2. Sharing Personal Backgrounds:** Students Adam A. Neal from the United States and YuKun Zou from China, both pursuing their Ph.D. degrees at Sofia University, shared their diverse personal backgrounds and experiences.
- 3. Expressing Views on Dual Relationships:** They shared their perspectives on dual relationships in counseling, with Adam expressing skepticism about their benefits and YuKun highlighting their potential to strengthen the therapist-patient bond.
- 4. Identifying Stereotypes:** The students pinpointed stereotypes about each other's viewpoints, fostering a deeper understanding.
- 5. Asking Questions:** Both students posed challenging questions to each other, exploring hypothetical scenarios and potential responses in a dual relationship.

6. Reflecting on the Dialogue: In the final stage, the students reflected on the overall dialogue, emphasizing the importance of patient-centered care in the field of mental health. Throughout the symposium, Dr. Caifang Zhu, Professor and Chair of the Chinese Ph.D. program in transpersonal psychology at Sofia University, skillfully moderated the discussions. Dr. Anne Hsu, Lead faculty of the Chinese Master's program in transpersonal psychology, provided valuable insights as the opening guest, and Dr. Robert Wood, Chair of the Ph.D. and PsyD programs in transpersonal psychology at Sofia University, played a crucial supporting role. This interactive conversation, with its emphasis on experiential learning and cross-cultural exchange, showcased the university's commitment to facilitating meaningful academic discussions. Participants were encouraged to explore diverse viewpoints, transcend cultural boundaries, and embrace a patient-centered approach in their future careers as mental health professionals.

In our ever more interconnected world, workshops such as the Sino-US Transpersonal Psychology play a vital role in nurturing mutual comprehension and facilitating the sharing of ideas among students and scholars from diverse cultural backgrounds. Sofia University's unwavering commitment to offering such platforms underscores its dedication to academic excellence and global cooperation in the realm of transpersonal psychology.

