

Chapter 11

Multicultural Considerations in Play Therapy Caregiver Consultation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature regarding parent consultation and to address special considerations when working across cultures and ethnicities. Understanding privacy expectations and how to meet the needs of families, without discouraging the caregivers or unintentionally breaking cultural guidelines, will be explored. This chapter is extremely important because mental health professionals must adhere to the diversity guidelines and ethical standards of practice in complex cases, with many involved caregivers at times. When consulting with caregivers from culturally diverse backgrounds, consultants need to consider the impact of culture on the caregiver, the child client, and on the consultation process.

MULTICULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PLAY THERAPY CAREGIVER CONSULTATION

According to Colby and Ortman (2014) in a 2014 report of National Population Projections, more than half of the nation's children are expected to be from a minority race or ethnic group by the 2020 census. By 2060, 36 percent of children (people under 18) will be white, as compared to 52 percent today. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) also states the Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, accounting for over half of the 27.3 million increase in the total population of the United States. Professionals who work with children and their caregivers must attempt to develop an understanding of various cultures and the roles of the caregivers and children within these cultures. Although there is an

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increasing diversity in referrals, demographic surveys indicate that white females continue to dominate the fields of play therapy and counseling.(Haslam & Harris, 2011; Kranz, Kottman, & Lund, 1998; Phillips & Landreth, 1995; Ryan, Gomory, & Lacasse, 2002).

It is challenging, if not impossible, to summarize the breadth of information necessary when considering the specific needs of every cultural subgroup the play therapist encounters in their role as a play therapy caregiver consultant (PTCC). However, competence in working with a variety of clients is essential and ethically mandated. In fact, according to the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics, counselors are expected to be capable of working with diverse populations and must gain training and supervision when confronted with limitations in their scope of practice, especially when confronted with underrepresented or marginalized populations (American Counseling Association, 2014).

In an investigation of play therapists' self-reported multicultural competence, subjects indicated a need for specific multicultural education as well as ongoing supervision to maximize, "attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, skills, and action" (Penn & Post, 2012, p. 3). In this chapter, we attempt to provide useful guidelines for consideration when working with culturally diverse clients and their caregivers, without assuming that there is an exact answer or a "cookbook recipe approach" all too often used in multicultural or diversity-focused chapters. We present historical and up-to-date information on multicultural considerations for the PTCC, including practical implications for practice in engaging caregivers as a culturally competent play therapist. This information is based on an extensive literature review, research gained from clinical work, and current consultation with PTCCs in the field. It should be noted that the relative lack of research on both multicultural considerations in play therapy and caregiver consultation in general are significant limitations in the scope and breadth of this chapter.

Multicultural Competence

The Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) published Multicultural Competencies on their website, www.multiculturalcounseling.org, which outlines specific standards and serves as a resource for counselors to increase their cultural competence (Arredondo, P., Toporek, M. S., Brown, S., Jones, J., Locke, D. C., Sanchez, J. and Stadler, H., 1996). Additionally, the ACA published Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies that offer developmental domains the PTCC can utilize to become more culturally competent (www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/competencies). These guidelines outline self-awareness, other-awareness, and rapport in addition to specific interventions. Exploring and understanding the guidelines challenges the counselor to acknowledge the pursuit of social justice while embracing multicultural competencies as a lifelong endeavor (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015). Of particular relevance to PTCCs, is the recommendation to recognize similarities and differences both within and between cultural groups. Finally, as a guideline for understanding client worldview, the fact that culture influences communication styles for both the caregiver and the consultant. As such, the consultant must "acquire culturally responsive cross-cultural communication skills to interact with [caregivers]" (Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015).

In addition to the ACA and the AMCD, The Association for Play Therapy also published best practice guidelines to assist PTCCs in providing the highest level of care for their clients (www.a4pt.org/?page=Research). Concepts such as boundaries of competence, non-discrimination, and sensitivity to individual vs. group differences are all areas where cultural competence is considered a necessary skill. Concerning issues of diversity and training, best practices specify:

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