


Chapter 13

Social Justice and Advocacy in University–Based Play Therapy Training Clinics

Emily C. Brown

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2376-0497>

University of Missouri – St. Louis, USA

Emily Oliveira

University of Missouri – St. Louis, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how university training programs and clinics can help play therapists develop social justice advocacy competency. Developing social justice advocacy can help play therapists understand social inequalities and oppressive systems, experience empathy with clients, and integrate advocacy action into their work. Training programs can help facilitate social justice advocacy for students through curriculum focus, service learning, and continuing education opportunities that promote awareness and empathy. Play therapy services offered in university clinics also offer opportunities for interns to increase understanding of social justice advocacy through client interactions and clinical supervision. Clinic directors promote social justice advocacy through managing just organization procedures and coordinating advocacy and outreach initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

According to the *Play Therapy Best Practices: Clinical, Professional, & Ethical Issues* published by the Association for Play Therapy (APT, 2016), training programs should include a focus on diversity issues. This is imperative as play therapists are serving increasingly diverse clients. Currently, almost half of children in the United States are racial and ethnic minorities, and it is estimated that more than 64% of children will be from racial and ethnic minorities by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Mental health

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3432-8.ch013

practitioners need cultural competence to respond to the needs of children and families in an increasingly diverse society, and the need for multicultural play therapy has been addressed in the play therapy literature (e.g., Davis & Pereira, 2014; O'Connor, 2005).

In addition to developing multicultural competence, mental health practitioners provide social justice advocacy to better serve clients. This is an intentional practice of seeking to meet the needs of disenfranchised clients based on an awareness of privilege, social inequality, and oppressive systems. Social justice advocacy can help clinicians understand and address the effects of social inequalities and oppression on well-being. One framework for the integration of multiculturalism and social justice is provided in the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies endorsed by the American Counseling Association (ACA; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2015, 2016). To facilitate the development of these competencies, mental health training programs are tasked with providing education and supervision for mental health practitioners (Ratts et al., 2016). Play therapy training programs also need to provide multicultural training and awareness for play therapists on issues of diversity and social justice (Parikah, Ceballos & Post, 2013). Specifically, Parikah and colleagues (2013) recommended play therapists engage in “empathy training, activities that increase dialogue and immersion, the use of case studies, and role play . . . to increase their empathy and challenge their [belief in a just world], which may lead to an increase in their [social justice advocacy]” (p. 250). Parikh and colleagues (2013) suggested social justice advocacy attitudes could help play therapists enhance empathy in relationships with children and integrate advocacy into their work.

Despite recognition of the need for social justice advocacy training for play therapists, APT's (2016) guidelines have little to no information on advocacy, outreach, or social justice work. Therefore, this chapter provides university based play therapy training clinics with information on furthering social justice advocacy competencies in training programs with recommendations for training, clinical services, advocacy, and outreach efforts.

TRAINING PLAY THERAPISTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

Mental health practitioners recognize cultural competence and social justice as components of ethical practice (ACA, 2014; APA, 2017; NASW, 2017). Social justice includes understanding issues of oppression, privilege, and equality and taking social action for equity (Lee, 2012). Mental health practitioners use this understanding to provide social justice counseling considering “the impact of oppression, privilege, and discrimination on the mental health of the individual with the goal of establishing equitable distribution of power and resources through social advocacy” (Chang, Creather, & Ratts, 2010, p. 84). These principles and practices are rooted in a belief in a just world where all people have access to resources needed for physical and mental health. This professional call for social justice is embodied through advocacy actions with and for clients at various systemic levels.

To prepare mental health practitioners for multicultural and social justice counseling, training programs need to increase students' self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to take action (Ratts et al., 2016). Training that encourages advocacy action may be particularly salient given potential gaps between social justice advocacy perceptions and practice. Steele, Bischof, and Craig (2014) found many counselors believed social justice advocacy was important but fewer reported engaging in social justice advocacy action. Therefore, additional professional development and training may be needed to prepare mental health practitioners for advocacy action. Play therapy training programs can help address this through

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/social-justice-and-advocacy-in-university-based-play-therapy-training-clinics/261349

Related Content

Neurotechnology in the Development of Cyber-Psychotherapy Systems for Inducing and Measuring Altered States of Consciousness in Transpersonal Psychotherapy

Raul Valverde (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 766-786).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/neurotechnology-in-the-development-of-cyber-psychotherapy-systems-for-inducing-and-measuring-altered-states-of-consciousness-in-transpersonal-psychotherapy/261374

Pre-Marital Counselling and Sustainability of Marriages in Contemporary Ghanaian Society

Joseph Ezale Cobbinah and Ellen Mabel Osei-Tutu (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 1492-1506).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/pre-marital-counselling-and-sustainability-of-marriages-in-contemporary-ghanaian-society/261414

The Role of Critical Theory in the Development of Multicultural Psychology and Counseling

Joseph C. Chen (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 168-190).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-role-of-critical-theory-in-the-development-of-multicultural-psychology-and-counseling/261346

Modes of Delivering Psychotherapy: Investigating Technology

Ebrahim Oshni Alvandi, George Van Doorn and Mark Symmons (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 698-725).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/modes-of-delivering-psychotherapy/261371

Neurological Disorders, Rehabilitation, and Associated Technologies: An Overview

Sateesh Reddy Avutu and Dinesh Bhatia (2021). *Research Anthology on Rehabilitation Practices and Therapy* (pp. 1577-1589).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/neurological-disorders-rehabilitation-and-associated-technologies/261418