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Art Therapy Ethical Practice And Multicultural/Diversity Competence

Abstract

The United States Census (2010) confirms a shift from a nation that is primarily White, from Western European backgrounds, to a country in which the majority of residents are from visible racial ethnic, and non-English speaking backgrounds (D'Andrea & Arrendondo, 2002). Consequently, this shift implies art therapists will be challenged to become expert in culturally congruent treatment. The American Art Therapy Association's *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists* (2011) Section 6.0 serves as a guide for our multicultural professional conduct/practice.

Over the years a number of art therapists have argued for cultural competence to be the cornerstone of art therapy education and training (Doby-Copeland, 2006; Dufrene, 1994; George, Greene, & Blackwell, 2005; Hiscox & Calisch, 1998; ter Maat, 1997; ter Maat, 2011; Talwar, Iyer, & Doby-Copeland, 2004). The American Art Therapy Association recognizes art therapists have an ethical responsibility to provide competent services to culturally diverse individuals. Recently the AATA adopted Multicultural/Diversity Competencies (2011), which were developed to describe the multicultural self-awareness, knowledge, and skills art therapists need to acquire to practice effectively with persons from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Individual and organizational multicultural competence is fundamental to ethical professional practice, and is the foundation for proficient art therapy practice.

The need to develop multicultural competence is a standing requirement of our organization. Practicing art therapists today range from those who remain *culturally encapsulated* to those who have embraced culturally competent practice as the basis of their therapeutic interactions (Sue & Sue, 2013). Moon (2006) infers that art therapists who are predisposed to ethnocentric biases may unintentionally misinterpret diversity issues related to age, race, sexual orientation, or social class. "Our own understanding of multiculturalism is based on the premise that *all counseling is cross-cultural*. …It is essential that you realize that culture influences a person's view of reality and thus every aspect of life" (Remley & Herlihy, 2007, p. 51).

The Ethics Committee receives inquiries that are characteristic of the dilemmas of ethical art therapy practice. The *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists,* Section 6.0 and the American Art

Therapy Association's Multicultural/Diversity Competencies, support three premises proffered by Lee (2001):

1. Diversity is a reality that can not be ignored,

2. Cultural differences are just that — differences — and not representative of deficits or indicators of pathology; and

3. Art therapists providing services to diverse clients should avoid stereotypes and monolithic thinking.

Moreover, "Without examining how the worldview and social order of the dominant culture is embedded in its practices and philosophy, art therapy can unknowingly reinforce structures of domination and contribute to continuing injustices" (Hocoy, 2005, p.8). These ideas undergird art therapy practice in our responsibility to clients, issues of confidentiality, assessment methods, the use and display of client artwork, interactions with students and supervisees, research participants, responsible profession practice (including independent practitioners) and art therapy practice by electronic means.

This year the Ethics Committee panel will present information relative to the American Art Therapy Association's Multicultural/Diversity Competencies, multicultural competence development, ethical cross-cultural research, and social justice, which support personal and organizational ethical decision-making.

Panel Objectives

1. Participants will be able to describe the American Art Therapy Association's Multicultural/Diversity Competencies, and three ethical decision-making approaches to multicultural art therapy practice.

2. Participants will define three ethical issues in conducting cross-cultural research.

3. Participants will understand the ethical considerations when engaging in art therapy for social justice and advocacy.

The Ethics Committee panel will present on ethical issues in culturally competent art therapy practice. Specifically, panelists will discuss the American Art Therapy Association's Multicultural/Diversity Competencies, strategies to develop multicultural competence, social justice and advocacy, along with ethical decision-making with respect to cross-cultural research. Ethical dilemmas pertaining to multicultural competence will be explored.

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