

## LACPA WORKING FOR YOU

# Social Justice Supervision: Ethical Imperative & Professional Competency

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The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code requires psychologists to "respect and protect civil and human rights" (APA, 2010; Wronka, 2008). Social justice, activities designed to dismantle systemic injustices and human rights violations, is included among professional competencies of both the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) (Hatcher, Fouad, Grus, Campbell, Mccutcheon, & Leahy, 2013). Specifically, the APA Competency Benchmarks (2009/2011) describe Advocacy as "actions targeting the impact of social, political, economic or cultural factors to promote change at the individual (client), institutional, and/or systems level." The Benchmarks outline the expectation that a practice-level psychologist engage in "promot[ing] change at the level of institutions, community, or society" (APA, 2011). Both our ethics code and professional competencies *demand* a social justice orientation for current and future psychologists. Yet social justice is infrequently addressed in traditional supervision models.

I have been fortunate to experience social justice supervision at a community-based, inpatient recovery program for legal-system-involved, low-income women of color. This practicum site offered social justice supervision through a developmental training model, which began with modeling and shadowing interventions that developed into semi-independent activities. Working under supervision, trainees advocated within the legal system on behalf of the client, participated in a supportive ca-

capacity during court hearings, role-played effective self-advocacy for medical decision-making, and attended medical appointments in the community with the client. This supervision was critical in developing a social justice-informed professional identity and practice.

The world is calling us to action. Psychology students, increasingly trained in multicultural competence (APA, 2003), cannot ignore the structural issues of injustice that underlie many clinical problems. Trainees are looking for guidance from the generation of psychologists currently in leadership or training positions. Psychology has a history of abuse and the promotion of injustice (Carpenter-Song, et al., 2010; LaVeist, et al., 2000; Surgeon General 2001; Thompson, et al., 2004). The hard work of living up to our ethical mandate requires courage. We can draw strength for this effort from psychology's often-overlooked history of social justice work, from the free psychiatric analytic clinics, to the liberation psychology movement of Latin America, to the ten current APA divisions that include social justice in their missions (Divisions 9, 17, 27, 35, 43, 44, 48, 37, and 51). How we engage with the human rights struggles of our era will determine the future and, perhaps, the relevance of psychology as a 21st-century profession. Social justice supervision has an important role to play. ▲

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References are available on request from the LACPA Office  
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