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## Social Justice and Counselling Psychology: Situating the Role of Graduate Student Research, Education, and Training

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### ABSTRACT

While social justice advocacy has been a part of counselling psychology since its inception, its role in the field has been debated. Many professionals have called for increased attention to social justice awareness and advocacy to enable the profession to meet the expanding needs of clients. The present article proposes that a move toward prioritizing social-justice issues necessitates the inclusion of graduate students. The authors contend that graduate programming in counselling psychology must provide students with opportunities to engage with the critical discourses of critical psychology, feminism, and multiculturalism in the aim of pursuing social justice-oriented practice and research.

### RÉSUMÉ

Depuis les débuts du counseling en tant que discipline reconnue, la promotion de la justice sociale a toujours fait partie des débats. Bon nombre de discussions et de contestations existent toujours quant au rôle concret de la justice sociale au sein de cette discipline. En effet, plusieurs professionnels ont attiré notre attention sur l'importance de la prise de conscience et de mise en action de la justice sociale afin de permettre à la profession de remplir les besoins d'une clientèle grandissante. Cet article suggère qu'il est nécessaire d'inclure des étudiant(e)s de 2 et 3 cycles si l'on veut faire des sujets de justice sociale une priorité. Les auteurs soutiennent que le programme d'études supérieures en psychologie du counseling doit fournir aux étudiants des opportunités de pratiquer la psychologie critique, le féminisme, et le multiculturalisme dans le but de poursuivre en théorie et en pratique une meilleure justice sociale.

Recent publications have noted the historical importance of pursuing a social justice agenda in counselling psychology (Fassinger, 2005; Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Goodman et al., 2004). Some authors have argued that social justice has been central to the counselling profession since its inception. However, others have suggested that a lack of substantive engagement with the material demands of "pursuing a social justice agenda" runs the risk of rendering the term a mere "buzzword" within the discipline (Speight & Vera, 2004, p. 111). Further, lack of institutional allegiance to social justice issues is evident in the absence of an explicit declaration of a social justice agenda by professional associations and bodies (Collison et al., 1998). Institutional pledges translating commitment to social justice and awareness have only recently been initiated, as is represented by the introduction of a forum on social justice in *The Counselling Psychologist* (Carter,

2003). Debate in the field, therefore, centres on the extent to, and means by, which counsellors and psychologists emphasize change to the systemic nature of oppression (e.g., Baluch, Pieterse, & Bolden, 2004; Fouad et al., 2004; Speight & Vera).

Sometimes referred to as “advocacy counselling” (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001), social justice “involves the promotion of the values of self-development and self-determination for everyone” (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 111). In counselling, social justice work means “actively working to change social institutions, political and economic systems, and government structures that perpetuate unfair practices, structures, and policies in terms of accessibility, resources distribution and human rights” (Fouad et al., 2006, p. 1). This can and should include both clinical and research practices.

The present article positions itself within contemporary debates regarding the role of “social justice” research and practice in counselling psychology. We argue that critical theories both within and outside of psychology, such as feminism, multiculturalism, and critical psychology, are imperative to graduate student research, education, and training. We contend that graduate student engagement with these debates is key to placing social justice aims at the heart of counselling psychology. We offer this discussion in the spirit of stimulating a dialogue involving graduate students in counselling psychology as well as in other disciplines that cultivate interest, knowledge, and practice in social justice advocacy and research.

The present review begins with a brief discussion of the central critiques of counselling psychology, followed by suggestions for incorporating social justice in the future identity of the profession. An overview of the theoretical foundations that offer important propositions for “social justice” in the discipline will follow. Finally, fundamental changes in graduate student education, training, and research are underscored as key toward increasing social justice in counselling psychology.

#### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

##### *Historical Foundations: Critical Perspectives*

Engagement with social justice issues demands recognizing that, as a discipline, counselling psychology exists in an already political social context and has “socio-political ramifications” (Katz, 1985). It has been argued that counselling and clinical psychological theory and practice are themselves implicated in the reproduction of social relations of exclusion, marginalization, and oppression (Arredondo, 1999; Brown, 1997; Fox, 2003; Katz; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Sue et al., 1998; Vera & Speight, 2003). Critics have further challenged assumptions in the field that, informed by a “monocultural perspective” in theory and training, tend to judge all individuals against white, heterosexual men (Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997). Also targeted as central to oppressive practices in the field are psychological paradigms valuing individualism and discounting environmental or structural factors (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Wilkinson, 1997). Wilkinson contends that “by locating ‘causes and cures’ within individuals, and by ignoring or minimizing the social context, psychology obscures the mechanisms of oppression” (p. 253). Moreover, the scientific methods deployed in the presentation of psychology as

“value-free” have been critiqued for their role in maintaining the status quo (Grant, Finkelstein, & Lyons, 2003). Important to the goal of prioritizing social justice in counselling practice and research is the issue that many counsellors (Katz) and students are unaware of the “tradition in psychology’s research, teaching, consulting, and therapy which too often reinforces rather than confronts societal institutions that spawn racism, sexism, and other forms of inequality and social injustice” (Fox, p. 301).

Central to the claims being made in this article is the conviction that in order to rectify historical injustices, counsellors, psychologists, and, we would argue, students as well must attempt to alter social *structures*, not solely *individuals* (Goodman et al., 2004). Toward this aim, counselling models and contemporary paradigms must be deconstructed and the profession redefined in order to move away from a Euro-American-centric individualist outlook, which does not acknowledge its own social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and ramifications (Bemak, 1998). Understanding the sociopolitical nature of counselling and expanding theory, research, and practice in light of these contentions will better enable the profession to respond to the needs of today’s client populations (Fouad et al., 2006; Katz, 1985; Lee & Walz, 1998).

#### *Future Directions: Toward Social Justice in Theory and Practice*

Counselling is a unique field in psychology within which to engage in social justice actions directed at individual, family, and social transformations, through both theoretical and practical engagements. Counsellors and psychologists are in a position to recognize and work to change the systemic nature of oppression, being cognizant of the ways in which social, cultural, political, and economic inequities negatively impact on individuals’ and communities’ psychological and emotional well-being. Counsellors, therefore, have a “unique vantage point” from which to advocate for clients and engage in multiple roles that contribute toward social justice (Vera & Speight, 2003).

As such, moving counselling psychology as an academic discipline toward social justice advocacy logically necessitates integrating new and existing theory and models for psychological practice. With respect to research practices specifically, a number of authors have called attention to the need to move beyond positivist and post-positivist methodologies and research paradigms to make use of critical, constructivist, and post-structural or post-modern techniques (Gergen, 2001; O’Neill, 2002; Silverstein, 2006; Strega, 2005). Consonant with the practical social justice aims of much critical counselling literature, a move away from individualist paradigms in counselling psychology research requires models inclusive of the interaction of the individual and the environment along with cultural, socio-political, and economic frames of reference (Katz, 1985; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Speight & Vera, 2004). Such movement is necessary in both research and practice, as “individual interventions will not provide liberation for oppressed people because they do not alter the prevailing social conditions” (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 114).

Preventative and proactive models of intervention (Ivey & Collins, 2003; Lee & Walz, 1998; Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997; Vera & Speight, 2003) have been suggested as a place from which to implement a social justice framework in professional counselling. Lewis and Arnold Smith (1998) recommend four areas on which the counselling profession needs to focus to incorporate social advocacy. These include (a) addressing professional collusion with oppression, (b) supporting community empowerment, (c) engaging in political advocacy, and (d) emphasizing a social advocacy agenda in our professional associations. We would include here academic engagements. Graduate education and training in practice and research are appropriate avenues for counsellors to begin developing such knowledge and skill bases.

This shift in focus entails new roles for counsellors and psychologists, expanding actions toward systems and institutions as well as with individuals, groups, and families. New roles may include (a) advocacy, (b) outreach, (c) prevention programming and psychoeducational interventions, (d) community outreach, (e) consulting, (f) facilitating indigenous support networks, and (g) public policy (Fox, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Vera & Speight, 2003). Expanded training and ethical obligations that include the examination of environmental factors (e.g., effects of racism and sexism) as well as new competencies and skills in social advocacy will also be important to the expansion of counsellors' roles (Bemak, 1998; Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997; Fouad et al., 2004). Moreover, awareness of the counsellor's role in perpetuating the status quo will demand alterations in professional identity and development of social responsibility when incorporating social justice analyses (Baluch et al., 2004; Lee & Walz, 1998). Shifting away from "value-free" science to awareness of social justice and liberation will certainly "constitute a serious transformation for the way the next generation of counselling scholars are educated" (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 266).

#### SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Social justice and advocacy discourse germane to counselling psychology can be drawn from several schools of thought. The work of critical psychologists is recurrently seen in the social justice literature (Lee & Walz, 1998; Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Contributions from feminist psychologists (Ussher, 2000; Wilkinson, 1997) and multicultural theorists (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) are crucial for theorizing and pursuing social action. We concur with those authors who promote the integration of these discourses into graduate education and research in counselling psychology (O'Brien, Patel, Hensler-McGinnis, & Kaplan, 2006; Prilleltensky & Nelson; Speight & Vera, 2004; Toporek & McNally, 2006).

#### *Critical Psychology*

Critical psychology, a division of psychology that formed alongside other social movements against human rights violations in the 1960s and 1970s (Fox, 2003), "is an approach that challenges the discipline to question its allegiance to the societal status quo and to construct ways to promote mental health in conjunc-

tion with social justice” (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 273). Influenced by the work of “liberation psychologists” Freire (1990) and Martín-Baró (1994), critical psychologists challenged and sought to transform oppressive and unjust institutions (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Social justice advocacy of critical psychology can be applied to the counselling process through attention to the “intersection of multiple sources of oppression,” such as racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia; by emphasizing client control and power in the counselling process; and by de-emphasizing pathology and diagnosis and focusing on client strengths (Prilleltensky & Nelson, p. 88). Counsellors and psychologists are further encouraged to engage in social justice efforts beyond the micro levels of theory and intervention (individual) into meso (communities and organizations) and macro (social structures and ideologies) levels (Prilleltensky & Nelson).

### *Feminist Psychology*

Feminist psychology entails psychological theory and practice informed by the political objectives of the feminist movement (Wilkinson, 1997). Definitions and debates within feminism are many; however, two common themes are found in all streams, namely, the emphasis and study of women and gender and the need for social change (Wilkinson). In addition to designing and conducting systematic research concerned with gender, girls, and women, feminist psychologists critically examine the etiologies and epistemologies of the research process itself and its supposed “objectivity” (Yoder, 1999). Feminist psychologists are highly critical of the individualist focus of psychology in theorizing “problems” as inherent to girls and women (Grant et al., 2003), and of sexist assumptions guiding psychology’s diagnostic practices and psychological instruments (e.g., Caplan, 1991; Chesler, 1997; Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997; Morrow, Hawxhurst, Montes de Vegas, Abousleman, & Castaneda, 2006; Wilkinson).

Feminist theorists and researchers have made important contributions to psychology in general; they have made an even greater impact on the counselling psychology profession, particularly in regards to sociopolitical change models and actions (Brown, 1994; Moane, 2003). Morrow and Hawxhurst (1998), for example, detail a three-dimensional model for empowerment in therapy, which includes intervention at the personal, interpersonal, and sociopolitical levels. However, substantial incorporation of feminist theory into training, research, and practice has yet to occur (Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997; Swift, Bond, & Serrano-Garcia, 2000). Though integration of courses in the “Psychology of Women” offered in psychology departments and the introduction of the journal of the same name demonstrate successful contributions of feminist psychologists, mainstream psychology’s rejection of the term “feminism” and its overt political agenda reflects a broader academic constraint (Wilkinson, 1997).

More recently, some feminist psychologists have stressed the importance of adopting a multicultural perspective in feminist psychotherapy, extending feminist psychologists’ efforts for social action and change within a framework that includes the intersections of multiple identities, such as gender, race, class, sexual

orientation, ability, and others (Brown, 1995; Greene & Sanchez-Hucles, 1997; Landrine, 1995). This is essential, as a social justice framework must include awareness of the complexities of multiple identities on which experiences of oppression and privilege vary—hence, not prioritizing one “ism” over another. We concur that given the “sociopolitical ramifications” of the profession and practice of counselling (Katz, 1985), counsellors, psychologists, and graduate students must “not shy away from” the political nature of psychology (Wilkinson, 1997). To do so would entail sidestepping issues essential to social justice and transformation. Thus, training and education should include engagement with critical discourses, specifically feminist theory.

### *Multiculturalism*

Attention to multicultural issues in the field of counselling is growing rapidly (e.g., Arthur & Collins, 2005). This surge in the field is due in part to the productive engagements of multicultural and anti-racist theorists, not least of which was the development of a model for multicultural counselling competencies (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992). Multicultural theorists have actively critiqued and challenged counselling psychology (Arredondo, 1999; Delgado-Romero, Galvan, Maschino, & Rowland, 2005; Sue et al., 1998) and feminism (hooks, 1994; Landrine, 1995) for failing to address issues of race and diversity, and thereby being implicated in the marginalization of individuals and groups based on race and ethnicity.

While the multicultural movement, and the competencies in particular, have provided a model for culturally competent counselling, some authors have argued against the narrow focus on issues of race and ethnicity and the exclusion of gender (Reid, 2002; Silverstein, 2006) and an inadequate inclusion of social justice action (Vera & Speight, 2003). Use of the term “multicultural” has also varied in the literature in regard to specific concerns with issues of race and ethnicity, or in accounting for various modalities of the racialization process, such as gender, class, and sexual orientation (Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997; Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999). While acknowledging arguments made by anti-racist theorists against the use of the term “multiculturalism” (e.g., Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Bannerji, 2000), we privilege “multiculturalism” over “anti-racism” here in an attempt to capture the intersections of “cultures” and subject identifiers (e.g., gender, class, age, ability, as well as race) at the same time as we position ourselves with the dominant language in conversations within the counselling literature that seek to engage these contestations.

Multiculturalism, like feminism, is thus a highly contested term for which the meanings and politics associated therewith are contingent upon political histories and geographies. While the scope of this article precludes an in-depth discussion of the political nature of language, it is important to make a distinction between the specificities of the term “multicultural” as deployed in American and Canadian geo-historical contexts. For instance, while Canada has had upwards of 20 years of experience with *official* multiculturalism (i.e., state-sponsored, state-managed,

institutionalized), the United States has had no comparable experience. Thus, while much of the American counselling psychology literature links “social justice” and “multiculturalism” in the language and conceptualization of structural and institutional change (e.g., Fouad et al., 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003), this is not necessarily possible in the same way within a Canadian context. Because multiculturalism in Canada is *already* institutionalized in ways that tend to depoliticize the material struggles of gendered race/racialized sexism/heterosexism and homophobia (Bannerji, 2000), it is difficult to identify how multiculturalism may be mobilized with respect to Canadian state/institutions in the service of anti-hegemonic discourse and praxis. Debate in US-based journals, universities, and conference settings are, thus, fertile ground for engagement with this ideological and conceptual challenge.

If, as Speight and Vera (2004) contend, counselling psychology is “ready” for a social justice agenda, which would require contemplating political action and making clear demands against the state on behalf of the populations in service, then the language of multiculturalism needs to be nuanced and deconstructed. Otherwise, policy makers can too easily respond by saying, “but we are *already* ‘multicultural.’” The question of “readiness” may be rearticulated as, “Are we ready to demand a more just and substantive ‘multiculturalism?’” or, alternatively, “Are we ready to ask for something altogether different?” We hope that graduate students participate in dialoguing how, as students and counsellors, and as a profession, we may reconsider the transnational potentialities of “multiculturalism” and “anti-racism” as socially and politically transformative discourses within counselling psychology.

#### GRADUATE STUDENT EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND RESEARCH

Several authors have underscored the need for increased training in multicultural (Bemak, 2005; Forrest, Elman, Gizara, & Vacha-Haase, 1999; Heppner & O’Brien, 1994), feminist (Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997; Surrey, 1991), and social justice perspectives (Baluch et al., 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Vera & Speight, 2003) in counselling psychology graduate programs. Typically, counselling students interested in critical theory and social action receive such instruction outside of psychology (e.g., Women’s Studies, Social Work, Law, or Political Science; Fox, 2003). Without systematic implementation of social justice initiatives in counselling psychology graduate training (Baluch et al.; Vera & Speight), inclusion of social justice issues has typically relied on the academic program, faculty, and student interests (Toporek & McNally, 2006). As a result, most counsellors are untrained in the methods, techniques, and skills to effect social change. Given that graduate training must enable students to adapt to current changes in society, which includes developing skills in multicultural issues and social advocacy (Fouad et al., 2004), many changes in training and education are surely needed to move the profession of counselling psychology toward a new era distinguished by an allegiance to, indeed an active investment in, social transformation.

A social justice agenda in graduate training programs in counselling requires more than a mere polemic (Vera & Speight, 2003). It is important to acknowledge that there is “no single right definition or approach to advocacy” (Cohen, de la Vega, & Watson, 2001, p. 3). Multicultural, feminist, and social justice scholars have imparted a myriad of ways that counselling psychology graduate programming might integrate and alter its practices to encourage social justice efforts and advocacy in students and graduates (e.g., Baluch et al., 2004; Fox, 2003; Goodman et al., 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Vera & Speight). Changes to counsellor training should reflect shifts to the program climate and content of the curriculum, along with training and structural factors.

A frequent theme in the literature that promotes social justice is the creation of a climate that enables graduate students to engage with discourses surrounding social injustice. Developing social justice perspectives, for example, requires graduate students to engage in the discourses that allow for the connections between the personal and political (Butler-Byrd, Nieto, & Nieto Senour, 2006; hooks, 1994). As Sue et al. (1999) note, increasing multicultural understanding requires the ability “to engage in difficult dialogues related to race, gender and sexual orientation” (p. 1063). Discussions surrounding such an ideological framework coincide with a reconceptualization of clients’ problems from microsocial to macrosocial levels (Moane, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Speight & Vera, 2004).

The role of faculty in this process is not underestimated in the literature (e.g., Broido, 2000; Collison et al., 1998; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Suarez-Balcazar, Duriak, & Smith, 1994). A number of authors, for example, endorse teaching methods and content wherein graduate students are active learners and co-creators as a means to demonstrate and promote social justice awareness (Butler-Byrd et al., 2006; Chizhik Williams & Chizhik Williams, 2002; hooks, 1994). Faculty’s comfort and openness in self-disclosing (Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997; hooks; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001) and in facilitating students’ critical examination of programming (Baluch et al., 2004; Prilleltensky & Nelson) have also been deemed important in helping to develop students’ social justice identities. It is imperative that students and faculty critically reflect on and gain awareness of their own privileged positions in the given socio-political context, and take opportunities to confront their own participation in systemic oppression (Vera & Speight, 2003). Much of the literature emphasizes the need for a “safe environment” for self-reflection and self-disclosure by students and faculty, in order to critically explore these factors (Baluch et al.; Broido, 2000; Collison et al.; Suarez-Balcazar et al.). However, this should not foreclose the possibility of asking if it is possible and/or productive to assume that talking about the personal as political or unpacking issues around race, class, and gender can ever be a “safe” thing to do.

Changes in curriculum content and training parameters are also needed in order to integrate social action imperatives in graduate programming in counselling psychology. Training must comprise multicultural issues and competencies (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 1994) and discourses on sexism and heterosexism (Baluch et al., 2004; Fassinger & Richie Sperber, 1997). Such changes necessitate a re-ex-

amination of the texts and coursework that contain the history of scientific racism, sexism, and oppression (Collison et al., 1998; Nilsson & Schmidt, 2005).

Recent research has suggested that social justice training would be most effective if integrated at multiple levels, such as in coursework, fieldwork, research, and mentorship (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 1994). Community participation reflected in drawing upon guest speakers from varied minority groups (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994) can be a critical part of this openness.

Internship experiences are fruitful avenues for training in social justice work (Collison et al., 1998). Expansion of training parameters that include increased attention to outreach, prevention, community service, and advocacy (Ivey & Collins, 2003; Vera & Speight, 2003) might entail new possibilities for internships that provide experience with social justice work. This may mean looking toward other disciplines for theoretical frameworks for education, research, and training in social action (Baluch et al., 2004; Carter, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Vera & Speight). Training parameters might include, for example, public policy, consultation, and health (Baluch et al.). Helms (2003) suggests looking to social work or consulting psychology for ideas of social justice models, suggesting in particular Shullman's (2002) group- and organizational/systemic-level competencies to derive strategies for micro- and macro-level interventions.

The lack of interdisciplinary collaboration in training programs, practice, supervision, or consultation is surprising, given the involvement of multiple agencies in the healthcare of clients (Bemak, 1998). Integrative coursework and enhanced practical opportunities for graduate students in multicultural issues and social justice would cultivate a sense of competency to respond to the imminent expansion of client needs. Vera and Speight (2003) contend that, "If students were taught to think more broadly about their potential roles as professionals, they would be in a better position to intervene at multiple levels for clients and communities" (p. 268).

Professional counselling associations and bodies possess significant authority in promoting social justice. For instance, the creation of awards or honours to acknowledge the exceptional work of graduate students and faculty that contribute to social justice and advocacy is a positive step in directing the field to prioritize social justice (Fouad et al., 2004). Moreover, dissemination of research outside of traditional academic parameters (i.e., academic journals) to include public policy makers and the community further supports a social justice agenda (Vera & Speight, 2003). The implementation of mandatory training in multicultural competencies in program criteria and internship accreditation and licensing would further underscore social justice issues in counselling psychology (Baluch et al., 2004; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 1994).

Graduate programs that have begun to incorporate social justice into their programming act as models for those that have yet to prepare graduate students toward expanding roles as counsellors and psychologists as change agents (Fouad et al., 2004). Some models include those of the University of Oregon, the Community-based Block Counselling Preparation Program at San Diego State University, George Mason University, and Boston College.

## CHALLENGES AND RISKS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

The challenges and risks inherent in being involved with social justice work frequently hinder graduate students, counsellors, and psychologists from committing to social justice action. Challenges can include students' defensive resistance to social justice conceptualizations, structural barriers, and risks of social and professional censure along with the personal emotional cost.

Recent studies have noted resistance to engage in social justice ideologies and practices among graduate students in counselling programs (Chizhik Williams & Chizhik Williams, 2002; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1999; Tallyrand, Chung Chi-Ying, & Bemak, 2006), which may be seen, for instance, in students disrupting class or not participating in discussions (Chizhik Williams & Chizhik Williams). Students' preconceived assumptions and their own along with the instructor's gender, race, and class are related to students' reactions to social justice material (Chizhik Williams & Chizhik Williams; Tallyrand et al.). Fears of others' negative reactions to social justice analyses and discussions that centre on privilege and oppression have also been shown to impact students' limited engagement with social justice advocacy (D'Andrea & Daniels). While some authors propose that students' resistance to social justice material may be due to a lack of shared understanding of knowledge about concepts of "privilege" and "oppression" (Chizhik Williams & Chizhik Williams), we question what might also be at stake. Given that engagement with social justice issues entails self-reflections on positions of privilege and accountability in sociocultural, economic, and political inequalities, might it not also be that students' resistance to social justice ideologies itself represents indications of systemic power imbalances at risk of deconstruction?

Pursuing social justice is additionally dependent on curricula and institutional structure, which can be disenchanting for social justice advocates (Fox, 2003), as the values of the university and other larger systems are not always congruent with critical social justice ideologies (Ivey & Collins, 2003). Further, structural barriers such as constraints in licensure and accreditation criteria make it difficult for programs that want to emphasize and integrate social justice into their mission and practice (Tallyrand et al., 2006). Integration of social justice training in counselling psychology programs is additionally hindered by the prominence of the scientist-practitioner model, market demands of licensing and managed care, traditional criteria for academic tenure, program accreditation criteria, and professional "insularity" (Swift et al., 2000). Such constraints prohibit new paradigms of service and interventions that are needed to meet client needs (Bemak, 1998).

A commonly regarded risk of prioritizing social justice advocacy in one's professional identity is the perception of being a "troublemaker," jeopardizing employment or being the target of backlash or harassment (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1999; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Lee & Walz, 1998; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Loss of credibility (Prilleltensky & Nelson; Speight & Vera, 2004) and negative and unsympathetic reactions by superiors are also possible outcomes of pursuing social justice (Baluch et al., 2004). Such constraints impart the need for collegial support (Prilleltensky & Nelson). As Ussher (2000) notes, "The individual who

challenges the establishment is always at risk of their work (or personal life) being undermined or scrutinized" (p. 17).

Further, the economic security afforded in professional and academic success is likely an important factor in the current state of graduate students' and counsellors' limited involvement with social justice causes (Helms, 2003). Helms implicates the difficult history in counselling psychology's establishment of legitimacy and credibility in its limited vision of social justice, noting that in human service, "Administrators and policy makers do not typically support social justice services" (p. 310). Such professional and economic constraints can result in social justice advocates co-opting their ideologies to fit within the mainstream (Ussher, 2000).

Finally, being involved in social justice work, not to mention feminist and multicultural research, is not impeded or made challenging solely through structural barriers. The personal emotional cost of attempting to affect social change and equalize the deeply rooted and systemic power imbalances are high (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). For example, many social justice advocates experience burn out (Ussher, 2000). Advocating for social justice, therefore, necessitates an established and supported personal belief system that the benefits of doing so outweigh the potential risks (Lee & Walz, 1998).

While involvement in social justice work is undoubtedly challenging, rewards are also possible, for example, in experiencing personal satisfaction and growth (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Suarez-Balcazar et al. (1994) found that students engaged in a multicultural training course derived increased awareness and understanding of others' and their own experiences based on cultural differences. To the students in Boston College's First Year Experience (FYE) program, rewards included learning about the sociopolitical factors that impact clients' lives in a way not understood in counselling practice, collaborating with community members, and participating in complex, meaningful, and valuable work, which they reported outweighed the costs of social justice advocacy (Goodman et al., 2004).

#### CONCLUSION

This article has made the case for incorporating social justice advocacy in the vision for the future of counselling psychology. The participation of graduate students is an essential step toward achieving this goal (Carter, 2003). This movement in the field will require numerous changes, such as the addition of new theories and paradigms that bring social justice and advocacy to current knowledge, training, practice, and research. We have argued that the inclusion of feminist, multicultural, and other critical theory and praxes in graduate counselling psychology training is a positive step toward prioritizing social justice in the profession.

Further, the addition of social justice models to counselling psychology will inevitably create new roles for counsellors and psychologists. These new roles necessarily demand changes to student training and education, specifically, changes that reflect the current "chilly climate" surrounding social justice analyses, as well as

curriculum content and training parameters, and structural barriers. The infusion of these and other changes to programming and training would hopefully alter the negative experiences and risks associated with conducting social justice in counselling research, training, and practice. Fostering hope and vision in doing social justice work is essential, as “Without aspirations, hope, and vision, the foresight is lost and the momentum for change diminishes” (Bemak, 1998, p. 283).

As the debate surrounding the role of social justice in the identity of the field of counselling psychology remains, advocates of social justice in the field realistically acknowledge, “We face a long battle ahead” (Ivey & Collins, 2003). This article is one articulation of the importance of engaging graduate students in counselling psychology in a cross-disciplinary dialogue regarding how to move the field toward increased social justice advocacy and social change. Coming from diverse disciplines in counselling psychology and political science, we have attempted to present this article as an exercise in cross-disciplinary research, collaboration, and writing, a practice that is lauded for doing social justice work (Baluch et al., 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003). We have promoted increased opportunities for graduate students’ engagement with critical discourses as a way to propel the field of counselling psychology toward a new era of expanding client needs and healthcare services. We invite alternate views and perspectives and hope that graduate students, faculty, counsellors, and psychologists will share in our desire for dialogue and commitment to make social justice central in counselling psychology.

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