

12

Social Justice in Education and Counseling

What is justice? What is fairness? Is life fair? Is life just? What kind of fairness and justice may one expect? What rights are people entitled to as human beings? What privileges are people entitled to as human beings? Should privilege be based on merit? To what should merit entitle people? What is a fair way to distribute goods and resources? Should distribution be based on rights or privileges? Is it fair to take from one group and give to another group? When is it fair and when is it not fair to do so?

Social justice has become a watchword for teacher education and counselor education. In both professions, the concept of social justice has become fundamental to effective teaching and counseling. Social justice principles serve as a foundation for implementing strategies that lead to more egalitarian practices (Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, Roysircar-Sodowsky, & Israel, 2006). As the United States moves rapidly toward a population in which more than one half of the people are of diverse cultural backgrounds, current and future leaders must be prepared to address issues of social justice. A social justice focus acknowledges issues of unearned power, privilege, and oppression and how these link with psychological stress and disorders (Ratts, D'Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004). We recognize that counseling and counselor education are inescapably political and ideological activities in that they inherently involve ideas, ideals, power, and access to learning and life opportunities. As such, the professions of education and counseling are compelled to undertake a coherent and intellectual approach to the preparation of teachers and counselors that acknowledges the social and political contexts in which teaching, counseling, learning, schooling, and

ideas about justice have been located historically and the tensions among competing goals of those who seek justice.

Crethar, Rivera, and Nash (2008) found common threads that are shared by multicultural, feminist, and social justice paradigms. Clients exist within and are constantly affected by environmental systems and contexts that “require developing a keen awareness and knowledge of the ways that various forms of injustice, oppression, discrimination, marginalization, and social-cultural privileges adversely affect the lives of millions of people in contemporary society” (p. 269). Recognition that all counseling is political requires “practitioners to embrace their roles as environmental-organizational-institutional change agents and sociopolitical activists” (p. 277).

Ratts (2011) described the interconnectedness of multiculturalism and social justice as “two sides of the same coin” (p. 26). Ratts posited that both perspectives promote the “need to develop multiculturally and advocacy competent helping professionals” (p. 24).

What Is Social Justice?

Moyo (2010) concluded that most authors make no attempt to define social justice or to explain how the concept is used in their particular context. It appears that authors who do not define social justice take for granted that the reader should understand their intended meaning. Moyo suggested that this conceptual vagueness might actually support the prevailing realities of social injustice. Rizvi (1998) argued that “the immediate difficulty one confronts when examining the idea of social justice is the fact that it does not have a single essential meaning—it is embedded within discourses that are historically constituted and that are sites of conflicting and divergent political endeavors” (p. 47).

Zollers, Albert, and Cochran-Smith (2000) described a multiyear study to see if a group of faculty members could develop a “shared meaning” of social justice. Even though similar themes and conceptions emerged, a common grasp of the term with comparable practices appeared untenable, claiming that they “could not assume that we were all committed to the same idea or shared fundamental meanings and assumptions about social justice” (p. 9).

Social justice is a normative concept often expressed in two forms: as an ideal and as a mobilizing idea. The ideal focuses on how and to what extent the good and bad things in life should be distributed among members of human society (Miller, 1999). Social justice in the form of mobilizing people makes injustice visible, contestable, and changeable (Newman & Yeates, 2008). Those focusing on this form of social justice require a definition that

accommodates multiple forms of identity, discrimination, and exclusion. Social justice in the broadest sense includes political, educational, legal, economic, social, and other human rights of people. Social justice symbolizes the concept of fairness and advocates that no one be discriminated against on the grounds of religion, belief, gender, color, class, wealth, and social status.

Bell (1997) defined social justice as a state of

full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of a society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure . . . a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others). (p. 3)

Western thought is built on a series of interrelated hierarchical oppositions, such as reason—emotion, presence—absence, fact—value, good—evil, and male—female (Culler, 1982).

For our purposes in this chapter, we conceptualize social justice along a continuum between social oppression on one end of the continuum and social equality on the other end. We view social oppression as those behaviors that result in the assignment of persons to a particular category based on their membership in a particular group of people. We view social equality as a state where all individuals have equal intrinsic worth and that status is recognized in the decisions made in the society. Terms like *fairness*, *nondiscrimination*, *equity*, and *giving persons their due* are often found in discussions of social equality. For any definition then, one might position it along the continuum, and thus in relation to both poles, and in relation to other social justice definitions. Prigoff (2003) asserted that a “social justice framework” includes access to vital resources, participation in critical decision making processes, and respect for human rights and the various dimensions of personal identity, particularly culture.

Oppression describes policies, practices, norms, and traditions that systematically exploit one social group (the target group) by another (the dominant group) for the dominant group’s benefit. The common elements of oppression are: norms defined by the dominant group, institutional power, economic power, violence and the threat of violence, and target group invisibility (Pharr, 1997).

Oppression differs from discrimination, bias, prejudice, or bigotry because these refer to individual acts that anyone can manifest (all humans have learned prejudices). In contrast, oppression occurs when prejudice is backed by social and institutional power. Oppression involves institutional control, ideological domination, and the imposition of the dominant group’s culture on the target group.

Privilege refers to the rights, benefits, and advantages automatically received by being a member of the dominant group, regardless of intentions. From the critical social justice perspective, privilege refers to systemically conferred dominance (McIntosh, 1988) and the institutional processes by which the beliefs and values of the dominant group are “made normal” and universal (Dyer, 1997; Kimmel, 2003).

History of Social Justice

Justice (from the Latin *justus* meaning righteous) is a complex and contested notion, which defies precise definition. Questions concerning what justice is and its origins have occupied the minds of philosophers for nearly 3,000 years, and to this day, remain the subject of philosophical debate. The result of this philosophical debate has not been the development of a singular and refined universal theory of justice but the development of a range of rival theories of justice.

Social justice is based on the premise that all people have inalienable rights. These rights include access to vital resources, participation in critical decision making processes, and respect for human rights and the various dimensions of personal identity, particularly culture.

In rabbinic Judaism *tzedakah* (charity) is used synonymously with justice. Charity *is* justice, and in post-biblical Hebrew *tzedakah*, relief/relieving fellow Jews (neighbors) from poverty, is understood as a duty, an act of justice, and moral righteousness. Correlatively, the poor individual’s right to food, clothing, and shelter is just that, a right, and is considered a legal claim that must be honored by the more fortunate of the community. Viewed this way, *tzedakah* is not a matter of philanthropic sentiment or mercy but an act of justice, a commandment, and duty (Fleischacker, 2004).

Throughout the Christian Bible there are numerous references calling Christians to serve the poor, marginalized, and oppressed—to reach out to the underserved. Among the many references are the following:

Isaiah 1:17. Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause

Jeremiah 22:3. Do justice and righteousness.

Romans 12:16. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.

Micah 6:8. . . . do justice, and to love kindness.

Proverbs 31:9. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Psalm 82:3. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Ethnic minorities, older adults, children, low-income individuals, persons with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), persons with disabilities, inner-city residents, and rural residents represent just a few of the modern day people groups who remain underserved. Kallen (2004) posited that variables such as oppression, racism, discrimination, poverty, stigma, lack of available mental health professionals, and inadequate (if not unattainable) health insurance make it difficult for the underserved to receive adequate psychological care.

Novak (2000) reported the phrase “social justice” was first used in 1840 by a Sicilian priest, Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, and given prominence by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati in *La Costituzione Civile Secondo la Giustizia Sociale* in 1848. Taparelli prefaced “justice” with “social” to emphasize the social nature of human beings and, flowing from this, the importance of various social spheres outside civic government. Taparelli believed that people have the right to freely form different levels of association and to interact through them to fulfill needs and accomplish necessary tasks. His vision of social justice emphasized freedom and respect for human beings and the small institutions through which they pursue basic needs. John Stuart Mill gave this suggested approach to social questions in 1863 in *Utilitarianism*:

Society should treat all equally well who have *deserved* equally well of it, that is, who have deserved equally well absolutely. This is the highest abstract standard of social and distributive justice; towards which *all institutions*, and the efforts of all virtuous citizens, *should be made in the utmost degree to converge*. (cited in Novak, 2000, p. 108)

Social Justice in a Just Society

Among the different conceptions of justice to have emerged through the ages of ongoing philosophical debate are: justice as revenge (retributive justice); justice as mercy; justice as harmony; justice as equity (impartiality and fairness); justice as equality (equals must be treated equally); justice as an equal distribution of benefits and burdens (distributive justice and redistributive justice); justice as what is deserved (to each according to merit or worth); justice as love; and justice as reconciliation and reparation (restorative justice).

The basic structure of a society includes all institutional and social practices that are required to sustain mutual recognition and respect among people. The distributive part of social justice (Rawls, 1971) is associated

with the socially just distribution of goods in a society. It also includes the distribution of basic rights and liberties, opportunity, health care, social patterns of respect, recognition, and self-respect. Individuals in devalued groups often speak of the social patterns of respect, recognition, and self-respect. While the boundaries between the social patterns of respect and disrespect, recognition and invisibility, and self-respect and self-hatred may be vague and a function of individuality, they remain central and critical to the concept of social justice. Rawls's concept of social justice requires equality in the social bases of self-respect and a society in which all citizens acquire a sense that what they do in everyday life is worthwhile. What makes a just society? How is social justice connected to an individual's pursuit of the good life?

Jansson (2005) described a socially just society as one in which both "economic and social differences between social classes and groups are markedly reduced" (p. 24). Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) concluded that in those societies with more equal income distribution there exist fewer social problems and ills. They used the 23 richest countries and correlated the level of inequality with different indicators of individual well-being and social welfare. To measure the extent of income inequality, they chose the ratio of income of the top 20% to the lower 20% in a society, the 23 countries are ranked according to their degree of income inequality, the Scandinavian countries and Japan representing one extreme with the lowest income inequality, and the United Kingdom, Portugal, the United States, and Singapore the other extreme with the highest income inequality. They used a total of nine social problems, which are identified as "costs of inequality": (1) community life and social relations, (2) mental health and drug use, (3) physical health and life expectancy, (4) obesity, (5) educational performance, (6) teenage pregnancies, (7) violence, (8) crime and punishment, and (9) unequal opportunities for intergenerational social mobility.

For each of the nine social problems a correlation with the degree of a society's income inequality emerges: Countries with lower income inequality show a low level of the various problems, while in countries with higher income inequality people have less trust and a higher level of mental illnesses, consume more drugs, have worse general health and lower life expectancy, the rate of obesity is higher, and educational performance is lower, there are more teenage pregnancies, there is more violence and crime, prisons are overcrowded, and children from disadvantaged sections of the population have poorer career prospects (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

It is fair to raise the question of the degree to which income inequality alone contributes to the existence of these social problems. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) answer that question by linking together two arguments. The first is that social problems observed in a society could be attributed to increased status competition and social anxiety among individual members

of society. People who constantly find themselves competing with others not only develop psychological symptoms of stress but are also more suspicious of others, more likely to resort to sedative or stimulant drugs, and tend toward violence and delinquent behavior. The second argument is that a high degree of income inequality describes a societal situation in which there is a high level of status competition. As inequality in a society increases, there is more competition between individual members of the society, the risk of status loss is greater, and social anxieties are exacerbated. A third argument is that an egalitarian distribution of income helps those who are less well off while producing welfare effects for all citizens.

Social justice is a specific habit of justice that is social in two senses. First, the skills it requires are those of inspiring, working with, and organizing others to accomplish together a work of justice. The second characteristic of social justice is that it aims at the good of the community, not at the good of one segment of the community only. The second sense in which this habit of justice is social is its object, as well as its form, primarily involves the good of others.

Social justice is ideologically neutral. It is as open to people on the left, on the right, or in the center. Its field of activity may be literary, scientific, religious, political, economic, cultural, athletic, across the whole spectrum of human social activities. The virtue of social justice allows for people of good will to reach different—even opposing—practical judgments about the material content of the common good (ends) and how to get there (means).

According to Leventhal (1980), in order for a procedure (distribution decision) to be perceived as being fair, the following six criteria must be met; namely, the procedures must:

1. Be followed consistently
2. Lack self-interest
3. Be based on accurate information
4. Allow for opportunities to correct decisions
5. Represent the important interests of all concerned
6. Comply with ethical standards

Fleischacker (2004) discussed the intellectual history of “distributive justice” and the five premises required to arrive at the modern concept of distributive justice as:

1. Each individual has a good that deserves respect, and individuals are due certain rights and protections in their pursuit of that good.

2. Some share of material goods is part of every individual's due.
3. The fact that every individual deserves this can be justified rationally, in purely secular terms.
4. The distribution of this share of goods is practicable.
5. The state ought to be guaranteeing the distribution. (p. 7)

Social Justice: Redistribution and Recognition

Young (1990) pointed out that the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as feminism, Black liberation, American Indian movements, and gay and lesbian liberation, made it clear that failure to recognize and respect social groups was a central dimension of injustice, and thus the goal of recognition had to be central to justice theories. Both socioeconomic injustice and cultural injustice are pervasive in contemporary societies. Both are rooted in processes and practices that systematically disadvantage some groups of people vis-à-vis others. Both, consequently, should be remedied. In practice, the two are intertwined. Recognition has as its goal "a difference-friendly world, where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of equal respect." Examples include the "distinctive perspectives of ethnic, racial, and sexual minorities, as well as of gender difference" (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 7).

We agree with Fraser and Honneth (2003) that neither alone is sufficient, and somehow we must come to a system that a combination of both is necessary. Our task is figuring out how to conceptualize cultural recognition and social inequality in forms that support rather than undermine one another. It also means theorizing the ways in which economic disadvantage and cultural disrespect are currently entwined with and support one another. It is not as simple as cultural injustices versus economic injustices, recognition versus redistribution.

Socioeconomic injustice is rooted in the political-economic structure of society. Examples include exploitation (having the fruits of one's labor appropriated for the benefit of others); economic marginalization (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labor altogether); and deprivation (being denied an adequate material standard of living) (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

A second understanding of injustice is cultural or symbolic. Here injustice is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Examples include cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien or hostile to one's own); nonrecognition

(being rendered invisible by means of the communicative and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations or in everyday life interactions) (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Therefore, there is a distinction between redistributive remedies and recognition remedies, while simultaneously being connected with each other. Redistributive remedies generally presuppose an underlying conception of recognition. For example, some proponents of egalitarian socioeconomic redistribution ground their claims on the "equal moral worth of persons"; thus, they treat economic redistribution as an expression of recognition. Conversely, recognition remedies sometimes presuppose an underlying conception of redistribution. For example, some proponents of multicultural recognition ground their claims on the imperative of a just distribution of the "primary good" of an "intact cultural structure"; they therefore treat cultural recognition as a species of redistribution (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Recognition lies in its relationship to identity, which C. Taylor (1994) defined as "a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental characteristics as a human being" (p. 25). Because identity is "partly shaped by recognition or its absence," then "non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (p. 25).

Social justice can be achieved in the contemporary world through redistribution, that is, changing economic, political, and social conditions and structures to obtain a socially just distribution of resources, wealth, and income. Social movements connected with trade unions and social welfare programs such as pensions; minimum wage legislation; unemployment or employment insurance; child welfare; antipoverty programs; and progressive taxation represent this form of redistribution. Social theorists and those involved in social movements around these issues generally looked on achievement of these reforms as a means of redistributing the wealth of society more equally, so that all members of a society could benefit equitably and in order to reduce or eliminate extreme economic inequalities. These are what Fraser and Honneth (2003) refer to as redistribution or achieving distributive justice.

Over the last 60 or 70 years, it became apparent that social movements and struggles for redistribution or distributive justice alone were inadequate or incomplete mechanisms for achieving social justice. These class-based social movements that attempted to achieve distributive justice did not always address inequalities related to sex and gender, to ethnic and racial discrimination and difference, to national and regional inequalities, to discrimination on the basis of culture and religion, or to issues related to diverse sexualities and sexual practices. Even more problematic was that some of the movements for distributive justice ignored, made secondary,

or downgraded struggles related to these latter issues, using the argument that the class struggle must be the primary focus. Among social and political movements that have highlighted the issues that are not strictly class struggles are the civil rights movement in the United States, struggles for women's rights, employment equity, and gay and lesbian rights. While it may be misleading to put all these social movements and issues together, they have often been given the name "identity politics"—that is, demands from groups to have their identity recognized and injustices of misrecognition and exploitation ended. Fraser and Honneth term these "claims for recognition" and they agree that these claims are central to contemporary social movements and some political struggles. Both redistribution and recognition are required in order to create social justice, and these represent two distinct but interrelated forms of struggle for social justice. That is, those who have been treated inequitably and not provided the opportunity of equal treatment are most likely to be subjects of both maldistribution and misrecognition. Many members of such groups have been exploited and not permitted to participate equitably in the distributive sphere, at the same time as their identity and claims have been ignored and not recognized. Social justice requires both redistribution and recognition—these are interrelated but analytically distinct aspects.

Social Justice Education

Paulo Freire (1970, 1987) indicated that educators must use three steps to educate for social justice. The first step is to acknowledge students' voices. A student's voice is a reflection of personal perspectives and experiences regarding issues and situations. The second step is to use students' voices and past experiences to develop curriculum. The third step is to encourage and show students how to apply their voices and past experiences toward making significant changes in their communities. Instructional design using these three steps empowers students to experience a sense of belonging in the classroom and in their communities

Kumashiro (2004) concluded "the norms of schooling, like the norms of society privilege and benefit some groups and identities while marginalizing and subordinating others on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disabilities, language, age, and other social markers" (p. xxiv). This realization necessitates a transformation of education of students, of teachers, of counselors, and administrators. We must challenge the notion that the way we educate is the way it is supposed to be. We must also acknowledge that treating students and clients as if they are equal is not always equitable.

We have concluded that social justice education: (1) considers the values and politics that pervade education, as well as the technical matters of teaching and learning, (2) asks critical questions about how conventional schooling came to be and about who benefits from the status quo, (3) pays attention to inequalities and seeks alternatives, and (4) treats cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset to teaching and learning. Van Soest and Garcia (2003) postulated as core “social justice values,” life, freedom and liberty, equality and nondiscrimination, justice, solidarity, social responsibility, justice, evolution, peace and nonviolence, and relations between humankind and nature (pp. 65–67).

Picower (2012) identified six elements of social justice education:

1. **Self-love and knowledge** provide opportunities for students to learn about who they are and develop a sense of dignity in their culture, heritage, ethnicity/race, religion, skin tone, gender, and sexual orientation, among other differences.
2. **Respect for Others** provides opportunities for students to participate in a climate of respect for diversity through learning to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers and to deconstruct stereotypes about their peers’ identities.
3. **Issues of Social Injustice** help students learn about the history of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and religious intolerance and how these forms of oppression have affected different communities. Students learn how the historical roots of oppression impact the lived experiences and material conditions of people in contemporary settings. The goal in this area is that of promoting equity in learning opportunities and outcomes for all students.
4. **Social Movements and Social Change** involve learning about examples of movements of iconic and everyday people standing together to address the issues of social injustice. Rather than leaving students feeling overwhelmed and defeated, students learn that working together, ordinary people have united to create change. They learn this through learning about the knowledge traditions and ways of knowing of marginalized groups;
5. **Awareness Raising** allows students who feel passionately about particular issues to become advocates by raising awareness of other students, teachers, family, and community members. It is important to recognize that while raising awareness is a necessary and important precursor for action, it by itself does not by itself translate into change. Students learn about the tensions and contradictions that emerge between groups who are striving toward the same ends.
6. **Social Action** provides opportunities to take action on issues that affect students and their communities by identifying issues they feel passionate about and learn the skills of creating change firsthand.

Stated somewhat differently, social justice encompasses three main elements: (1) a critical analysis of social and institutional inequities;

(2) a commitment to principled action on behalf of self as well as for strangers; and (3) a willingness to question one's own understanding of social justice, in part through listening to alternative perspectives (Kelly & Brandes, 2001).

Educating for social justice appears to be predicated upon three transformations. They are a transformation of self, transformation of groups, and transformation of culture. During these transformations, students examine their personal and professional views about situations, learn how to use their views to affect other people, and begin to empower other people to affect social change in their communities.

Apple (2004) suggested that the scholarship on social justice and education revolves around two general areas: (1) relations and dominations of power, and (2) the legitimization and distribution of knowledge. These two areas (power and knowledge) may be examined in relation to a given group to demonstrate how, through the circulation and legitimization of knowledge, certain groups dominate others. Domination occurs not just through economic forces but through access to privileged forms of knowledge and through systems that maintain power relationships.

Thus, understanding one's race does not just involve recognizing color but the position one attains in relation to unequal power relationships, control, and distribution of resources. Understanding one's sexual orientation does not just involve the recognition of one's sexual partner but one's position either as the dominating or dominated group in specific situations. Understanding one's sex does not just involve recognizing one's physical characteristics but one's position in relation to power and the legitimization of certain forms of knowledge.

Gorski (2009) explained that the key to being a social justice learner is the willingness to engage cognitive dissonance, to think most critically about the truths about which we are most fervently convinced, particularly in relation to dimensions of identity that privilege certain individuals. According to Huegler (2006), cognitive dissonance theory holds that our reactions to psychological stimuli tend to fall somewhere along a continuum, at one end is acceptance of a new idea or framework and at the other end is refusal to consider the possibility that the idea even exists.

Hytten and Bettez (2011) explained that there are multiple discourses that educators draw upon when claiming a social justice orientation. These include "democratic education, critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, post-structuralism, feminism, queer theory, anti-oppressive education, cultural studies, post-colonialism, globalization, and critical race theory" (pp. 8–9).

Social Justice as a Basic Human Need

The notion of justice as a basic human need can be traced to the work of Anthony Taylor (2003, 2006), a New Zealand professor of psychology. After working in Fiji following the 2000 attempted coup by a group of armed insurgents, he concluded that the bewilderment, disappointment, and shock of the hostages fell outside the familiar categories of stress or trauma reactions. What stood out for Taylor were the shock, horror, disillusionment, and disbelief the hostages felt, which they attributed to “the shattering of their legitimate expectations from being members of a community” (2003, p. 210). This led him to reflect on the psychological nature of justice and how violations of it might compound the emotional and physical losses that an individual can experience when their need for justice is violated, frustrated, or unfulfilled. His reflections ultimately informed the development of the following argument:

Justice is not simply an idealistic concept with implications for the development of individuals and their communities towards the highest goals of human endeavor. Nor is it just the interpretation and application of common law and statute law that applies in every jurisdiction. Rather, it is an inherent human need, the violation of which compounds the emotional, physical, and property loss that victims of crime suffer. (Taylor, 2009, p. 3)

Taylor’s conclusion on the psychology and motivational function of justice has support in the work of Fischer and Skitka (2006) who posited that people have an inherent need to believe in a just world, that is, to believe that good things happen to good people and bad things happen only to bad people. Additionally, the reason people need to believe in a just world is, in part, “because the belief provides a sense of predictability and meaning in life as well as giving some assurance that behavior and characteristic will be appropriately rewarded or punished in the long run” (p. 87).

Recognizing justice as a basic human need serves other important human interests as well, including people’s

- long-term self-interest (in order to survive and thrive, people need to be able to engage in socially cooperative behavior with those who behave fairly),
- social identity (when people are treated fairly, this communicates the degree to which they are valued and respected as a member of the group), and
- need to express or defend themselves as morally authentic beings (also a constituent of social identity) (Fischer & Skitka, 2006, p. 88).

Social Justice in Education and Counseling

Addressing social justice when providing multicultural education and counseling is recognized as pivotal to help practitioners better serve disenfranchised clients whose socio-emotional well-being is affected by oppressive factors in society. Social justice training must be at the forefront for counselors (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010). Mental health professionals must recognize that being responsive to the needs of ethnic populations cannot be reached by simply increasing multicultural competence.

Social justice has been described as active efforts to transform institutions and systems that impede human rights and distribution of resources (Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006). Moreover, social justice work in counseling seeks to enhance access to “tools of self-determination” among marginalized groups (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 795). Social justice-oriented counselors argue that the field must expand therapists’ roles beyond individual counseling to encompass macrolevel interventions. Indeed, broader roles are critical to address needs of marginalized communities in an increasingly diverse, multicultural society (Douce, 2004; Vera & Speight, 2003).

Hayes and Paisley (2002) asserted that advocacy must be intentionally used as a guiding principle undergirding program assumptions and rationales, curriculum topics and structure, methodologies of teaching, and evaluation of programs in order to train transformed school counselors. Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahan (2010) described how school counselors can incorporate social justice into the strategies used in schools. These included using political savvy to navigate power structures, consciousness raising, initiating difficult dialogues, building intentional relationships, teaching students self-advocacy skills, using data for marketing, and educating others about the school counselor role of advocate.

According to Odegard and Vereen (2010), in psychotherapy, social justice refers to the process of recognizing the impact that oppression and social inequities have on clients’ psychological well-being. Practicing from a social justice paradigm can aid therapists in developing empathy for clients, conceptualizing from a systemic perspective, and understanding the interventions needed to help clients achieve long-term positive results (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

Social justice implies that there is a fair and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens in a society. Social justice means upholding moral, legal, and ethical principles. The value of social justice is espoused in both the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics and the Counselors for Social Justice Code of Ethics. Both organizations describe social justice as a core value to be applied in professional practice.

Pieterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, and Mason (2009) analyzed a national sample ($n = 54$) of multicultural counseling course syllabi. Their findings suggested that nearly 60% of instructors included social justice as a course objective, but rarely did instructors focus on extending the roles of counseling psychologists beyond individual therapy, as social justice change agents.

Our concepts include ways of thinking about social justice that place at its center acknowledgement and deconstruction of inequitable power relations as well as an emphasis on the need to address issues of power and privilege.

Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ), formed as an official division of the American Counseling Association (ACA) in 2003, provides this definition of social justice counseling:

Social justice counseling represents a multifaceted approach to counseling in which practitioners strive to simultaneously promote human development and the common good through addressing challenges related to both individual and distributive justice. Social justice counseling includes empowerment of the individual as well as active confrontation of injustice and inequality in society as they impact clientele as well as those in their systemic contexts. In doing so, social justice counselors direct attention to the promotion of four critical principles that guide their work; equity, access, participation, and harmony. This work is done with a focus on the cultural, contextual, and individual needs of those served. (Counselors for Social Justice, n.d.)

Tolman (2006) has suggested that while we can and do live with injustice, we cannot live without justice altogether. It is in this sense that justice is the absolutely necessary condition for the existence of humanity. This goes to the idea that justice is a basic human need, fundamental to our being human, and not just a legal or ethical principle for systematically guiding human conduct.

Fox (2003) advocated a history of psychology in which:

Psychologists incorporating insights from feminist, Marxist, anarchist, communitarian, and other perspectives emphasized the understanding . . . that American psychology's determined individualist focus, paralleling the broader American capitalist victim-blaming ethos, needed correction by a compensating emphasis on the communal and the mutual. (p. 300)

Ellis and Carlson (2009) posited that

social justice can be thought of in terms of one's internal sense of conscience or spiritual responsibility as well as one's sense of righteousness for the world. Whether your sense of social justice comes from your faith, your spirit, or your

religious conviction, social justice can be equated to the harmonious nature by showing love, goodness, or kindness to your fellow being because you are a recipient of blessings and precious love yourself. (p. viii)

Social justice advocacy is variously referred to as a new ethical praxis (Kakkad, 2005); a way of correcting deficits of the multicultural counseling movement and an expansion of professional roles (Vera & Speight, 2003); and a moral imperative (Palmer, 2004). Topics include advocating about issues ranging from homelessness to immigration. Scholars in the field of social justice corroborate that advocacy is pivotal to counseling services because it empowers clients to create changes that meet their needs (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 1998). Adopting a social justice advocacy paradigm can provide counselors with a therapeutic tool to alleviate clients' distress caused by social oppression. The same holds true for educators. Social justice advocacy is also important when working with clients despite their demographic characteristics. For example, research indicates that regardless of minority clients' socioeconomic status, level of education, gender, or age, these clients' experience with racial discrimination is associated with psychological problems such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse, among others (Chou, Asnaani, & Hofmann, 2012).

Social justice advocates such as Toporek and Williams (2005) believe that existing professional ethical codes are inadequate because they do not address a counselor's moral duty to pursue social equality and to end any and all forms of oppression. Chang, Hays, and Milliken (2009) asserted, "the purpose of social justice is to empower disenfranchised clients and create sociopolitical change to dismantle the current status quo" (p. 27).

Manis, Brown, and Paylo (2009) proposed nine social justice competencies for counselors:

- (1) gain knowledge of how social injustices are manifested and experienced at the individual, cultural, and societal levels;
- (2) participate in active self-reflection on issues concerning race, ethnicity, oppression, power, and privilege;
- (3) when interacting with clients and community organizations, maintain ongoing self-awareness of how your personal positions of power and privilege may unintentionally parallel experiences with oppression and injustice;
- (4) promote the well-being of individuals and groups by challenging interventions that seem exploitive;
- (5) gain knowledge about indigenous models of health and healing and work alongside these entities to promote culturally relevant, holistic interventions;
- (6) expand awareness of global issues and injustices;
- (7) conceptualize and implement preventive therapeutic interventions;
- (8) collaborate with community organizations to provide culturally relevant services to the identified groups; and
- (9) hone systemic and advocacy skills to facilitate social change within institutions and communities. (p. 32)

Sensoy and Diangelo (2009) stated that being an *ally* means:

Validating and supporting people who are socially or institutionally positioned below yourself, regardless of whether you understand or agree with where they are coming from; engaging in continual self-reflection to uncover your socialized blind spots where you have privilege; advocating when the oppressed group is absent by challenging misconceptions; and sharing power, taking risks to build relationships with target group members, taking responsibility for your mistakes, having humility and willingness to admit to “not knowing,” letting go of control, and earning trust through action. (p. 346)

An educational focus on social justice is necessary to prepare future educators and counselors to address concerns related to how societies are structured. Topics related to educating teachers and counselors for social justice generally focus on issues of underserved, marginalized, or vulnerable members of society. Because social justice is a concept central to multiple aspects of life, a focus on common issues should highlight how unequal benefits and burdens are created in society, and affect everyone, regardless of the privileges people hold on a society.

Criticisms of Social Justice

Smith, Reynolds, and Rovnak (2009) offered criticism of social justice counseling when they stated

The most pressing mandate for the counseling profession at this time is an in-depth examination of the social advocacy movement. . . . [It] lacks sufficient moderation and sometimes attempts to promote various agendas (e.g., personal, political) . . . [and] makes bold claims for which it has little or no substantive evidence, such as clinical effectiveness. (p. 483)

One of the criticisms of group specific attempts at targeting devalued groups for special consideration is that by doing so we discriminate against another group. In his book on *Blacks and Social Justice*, Boxill (1992) blocks this charge by insisting that we must differentiate between just and unjust color conscious policies. He asserts,

It goes without saying that Jim Crow legislation is unjust. But critics cannot as a result infer that all color-conscious policy is unjust. Jim Crow legislation was insulting to black people and its intention was to degrade them. The color-conscious policies that are threatened by the Reagan administration are not insulting to white people, and their intent is to elevate black people. The differences in nature and intent, and presumed result of these two kinds

of policy are so deep that it is presumptuous to conclude that because they resemble each other in being color-conscious, they resemble each other in being unjust. (p. 3)

Skocpol (2003) identified a major problem of social justice advocacy as too often little connection between professional advocates and the people for whom they speak. Typically, community based social justice organizations fend for themselves with little or no access to institutional resources or professional expertise. These organizations often struggle with daily issues of survival like being able to support a paid staff, rent space, or afford public outreach materials. The struggle for resources often consumes organizers' time and makes many social justice movement organizations unstable and sometimes, short-lived.

Among other critiques, Michelli and Keiser (2005) stated that education that is grounded on a commitment to justice and the cultivation of democratic citizenship "is increasingly seen as superfluous, complicating, and even threatening by some policy makers and pressure groups who increasingly see any curriculum not tied to basic literacy or numeracy as disposable and inappropriate" (p. xix).

Case Study

Once upon a time, a woman strolling along a riverbank hears a cry for help and, seeing a drowning person, rescues him. She no sooner finishes administering artificial respiration when another cry requires another rescue. Again, she has only just helped the second person when a third call for help is heard. After a number of rescues, she begins to realize that she is pulling some people out of the river more than once. By this time the rescuer is exhausted and resentful, feeling that if people are stupid or careless enough to keep landing in the river, they can rescue themselves. She is too annoyed, tired, and frustrated to look around her.

Shortly after, another woman walking along the river hears the cries for help and begins rescuing people. She, however, wonders why so many people are drowning in this river. Looking around her, she sees a hill where something seems to be pushing people off. Realizing this is the source of the drowning problem, she is faced with a difficult dilemma: If she rushes uphill, people presently in the river will drown; if she stays at the river pulling them out, more people will be pushed in. What can she do? (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, pp. 1–2). Who are the people being pushed into the river?

- Are individuals being pushed into the river, or are groups of individuals being pushed?

- What is the force on the hill?
- How does the force operate?
- Why are some people *not* being pushed into the river? What are their characteristics? How do they benefit by having others being pushed into the river?
- What is it like to be in the river?
- How did some people who were rescued end up being pushed in the river for a second or third time? What were the characteristics of those who were rescued and were *not* pushed in again?
- Were any of the rescued folks seen pushing people into the river? How could this be?
- Whom does the first woman represent? The second woman?
- Which option should the second woman choose? Why?
- Who is responsible for dealing with the situation on the hill?

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. Define the following terms
 - Advocacy
 - Justice
 - Ally
 - Oppression
 - Distributive Justice
 - Social Justice
 - Injustice
2. How does John Rawls conceptualize justice? Social justice? What are the core social justice values, according to Van Soest and Garcia?
3. What are some religious references, based on your faith tradition, other than those cited in the chapter?
4. What are the “costs of inequality” to a society, according to Wilkinson and Pickett? Compare and contrast two societies in terms of these elements.
5. What characteristics must be present for a procedure to be perceived as fair, according to Leventhal?
6. How are redistribution and cultural recognition alike and different?
7. What requirements are necessary to educate for social justice, according to Paulo Freire? Compare and contrast the requirements posited by Freire with those identified by Picower and those identified by Singh et al.

8. Taylor suggested that justice is a basic human need. Explain why you either agree or disagree with Taylor's thesis.
9. Summarize the nine social justice competencies for counselors proposed by Manis, Brown, and Paylo.
10. Describe the treatment of social justice in the Code of Ethics of your anticipated career.

References

- Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bell, L. A. (1997). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, P. Griffin, & L. A. Bell (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice—A sourcebook* (pp. 1–14). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Boxill, B. R. (1992). *Blacks and social justice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Chang, C. Y., Crethar, H. C., & Ratts, M. J. (2010). Social justice: A national imperative for counselor education and supervision. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 50*, 82–87.
- Chang, C. Y., Hays, D. G., & Milliken, T. F. (2009). Addressing social justice issues in supervision: A call for client and professional advocacy. *Clinical Supervisor, 28*(1), 20–35.
- Chou, T., Asnaani, A., & Hofmann, S. G. (2012). Perception of racial discrimination and psychopathology across three U.S. ethnic minority groups. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*, 74–81.
- Counselors for Social Justice. (N.d.). "What is social justice in counseling?" Retrieved from <http://counselorsforsocialjustice.com>
- Crethar, H. C., Rivera, E. T., & Nash, S. (2008). In search of common threads: Linking multicultural, feminist, and social justice counseling paradigms. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 86*, 269–278.
- Culler, J. (1982). *On deconstruction: Theory and criticism after structuralism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Derman-Sparks, L., & Phillips, C. B. (1997). *Teaching/learning anti-racism: A developmental approach*. New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Douce, L. A. (2004). Society of counseling psychology, presidential address 2003: Globalization of counseling psychology. *Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 142–152.
- Dyer, R. (1997). *White: Essays on race and culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ellis, C. M., & Carlson, J. (Eds.). (2009). *Cross cultural awareness and social justice in counseling*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fischer, R., & Skitka, L. (2006). Justice: Social-psychological perspectives. In A. J. W. Taylor (Ed.), *Justice as a basic human need* (pp. 85–93). New York, NY: Nova Science.
- Fleischacker, S. (2004). *A short history of distributive justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

- Fouad, N. A., Gerstein, L. H., & Toporek, R. L. (2006). Social justice and counseling psychology in context. In R. L. Toporek, L. H. Gerstein, N. A. Fouad, G. Roysircar, & T. Israel (Eds.), *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology: Leadership, vision, and action* (pp. 44–58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fox, D. R. (2003). Awareness is good, but action is better. *Counseling Psychologist, 31*(3), 299–304.
- Fraser, N., & Honneth, A. (2003). *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*. London, UK: Verso.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1987). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Goodman, L. A., Liang, B., Helms, J. E., Latta, R. E., Sparks, E., & Weintraub, S. R. (2004). Training counseling psychologists as social justice agents: Feminist and multicultural principles in action. *Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 793–837
- Gorski, P. C. (2009). Cognitive dissonance as a strategy in social justice teaching. *Multicultural Education, 17*(1), 54–57.
- Hayes, R. L., & Paisley, P.O. (2002). Transforming school counselor preparation programs. *Theory into Practice, 41*, 169–176.
- Huegler, S. (2006). Purple shoes or blue? *Scientific American, 17*(1), 12–13.
- Hytten, K., & Bettez, S. C. (2011). Understanding education for social justice. *Educational foundations, 25*, 7–24.
- Jansson, B. (2005). *The reluctant welfare state*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Kakkad, D. (2005). A new ethical praxis: Psychologists' emerging responsibilities in issues of social justice. *Ethics & Behavior, 15*(4), 293–308.
- Kallen, E. (2004). *Social inequality and social injustice: A human rights perspective*. London, UK: Taylor and Francis.
- Kelly, D. M., & Brandes, G. M. (2001). Shifting out of “neutral”: Beginning teachers' struggles with teaching for social justice. *Canadian Journal of Education, 26*(4), 437–454.
- Kimmel, M. S. (2003). Towards a pedagogy of the oppressor. In M.S. Kimmel & A. L. Ferber (Eds.). *Privilege: A reader*. (pp. 1–10). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Kiselica, M. S., & Robinson, M. (2001). Bringing advocacy counseling to life: The history, issues, and human dramas of social justice work in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 79*, 387–397.
- Kumashiro, K. (2004). *Against common sense: Teaching and learning towards social justice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Leventhal, G. (1980). What should be done with equity theory? New approaches to the study of fairness in social relationships. In K. Gergen, M. Greenberg, & R. Willis (Eds.), *Social Exchange: Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 27–54). New York, NY: Plenum.
- Lewis, J. A., Lewis, M. D., Daniels, J. A., & D'Andrea, M. J. (1998). *Community counseling: Empowerment strategies for a diverse society*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole.
- Manis, A., Brown, S., & Paylo, M. (2009). The helping professional as an advocate. In J. Carlson & C. M. Ellis (Eds.), *Cross cultural awareness and social justice in counseling* (pp. 23–44). New York, NY: Routledge.

- McIntosh, P. (1988). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. Retrieved from <http://www.iub.edu/~tchsotl/part2/McIntosh%20White%20Privilege.pdf>
- Michelli, N., & Keiser, D. (Eds.). (2005). *Teacher education for democracy and social justice*. New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- Miller, D. (1999). *Principles of social justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- Moyo, O. N. (2010). A commitment to social justice in a capitalist democracy: Are we being critical citizens or just moving along clichés? *Journal of progressive human services, 21*(1), 3–7.
- Newman, J., & Yeates, N. (Eds.). (2008). *Social justice: Welfare, crime and society*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University. Retrieved from <http://oro.open.ac.uk/id/eprint/17455>
- Novak, M. (2000, December). Defining social justice. *First Things, 108*.
- Odegard, M. A., & Vereen, L. G. (2010). A grounded theory of counselor educators integrating social justice into their pedagogy. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 50*, 130–149.
- Palmer, L. K. (2004). A call to social justice: A multidiscipline agenda. *Counseling Psychologist, 32*(6), 879–885.
- Pharr, S. (1997). *Homophobia: A weapon of sexism*. Inverness, CA: Chardin.
- Picower, B. (2012). Using their words: Six elements of social justice curriculum design for the elementary classroom. *International Journal of Multicultural Education, 14*(1). Retrieved from <http://www.usingtheirwords.org/6elements/>
- Pieterse, A. L., Evans, S. A., Risner-Butner, A., Collins, N. M., & Mason, L. B. (2009). Multicultural and social justice training in counseling psychology and counselor education: A review and analysis of a sample of course syllabi. *Counseling Psychologist, 37*, 93–115.
- Prigoff, A. W. (2003). Social justice framework. In J. Anderson & R.W. Carter. (Eds.), *Diversity perspectives for social work practice* (pp. 113–120). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ratts, M. J. (2011). Multiculturalism and social justice: Two sides of the same coin. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 39*, 24–37.
- Ratts, M., D'Andrea, M., & Arredondo, P. (2004). Social justice counseling: A “fifth force” in the field. *Counseling today, 47*(1), 28–30.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Boston, MA: Harvard University
- Rizvi, F. (1998). Some thoughts on contemporary theories of social justice. In B. Atweh, S. Kemmis, & P. Weeks (Eds.), *Action research in practice: Partnerships for social justice in education* (pp. 47–56). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sensoy, O., & Diangelo, R. (2009). Developing social justice literacy: An open letter to our faculty colleagues. *Phi Delta Kappan, 90*(5), 345–352.
- Singh, A. A., Urbano, Al, Haston, M., & McMahon, E. (2010). School counselors' strategies for social justice change: A grounded theory of what works in the real world. *Professional School Counseling, 13*, 135–145.
- Skocpol, T. (2003). *Diminished democracy: From membership to management in American civic life*. Norman: University of Oklahoma.

- Smith, S. D., Reynolds, C. A., & Rovnak, A. (2009). A critical analysis of the social advocacy movement in counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 87(4), 483–491.
- Taylor, A. J. W. (2003). Justice as a basic human need. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 21, 209–219.
- Taylor, A. J. W. (Ed.). (2006). *Justice as a basic human need*. New York, NY: Nova Science.
- Taylor, A. J. W. (2009). The nebulous but far from negligible concept of justice. *International Perspectives in Victimology*, 4(1), 3–10.
- Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (pp. 25–73). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.
- Tolman, C. W. (2006). Being human and the need for justice. In A. J. W. Taylor, (Ed.), *Justice as a basic human need* (pp. 13–23). New York, NY: Nova Science.
- Toporek, R. L., Gerstein, L. H., Fouad, N. A., Roysircar-Sodowsky, G., & Israel, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology: Leadership, vision, and action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Toporek, R. L., & Williams, R. A. (2005). Ethics and professional issues related to the practice of social justice in counseling psychology. In R. L. Toporek, L. H. Gerstein, N. A. Fouad, G. Roysircar-Sodowsky, & T. Israel, (Eds.), *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology: Leadership, vision, and action* (pp. 17–34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Van Soest, D., & Garcia, B. (2003). *Diversity education for social justice: Mastering teaching skills*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.
- Vera, E. M., & Speight, S. L. (2003). Multicultural competence, social justice, and counseling psychology. *Counseling Psychologist*, 31(3), 253–272.
- Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2009). *The spirit level: Why more equal societies almost always do better*. London, UK: Allen Lane.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.
- Zollers, N.J, Albert, L.R., & Cochran-Smith, M. (2000). In pursuit of social justice: Collaborative research and practice in teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education*, 22(2), 1–14.