

SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGY WITHIN AND BEYOND COUNSELLING EDUCATION:
RADICAL PRAXIS TOWARDS LIBERATORY HEALING

By

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Abstract

The current socio-political climate presents a challenge to the existing mainstream orientation that we have in our counselling programs. Therefore, it is critical for the practice and discipline of counselling to adapt in order to effectively address the changing needs of society and attend to the connection between justice and wellness. This manuscript style thesis draws from theoretical frameworks grounded in critical and political pedagogy, inviting readers to challenge the hegemonic systems of counselling education and consider the importance of social justice principles. A review of the literature demonstrates evidence of the significance that a social justice orientation holds, which is followed by an outline of the essential components that comprise a social justice orientation. These components include an emphasis on cultivating an understanding of sociopolitical forces that create and maintain oppressive structures; a critical, social, analysis of power, dominant discourses and broader societal norms which continue to cause harm; social action and advocacy efforts; and critical self-reflection and evaluation of biases about human behavior in relation to sources of suffering. Lastly, recommendations are made for weaving a social justice orientation into counselling education to promote wellness and liberatory healing for all who seek counselling support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Thesis Statement: This manuscript-style thesis was written to discuss *the role and importance of social justice principles in counselling education*.

Whether therapists or psychologists are responsive to this or not, the undeniable fact remains that human beings are inseparable from their social locations and context. As long as we are in existence on this earth, our lives are impacted daily by political and social structures, and for many, they are still impacted by alienation and oppression from the effects of colonial power and domination. For this reason, the merging of psychological and political domains is unavoidable (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). Those who embrace an individualistic ethos and neglect to consider the political rationales for conceptualizing the human experience, only serve to reinforce inequality and injustice (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). To reiterate what Fox and Prilleltensky (1996, 1997, as cited in Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007) captured so honestly, “psychology is not separate from politics merely because some wish it were so” (p.794); a disregard for the political will serve to only strengthen any obstacles to survival and living a more meaningful life, despite any therapist’s belief that the individuals seeking counselling are being helped to improve their lives.

There is a basic assumption that neither psychological nor political factors alone can sufficiently account for wellness and justice, therefore we must understand the relationship between the two in order to arrive at effective therapeutic interventions. Wellness is about more than just the satisfaction of personal needs, and justice is more than just having equal opportunity – both wellness and justice are part of a larger construct, and not isolated entities (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). If they are treated as isolates, we then engage in polarized and distorted views about the link between wellness and justice, however if they are treated as parts of a larger whole, we

will have the ability to extend our vision and biases beyond the fragments that are more easily seen on the surface and can better achieve transformative healing (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007).

A lack of interest in applying a critical, social, analysis to the pedagogy and practice of counselling maintains hegemonic paradigms that do not undo the harm that oppressive systems have effected on the lives of so many. To attend to racial minority peoples and cultures via mainstream Eurocentric therapeutic settings and practices, without a critical, social, analysis or careful consideration of ancestral sociopolitical trauma, may result in widespread and abounding consequences (Heath, 2018). The question is asked, how do counsellors promote the healing of persons suffering the ongoing vestigial harms of colonization and oppression in present day society, without the awareness and acknowledgement of sociopolitical context. Is this logically possible? Oppression is entwined in both the psyche and systems and is not solely systems based. A social justice orientation serves to de-colonize not only counselling pedagogy, but also counselling praxis and in turn develop a sense of authentic humanity (Lang, 2006).

The practice and discipline of counselling needs to adapt and respond to the changing needs of society and the spotlight on justice for human rights. The concept of power, how it is defined and where it resides (Lang, 2006) is central to the debate of why a social justice orientation is important to have in counselling education. Any adaptations to the training and education structure may be difficult to achieve when the impact of counselling education reform creates fear of disrupting a system that continues to operate from traditional schemas of power and oppression. Some who are part of the dominant class, or those who have been influenced to believe that counselling and politics are forever separate concepts, are typically the ones to resist this type of reform the most.

Purpose

Reducing wellness to the notion that it depends primarily on our inherent capacities to self-soothe neglects broader, more powerful, forces at play in our lives. Prilleltensky & Fox (2007) argue that to be well, we require interpersonal exchanges based on respect, mutual support, and cultural, political, and economic conditions free of exploitation and human rights abuses. Thereby, the purpose of this document is not only to acknowledge the impact of unequal social structures that cause and perpetuate harm and suffering, but also to be clear that a lack of social justice orientation and action in counselling education will inadvertently demonstrate to students that structural and contextual factors, and their effects on our well-being, are unimportant. It is the positioning of a social justice orientation in counselling *curricula* that is vitally important when supporting persons alongside their journey of overcoming and resisting barriers, systemic or otherwise, to their health and well-being. The hope and intention here is that this thesis will be useful to anyone that is involved in a counselling education program (students and faculty), regardless of their social location, analysis, or beliefs. Furthermore, I hope that by elucidating the need for a social justice orientation, I will be able to offer some recommendations for how to integrate this orientation and training into a counselling program, based on what I have gleaned from the existing literature.

Significance

Historically and again recently, there have been huge global shifts towards emerging organizations, voices, community-based media, and solidarity movements highlighting the injustices of human rights violations, and talking about racial injustice, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, immigrant rights, police brutality, #metoo, and oppressive structures in place from the ramifications associated with ongoing colonialism. The current state of our local and global

socio-political climate presents a challenge to the existing orientation that we have in our counselling programs. To paraphrase Craig's (2003) point about challenging the status quo, there needs to be a rigorous evaluation and this seems an urgent task.

A common denominator amongst all of the layers of violence and injustice as outlined above is that humans are at the centre of the harm that is caused in each of those dimensions, and as long as humans continue to suffer within the mechanisms and structures of a profoundly unequal society (Craig, 2003), then we have a duty in our clinical work to account for the sources and etiology of suffering. Similarly, Vodde and Gallant (2002) argue that "unless we are able to adequately connect the problems of clients in oppressed groups to the roots of their oppression and the clients to each other (through collective activity, social action and macro-level change), fundamental change will not occur" (p. 440) and suffering will continue.

No matter how inadvertently, counselling education and thereby the profession, will continue harm to those who seek support without efforts made to embark on a journey of de-colonizing curricula (macro-level) and one's counselling practice (micro-level). The move towards social justice liberation begins with the knowledge and understanding of prejudices, worldviews, privilege brought about by white supremacy, sociopolitical issues, and by sharing power and determinism (Lang, 2006) with persons seeking therapy. It is equally as important to not only understand the world in which we live, but to try to change it as well (Craig, 2003).

Further application of this study will hopefully influence any attempt to restore the lost value and equilibrium in justice; and in order to do that Prilleltensky and Fox (2007) suggest we reposition certain domains that have historically been in the background of our curriculum to the foreground while we learn the fundamentals of therapeutic practice. Additionally, promoting wellness and justice in combination together requires the sort of social change that would result

in an understanding of their underlying dynamics and reciprocal relationship (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). With this gained understanding, we will be better able to restore the balance and challenge distorted, or limited, conceptions that get in the way of bringing about social action and advocacy in our therapeutic work.

Many will argue that integrating a critical, social, analysis with counselling pedagogy is simply too political (Harrist & Richardson, 2012; Olle, 2018; Applebaum, 2008; Prilleltensky, 1989). I would argue, however, that bypassing and denying the importance of this is just as political, and even harmful. Counselling education that is narrow in its' disciplinary lens will fuel any distortions already established in society by those in power who maintain and benefit from the strength and exploitation of the capitalist economic system in place. The oppression that stems from capitalist structure and system-maintaining norms applies to wellness just as much as it applies to justice (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007).

For this reason, there exist strong grounds for the role of sociopolitical thinking, such as Marxist, and other ideologies, in the discourse around the importance of incorporating social justice in counselling curriculum. Just as the Feminist critique and Critical Theory perspectives have struggled and fought to earn their place in counselling and psychology, it is imperative that we look at Karl Marx's teachings about the impact of consumerism, capitalism, and power on wellness. We have been well conditioned to believe that consumerism will be the antidote to our suffering, which is a brilliant strategy for effecting power and control over individuals through capitalist means. Incited by Marxist ideology, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) added the perspective that power and capitalism contribute to mental health problems and does not operate as an illusion in the same way that capitalism was conceptualized by Marx, rather power was described by Deleuze and Guattari (1983) as an effect of relations which can be unpacked.

Collectively as a society, and in particular large numbers of marginalized and powerless people, we have also been well conditioned, via exploitation, capitalism, domination and oppression, to believe the huge imbalance between justice and wellness is normal and inevitable (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

This thesis is grounded in Feminist theory, radical and critical psychology, solidarity-based counselling, and anti-oppressive, anti-colonial and social justice principles. Much of what is discussed in this writing is not a new concept to the disciplines of counselling, psychology, and social work. This analysis draws heavily on thinkers such as Fanon, Freire, Foucault, White, Epston, hooks, Lorde, Davis, Marx, Sartre, Reynolds and Sanders, and many other radical social justice activists from around the world who have been doing land-based work without the recognition from scholars and academics. Much of this writing is informed by the framework and foundation laid by the individuals, elders, and communities, who have been doing the hard solidarity work of locating the origins of suffering as a result of broader societal processes, and challenging the traditional ways of encouraging people to simply adjust to the conditions of their environment which created their presenting problems in the first place (Craig, 2003).

Counselling and Psychology as a Harmful Product of Imperialism and Colonialism

Like almost anything in present society, counselling and psychology are also part of historical imperial and colonial processes (Lang, 2006), and sadly many communities, primarily marginalized communities, have been harmed by these disciplines. Colonialism served an important function in oppression and now across the world many are examining the role of de-colonialism in liberation (Lang, 2006). This is of particular importance to the context of psychology and counselling given the emphasis on healing and liberation from suffering.

There is sufficient evidence of the damage that powerlessness causes to our personal and collective well-being. Yet, the dominant discourse routinely emphasizes “apolitical factors such as biological determinants and personality traits” (Chomsky, 2002, as cited in Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007) which infers that power is either unimportant or secondary to intrapersonal variables. Though Prilleltensky & Fox (2007) admit that psychological dynamics are important, they also make explicit that psychological dynamics themselves are affected by power. Thus, as per the purpose of this thesis, the better educated we become about power and injustice, the better we are in our efforts to weave together wellness and justice in order to facilitate healing and liberation from suffering. To further add to this framework, Reynolds (2010) offers up an important point about addressing power as one of six guiding intentions that informs her practice of doing social justice work:

“Addressing power speaks to witnessing both resistance and acts of justice doing. It also invites cultural and collective accountability. Accountability requires a complex analysis, in which the multiplicity of sites of both power and oppression are acknowledged and addressed” (p. 18).

Radical Healing and Liberation from Suffering through Social Justice

In order to develop a paradigm of social justice in counselling education, it is important to also understand how healing and liberation from suffering can be achieved through social justice. When we talk about radical healing, we are talking about a process of healing within a larger healing justice framework (Ginwright, 2016). Healing justice is defined by Ginwright (2016) as a strengths-based framework to improve and nurture well-being that involves transforming institutions and relationships that get in the way of collectively healing and fostering hope (Ginwright, 2016 as cited in Kokka, 2018). Ginwright (2016) also referred to Prilleltensky’s (2012) writing about the need to clarify that well-being and social justice are

intertwined, and that well-being involves “practices that sustain, maintain, and expand health” while healing is “a process to restore health resulting from (psychological and/or physical) harm or injury” (Ginwright, 2016, pp. 37-38, as cited in Kokka, 2018).

Radical healing is explicitly defined as different than social or emotional learning due to its political and social justice framework that includes an analysis of structural factors and systemic issues which threaten our well-being (Kokka, 2018). Both Ginwright (2016) and Kokka (2018) discuss the importance of discovering meaning and purpose in making the shift toward social justice as well as acting individually and collectively to address community issues and improve community well-being.

A social justice-oriented conceptualization of counselling education helps educators and students recognize the role of systemic factors in contributing to emotional and mental health problems while also “bringing the context to the therapy room” (Kozan & Blustein, 2018, p. 168). This conceptualization will require educators (and students) to attend to their subjectivity and engage in consistent self-reflection to examine the ways in which their social identities, values, and assumptions, along with oppression and privilege, might affect their pedagogical methods of teaching and practice of counselling.

Additionally, by helping individuals improve their circumstances and well-being by instilling a sense of power when dealing with oppressive systems, therapists may use advocacy efforts to promote radical healing and liberation from suffering while also helping to change the unequal social structures through this type of social action (Kozan & Blustein, 2018).

Historically, critical psychologists have “conceptualized advocacy as a continuum of counselling action extending from empowerment to social change” (Kozan & Blustein, 2018, p. 156).

Empowerment can be used as a therapist’s actions to focus on the psychotherapy context to

support individuals in acknowledging and overcoming systemic barriers to their well-being; while social change refers to those actions that advocate for the betterment of communities and change in society at large (Kozan & Blustein, 2018).

Method

The method for this thesis will be to set forth a manuscript-style document that is intended to acknowledge and assert the need for a social justice orientation in counselling education, and to conduct a systematic review of the literature to present evidence of its significance. There will be an investigation into the approaches used to integrate a social justice frame of reference into academic curriculum and pedagogical approaches to counselling. Additionally, a critical analysis of the fallout and ramifications of omitting a social justice orientation from counselling education will be included as well.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined for further clarification and congruency throughout this document

Advocacy

Advocacy is considered a form of social action, and in the context of counselling, it is best achieved when grounded in the social contexts in which the problems occur for the people being served (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). The purposes of advocacy work in counselling is to take action to eliminate or reduce social problems, confront injustice and inequality, to facilitate an increase in marginalized people's relative, structural, power, and to foster sociopolitical changes that will result in greater societal responses to the needs of the people seeking support (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

The term advocacy is often broken down into two subcategories of intervention: micro and macro level advocacy. Micro-level advocacy work (as part of one's counselling practice) involves the assessing and validating of people's experiences in relation to systemic barriers, facilitation of greater access to services consistent with addressing social problems, and supporting people to resist oppression and find their voice, particularly when advocating for themselves (Kozan & Blustein, 2018).

Macro-level advocacy work involves the participation in groups or activities that would bring organizational or institutional changes by engaging in critical dialogue, community collaboration, attending to power dynamics within an organization or system, and promoting inclusivity, diversity and social justice (Kozan & Blustein, 2018).

Oppression

Oppression is a pervasive system of discrimination that manifests itself through differential treatment, ideological domination, and institutional power and control (the anti-oppression network: n.d.). Oppression depends on a socially constructed binary of a dominant, privileged, group (though not necessarily more populous) as being normal, superior, and required over the 'other' (the anti-oppression network: n.d.). This binary benefits the dominant group who have more relative structural power and greater ability to influence change on macro and micro levels.

Oppression Involves a set of institutions that systematically act to preserve the marginalization of certain groups and internalize within the members of those groups the belief that the differential treatment is deserved (Miles, 2014). Oppression is distinguishable from exploitation, which refers to the misuse of persons, as oppressing institutions disempower marginalized groups so that they may be exploited (Miles, 2014).

Oppression is expressed through default positions of power and through the denial and limitation of resources, agency, and dignity based on one's social location and identity (the anti-oppression network: n.d.). This includes policies, laws, and practices that are enforced in and by dominant groups that have the power to shape and control cultural narratives on a global scale (the anti-oppression network: n.d.). Oppression that manifests on personal, positional, and institutional levels creates a system that produces various forms of exclusion, marginalization, and concentrated violence and harm directed towards marginalized groups (the anti-oppression network: n.d.). The access to power gained from oppression against marginalized groups provides opportunity for social advantages over (perceived) scarce resources and in turn results in exploitation of marginalized groups (the anti-oppression network: n.d.).

Anti-colonial

The term anti-colonial pertains to the deliberate resistance and opposition against systematic de-humanization caused by colonialism. It is important to recognize that it is difficult for marginalized people to achieve wellness in a sick society diseased by colonization/colonialism (Fanon, 1963), power imbalances and oppressive forces that are repeatedly and violently used against them. Heath (2018) noted the explicit use of the term anti-colonial over that of the term post-colonial "in acknowledgement that we do not live in a post-colonial world: the effects of colonialism are still regularly felt by persons. An anti-colonial stance allows for people to stand against past, present, and future effects of colonialism" (p. 54), and for this reason, the term anti-colonial will be privileged over post-colonial in this thesis.

It is also imperative in this context to respectfully acknowledge that the completion of this thesis took place on the unceded and occupied territories of the x^wməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. Connecting the

recognition of indigenous land rights to the ongoing struggles of indigenous people is vitally important due to the harms they suffered, and continue to suffer from, as a result of colonization. Many of the core themes of this thesis, including emphasis placed on the value of subjugated knowledge, anti-oppression, and anti-colonial work, have great significance for and are tied to the well-being of the indigenous peoples of this land.

Social Justice

Social justice is defined by Craig (2003), a professor of Social Justice at the University of Hull, UK, as “a framework of political objectives, pursued through social, economic, environmental and political policies, based on an acceptance of difference and diversity, and informed by values concerned with: achieving fairness, equality of outcomes and treatment; recognizing the dignity and equal worth and encouraging the self-esteem of all; the meeting of basic needs; maximising the reduction of inequalities in wealth, income and life chances; and the participation of all, including the most disadvantaged.” (p. 2). Additionally, Reynolds’ (2010) explained that “social justice includes all domains of social life, which is beyond the more narrow scope of human rights and justice systems which primarily uphold laws” (p.12).

Critical, Social, Analysis

The term ‘critical, social, analysis’ is used in this document as a framework or lens that is applied in order to critically examination social issues and contexts, equality, and justice.

Assumptions, Limitations and Scope

Wellness and justice have received more attention in psychology over the last decade or more, yet Prilleltensky and Fox (2007) argue that more needs to be done, both within the discipline and society at large, to explicate the link between the two. Prilleltensky and Fox (2007) suggest that this link needs to be made while also taking into account the role of power

and context, particularly as we begin to examine how wellness is dependent on how much justice individuals experience in the various domains and intersections of their lives. This manuscript thesis will discuss said link and also focus on demonstrating the need for a social justice orientation in counselling education, however it does not conduct original research, thereby any conclusions about the efficacy of social justice in counselling education cannot be made.

A summary of proposed strategies to integrate a social justice orientation will be provided, however this will be less robust than preferred due to the limited scope of this manuscript thesis. The recommendations made for counselling education programs will be comprehensive and appropriate for academic consideration, however they will simply be recommendations only, based on the literature found.

Summary

It goes without saying that having an integrated framework of wellness and justice does not provide a panacea for suffering and injustice (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). Thereby, much of the literature places emphasis on the additional responsibility to give up personal privileges and renounce strongly held beliefs in order to live up to the task of disrupting normative worldviews that are deeply entrenched and supported by powerful forces (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). It is true that it is possible to be aware of psychological and political forces (negative or positive) and still engage in victim-blaming rhetoric, hence the decision to apply a social analysis to counselling education and practice should be made not only on a cognitive level, but on an ethical and moral one as well (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007). It is an ethical duty as educators in academic settings, and as therapists in practice, to emphasize the discourse around power and the destructive impact of inaccurate assumptions about human nature and society (Prilleltensky & Fox, 2007).

Many have studied and written about the gaps that hinder the promotion of wellness and justice within the disciplines of counselling and psychology. This large body of literature will be reviewed extensively in the next chapter. Additionally, there will be a review of the research outcomes that has shown how to focus attention on the interface between individual and societal variables, and the proposed interventions that will help to consider the reciprocal relationship between wellness and justice when applying a social analysis to counselling education.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Scholarship surrounding socially just pedagogical perspectives in counselling education, and the importance for having said perspectives embedded in a critical analysis, will be further elaborated upon in this second chapter.

The intention of this chapter is to review the existing literature for its' potential to provide vital information and direction for integrating a social justice orientation with the current approach to counselling education. This examination will draw upon the content presented in the discourse around maintaining social justice as a central tenet in counselling and psychology and outline the important themes that arise. An additional objective of this literature review is to delve into the construct of social justice within the framework of academic institutions and determine clearer directives regarding the role of educators and practicing therapists in committing to this critical, social, analysis.

Any implications found through this review, for academic training models, or for counselling practice, will be noted briefly in this chapter and discussed later in further detail in subsequent chapters. A brief synopsis of critiques or counter perspectives to social justice counselling will also be outlined in this chapter.

Process

A preliminary search was conducted using the following search terms in PsychARTICLES, PsychBOOKS and PscyhINFO databases via the EBSCOhost website; social justice, counselling education, social justice education, social justice in therapy, social policy, advocacy, social action, critical psychology, community psychology, feminist psychology, ethics, anti-colonial, cultural democracy, oppression, systemic injustice, power, liberation, wellness, well-being, psycho-political, affective politics, resistance, collective healing, healing,

and transformative justice. A manual search of reference lists from selected articles and key publications related to this topic was conducted as well to identify writing that may have been missed in the systematic search using the above databases. Furthermore, readings recommended by this writer's thesis advisor and mentors were included in the literature review as well.

In order to maintain some semblance of containment and establish limitations to keep this literature search within manageable parameters, the following topics that are connected to this work were not included in the review; racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia, multicultural counselling, diversity training, and cultural competence.

Components for Social Justice Education

It is extremely promising to come across an overwhelming body of research that exists on social justice counselling. Based on my search thus far, what is evident is the expansive variety of results that range across a wide spectrum demonstrating how a social justice orientation can be applied to the different areas of counselling and psychology, both in academic and clinical practice settings.

The study by Hackman (2005) illuminated the pragmatic aspects of incorporating the essentials of social justice counselling in education programs. Hackman (2005) acknowledged the consistent challenge that progressive educators face when trying to teach effectively from a clear social justice perspective that empowers and encourages students to think critically, and models social change. Hackman (2005) offers suggestions on how to apply a social justice pedagogical lens to curricula by introducing five key components, which are listed as: (1) tools for content mastery, (2) tools for critical thinking, (3) tools for action and social change, (4) tools for personal reflection, and (5) tools for awareness of multicultural issues. These five areas will be reviewed more comprehensively in subsequent chapters.

Such critical academic engagements will require educators and students to continuously re-evaluate not only their social and academic institutions, but also the terms they use to identify and describe themselves and their very existence (Coates, 2007). This process is best accomplished in a classroom environment.

Social Action and Advocacy

As scholarship has shifted focus beyond that of traditional counselling interventions, some of the literature has shown research done to investigate the components of what would be considered effective social justice training. What was found is a growing body of research that explored advocacy training using specific tools such as the Relationship-Centered Advocacy (RCA) model (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). This training tool helped counselling students to develop a better understanding of structural factors and their effects on marginalized communities, “which allowed them to conceptualize pathology in a larger social context” (Kozan & Blustein, p. 157, 2018). Furthermore, studies in advocacy training discuss the distinct importance of advancing beyond the current training into social justice learning that involves direct and structured experiences, which Kiselica and Robinson (2001) noted requires counsellors to work beyond their comfort zones and to collaborate with communities and partnering agencies in different settings.

The study by Kozan & Blustein (2018) provided examples of advocacy interventions within the construct of social justice counselling that were consistent with the relevant literature results found. These examples include:

- (a) recognizing the impacts of systemic factors on mental health; (b) integrating a social justice perspective into the case conceptualization and therapeutic alliance; and (c) addressing power dynamics and contextual issues in psychotherapy (p. 178).

Accompanying the aforementioned, is the engagement in advocacy outside therapeutic settings, which involves adopting non-traditional counselling roles to support persons in navigating multiple systems and connecting them with resources (Kozan & Blustein, 2018).

Even so, Ivey & Collins (2003) point out that despite the advocacy training some may receive in academic settings, therapists may not have the opportunity to implement social justice or advocacy interventions if their employment setting, which can vary greatly, does not share the same values about social justice practices. This underlines the importance of reviewing assumptions, biases and worldviews about social justice counselling, on a micro and macro level, as we consider the barriers and challenges of doing the work.

Barriers to Social Justice Counselling: Assumptions and Biases

The challenges and resistance to social justice counselling that arise are shaped by one's potential biases, boundaries of one's competence, and limitations of expertise, all of which may lead to or condone unjust practices. Additional challenges include systemic barriers that student therapists encounter in academic programs that do not recognize the necessity of applying a critical, social, analysis to the curriculum. These challenges continue beyond academic settings as the barriers are also maintained in the institutions in which therapists become employed. The goal of having this dialogue is to signify that teachers/students/therapists need to be open to exploring how sociopolitical and economic issues shape the lives of all humans, and in particular those systemically oppressed and seeking support.

Therapists and psychologists tend to be wary of cultural and racial matters, and thus what often occurs is the suffering and plight of ethnic minorities that is attributed to their 'defective cultures' or psychological make-up, or both (Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 1999). These forms of racism, stemming from inaccurate assumptions and biases, are expressed equivocally, as in the

therapists and psychologists superficially recognize racism as the problem, but hold the victims/survivors responsible for its solution (Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 1999).

Due to the over-emphasis of intrapsychic explanations for a person's distress, often resulting in very narrow and perfunctory individualistic and intrapsychic interventions, therapists are left with insufficient training on how to address systemic injustices (Toporek & Williams, 2006). This, once again, underscores the need for learning systemic-level interventions such as advocacy and social action that can be utilized to address the impact of external structural forces and challenge the institutions that maintain and contribute to power inequalities over others.

Once the student therapists begin to examine their own worldview and recognize the implications of their beliefs, the risk of political proselytizing within social justice training in academic settings is low. What is critical to this process is whether dialogic conditions for inclusivity and free deliberation are taken into account in the classroom environment, resulting in deeper and more honest conversations about biases and allowing room for perspectives to shift.

Developing comfort in this area requires the practice of talking about identities and relative privilege and subjugation (Watts-Jones, 2010). Training in academic settings is the appropriate place to nurture this dialogue and develop comfort by making it routine to consider and talk about these issues as personal and not simply a theoretical construct (Watts-Jones, 2010).

Social Justice Awareness

Another aspect to consider would be to examine the level of preparedness and understanding that students have when learning about structural inequalities and injustice, liberation theories, what it means to be a change agent, and to fully realize the paradigm of oppressive systems before engaging in discourse about how to deconstruct or critique it. Gaining

this awareness would require one to be open to a fundamental shift in attitude and responsibility and to own up to the valid accusations that have been made towards helping professionals, which is that the voice of marginalized persons is often silenced (Waldegrave, 2009). This is the sort of challenge that Waldegrave (2009) suggests helping professionals should face up to as they are entrusted with the vulnerability of people during some of their most fragile states. Waldegrave (2009) bravely added that it does no harm for helping professionals to reflect on this uncomfortable criticism because it is likely to have some truth to it.

An awareness of the influence of oppression is also paramount to understanding the role for social justice in counselling. Watts-Jones (2010) effectively alerted readers to the fact that “no one escapes the influence of oppression, given its infusion into systems of thought, associations, and values, implicit and explicit, and institutional and cultural practices.” (p. 411). The aforementioned statement strongly aligns with the overarching argument in this thesis which is that “issues of oppression are always relevant to some degree in therapy” (Watts-Jones, 2010, p. 411). Thereby, therapists and psychologists need to be aware and continue to stay curious about how oppression shows up for persons, families, and communities; therefore in this framework therapy must include “a lens for seeing the legacy of wounds and entitlements that run underground as well as those that surface”, and to include a space for witnessing and healing those wounds (Watts-Jones, 2010, p. 411).

Social Justice Goals in Counselling

Addressing the dynamics of power and privilege that come in to play in therapeutic relationships is critical, as well as giving voice and raising consciousness (Toporek & Williams, 2006). The problems marginalized persons face often lie in the systems in which they live

therefore learning about the resources in their communities and supporting them to access those resources helps to rebuild a sense of empowerment and facilitate healing.

One goal of social justice counselling is seen as giving voice, through advocacy, to persons or communities who have historically been silenced regarding their experience of oppression (Toporek & Williams, 2006). A second aspect involves the act of consciousness raising, which is a political act, alongside persons regarding their oppressive circumstances. Careful attention needs to be placed on the ethical implications of having this newly acquired perspective and potential for action, as critical consciousness on its' own may not be sufficient or safe (Toporek & Williams, 2006).

Moreover, social and economic policies can be identified by therapists as the prime etiology behind pain and ill health to many marginalized communities, rather than ascribing the cause to the failure of individuals as per the dominant discourse in society (Waldegrave, 2009).

Recommendations for Future Developments

What is proposed as a helpful paradigm for social justice counselling would be to look at ethics codes with respect to decision making that would align with the principles of social justice, standards of practice and competencies, models for advocacy and social action, frameworks for *cultural democracy* (Heath, 2018), anti-colonialism, and of course attention given to external and contextual variables, systemic inequalities, and forces of oppression.

With regards to the recommendation for ethical standards to authenticate the practice of social justice counselling, Toporek and Williams (2006) stated that “to truly demonstrate a commitment to positive social change, ethical codes and guidelines should reflect the issues inherent in this work” (p. 13). Toporek and Williams (2006) emphasized the need for clear language to be developed in ethics codes and standards of practice around the professional role

and responsibility of therapists to address social injustice. In addition to the ethical positioning of this work, Toporek and Williams (2006) suggested new guidelines would be helpful for developing and using specific competencies and training to help inform therapeutic practice and incorporate interventions.

Moreover, a great deal of discussion about multicultural counselling, or cultural competence, was noted in the literature about social justice counselling. A common result from a few studies is that multicultural or diversity counselling competencies was the most prominent component of the social justice training provided in most academic settings, and that engagement in social justice interventions was not emphasized enough (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). While learning and discussing about diversity issues is imperative to the discourse around the interconnections between social context, justice, and wellness, it tends to become the bulk of social justice training, and that is simply inadequate and unavailing to the entire process.

Moreover, there is a recommended shift from using a ‘multicultural’ approach to counselling to one of ‘cultural democracy’, as referenced by Heath (2018), which invites dialogue about a theoretical framework that is embedded in an anti-colonial approach to counselling. Heath (2018) acknowledged the work of Makungu Akinyela, who nearly two decades ago referred to this framework as the stance of cultural democracy, and recently described it as “far beyond just multiculturalism, which tends to be simply the inclusion of cultures and ideas other than European ones into the arena created by Europeans, cultural democracy is de-colonization in practice” (Akinyela, 2014, p. 47). Further discourse on this paradigm versus the neoliberal modern colonial approach which seeks to eradicate the differences among our cultures (Heath, 2018) will be continued in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Critiques

Some studies have found that the variability in how a social justice training model is defined, and more importantly how it is implemented in different academic programs, represents a limitation in the validity of this construct. In spite of the large body of literature in favor of a social justice approach to counselling and psychology, there seems to be some ambivalence from some scholars about how readily achievable this proposed concept may be.

Christens and Perkins (2008) question the applicability of some social justice counselling models stating that there is no simple transfer of theoretical approaches and interventions into practice. Additionally, there is room for further criticism if there is no clear framework for a contextual analysis of power and psychological outcomes that can be applied to different cultural and political contexts in other parts of the country, and beyond. On the one hand, a stronger contextualization of a social justice model for counselling might be achieved with clearer implications for empowerment and social change, however Christens and Perkins (2008) suggest that by reflecting one particular worldview, we then deny or ignore others. This also speaks to the limited generalizability of some proposed models as well.

Other scholars have observed that the consideration of oppression in counselling and psychology is tricky and not a simple matter of domination and subjugation of others (Fisher & Sonn, 2008). The terms 'semi-oppressed' and 'semi-oppressors' was referenced by Fisher and Sonn (2008) to draw attention to the mixed position of power and privilege that many have, and that in some circumstances almost all people experience some degree of oppression, but in other contexts, a lot of people are the ones who oppress others, either knowingly or unknowingly. In this sense, Fisher and Sonn (2008) argue that it is the nuance in differential power and oppression that make macro-level analysis and intervention problematic.

Similar to what has been outlined above under ‘assumptions and biases’ another perspective by Applebaum (2008) is offered regarding the problems that arise when engaging students in the discourse around social justice counselling. Applebaum (2008) explained that:

“...systemically privileged students can avoid having the status quo challenged and can avert attention away from them having to consider their complicity in systemic racism. Even when students admit that it is difficult to comprehend what one does not experience, such declarations can be evidence of distancing strategies that systemically privileged students use to resist engagement with an anti-racist curriculum” (p. 406).

This resistance to applying a critical, social, analysis to one’s counselling practice presents itself as an important element to social justice counselling pedagogy that needs to be principally addressed in order to withstand further criticism about whether or not this theoretical analysis can be realized in praxis.

Summary

The ways in which the concepts of social justice counselling may be, or already have been, envisioned in the literature help to frame the discussion and provide pedagogical examples of its application within academia. In order to move towards progressive and socially just counselling practices that will result in social democracy for the people seeking support, it is imperative to ask difficult questions, to challenge ourselves as well as the system, and to deny the complacency that accepts the tragedies of vestigial harm and oppression that continue as business as usual (Coates, 2007). To deconstruct hegemonic power, the intersectional differences amongst people need to be honoured rather than silenced, and those in positions of power over others need to relinquish intrinsic mechanisms of control. For any movement towards social

action, we must undergo a long journey of introspection (Lang, 2006) and for social justice to be effective it must operate from a structural and institutional basis (Coates, 2007).

Waldegrave (2009) reminded us of Herman's (1992) argument that "psychological trauma can be understood only in a social context" (p. 92), as well as Herman's success in placing ~~domestic~~ intimate partner violence alongside other forms of terror beyond an individual's experience and into a broader socio-political frame. It is argued that this same principle can be applied and accomplished in other areas such as addressing systemic injustice and oppression when large groups of people are determined and committed in doing so (Waldegrave, 2009).

Waldegrave (2009) also made the compelling declaration that "psychologists, social workers, doctors, nurses, and therapists can no longer act as they did before" (p. 92) and that the development of policies has been required to address the broader structural issues surrounding violence. The acknowledgment that counselling and psychology has an implicitly political nature (Toporek & Williams, 2006) is demonstrated by how "many therapists and psychologists are now trained to recognize violence when it occurs and to ensure that those victimized by it are properly supported and freed from self-blame." (Waldegrave, 2009, p.92).

What is problematic about overlooking the critical contexts of meaning for those who are 'othered' is that the dominant culture and its' assumptions prevail and those who are made invisible based on having alternative knowledge and values are expected to adjust to the mainstream and deny their experiences (Waldegrave, 2009). The damage that is caused by this and as a result of the individualistic approach to services will be outlined in subsequent chapters. The harm associated with maintaining inaccurate assumptions about human behavior and communities will also be expanded upon to further contextualize the rationale for why it is

necessary to situate the discourse around the impact of structural factors, power and dominance over others, at the forefront of our learning and therapeutic practice.

Chapter 3: Engaging with Social Justice Concepts

Conceptual foundations for a critical, social, analysis, including the sociopolitical perspectives in which it is firmly embedded, will be discussed in more detail in this chapter. The better educated and attentive we become with regard to the multitudinal levels of power and oppression, the better we can facilitate wellness and justice (Goodman, 2001). As mentioned at various points throughout this thesis, wellness is indistinguishably linked to justice, and justice is defined by Prilleltensky (2012) as a pillar of wellbeing that is present at the personal, interpersonal, organizational, and community levels. Moreover, a discourse on power and the problematic impact of assumptions and biases about human behavior will be outlined in this chapter as well.

It is important to note that the awareness gained from a critical, social, analysis, made possible by social justice paradigms, will ultimately lead to the enhancement of social democracies (Coates, 2007). The goal here is to inspire and invite critical thinking and dialogue about the role of social justice in counselling and to examine associated privilege and the effects of both domination and subjugation in the world. To ignore the political nature of power “in the name of science and objectivity is to abrogate our responsibilities as professionals and is an implicit reinforcement of the status quo” (Fisher et al., 2007, p. 259). As counsellors, we simply cannot justifiably claim that we are helping people if we continue to uphold the status quo that is arguably harmful to disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

Situating Social Justice Paradigms in Counselling Education

Academic settings are highly conducive to creating an environment for engaged, critical, empowered thinking, analysis and action (Hackman, 2005). The discourse on equity, social justice, and wellness needs to shift beyond the discussions being had by radical movements or

groups of people who ascribe to leftist politics and become more a part of the foundation for which counselling content is developed in the classroom. The hope here is that social justice pedagogy will foster an ethos that in fact best practice is socially just practice (Miranda, Radliff, Cooper, & Eschenbrenner, 2014). While there is a recognition that developing and maintaining a critical, social, analysis is an ongoing dynamic process through attention to oppression and liberation, a social justice orientation through academic preparation allows for the foundation and framework for this practice to be in place. More importantly, Miranda et al. (2014) cogently point out that it is simply not enough to integrate social justice into existing training, rather it is important to evaluate whether or not competence is developed and if there is an understanding of what it effectively means to engage in social justice practice.

This is in part also noted by Hackman (2005) who makes a clear distinction that a social justice orientation in education does not merely examine differences amongst people in society but encourages an analysis of power with careful attention to systems of power and privilege that give rise to social inequality. This intentional approach encourages a critical examination of oppression and an emphasis on exploring opportunities for social action and change, which ultimately also helps to move the field forward in order to effectively address the structural factors in society which continue to harm, subjugate and oppress marginalized people.

Moreover, it is essential for an academic program that embraces a social justice philosophy to help its' students to develop awareness. Miranda et al. (2014) argue that programs have to be deliberate and designed in such a way to embed a social justice philosophy in the training in order for students to develop a self-awareness about their own cultural backgrounds, privilege, socialization, biases, and perspectives about diversity. An awareness of how these factors will influence their analysis, and how issues are then contextualized, is thereby also

essential. Additionally, Miranda et al. (2014) encouraged having opportunities for students to engage in socially just practice while training, including advocacy that is action-oriented; establishing strong positive relationships with the people seeking support and viewing them as equal partners; and knowing how to modify their approach based on the person's needs. The combination of urban and rural-setting practicums, academic learning grounded in a critical, social analysis, and continuous self-reflection will promote the development of knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities that are essential for students when they are dealing with the complexities of social issues that encompass marginalized communities (Miranda et al., 2014).

Power, Privilege, and Oppression

In order to be alert to the legitimacy of the impact that power and oppression have in our society, the role and function of structural factors and power need to be better understood and addressed more directly and more politically. Having said that however, Fisher et al. (2007) remind us of the disappointing reality that despite having an awareness of the impact of power differentials inherent in societies, and the consequences of that on mental and physical health, power itself is not often the central focus of the work counsellors and psychologists do. It is undeniable that power is vital to wellness, liberation, and in resisting oppression, and contrary to the dominant discourse, power is never either psychological or political; it is always both (Prilleltensky, 2008).

Some scholars argue that power is a commodity; that it must be taken in order to be gained and used in domination over others. Foucault's (1978) view of power, however, is that it is ubiquitous and pervasive rather than something that is possessed and exerted as an act of domination. The following are some examples of Foucault's points on power:

1. Power is not a thing but a relation.

2. Power is not simply repressive, but it is productive.
3. Power is not something that is exclusively localized in government, rather power is exercised throughout the social body.
4. Power operates at the most micro levels of social relations. Power is omnipresent at every level of the social body.
5. The exercise of power is strategic and war-like.

(O'Farrell, 2008)

Another definition of power offered by Fisher et al. (2007) is that power is not something that is fixed with an individual, which counters the long-standing discourse in counselling and psychology that suggests the problems people have are related to their individualistic characteristics. Fisher et al. (2007) explain that power is in fact constituted within relations between people, within broader historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts. In this orientation, which resembles Foucault's ideas stated above, power is seen as something that is produced via cultural practices, ideologies, discourses, and historically constructed regimes of knowledge that mediate between people and social systems (Fisher et al., 2007).

What is critical here is the need for deconstructed dominant discourses, through which we have come to share and understand each other, in addition to an inclusion of marginalized voices in order to better understand some of the workings of power. Freire (1970) observed that the voices of marginalized people have been taken from them through means whereby power is produced within institutions and maintained through everyday practices as part of the "oppressor ideology" (p.134) used to suffocate alternative knowledge.

When making reference to the deconstruction of dominant discourses one must acknowledge and impart the work of Michael White. White's (2002) position on the mechanism

of power (also influenced by Foucault) is of significant importance in the context of therapy, and has been delineated into two proposed schemas that he termed: traditional power and modern power. White (2002) made several distinctions between said forms of power that are important to reiterate in this section. For example, White (2002) made the comparison that traditional power “acts to oppress, repress, limit, prohibit, impose, and to coerce” (p. 44), while modern power “recruits people into the surveillance and the policing of their own and each other's’ lives” (p. 44). Another comparison between traditional and modern power from White (2002) is that traditional power “establishes social control through a system of institutionalized moral judgment that is exercised by appointed representatives of the state and of institutions of the state” (p. 44), whereas modern power “establishes social control through a system of normalizing judgement that is exercised by people in the evaluation of their own and each others’ lives” (p.44).

The inextricable relationship between power and knowledge was presented by Foucault (1980a) through the conceptualization of the ways in which humans conduct themselves and impact each other based on knowledge gathered from socially generated ideas, which reinforce acts of power. White and Epston (1990) were heavily informed by this concept and incorporated it into the process of narrative therapy as a means to understand and deconstruct the impact of knowledge, power, and also oppression on identities and discourses. This is demonstrated by White and Epston’s (1990) argument that the client’s expert knowledge needs to be privileged over that of the therapist, the power differential between therapist and client needs to be routinely called into question, and oppression needs to be challenged in order to be disentangled from the socially constructed dominant discourses that are so often internalized.

The manifestation and influence of power and oppression in the psyche and in relationships is shaped by many contextual factors, which include the intersectional mix of identities and their historical legacies, lived experience, and conscious work on overcoming internalized oppression and the use of privilege in ways that collude with injustice (Watts-Jones, 2010). Because power is multifarious and omnipresent, Prilleltensky (2008) offered a valuable and comprehensive conceptualization, which will be outlined below for clarification:

1. Power refers to the capacity and opportunity to fulfill or obstruct personal, relational, or collective needs.
2. Power has psychological and political sources, manifestations, and consequences.
3. We can distinguish among power to strive for wellness, power to oppress, and power to resist oppression and strive for liberation.
4. Power can be overt or covert, subtle or blatant, hidden, or exposed.
5. The exercise of power can apply to self, others, and collectives.
6. Power affords people multiple identities as individuals seeking wellness, engaging in oppression, or resisting domination.
7. Whereas people may be oppressed in one context, at a particular time and place, they may act as oppressors at another time and place.
8. Due to structural factors such as social class, gender, ability, and race, people may enjoy differential levels of power.
9. Degrees of power are also affected by personal and social constructs such as beauty, intelligence, and assertiveness; constructs that enjoy variable status within different cultures.

10. The exercise of power can reflect varying degrees of awareness with respect to the impact of one's actions.

(Prilleltensky, 2008, p. 119)

Oppression

A common experience of oppressed people is the internalization of opinions or beliefs held by the dominant hegemonic class, which include such beliefs as having no worth, being ignorant or knowing nothing and incapable of learning (Freire, 1970). Becoming convinced of this imposed and prescribed narrative is rife with harmful consequences. Examples of this, as offered by Freire (1970), include an ambiguity about oneself, a lack of confidence, a reluctance to resist the oppression, and ultimately an encumbered ability to recognize the exploitation and control by the dominant class. For this reason, it is of paramount importance to understand that critical dialogue around healing and liberation for oppressed groups must be done in collaboration with them and as part of their process of engaging in reflective participation and action (Freire, 1970). This understanding and analysis, that is so very much needed amongst helping professionals, can and should be developed by cultivating knowledge about the inextricable link between justice and wellness (and liberation from oppression), once again further emphasizing the importance of having a social justice orientation in counselling education. Furthermore, developing the social ethics of the counselling and psychology profession will also help the advancement of human welfare and the well-being of society at large.

In the context of therapy, many of the issues that present result from systemic oppression, poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, and other structural factors - which are all symptoms of inequality. Similar to Freire's (1970) perspective, Waldegrave (2009) also argued

that these symptoms are usually thought of in the context of mental health and should not be considered to be personal or intrapsychic, rather they can be more accurately viewed as the symptoms of broader structural social problems. As mentioned throughout this thesis thus far, addressing these issues in isolation of their context may inadvertently be entrenching the primary causes of the presenting problems, which are often tied to oppression and subjugation by the dominant culture, the consequences of power difference, and injustice (Waldegrave, 2009).

To help deepen our understanding of oppression at the broadest level of analysis, Prilleltensky (2003) explained that sources of oppression stem from colonialism, economic exploitation and globalization. Class and race-based systems of oppression create discrimination, maintain discourses of inferiority vs. superiority, and advance means of political exclusion (Prilleltensky, 2003). Oppression, essentially, is a denial of rights, contempt for other cultures and knowledge, a deprecation of culture, exploitation, economic deprivation, exclusion and intimidations based on class, age, gender, education, race, and ability, fragmentation and insecurity within the oppressed, a lack of control, material and ideological domination, a dehumanization and objectification of others, exposure to risky and unsafe environmental conditions, and reduced opportunities in life (Prilleltensky, 2003).

Concomitantly, oppression can be understood by characteristics of domination and subjugation whereby dominant groups exercise their power over the oppressed in innumerable ways. Waldegrave (2009) reminds us of the salient point that the consequences of power and dominance in the form of “universalized mono-cultural approaches, as it works its’ way through our social and economic systems, are all too apparent” (p. 89). This is exemplified by statistics that show “the social, educational, health, and economic indicator results for many immigrant and indigenous people are consistently poorer than for the mainstream” (Waldegrave, 2009, p.

89). Furthermore, Waldegrave (2009) argued that this strongly suggests most immigrant and indigenous cultures approach learning and socialization from different perspectives than the mainstream, thereby educational and other systems disadvantage them, while favouring those more in line with the mainstream.

In order to be adequately informed and awake to the problems associated with the various forms of oppression, there needs to be a deep examination when addressing the enduring social problems, locally and in the world at large.

Resistance, Fear and Problematic Assumptions

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid” - Audre Lorde

Despite the incontestably large body of literature and evidence that suggests a critical, social, analysis is imperative to the field of counselling and psychology, one can't help but notice that it is still largely absent. The connection between counselling practices and discourse on liberation and disrupting dynamics of oppression are unfortunately seldomly made, often out of fear, resistance, or a lack of accurate knowledge about this subject matter.

When addressing resistance in this context, it is important to discern that the focus here is on resistance by people from dominant groups. Goodman (2001) observed that people who resist information or experiences that invites a critical examination of their worldview are unable to effectively engage in the discourse and thereby refuse alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant ideology which maintains the status quo. Goodman (2001) also makes the important distinction that resistance is not the same as prejudice; rather it is about the unwillingness to participate in personal exploration needed to identify and re-evaluate assumptions. Moreover, Goodman (2001) argued that while some people may not hold negative views about certain

dominated groups, they still deny the existence of oppression and power over those groups, further reinforcing the point that addressing resistance is a necessary precursor to examining prejudices and assumptions.

We can ill-afford not to challenge our assumptions, values, and belief systems because failing to do so does not avoid conflict and tension, rather it pushes tension underground which inevitably enables it to come out in alternative ways. Similarly, we cannot take the position of neutrality and objectivity, which is another manifestation of resistance, espoused by mainstream groups. Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi (2007) argued that neutrality is a myth which needs to be exposed and that we must accept the premise that all knowledge has a political foundation, which is “as true today as in the days of overt white supremacy” (p.95).

More recently we are witnessing the rise of neoliberal ideologies and false progressive tactics by mainstream groups claiming to be more inclusive of marginalized communities in order to cover up the status quo and even harmful and oppressive practices. It is for these reasons that critical evaluations are needed when addressing not only resistance or ignorance, but also fake progressive reform and its’ subservience to systems of power, that is happening as the social justice discourse gains more mainstream attention.

Nevertheless, addressing resistance has proven to be a difficult task, particularly in educational settings, and it is hardly surprising that defensiveness arises when the topic of social justice becomes a part of the discourse. Our entire socio-political and economic systems have been designed by powerful dominant groups to create and reinforce ideas and behaviors that undermine any receptivity and understanding of true democracy and equality. For many years, policy makers have relied heavily on a narrow analysis of racial phenomena that obscure

structural factors and the manner in which social scientists report their results tends to distort the significance of racism as well (Bonilla-Silva & Baiocchi, 2007).

The cognitive dissonance, or psychological discomfort, that occurs when one's belief system is challenged is a psychological factor underlying resistance, which makes any dialogue about social justice seem like a threatening experience (Goodman, 2001). A common strategy used to reduce cognitive dissonance, in present day society and often in classroom settings, is to trivialize the issue to reduce the importance of that which is creating discomfort (Goodman, 2001). Examples of this include the argument that oppression today is not that bad and that things have changed, or that marginalized people are being overly sensitive and making a big deal out of nothing (Goodman, 2001).

Conjointly, alternative knowledge and plurality for those whose values are different is often minimized or ignored, thereby in this manner, the distinctiveness of other cultures is made in a sense invisible, and not recognized (Waldegrave, 2009). Waldegrave (2009) highlighted the problematic nature of this by pointing out that services are then devised within this ideological context, which reinforces the primarily individualistic approach. Waldegrave (2009) further stressed the point that contexts of meaning for those who are 'othered' are largely overlooked, and that the assumptions of the dominant culture prevail, creating an expectation for those who are dissimilar to adjust to the mainstream.

As the dominant ideology defines failure in terms of personal inadequacies, it may well be argued that hegemonic definitions tend to promote the idea of 'learned helplessness' (Prilleltensky, 1990), a term sometimes still used by social service designers and health care practitioners that ascribe to that ideology. As such, some marginalized groups might internalize the dominant narrative that defines them as helpless and reliant upon people with higher levels of

relative structural power for support. And, any internalized helplessness may be regarded as a state of passivity developed over time in response to repeated exposure to social injustice. To make matters worse, societal structures and norms continue to account for social problems or inequality by locating the problem in the individual rather than in the structural factors and society (Freire, 1970). This is consistent with the individualistic orientation of North American culture whereby the focus is on changing the individual rather than society or government, which also provides little institutional or cultural support to engage in an exploration of social justice.

It is important to bring attention to the work of grassroots and scholar-activists who have challenged this dominant ideology and instead brought forth narratives of liberation and acts of resistance to oppression and abuse (Wade, 1997; Richardson, 2018). Marginalized people in particular have long engaged in radical traditions that nurture a reclamation of self and community (Richardson, 2018), are not often passive in the face of injustice, nor are they helpless despite any barriers or economic and social contexts.

There are pernicious twists in conceptualizing justice that Prilleltensky (2012) stated “results in billions of people suffering because they are, in the eyes of powerful elites, not deserving” (p. 619). Prilleltensky (2012) has called to action educators to elucidate and communicate the impact of social and global policies on well-being outcomes that have historically been explicated in the field of counselling and psychology as connections between emotions, behaviors, and cognitions. According to Prilleltensky (2012), “pedagogically this means enlarging the explanatory context from the micro sphere to the macro sphere” (p. 625) and to make explicit the connections between justice and wellness.

Scholarship in the area of oppression offered by Freire (1970) encouraged a deeper analysis of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action, which Freire (1970) argued is hardly

perceived by the “dedicated but naive professionals involved” (p.141). Freire (1970) observed that “the emphasis on a focalized view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a totality” (p. 141) continues to maintain any efforts to keep the oppressed people alienated and in isolation. This in turn hampers any critical perspective of reality, discourages any recognition or discussion of systemic inequality, and hinders the development of a sense of community or social responsibility.

Educators can help students to reflect on and examine their resistance, assumptions, and beliefs by embracing a multidimensional view of justice and well-being, power, and oppression and by adopting a systematic method of personal, organization, and social change (Prilleltensky, 2012). Having said that however, for educators and students to realize that they can change their assumptions and beliefs, and be a part of the solution, they first need to realize that they may have been part of the problem by “individualizing problems, arrogating power, neglecting context, blaming victims of injustice, and extolling virtues of the status quo.” (Prilleltensky, 2012, p. 626).

Summary

Without a concern for social change, we end up with ethereal theorizing in the classroom setting and no connection to the pressing needs of the people who are oppressed. Linked with this apathy towards oppression and social action is what Prilleltensky and Fox (2007) describe as a lack of knowledge of and respect for how other communities operate, both geographically and culturally, which hinders our society’s advancement. Teaching about power and sociopolitical forces in an educational setting is a transformative intervention for social change that helps to raise critical consciousness and highlight one’s role in either maintaining or potentially challenging injustice.

This chapter has further asserted that the context of social problems is critical to their resolution and that the context is often ignored. Waldegrave (2009) observed that the “marginalization of many people’s primary sense of belonging in the services they receive and the policies they are required to live with, simply because they are less powerful and different from the majority, is of serious concern (p. 97). For this reason, amongst others, it is essential to reflect on how our discourse, theories and interventions are developed, maintained, and how they impact communities. We must become aware of our own hegemonic positions of power that fuel epistemic injustice within the disciplines of counselling and psychology and beyond (Fisher et al., 2007).

To change the state of affairs in helping professions such as counselling, and in educational institutions, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the privilege enjoyed from their positions of power and policy making, and as Waldegrave (2009) bravely stated “to sit humbly alongside other forms of tradition and knowledge” (p. 97). Counselling education needs to be radically critiqued in order to deconstruct the industry from the perspectives of social justice, culture, gender, and socioeconomic status and critically inquire as to the reasons for the existing hegemonic practice. Additionally, more attention has to be given to negative political forces including oppression, exploitation, discrimination and invested distortions based on power inequality (Fisher et al., 2007).

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that many of the theoretical concepts in counselling and psychology are and have been socially conditioned in order to determine what it is to be studied or researched, what knowledge is privileged, whose voices are privileged over others, how definitions are made, and whose interests are served by the particular definition of a social problem (Fisher et al., 2007). Scholarship in the area of implementing strategies for

change, in order to bring forth a social justice orientation, will be addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Pedagogical Implications for a Social Justice Orientation

There are ways of reconceptualizing the work that helping professionals do in order to address higher order social constructs responsible for oppressing marginalized communities (Fisher et al., 2007). In this chapter, recommendations based on scholarship in this area will be outlined for educators and therapists to provide a framework for incorporating social justice training, and to give a bridge between theory and practice. This will include information about the core elements of social justice education, recommendations around the different ways to implement advocacy and social action into practice, and suggestions for building insight and awareness by first engaging in critical reflection and inquiry. Davidson, Evans, Ganote, Henrickson, Jacobs-Priebe, Jones, Prilleltensky, and Reimer (2006) stress the importance of teaching as a form of social action and being intentional in course design and implementation to provide opportunities for students to become aware of the complexities of social issues. In essence, this chapter will cover the basic concepts of ‘how-to’ implement and commit to an ethic of social justice in counselling practice.

Approaches for Implementing a Social Justice Orientation

There is a large body of literature pertaining to social justice education and what that could look like, however not all of the recommendations can be reviewed in this chapter, therefore some key principles offered by a few different scholars will be summarized instead. Additionally, it is interesting to note just how harmonious and congruent the literature content is regarding the fundamental tenets of social justice, and thus some of what will be outlined below will reflect to some extent some of the subject matter that has already been discussed in this thesis thus far.

To begin, there are two key distinctions made when identifying problems in traditional forms of counselling and psychology and providing suggestions for improvement. Fisher and Sonn (2008) referenced these distinctions made by Prilleltensky's (2008) as: (1) emphasizing the impact of power on personal, relational, and collective outcomes to provide a systems understanding of processes, rather than a static description of the existing problem in isolation; and (2) to demonstrate that while these things may be taught in academia, the realities of practice is that the individual often becomes the main focus and the contextual and systematic factors are ignored, which lead to ever-repeating cycles of social problems.

Similarly, in relation to what is needed for social justice training, the Monterey Declaration of Critical Community Psychology provides the following principles for consideration; (a) to redress social injustices; (b) create a utopian vision; (c) understand behavior in context; (d) foster critical awareness and consciousness-raising; (e) encourage university-community partnerships; (f) embrace methodological pluralism; (g) develop theories of human subjectivity; power asymmetries and social change; (h) advance broad interdisciplinary training; and (i) address inequalities at all levels (Angelique, 2012).

Hackman (2005) offered instruction for educators on how to utilize a social justice pedagogical lens to develop their content in ways that include democratic dialogue, increased awareness of social issues, and an analysis of systems of power and oppression combined with a prolonged emphasis on social change. As briefly mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, Hackman's (2005) five essential components for social justice education provides a helpful framework for teaching from a social justice perspective, thereby these five components will be outlined in further detail below:

1. Content Mastery

This is presented as a vital aspect of social justice education and consists of three main points: “factual information, historical contextualization, and a macro-to-micro content analysis” (p. 104). Content mastery is offered as the first component out of five because Hackman (2005) argued that students cannot participate in discourse without first acquiring in-depth information. More importantly, however, the information gained has to be factual, have a broad representation, and not only reflect the dominant hegemonic ideologies presented in mainstream sources and education.

With respect to historical contextualization, Hackman (2005) suggested that students will need a thorough understanding of the historical context of the content presented in class, i.e. the political, social, and economic forces and patterns that create and sustain the oppressive social dynamics, in order to construct a critical, social analysis.

Lastly, content mastery involves the cultivation of student awareness on both micro and macro levels. Hackman (2005) observed that some students will interpret social issues more easily if they are given information that is connected to their lives thereby allowing them to better understand the micro-level implications of macro level issues. Subsequently, students may then develop a solid understanding of how the content learned in the classroom setting connects with larger issues in society. Hackmann (2005) discerned that these two levels need to be constantly interacting in the classroom while students and teachers also simultaneously engage in critical inquiry by asking themselves why this information is important on both a micro and macro level.

2. Critical Thinking and the Analysis of Oppression

Hackman (2005) maintained that “the mere possession of information does not necessarily translate into wisdom or deep knowledge” or “...provide students with a pathway for

action” (p. 105), and exemplified this by pointing out how many Americans “have known about the historical and current manifestations of racism, and yet that knowledge has not been enough to motivate change on the deepest of levels” (p. 105). Additionally, Hackman (2005) touched on a very important dynamic that occurs for many, which is that people often feel overwhelmed by the information presented to them and subsequently feel immobilized and uncertain of how to try to change or even address social injustice.

To avoid the common pitfalls of hopelessness, cynicism, and powerlessness that is often invoked as a result of this discourse, Hackman (2005) suggested the use of a critical analysis and careful consideration of issues of oppression in order to provide both deep knowledge and also a sense of direction for applying that knowledge outside the classroom setting. Freire (1970) offered a praxis loop that helps to demonstrate how content needs to be combined with tools for critical thinking in order to critique systems of power and inequality in society and what aspects of structural factors work to sustain those inequalities.

In order to be clear about the true meaning of the term critical thinking, which Hackman (2005) argued has become quite overused in education, it is important to explicitly discern what is required. Firstly, it involves focusing on information from multiple non-dominant perspectives and viewing them as independently valid rather than as a supplement to the dominant hegemonic ones (Hackman, 2005). Secondly, it involves de-centering ones’ analysis and exploring the experiences and wisdom of others; thirdly it involves analyzing the effects of power and oppression; and ultimately inquiring into alternative forms of knowledge that exists apart from the current, dominant view the issue (Hackman, 2005). In essence, critical thinking is defined by Hackman (2005) as the process by which our perspectives, positionality, power, and possibilities are considered in relation to the content. Most importantly, critically analyzing any source of

information or other cultural perspectives without ever leaving the comfort of one's own position, or critically analyzing one's own perspective, will result in more of the "othering" and de-humanizing of marginalized and dominated groups.

3. Action and Social Change

This third component is intended to provide the tools needed in order to make the shift from apathy, cynicism and despair to hope, possibility, and participation. Hackman (2005) pointed out that one of the most effortless forms of cultural imperialism is to convince those living within systems of inequality that there is nothing they can or should do about it. It is also important to note that many youth have grown distant from the kind of in-person social interaction needed to effectively participate in advocacy, social action, or mobilization and instead prefer the comfort of online forms of "social action" from behind their computer or mobile devices. It is imperative for educators to disrupt the notion of neutrality and silence and teach students that their rights in this society carry responsibilities of participation, voice, and protest, and to learn that social action is fundamental to the everyday workings of their existence (Hackman, 2005).

Social action can take many different forms, depending on content and context. It can range from taking to the streets in the form of grassroots protests, raising consciousness and awareness for the practice of freedom (Freire, 1970), promoting change through intergroup dialogue and writing, or subversively within the system (Hackman, 2005). Regardless of the approach, it is important to learn about the long history behind social change and the tools that support it.

4. Personal Reflection

Evidently, this component refers to the practice of critical self-reflection and how it lends itself to being open to learning new information and perspectives. One central theme of critical self-reflection in this context involves the examination of power and dominant group privilege as it relates to our identities and social location. Members of the dominant group are actively socially conditioned not to see their privilege, to view their life and privileges as the norm for society and humanity, meanwhile having done nothing to earn this privilege (Hackman, 2005). This power and privilege, if unacknowledged, continues to support larger oppressive structures in society.

Teachers and students can make use of pedagogical approaches such as reflective dialogue and writing exercises to critique their worldviews and the educational content in the classroom, locate their connection to power and privilege, and begin to understand how to be more effective agents of change (Hackman, 2005). Critical self-reflection will be reviewed in further detail toward the end of this chapter.

5. Awareness of Multicultural Group Dynamics

The final component for social justice education involves understanding the group dynamics of the classroom and how the identities of the teacher and students will impact the implementation of the above four components (Hackman, 2005). The content presented (i.e. regarding race, gender, privilege, power, oppression etc.), the attention to how different class compositions affect dialogue and facilitation, and the amount of time spent on process versus content will differ in an all-white classroom in comparison to a classroom with diverse racial identities (Hackman, 2005). It is for this reason that class dynamics need to be taken into consideration in order to cultivate a safe learning environment for all, having said that however,

the make-up of the class is not a reason to shy away from addressing critical issues (Hackman, 2005).

Advocacy

A number of scholars have focussed their interests on moving beyond traditional counselling interventions to include advocacy and social action as necessary components of effective social justice training. What has been found, however, is that there are some practical and systemic roadblocks that many helping professionals face when trying to engage in advocacy work (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). Some of these barriers will depend greatly on the counsellor's development of a social justice orientation, how advocacy might be implemented in their practice, and the overall positioning of advocacy in counselling education (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). What is evident is that to begin with, social justice training varies greatly across programs that claim to have this orientation, and thus as a result engagement in advocacy training varies greatly as well.

Advocacy is an integral and inevitable aspect of one's work as a helping professional. This is particularly true for helping professionals who work for organizations that serve marginalized people and survivors of daily acts of violence and oppression by power structures in society. Advocacy can set wrongs to rights, is at the heart of the helping process, is about caring about injustice and oppressive acts towards individuals, and gives people a voice while helping to empower them (Bateman, 2006). There is a clear responsibility to act as advocates in one's practice, and furthermore it is indisputable that there is a clear responsibility to advocate in situations where power and control is mishandled, abused, and exerted over those receiving services within health and social care settings.

Kozan and Blustein (2018) offered two different ways for implementing advocacy into one's practice. The first approach is referred to as 'individual-level advocacy' which focuses on one's engagement on a micro-level scale (i.e. social justice-oriented therapy skills, assessments, social justice-oriented case conceptualization and treatment, and connecting people with resources) (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). The second category involves 'working with marginalized populations' which Kozan and Blustein (2018) describe as a way to promote justice by responding to the social problems and broad array of needs of disadvantaged and underserved groups.

Further regarding micro-level interventions, advocacy steps in the form of therapeutic counselling skills could also be used to support people in creating new stories of resistance, empowerment, and liberation as alternatives to the diminishing stories that are imposed by unjust systemic structures (Kozan & Blustein, 2018). Ananth (2015) wrote about the ethical practice of anti-oppressive listening that is grounded in caring, engaging, and solidarity-based work and that is attentive to the way different structures of oppression manifest in our lives. Ananth (2015) explained that the hyper-medicalization of our services, particularly in mental health and substance use services, is responsible for the lack of caring and solidarity at the heart of our healthcare system.

Arguably, if one is engaged in advocacy work then one is in true solidarity with that individual and will acknowledge that person's experiences are unique and must be honored as such (Ananth, 2015). Advocacy parallels much of what is considered an 'anti-oppressive' practice in the same way that it helps to bring awareness and attention to structural and institutional oppression that exists in our systems whereby people seek and receive help (Ananth, 2015). It also includes the deliberate act of honoring the plethora of diverse individual

experiences via solidarity while also taking action to replace the power differential between two people with solidarity (Ananth, 2015). This can be done through careful attention to the liberating qualities of solidarity, mutual respect and care, and to know that it is possible to neutralize the power imbalance by being more collaborative (Ananth, 2015). It is also equally important to not only openly acknowledge the power differential but to also be transparent about areas where levelling the power relationship cannot be achieved.

Positionality, Epistemology and Constructivism in the Classroom

Examining the connections between students' positionality and epistemology is a critical part of social justice praxis and pedagogy that needs to be developed in the classroom (Takacs, 2002). There is a cycle of praxis offered by Takacs (2002) which can be adapted to the field of counselling and is outlined as; first inviting students to name their own values and assumptions; then examining these through the study of counselling (via class discussions and continuous reflection of how their positionality is biasing the epistemological claims they might make); and lastly by taking intentional social action in the community, either through a practicum learning experience or through a political project. This particular praxis also helps to promote an understanding of how we are positioned in relation to others which shapes what we know about the world, where we stand with respect to power, and how to challenge power and change ourselves (Takacs, 2002).

An important element of having critical discussions in a classroom setting will inevitably involve the challenge of seeing beyond one's own perspective. Takacs (2002) explained that one's positionality can bias one's epistemology, as in claiming assumptions that one takes as universal truths, is easily done when gone unchecked and not examined. This is also exemplified by the common occurrence of working to convince others to understand and adopt one's view,

which Takacs (2002) argued is in actuality not dialogue but rather it is an expression of a monologue often reconfirmed within one's own mind. When an examination of how we have formed our knowledge perspectives is encouraged in a classroom setting, students are then invited into a practice of critical thinking, deep reflection, and inquiry into the authority of knowledge sources, including one's own beliefs. Takacs (2002) further observed that asking students to understand how positionality biases epistemology and how those in dominant positions arrogate power, can and should be a part of an educational agenda aimed toward promoting greater social justice.

In efforts to understand how one attains knowledge, and how knowledge is constructed, one may engage in a practice of inquiry around why certain questions are asked and answered, how values shape observation, how metaphors shape understandings, and how knowledge makers positioned information and truths against competing sources (Takacs, 2002). Part of applying a social justice orientation to any curriculum means to ensure there is a diverse range of knowledge sources offered and critiqued, to engage in learning to respect different ways of knowing, and to examine and re-examine one's own worldviews.

Critical Self Reflection and Inquiry

The process of critical reflection and dialogue is not nearly recognized as a form of education as it should be, despite that many scholars and critical thinkers (as referenced in this thesis) have been quite explicit about the benefits of this practice. For example, Prilleltensky (1990) reminds us to connect back to Freire's (1970) teachings, specifically the concept of conscientization, "whereby people attain an insightful awareness of the socio-economic, political, and cultural circumstances which affect their lives as well as their potential capacity to transform that social reality" (p. 312). This can be achieved by posing such questions as "how

does hegemony work? What are its main components? How is it achieved? What psychological phenomena are involved?" (Prilleltensky, 1990, P. 312).

Additionally, Heath (2018) offered some helpful inquiries as well, such as "What are the ways in which my questions might be influenced, even unintentionally, by colonial ideas and standards? What does an anti-colonial approach to therapy actually look like in action? How do we, as therapists in real time, shape our questions to consider the ancestral sociopolitical trauma of the persons who consult us?" (p. 51). Furthermore, Akinyela (2002) also posited some critical questions for reflection, such as "How do we promote the healing of the souls, spirits and minds of persons suffering the continuing influences of colonization?" (as cited in Heath, 2018, p.51).

Other considerations for reflective practice might include teachers and students challenging themselves to translate academic theory into personal lived experiences in order to make it real (Yee, 2011). Accompanying that might be a reflection on how one has benefitted, supported, or may be complicit in a system that oppresses, in contrast to assuming one is separate from systems of oppression (Yee, 2011). Moreover, making the time to integrate what one has been made aware of, either through the process of critical self-reflection and/or by gaining knowledge from another source, simply by being more intentional about taking the time to think, process, read, and engage in dialogue, is incredibly vital to this entire process (Yee, 2011). It is also vital to recognize this as an ongoing process of learning, rather than a one-time experience.

Another important angle to this reflective practice is to examine any biases one may have about oppressed communities being incapable of producing knowledge or too busy being victimized to have time for privileged topics of thought or lifestyles (Yee, 2011). Despite everything, communities that are labelled as oppressed are still vibrant, alive, and thriving in

whatever ways they can. Fundamentally and above all else, it is important to recognize that critical reflection and dialogue is a radical act and can only be realized in pairing with action.

Reynolds (2010) observed that social justice is better served by creating contexts in which transgressions like replicating some kind of oppression or harm is less likely to occur. Guiding Intentions for developing said context was offered by Reynolds (2010) as considerations for reflexive inquiry, and described as “challenging, compelling, and ever-transforming” (p. 19). These questions include; “How can we do justice working with people who struggle in the margins of our communities? How can we act in solidarity to keep the spirit of justice alive in our collective work and in our lives? How can we be connected with this aliveness? How might work that develops richer understandings of social justice, and follows from commitments to social justice, be more sustaining than work that does not? How can we change the unjust structures that oppress people? And what could *just* practice look like in a society which is more *just* to some than to others?” (Reynolds, 2010, p. 19).

Summary

Once again, as a precursor to any kind of social justice work and/or advocacy practice that will challenge the status quo, it is imperative to engage in the self-examination of one’s own power and privilege, as demonstrated by the examples above. Toporek and McNally (2006) argue that “a genuinely transformative commitment to social justice demands increasingly engaged, self-reflective, and politicized approaches to knowledge” (p. 3). It is simply indisputable that more training is needed in counselling education to support a critical, social, analysis and increased learning about the role of advocacy and social action within a social justice orientation (Miranda et al., 2014). More specifically, the glaring reality is that there is a

need for learning and open dialogue centered around critically examining structures of power and oppression.

With that said, attempts made to better understand and/or support the concept of social justice counselling has taken the form of ‘cross-cultural counselling’ instead. Toporek and McNally (2006) also highlighted this common practice by pointing out that the integration of social justice perspectives into counselling education has been “conceptualized in a parallel manner to that of multicultural counselling” (p. 3). One of the pitfalls of social justice teaching taking the form of “multicultural” competence, or learning about “diversity issues”, is that it is often where the conversation about healing, justice, and liberation tends to begin and end. It is important to note, applying a social justice model to counselling education involves far more than just multicultural sensitivity training.

Heath (2018) also acknowledged this very issue and instead offered the term ‘cultural democracy’, which is defined as ‘de-colonization in practice’ and embodies much of the other social justice components outlined above. Additionally, Goodman (2001) observed that teachers and others typically minimize the role of power in relationships and reduce wellness to platitudes such as ‘respect for diversity’ and ‘appreciation for differences’. Goodman (2001) added that without reflecting on how one’s own power prevents others from exercising control over their lives, ‘diversity talk’ amounts to mere diversion, furthering societal distortions about the link between justice and wellness. Moreover, in order to successfully commit to social justice education, teachers and academic leaders need to demand educational environments that will be conducive to engaged, critical, and empowered thinking and action, and advance the term ‘social justice’ beyond that of being simply a buzzword to becoming part of the operative practice in the classroom (Hackman, 2005).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Throughout this thesis, the role and importance of social justice in counselling education has been explained at length. In truth, humans are indivisible from their social locations and context and, marginalized groups in particular, are routinely impacted by sociopolitical structures, colonial power, and oppression. To remain silent, or ‘neutral’ as some prefer, perpetuates the status quo which serves to reinforce the existing systemic inequities.

To reiterate once again what has been stated thus far and argued by many critical thinkers and scholars; the fact remains that psychology and politics are inseparable. We simply cannot continue in the field of counselling with the assumption that wellness is not linked to justice. This assumption is incredibly problematic, particularly for those impacted by power and oppression, historically and on an ongoing basis. If wellness and justice are regarded as separates, we are left with pervasive ramifications, including polarized and inaccurate views about the context in which people are harmed. Furthermore, the focus then remains on intrapsychic reasons for suffering and consequently a neglect for the fact that more powerful forces and structural factors cause and maintain harm and suffering.

What is also fundamentally important to recapitulate here is that an analysis of power is central to the discourse around social justice pedagogy. A better understanding of how power exists and operates allows for a better understanding of one another and how power is socially constructed, multifaceted, and reinforced in many different ways. There needs to be an acknowledgement of how people from dominant groups (including helping professionals), benefit from their positions of power and hegemonic privilege that serves to bolster systemic injustice. Conjointly, a critique of mainstream counselling programs is needed in order to fully address power, oppression and higher order social constructs.

Counselling programs are very well suited to having a social justice orientation due to some overlapping concepts and theories inherent to each sphere. To be most succinct, an important outcome of weaving the two together is that a counselling program with a social justice analysis will encourage students to develop a critical awareness of their personal worldviews, the views and beliefs of others, and the various social inequalities that exist in the world (Grapin, 2017). The practice of self-reflection is already a significant aspect of mainstream counselling training, however the raised consciousness and awareness that is gained through critical reflection is hugely vital to the student's learning and ultimately greatly impactful on the lives of people seeking support.

Having stated that, however, the reality is that counselling and psychology programs are steeped in institutions of power and privilege, lack an in-depth critical, social, analysis, and have a long way to go in order to have a social justice-informed curriculum and pedagogy. Angelique (2012) raised an important point to consider, which is that one of the functions of higher education (in many cases) is to indoctrinate students and faculty into the dominant values of both patriarchy and the middle/upper class. Hegemonic power is maintained by the common practice of presenting race, gender, class, and other hierarchical social structures as a normal barometer against which to compare people. The denial of the existence of different intersecting identities helps to mask the function of education to enforce cultural hegemony (Angelique, 2012), hence the importance of having social justice training incorporated into academic programs in order to challenge these normative processes.

During the past decade, more scholars and educators have called for a social justice orientation to be applied to counselling and psychology training programs. Emerging research has identified some important features of social justice education; however, the literature remains

limited in terms of offering recommendations for educators and academic leaders to effect comprehensive change in order to cultivate a program-wide emphasis on social justice training (Grapin, 2017). Some of the challenges with this include the wide range in which social justice training is conceptualized and incorporated into curriculum, the need for buy-in from administrators, educators and students, and the dissonance between training programs with a social justice orientation versus community-based organizations or agencies that do not have this orientation.

Above all, a large concern pertains to the very real consequences that arise as a result of the absence of social justice in counselling education. The incredulousness that occurs at times from some educators and students about the benefits of and need for social justice training is concerning enough. However, what is more dismaying is the avoidance of such a form of pedagogy in an academic program that is centered around helping *all* people who seek support to suffer less and heal.

Political Pedagogy

For too long, counselling and psychology programs have turned a blind eye to addressing power structures, social factors, and oppression for fear of being too political or rocking the boat. Many scholars, educators and students prefer to maintain the status quo based on the assumption that addressing these issues and fostering empowerment will require digging too deep or will result in anger (Yee, 2011). This fear is so often based on the notion that anger about social injustice is too uncomfortable to be around and even intolerable. However, the classroom setting can be a healthy environment for learning and dialogue around these issues if facilitated in a way that feels safe and promotes deeper awareness.

Some educators have argued that it is fairly difficult to facilitate a conversation about power and oppression without students inevitably feeling unsafe in the classroom. This is one common reason why the discourse is often ignored. Those who are frightened or claim to feel unsafe are often the ones who benefit the most from power and privilege. Yee (2017) also observed that “knowledge, empowerment, and justice are scary concepts to those that uphold and benefit from the status quo in societies whose economies are based on colonization, racism, and exploitation of the poor” (p. 125).

Having discomfort with power, and for some a sense of indignation, is an appropriate response and, as Reynolds (2014) argued, it is important to make the distinction between feeling discomfort and feeling truly unsafe. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, it does us no harm to examine power and privilege and how we benefit from it, however it can be considerably harmful to those disadvantaged and suffering from power structures if we don't. This is further supported by Reynolds' (2014) statement that “clients suffer the greater consequences for our lack of knowing, ineffectiveness and ethical transgressions” (p.3).

Additionally, Reynolds (2014) posited the importance of fostering a culture of critique, albeit in the context of group supervision, in order to break free from the cycle of judging, fault-finding, and feeling under attack during dialogue. Arguably, this same concept, or ‘culture of critique’ within the context of group supervision could be and certainly *should be* applied in the same way to the context of a classroom setting.

Consequences of Political ‘Neutrality’ in Academia

At this present time, and confoundingly given the political affairs happening locally and globally, what has become evident is the proliferation of people who prefer to ignore their positionality and remain disengaged from any sort of critical discourse. The same dynamic exists

in academia whereby many academic leaders and teachers, still in 2019, share the idea that classrooms/academic institutions should be neutral spaces in which issues such as power and social justice should not be addressed (Giroux, 2019). This ideology is based on the unfounded premise that political neutrality exists and that pedagogy should not include any content related to the major systemic problems that have occurred and still continue to occur locally and around the world (Giroux, 2019).

A common misconception that is held by many educators is that a social justice orientation, or critical, social, analysis, serves only to mold students to a political ideology applied through an orthodox and rigid script, rather than to encourage a broader awareness, human agency, critical thinking, and social responsibility (Giroux, 2019). This misconception leads to a silencing of knowledge that is in contrast to the dominant discourse on power, in turn further silencing and marginalizing the voices of oppressed people.

Giroux (2019) offered an important distinction to make when discussing politics and pedagogy by explaining that “a *politicizing pedagogy* insists wrongly that students think exactly as educators, and a *political pedagogy* teaches students through dialogue about the importance of power, social responsibility and taking a stand (without standing still)” (p.2). Much like what has been offered by many critical thinkers such as Freire, political pedagogy is essentially similar to critical pedagogy, which is not dogmatic or indoctrinating, but rather engaging and inviting of a full range of theories and ideas about critical social issues while supporting students to recognize bias and shift from moral purpose to purposeful action (Giroux, 2019).

More importantly with regards to the context of this thesis, political and critical pedagogy is all the more pertinent and imperative in counselling education as an objective for students to learn about ways of understanding and supporting people who are suffering. Political pedagogy,

in this context, would also help to provide students, particularly those with more power and privilege over others, with the valuable knowledge and skills needed to comprehend, contextualize and address the social relations of oppression (Giroux, 2019).

As discussed, oppression and suffering are inextricably linked, and both are often caused by the structural and systemic factors that work to effectively marginalize and harm dominated groups. These same structural factors are closely tied to the widely held normative assumptions and beliefs that the individual who is suffering is the problem rather than the problem itself (White & Eptson, 1990) or society as a whole (Freire, 1970). What we also know, as discussed in this thesis, is that wellness, liberation and justice are all inextricably linked. Therefore, in order to achieve wellness and liberation, there needs to be an understanding of social justice and power dynamics along with social change, all of which can be cultivated from discourse generated through critical, political pedagogy.

Wellness and Liberatory Healing Through Social Justice

It is well documented that the high prevalence of mental and emotional distress, as well as limited and fair access to opportunities and resources that promote healing, are a direct function of social conditions that foster oppression and inequity. If social justice is to be realized, we must attend to and confront the oppressive societal structures and power hierarchies in conjunction with collective empowerment (Kenny & Hage, 2009). The wellness and liberatory healing of people needed to resist the effects of oppression will be better supported through radical acts of counselling and solidarity that are grounded in social justice principles. The goal of social justice-oriented counselling is not only to reduce oppression but to support the inherent wisdom, resilience, and skills that foster optimal states of well-being. Social justice-oriented counselling must seek to alter the sources of oppression through social change efforts and

address the oppressive social structures and policies that serve to marginalize and disenfranchise people and sustain social inequities (Kenny & Hage, 2009).

Supporting wellness and liberatory healing also involves an awareness from helping professionals to engage in an analysis of the sociopolitical and cultural factors, and the dynamics of privilege and power inherent in the contexts and environments in which they work (Kenny & Hage, 2009). This analysis, obtained through social justice training and political pedagogy, can then inform the design of counselling services and interventions at both micro (individual) and macro (community, organizational, and societal) levels.

Guidelines for Incorporating a Social Justice Orientation

As noted from a review of the literature in Chapter 2, research in the area of social justice training is still emerging, yet there have been some valuable scholarly contributions made thus far, particularly regarding social justice concepts and competencies that can be infused into graduate programs (Grapin, 2017). The literature has also shown that efforts to promote social justice must identify and target the specific conditions that contribute to oppression and inequity (Kenny & Hage, 2009).

There are clearly outlined interventions that can be applied for the various elements of a graduate program, such as counselling. With respect to social justice training, Grapin (2017) argued that a comprehensive framework must be developed for integrating social justice training throughout the program and guided by a clear definition of social justice. Grapin (2017) added that the program mission should also explicitly communicate the program's commitment to social justice and advocacy, while also ensuring that the mission is reflected pervasively in the coursework, practicum experiences, and other training requirements. Grapin (2017) also touched on the aspect of faculty and student diversity by emphasizing the importance of creating plans

for increasing diversity among faculty hires and student admissions and creating mentorship opportunities and networks for junior faculty as well. In addition, implementing an equitable, multifaceted admissions process that will help to identify student candidates who are committed to social justice work was highlighted as an important step as well (Grapin, 2017).

Furthermore, it is important to consider efforts made towards incorporating social justice principles as a form of responsible counselling pedagogy. One very crucial element of social justice training in counselling education is that responsibility is explained and understood as both an ethical issue and a strategic act (Giroux, 2019). Responsible pedagogy as described by Giroux (2019) “is not only a crucial element regarding what issues teachers address in a classroom; it is also embodied in their relationships to their colleagues, students, parents, and the wider society” (p. 3). It calls attention to the need for a critical, social, analysis of the relationship between knowledge and power, and the social costs it often enacts on oppressed groups (Giroux, 2019).

Conclusion

It is without a doubt that a social justice orientation in a counselling program will be effective in emphasizing the recognition of power, privilege, and social injustice on both the individual and systems levels. Social justice principles can be seamlessly woven into other theoretical orientations that are compatible. This approach, which also informs narrative therapy’s grounding principles, places special attention on re-humanizing our understanding of suffering within social contexts and promoting radical healing and empowerment. It will help to raise our collective consciousness, examine our biases, and spur efforts towards social change. It is important to note that helping professionals can all fight to raise awareness and expose issues of structural injustice and intersecting oppressions. This responsibility does not lie within any

one particular person, group, institution, or system. It is a shared ethical responsibility that we all have and must attend to.

The hope and intention for counselling education is to continue to evolve and have widely accepted guidelines around the knowledge and skills related to social justice concepts, as well as to move beyond simply cultural competence or sensitivity training as the sole emphasis of the social justice agenda (Grapin, 2017). Hope, as described by Giroux (2019), is the precondition that encourages a critique of social problems and subsequently fuels the courage required to translate critique into political practice. By holding on to both hope and critique, the possibility for transforming politics into an ethical stance and social act can then occur as an act of resistance (Giroux, 2019). What is urgently needed is a language and a vision for understanding power, and to emphasize the reality that education is linked to social change (Giroux, 2019). Ultimately, as Giroux (2019) points out, there is no democracy without informed citizens and no justice without a language critical of injustice.

While it is imperative for a counselling program to be positioned in a way to challenge the status quo and provide a counter-hegemonic discourse, it is also crucial for students and faculty not to remain silent but to be in solidarity with the social change that is needed. Undeniably, the silence perpetuates oppressive forces, while also maintaining expressions of prejudice and discrimination at both the individual and systemic levels. This results in exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, violence, and other threats to an oppressed person's safety and well-being (Kenny & Hage, 2009).

Change, as well as freedom from pain and suffering, will not occur in an oppressed person's life unless we understand and connect the problems people are faced with to the source of their oppression (Vodde & Gallant, 2002). Without efforts made towards anti-colonial and

anti-oppressive practices, we will continue to cause harm to people seeking support, no matter what or how good our intentions may be. We must develop a deeper understanding of the world in which we live, as well as our prejudices and biases, before we can assume to be helpful or effective as counsellors. The fact remains that wellness and justice, when combined, will result in healing and liberation from suffering. This can only be realized, however, through social justice training and implementing social change and advocacy in our therapeutic work.

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