CHAPTER 17

Future Considerations for Fostering Multicultural Competence in Mental Health and Educational Settings: Social Justice Implications

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> We must be trained to do public policy work and to advocate for social justice. This work can and must be done by us as citizens, not just as mental health professionals.
>
> Dworkin and Yi (2003, p. 277)

> Multicultural counseling competence must be about social justice—providing equal access and opportunity, being inclusive, and removing individual and systemic barriers to fair mental health services.
>
> Sue (2001, p. 801)

THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK, experts in the field of multicultural counseling have shared strategies, critical incidents, and case examples with the aim of bringing to light the practical implications of each of the "Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2003) for various areas in psychology. The collective writings of these well-known scholars, researchers, and practitioners provide a critical bridge for

psychologists and mental health professionals between the broader, aspirational objectives of the Multicultural Guidelines ("knowing that") and the specific knowledge and skills necessary for carrying out the multicultural competencies model ("knowing how"; Johnson, 1987). Sue (2001) notes two specific outcomes that are sought when implementing multicultural competence. The first goal is "providing relevant treatment to all populations," that is, clients of diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds (p. 800). To a large extent, the focus of this book is about accomplishing this first goal through the concrete application of the aspirations of the Multicultural Guidelines to various settings in psychology. The second desired outcome suggested by Sue for implementing multicultural competence is the development of theories, practices, policies, and organizational structures that are responsive to all groups. This second goal recognizes the importance of working collaboratively with members of marginalized communities to generate strategies to intervene at a systemic level, not just a micro level. Such strategies are ultimately aimed at preventing the negative consequences of oppression in the lives of people of color and other groups who share unequal power in society because of their immigration, age, socioeconomic status, religious heritage, physical ability, or sexual orientation. As Sue indicates, both of these levels of involvement—providing relevant treatment for diverse populations and developing theories, policies, and structures responsive to all groups—are "truly about social justice" (p. 800).

In this final chapter, future considerations for fostering multicultural competencies by expanding the social justice efforts of psychologists and mental health professionals in organizations, institutions, and society are presented. A definition of social justice is also provided. In addition, this chapter discusses specific strategies that mental health professionals may use to develop their competence in addressing social justice issues in their work.

DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of power, resources, and obligations in society (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). Social justice concerns include issues related to the justice of processes and procedures as well as issues related to the justice of outcomes (Van den Bos, 2003). Fundamental principles underlying this definition include values of inclusion, collaboration, cooperation, equal access, and equal opportunity. Such values are also the foundation of a democratic and egalitarian society (Sue, 2001). Finally, although social justice has not ordinarily been associated with issues of health, it is important to recognize the crucial link that exists between social justice and well-being. For individuals, the

absence of justice often represents increased physical and emotional suffering as well as greater vulnerability to illness. But social justice issues and access to resources are also inexorably tied to the collective well-being (e.g., relationships and political welfare) of families, communities, and society (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

THE MULTICULTURAL GUIDELINES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Although the focus of the Multicultural Guidelines is not explicitly social justice, issues of justice and fairness are the backdrop and foundation to these competencies. In essence, the Multicultural Guidelines provide a framework for doing social justice in the domains of education, research, practice, and organizations (Speight & Vera, 2004). The Multicultural Guidelines address the need to take a broad and systemic approach by addressing varied roles of mental health practitioners, including addressing concerns at the organizational and systemic levels. In addition, they offer a clear statement in favor of involvement by psychologists in social change processes:

> Psychologists are in a position to provide leadership as agents of prosocial change, advocacy, and social justice, thereby promoting societal understanding, affirmation, and appreciation of multiculturalism against the damaging effects of individual, institutional, and societal racism, prejudice, and all forms of oppression based on stereotyping and discrimination. (APA, 2003, p. 382)

Further, the Multicultural Guidelines refer to Principle F of the APA (1992) code of ethics: that our work should contribute to social justice. The last section of the Multicultural Guidelines is noteworthy in that it explicitly addresses the role of psychology in social and organizational change and policy development. In this section, the authors point to the "multiple opportunities" psychologists have to lead change and influence policy at a systemic level.

Notably, less attention in the multicultural competencies literature has been devoted to intervening at a systemic or macro level (Vera & Speight, 2003). This point is not to minimize the considerable contribution of the multicultural competencies in maximizing "the optimal development of clients and client systems" (Sue, 2001, p. 802). Ivey and Collins (2003) clearly express this point when they assert that the multicultural competencies themselves are a "major organizational intervention" to further social justice in the profession (p. 294). However, as suggested by Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002), what those committed to social justice "are able to achieve within micro and mesolevel settings is constrained by macro-level

social structures, processes and policies" (p. 167). For example, constructions of race are expressed and supported through macro systems that help shape public discourse, language, and institutional practices (Thompson & Neville, 1999). Hence, while it is critical to support the ongoing efforts of the multicultural competencies movement to transform the traditional practice of psychology (i.e., in individual counseling and small group interventions) to be more culturally relevant, it is also imperative to explore potential pathways to expand psychology's commitment and ability to engage in broader social change. Such work, including efforts at social justice and social policy change, has been identified as the "next frontier" for psychology (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, p. 176).

THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT FOR EXPANDING THE COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Several changes in the sociopolitical context itself necessitate that the field of psychology give increased emphasis to social justice issues. One of the most significant of these changes, addressed in the Multicultural Guidelines, relates to the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the United States. Despite changes in the composition of the U.S. population, people of color and women continue to be significantly underrepresented in positions of power in business, educational, and governmental organizations and institutions. This imbalance in the allocation of power and resources is likely to continue unless there is a concerted effort to bring about widespread changes in society to eliminate bigotry and prejudice (Sue, 2003).

A second change in the sociopolitical context that calls for greater emphasis on social justice issues is the increasing economic disparity that exists between people who are rich and people who are poor. About 35 million people (12.1%) in the U.S. population live below the official poverty line, with about 16% of individuals under age 18 living in poverty (Bureau of the Census, 2002). More than 43 million adults lack health insurance, and more than 33% of Hispanic citizens have no health insurance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2000). People of color, women, immigrants, those without a high school education, and residents in rural and urban areas are disproportionately represented among those who live in poverty (Haveman, 1994). Further, the "new poor" include those who do have access to information technology and the education and skills to use technology (McNutt, 1998).

In his book *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*, David Shipler (2004) chronicles the daily lives of the working poor, who make up the majority of low-income Americans. Due to their lack of income, such families typically

live in lower-quality housing and are without adequate health insurance. Such housing may contain lead paint and be infested with mold, dust mites, and roaches. The infestation translates to lower IQ, attention deficits, and frequent illness among children. Frequently ill children are often absent from school, which means missed work and, ultimately, lost employment and income for the families. These children also tend to do poorly in school, which makes their chances of escaping a life similar to that of their parents seem insurmountable without intervention by concerned groups of individuals who are willing to take a stand and enact widespread changes to interrupt this cycle.

A critical question offered by Shipler (2004) and others (e.g., Speight & Vera, 2004) is whether concerned professionals have both the skills and the motivation (i.e., the will) to do what is needed to alter the inequities. The task of intervening in unjust systems is largely about creating access—access to education, resources, information, technology, health care, and opportunity (Jackson, 2000). Yet, a number of significant obstacles continue to stand in the way of increased involvement by mental health professionals in such social justice efforts. Briefly, these obstacles include institutional resistance by mainstream psychology, insistence on individual-level explanations and individual remedies for social problems, training and interventions devoid of social and cultural issues, traditional conceptions of value-free science, institutional career pressures and the need for economic survival, and human service delivery systems that are unresponsive to social justice interventions (Fox, 2003; Helms, 2003). Preparing our field to overcome these obstacles will require a transformation in both our thinking and the way we do our work. An important question to explore is what such a transformation would look like for mental health professionals.

STRENGTHENING THE COMMITMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

This section will discuss several changes that are needed in the training and orientation of mental health professionals in order to strengthen psychology's commitment to social justice.

Systems Intervention

The first change is for mental health professionals to receive specific training in how to intervene at a systems level, not just with individual clients (Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993; Helms, 2003; Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 1998). This training needs to include an emphasis on understanding human behavior through an ecological or contextual

framework, that is, that human behavior is multiply determined by a series of dynamic interactions between social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Neville & Mobley, 2001).

The integration of social justice principles at the macro or systems level may require looking for theoretical frameworks and interventions that have been found to work in other disciplines, such as public health, sociology, law, and consulting psychology (Baluch, Pieterse, & Bolden, 2004; Helms, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). As reflected in the Multicultural Guidelines, the "path to cultural competence requires a broad and integrated approach" (p. 816).

Collaboration

Mental health professionals also need to develop collaborations among multiple areas within psychology, particularly as a number of these fields already are oriented toward social change or social justice. "We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we just need to find those that are well oiled" (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 279). Perhaps one avenue to further develop collaboration is for the nine divisions within APA to form a coalition of divisions for social justice. Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2003) also suggest creating alliances with the people we seek to help and with other professionals, so as to reconcile the roles of healers and social change agents. As noted by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1979), collective activism by members of oppressed groups is essential because they will not gain liberation by chance, "but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it" (p. 27).

The disabilities rights movement, following the model of the 1960s civil rights movement, is a recent example of a collaborative network of clients, advocates, and service providers who organized themselves to create a powerful force for social change. Working together, they changed the perceptions of what it means to be considered disabled. Increasingly, professional services are now based on the belief that the medical model is ineffective and that oppressive institutions, not their victims, must be changed. This transformation has happened because persons with disabilities and their supporters learned the value of advocating for their rights, including the right to certain income and medical benefits, and how to influence legislation (Middleton, Rollins, & Harley, 1999).

International Perspective

Mental health professionals also need to be trained to understand social justice issues from an international perspective (Lee, 1997). An experience that educator Michael Apple (1997) had while traveling in an Asian

country illustrates this point. He noticed numerous signs advertising a U.S.-based fast food restaurant and asked his traveling companion, a local villager, about them. His companion told him that they represented vast tracts of land the military-dominated government had given over at a very low cost to a supplier of a U.S. based fast food restaurant to grow potatoes for the restaurant's french fries. From the local villager's perspective, the government's objective of attracting foreign capital came at an enormous cost. Whole communities of people had been displaced into large slums in the cities, which lacked schools, hospitals, running water, and housing, so that people in the "developed" world could have inexpensive french fries. Apple reflects on the meaning of this story for our educational efforts:

> The denial of basic rights, the destruction of the environment, the deadly conditions under which people (barely) survive, the lack of a meaningful future for the thousands of children I noted in my story—all of this is not only or primarily a "text" to be deciphered in our academic volumes as we pursue our postmodern themes. It is a reality millions of people experience in their bodies every day. Educational work that is not connected to a powerful understanding of these realities . . . is in danger of losing its soul. The lives of our children demand no less. (p. 124)

Too often, the countless stresses related to our work as psychologists and mental health professionals lead to a kind of tunnel vision, making it possible to ignore the global context of our times. This story illustrates the importance of connecting the work we do with what is happening in the larger community. If indeed power is about defining reality, and what is true or valued (Sue & Sue, 2003), then a social justice orientation demands that we be aware of how the numerous systems that are part of U.S. society, including economic, governmental, and educational systems, define truth for the global community (Douce, 2004; Dworkin & Yi, 2003). Such work can and should begin in the local context (as we also need to apply the social justice model in our own communities), but it also needs to be thoughtfully concerned with social justice practices and the state of power and oppression around the world.

Holistic Approach

Holistic remedies are also vital to the social change process and to creating a just society. Unjust conditions, such as poverty, result from a "constellation of difficulties that magnify one another" (Shipler, 2004, p. 285). Hence, all of the social problems contributing to an unjust society (e.g., education, housing, employment, health care) need to be tackled at once. Too often, human services organizations, such as educational, psychological,

and medical services, deal only with the particular problem clients present to them. Without more holistic efforts, mental health professionals, "despite good intentions, too often reinforce oppression even when they think they are working to ameliorate its consequences" (Fox, 2003, pp. 299–300).

An example of the kind of social justice efforts that need to take place is beginning to surface in a small number of settings across the United States. Collaborative partnerships are being created among medical clinics, counselors, social workers, and legal services. When a child enters a clinic with a medical condition, such as asthma, a counselor advocate or nurse conducts a home visit to assess the presence of environmental factors, such as rundown housing, and may also visit the child's school. Following the assessment, the advocate may contact the landlord to request that needed repairs be made and, if necessary, work with the client to utilize attorneys and social workers employed by the clinic to press for safe housing and other benefits, such as Medicaid. Without such an intensive, holistic approach, the impact any one organization or professional can make would likely be shallow and leave people vulnerable to the next crisis (Shipler, 2004).

Focus on Prevention

Last, a focus on prevention needs to be a key component of our social justice efforts. Although prevention has a long tradition as a specialty in the field of psychology, it has not enjoyed a very influential position (Romano & Hage, 2000). Intervention has been "primarily remedial when a strong need exists for preventive measures" (Sue, 2001, p. 816). Significant barriers, such as a focus on individual remediation, the influence of the medical model, and training requirements, have hindered further development of a prevention focus. One reason prevention is critical is the low remedial service use rates and options for mental health services in the United States. For example, Hoagwood and Koretz (1996) estimate that 60% to 80% of children in need of mental health treatment do not receive it. If we are to commit ourselves to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable (e.g., children, youth, people living in poverty, older adults), then we must search for ways to collaborate with schools and governmental and community organizations to prevent hardship, not just at the level of providing individuals with life skills or better coping mechanisms for dealing with existing problems, but at the level of systemic change (Hage, 2003).

Conyne (1997) aptly describes the characteristics of a prevention orientation, including an approach that is "before the fact," ecological,

multidisciplinary, collaborative, and aimed at empowerment. A preventive orientation also starts with a vision of people as fundamentally healthy, resilient, and growth-oriented (Romano & Hage, 2000). It is significant that the majority of the work in primary prevention has adopted a person-centered approach at the micro levels (e.g., teaching life skills). Few attempts at macro-level social system change exist. The danger in pursuing only person-centered interventions is that unjust social conditions are ignored. One needs to ask whether our prevention work addresses the "causes of the causes" or only the surface of the causes (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997).

The question of how to infuse a prevention orientation into training programs and guidelines is an important one. The task is much like and intersects with efforts to integrate multicultural competence training into counseling training. It is not simply about adding one or even two more courses to the curriculum, or about tacking on extra reading or lecture material to course outlines. It is about fundamentally changing the lens and context for our training efforts, shifting from a remedial, individually focused, adaptation approach to one focused on before-the-fact intervention involving groups, communities, and social systems and ultimately aimed at social change. Further, the voices, experiences, and leadership of members of traditionally disenfranchised groups need to be represented and integrated into our prevention training and intervention efforts (Eddy, Martinez, Morgan-Lopez, Smith, & Fisher, 2002). In sum, the goal of such training is to orient psychologists and mental health professionals to a broader application of their counseling work to more effectively and sensitively respond to the tremendous social needs that exist in our communities.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO DEVELOP COMPETENCE IN ADDRESSING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

This section will discuss specific strategies psychologists and other mental health professionals might utilize to give greater focus to social justice in educational, research and practice settings.

Education

Much of the specific content of training programs for psychologists and mental health professionals has historically been directed by accreditation standards and guidelines. To prepare future mental health professionals to

give greater emphasis to social justice concerns, classrooms must also become "laboratories for studying social justice issues" and social concerns (Rabow, Stein, & Conley, 1999). Giving more emphasis to social justice issues has several advantages over traditional approaches. A social justice training focus involves us in the principal issues of our increasingly multicultural society, while embracing education as a form of liberation (Freire, 1979). In addition, giving attention to social issues in the classroom makes students' educational experience more meaningful and deeply impacts their lives (Tatum, 1994).

Several aspects of a "liberating" education have been identified in the literature, including the development of critical thinking skills, collaborative and multidisciplinary methods, and stronger community involvement. Before giving attention to each of these aspects, it is important to briefly address one of the central objections to a social justice focus in the classroom, that is, that it is too political. To counter this objection, some have argued that counseling and, in general, the helping professions are not solely an intellectual task, but are also inherently a political one, to the extent that one takes account of the social and cultural context in which clients live (e.g., Varenne, 2003). In fact, it is argued that no education is politically neutral (hooks, 1994). Further some have argued, as educators we need to help students make a connection between the personal and the political. In such a framework, students (and, by extension, clients and research participants) see that their individual experiences do not occur in a vacuum, but are part of the social and cultural context, the lived version of political reality (Brown, 1994).

Critical Thinking Skills

Teaching a social justice model is about integrating a worldview in which the value of social justice plays a central role. It involves teaching others how to critically analyze inequality and oppression in society, along with privileges and experiences in their own life circumstances as they relate to forms of social and historical oppression (Arredondo, 1999; McGoldrick et al., 1999; Middleton et al., 1999). Freire (1979) identifies this process of critical awareness and engagement as "conscientization." The emphasis of this approach is on praxis, or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 66). Students are active participants in their own education, for "education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor" (hooks, 1994, p. 14). Further, this model assumes that issues of oppression and injustice are relevant whether students are studying human development, ethical standards, or counseling theory (Middleton et al., 1999).

Collaboration

A related aspect of pedagogy oriented toward social justice is that learning is a collaborative process (McGoldrick et al., 1999). Freire (1979) uses the terms "learner-teacher" (referring to the instructor) and "teacher-learner" (referring to the student) to highlight the interaction that is a vital part of educational activities. This model assumes that teachers and students grow together and are mutually empowered in the educational process (hooks, 1994). Teachers and students engage in a "co-intentional" education process and, as such, are both participants "not only in the task of unveiling reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 1979, p. 56). This "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994) is the foundation for later active involvement in a social change process. These active learning methods would also likely support the development of needed skills "for negotiating across administrative levels for the purpose of obtaining high-level commitments and concessions to communitarian social justice goals from the power and resource holders" (Helms, 2003, p. 311).

Interdisciplinary Methods

A social justice approach to education is a challenging task partly because it involves an interdisciplinary focus (Rabow et al., 1999). Graduate students need basic counseling skills and an understanding of the professional helping literature, along with knowledge about power disparities within and across marginalized groups and procedures to alter the distribution of power. Such procedural knowledge includes awareness of laws, regulations, legislation (e.g., RBP Associates, Inc., 1964), and programs that affect diverse groups of people, particularly groups marginalized due to race, ethnicity, or other status. Trainees also need an understanding of policy issues so as to be aware of valuable resources and alternatives available to marginalized groups (Middleton et al., 1999). In sum, educators for social change need to "read and teach broadly" (Arredondo & Perez, 2003, p. 288) to prepare students for the multiple roles connected with social justice advocacy (Atkinson et al., 1993; Lewis et al., 1998).

Community Involvement

A social justice model of education also includes a strong experiential base, which informs students' critical analysis of social problems and social change. Immersion in settings with a transformative and macro-level orientation helps develop one's political literacy about social issues. Examples of such settings include labor unions, environmental organizations, public interest groups, and antipoverty organizations (Prilleltensky &

Nelson, 1997). One approach to strengthening the experiential component of an existing course is to include a service-learning experience (Vera & Speight, 2003). Service learning has been shown to foster a sense of community activism (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Raskoff, 1994), to promote students' moral development (Delve, Mintz, & Stewart, 1990), and to strengthen a commitment to social justice (Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000). Practica and internships outside the United States are another way to broaden students' experiences and awareness of social justice (Lee, 1997). Such experiences assist students with "looking at America through the eyes of others," as recommended by the Race Advisory Board created by President Clinton (as cited in Sue, 2001, p. 808). In addition, a broad base of experience helps students draw parallels between "particular" (e.g., racism) and general processes of oppression (Thompson, Murry, Harris, & Annan, 2003).

RESEARCH

Research training has traditionally focused on statistics and experimental or quasi-experimental research methods. To prepare psychologists and mental health professionals to give greater emphasis to social justice concerns in their research, they should also be exposed to methods that are particularly oriented toward social change (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Several principles of social change–oriented research have been identified in the literature, including the importance of attending to the researcher's values and cultural context, an emphasis on working collaboratively with members of marginalized communities, and the significance of additional methodologies (e.g., qualitative methods) in furthering a social justice agenda.

Value-Attentive Context

To give greater emphasis to social justice concerns in research, psychologists and mental health professionals need to carefully consider the context of their scientific work. Serious doubts have been raised about the assumption that it is possible for research to be value-neutral and objective. Some have argued that a researcher who claims such neutrality "runs the risk of reinforcing the societal status quo" (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002, p. 50). For example, Chesler (1989) offered a powerful critique of research that presented depictions of women as inferior to men as "truth." The point is to acknowledge that research findings emerge from the interaction of the values and assumptions of the investigator with the unique historical representation of the phenomenon under study (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Similarly, Fine (1994) encourages researchers to

acknowledge the realities of "Self" and "Other" in our work, with whom we are "knottily entangled" (p. 71). What we need to do, writes Fine, is acknowledge the tension existing at the hyphen between these two realities and recognize our position as classed, gendered, raced, and sexual subjects who construct our own locations.

Collaboration

Research that is oriented toward social justice is guided by an awareness of power dynamics and is aimed at social change that benefits people who are marginalized (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The authentic voices and experiences of people who are alienated in our society (e.g., people in poverty) are at the center of the research efforts. As reflected in the APA (2003) Multicultural Guidelines, such efforts recognize the importance of working collaboratively with members of marginalized communities from the earliest phases of the research (e.g., conceptualization) to ensure that the research is of benefit to participants' communities (Council of National Psychologists for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2000). The goal, as much as possible, is to construct knowledge collaboratively and make ethical and conscious decisions about how much we involve ourselves in social struggles with those who have been exploited (Fine, 1994).

Additional Methodologies

Research that examines processes that facilitate or impede social change often does not fit neatly into experimental or quasi-experimental designs. As a result, some have advocated for a naturalistic case study or qualitative approach (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). A significant advantage of qualitative approaches is that the perceptions and experiences of those frequently ignored in traditional scholarship (e.g., people of color, women of low social power) are highlighted. Qualitative approaches recognize the importance of understanding experience from the participants' point of view and regard each participant as an expert in naming her or his reality. In sum, methodological diversity is consistent with an emphasis on respect for the personal, subjective experience of participants and multifaceted approaches to knowing (Hage, 2003).

Participatory action research (PAR) is one type of research that deserves further consideration in the effort to give greater emphasis to social justice concerns (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). With a long history that originated with oppressed groups in Central and South America, PAR draws on both quantitative and qualitative methods. At its core, PAR is a method that recognizes that knowledge is coproduced in collaboration and in action with those who have traditionally been left out of research and whose lives are most affected by the problem under study. The

research process becomes a means to empower participants in the quest to understand reasons for events or circumstances in their world. PAR is most often practiced in community-based social action projects committed to understanding, documenting, and evaluating the impact that social programs, social problems, and social movements have on individuals and communities (Fine et al., 2003).

PRACTICE

Psychologists and mental health practitioners often find themselves in the midst of service delivery systems that fail to value social justice interventions (Helms, 2003). Several reasons have been suggested for this lack of attention to social justice issues, including that these issues are "critical, controversial, political, and perhaps quite removed from our typical counseling psychology practice" (Speight & Vera, 2004, p. 110). To prepare mental health practitioners to give greater emphasis to social justice concerns, clarity regarding specific ways that these professionals can confront issues of oppression in their existing work is needed (Vera & Speight, 2003). The APA (2003) Multicultural Guidelines, similar to the multicultural counseling competencies (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) and the "Operationalization of the Multicultural Competencies" (Arredondo et al., 1996), offer numerous suggestions for addressing racism and oppression in the explanatory statements that support these competencies (Arredondo, 1999; Ridley, Baker, & Hill, 2001).

Specific examples of social justice interventions that can be integrated into existing psychological services may be gleaned from this literature. For example, to broaden the base of clients served, practitioners can offer a sliding fee scale and provide transportation vouchers for clients of low income; they can identify concrete institutional barriers that prevent ethnic minority clients from using psychological services and work with decision-making entities to eliminate these barriers (Arredondo et al., 1996). To serve linguistically diverse clients, counseling centers can make a strong commitment to hiring bilingual counselors (Ridley et al., 2001). To prevent bias when using assessment instruments, practitioners need to interpret findings with specific awareness of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of their clients (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992).

CONCLUSION

Psychologists and mental health professionals must embrace social justice as a central part of their identity as educators, researchers, and practitioners. They must be leaders in creating the change they wish to see in the world and, in doing so, bring "people to a place they could not imagine"

(Couto, 2000, p. 8). To strengthen the commitment to social justice, mental health professionals must confront their own participation in systems of privilege and oppression. As suggested by the Multicultural Guidelines, when people work through their own conscious and unconscious biases and negative attitudes toward ethnic and racial minority groups as well as other groups (e.g., gay, lesbian, and bisexual), they increase their resolve to eradicate not only racism but all forms of oppression (Helms, 1995; Thompson et al., 2003). Psychologists and mental health professionals also need to create a healthy, just climate within their own programs and institutions (e.g., employment and pay equity, policies and programs to prevent campus violence), thus creating a congruent base from which to engage in broader social change (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Finally, mental health professionals must recognize that there will be contradictions and tensions between their professional roles and commitment to social justice. Support networks are necessary for young professionals who may be in "precarious positions" due to their social justice leadership efforts (Helms, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997).

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