

# Integrating Social Justice Training Into the Practicum Experience for Psychology Trainees: Starting Earlier

Theodore R. Burnes  
Alliant International University

Anneliese A. Singh  
University of Georgia

Calls from the psychological literature have highlighted a need for the integration of social justice training in both didactic and fieldwork practicum experiences in professional psychology. This article presents concrete strategies for practicum instructors and applied fieldwork training site staff to integrate social justice work into practicum experiences. The authors review current scholarship on social justice training, identify foundational principles of social justice and recommendations for teaching social justice in applied training facilities, and apply these principles and recommendations to practicum experiences. Learning activities and evaluation methods are identified and presented, and recommendations for integration of these methods for teaching psychology trainees are underscored.

*Keywords:* social justice, practicum, fieldwork, practicum course

Recent interest in the integration of social justice work into the training of future psychologists has increased; however, there is still a dearth of literature that explains how to train psychologists to do social justice work (Speight & Vera, 2008). Psychologists have constructed a variety of definitions and meanings of social justice in order to describe the process of making the environment more conducive to positive human development, such as “scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination” (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 793). Recently, scholars have referenced the process of marginalization in defining the construct of social justice and have used a variety of similar constructs such as empowerment and advocacy as a foundation (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Toporek and Liu (2001) have defined *advocacy* as “. . . action a mental health professional, counselor, or psychologist takes in assisting clients and client groups to achieve goals through participating in clients’ environments” (p. 387). Examples of advocacy include *empowerment*, or assisting a client to act on the client’s own behalf when faced with oppression.

This emphasis on change and action from the above definitions of social justice suggests the need for training in social justice work as part of a psychologist’s development of cultural competence, as much of the multicultural counseling literature shows the

interaction between working with diverse populations and social justice work (e.g., Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2009). Although there are no formalized social justice training standards for psychologists currently, social justice training remains important to the future of psychology in order to ensure ethical and relevant practice with clients of numerous cultural and contextual backgrounds and frameworks. For instance, social justice in psychology has the potential to alleviate social and psychological challenges prior to their emergence rather than focusing on remedial practice (Hage et al., 2007). As such, psychology training programs need social justice training that can occur in settings for psychology doctoral trainees across programs in which practice has a primary emphasis (e.g., both Ph.D. and Psy.D. programs).

Scholars and activists in psychology have also defined social justice from a collectivist perspective (Crethar, Torres, Rivera, & Nash, 2008). As social justice calls for psychologists’ understanding of constructs related to the disempowerment of individuals and larger communities (e.g., oppression of clients based on their cultural identities), tenets from feminist and multicultural psychological paradigms can provide a framework for teaching and practicing social justice with psychology trainees. Such social advocacy for communities (rather than solely advocacy that takes place within individual therapy settings) has helped psychologists to adopt a focus on social and community systems (Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, Roysircar, & Israel, 2006). Using this community-based definition of social justice, psychologists engage in social justice as they advocate against marginalization when creating labor or social welfare policies or implement psychoeducational workshops on the effects of sexism to local community shelters.

When reviewing these various definitions of social justice, one sees how these various facets of social justice—marginalization, collectivism, advocacy, and community—must be part of trainee’s learning if social justice is taught comprehensively. Using this multifaceted definition in the context of social justice education, Weiss and Kaufman (2006) note that education for trainees should include equipping students with values, skills, and knowledge

---

THEODORE R. BURNES, PhD, received his doctorate in Counseling/Clinical/School Psychology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is now the Associate Professor in the Clinical Psychology PhD program at Alliant International University, Los Angeles.

ANNELIESE A. SINGH, PhD, received her doctorate in Counseling Psychology from Georgia State University. She is now an Assistant Professor in the Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia.

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THIS ARTICLE should be addressed to Theodore R. Burnes, 1000 S. Fremont Ave., #5 Alhambra, CA 91803. E-mail: tburnes@alliant.edu

needed to engage in social action, policy practice, and advocacy. Therefore, psychology trainees engaging in social justice need to learn to actively engage clients in their own assessment and treatment processes, engage in deconstructing power with clients in traditional therapy settings, and empower clients to challenge oppressive paradigms in their environments. However, an analysis of these writings highlights that although psychologists have documented the importance of this work, little is known about how to train psychologists in social justice.

The interest in training future psychologists from both Ph.D. and Psy.D. programs in social justice has in part stemmed from the articulated benefits of such practice. Although many programs are stretched in terms of training time and resources, scholars have noted how teaching social justice can benefit clients, professionals, and training programs on various ecological levels (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, 2009), including the individual psychology trainee, the program and/or fieldwork training site, the individual client, and the client's cultural communities and society as a whole. Miller, DeLeon, Morgan, Penk, and Magaletta (2006) argue that increased training in nontraditional clinical services (such as social justice) will improve the ability for psychologists to meet the demands of their multiple professional roles, and will be of value to a new cohort of future professionals who will be required to have a skill set to meet the evolving challenges of public sector psychology. Psychologists have noted that such training can increase the likelihood of future professional work reflective of social justice concerns while concurrently increasing their skills and competence (Pieterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, & Mason, 2009). Further, the APA Committee on Accreditation (1996) stated that the future employment of psychologists will include less of an emphasis on traditional clinical services and more on advocating and prevention work with clients, making training in social justice a direct influence on trainees' readiness for professional activity.

The above writings highlight that training psychologists in social justice has many positive outcomes for trainees' professional development; yet, a set of practical strategies to integrate social justice work and professional practice is still needed. Specifically, little literature exists on social justice in practicum training, or "[an] experience within a systematic training context in which the theoretical, conceptual, and skill based knowledge learned in programmatic coursework is implemented in a clinical or in an applied setting. . . specifically those activities that prepare [one] for the internship experience" (Campbell, 2005, p. 11). Although scholars have called for teaching of social justice to start earlier in psychologists' applied training (Burnes & Manese, 2008), there is little information on how to incorporate teaching social justice to a practicum trainee, or "A practicum student in training who is enrolled in a specific practicum course and fieldwork experience" (Boylan & Scott, 2009, p. 6). Professional organizations have documented that practicum trainees should undergo a series of applied fieldwork experiences that provide experiential opportunities that are fundamental to one's professional growth in their multiple roles as a psychologist (APA, 2005). Despite these calls, scholars know little about how to integrate social justice training into this professional development experience. The Association for State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB, 2009) stated that practicum activities may differ depending on variables of a particular training site (e.g., personnel at the site available for super-

vision of different types of service provision, activities needed by the target population served by a site, etc.). In addition, psychologists have noted that psychology graduate programs should provide training in program evaluation and development for community-based organizations (Maton & Bishop-Josef, 2006).

Psychologists have started to write about how professional training programs are beginning to integrate teaching social justice into their training of future professionals (e.g., McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). Scholars have documented how social justice can be incorporated into the training of future psychology professionals in didactic and academic training programs at both the master's (Talleyrand, Chung, & Bemak, 2006) and doctoral (Nastasi, 2008) levels of training. Goodman et al. (2004) identify six principles from multicultural and feminist theories important to structuring social justice advocacy in didactic training programs: (a) ongoing self-examination, (b) sharing power, (c) giving voice, (d) facilitating consciousness raising, (e) building on strengths, and (f) leaving clients the tools to work toward social change. Burnes and Manese (2008) identify how social justice could be integrated into the applied training of psychologists using these six principles by integrating social justice work into the predoctoral internship curriculum. Trusty and Brown (2005) identify respective sets of dispositions (advocacy, empowerment, social advocacy, and ethical) that professionals should possess in order to engage in social justice and advocacy work. A synthesis of the writings identified in this paragraph results in several strategies for applying social justice to clinical training, including: having a mission statement that reflects social justice, assessing trainee applicants for knowledge and enthusiasm about social justice, regularly assessing staff commitment toward social justice training, and being aware of trainees' differing developmental skill levels regarding their knowledge, attitudes, and skills of social justice.

Psychologists' writing about the incorporation of social justice work into psychologists' training also has noted that it is important to value the different experiences of trainees with regard to their levels of exposure, knowledge, and attitudes about social justice. Burnes and Manese (2008) recommend that giving didactic instruction about the definitions of social justice, social inequality, and marginalization are vital to make sure that all trainees have a similar framework from which to learn. As there are different frameworks from which to define social justice, it is important for practicum supervisors and instructors have a common language with which the trainees can engage. Trainees' differing knowledge and skill levels highlight the importance of psychologists' use of a developmental approach that is sensitive to and aware of trainee's different levels of experience (Harvey & Struzziero, 2008). Boylan and Scott (2009) advise that trainee growth is dependent on each trainee's mastery of early learning that establishes a foundation or knowledge base for later development of applied clinical skills in subsequent practicum experiences. As part of this awareness, Burnes and Manese suggest that an applied training site also have multiple levels of training and supervision in order to meet various training needs. In a practicum setting, practicum instructors and supervisors need to assess the variability of skills that psychology trainees bring to their applied training program and consequently create multiple learning activities that can help to teach trainees at different levels.

In addition to training recommendations from scholars, professional organizations have endorsed advocacy competencies

(Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003) that can inform the practice of professional psychology. These competencies are helpful in understanding the opportunities and challenges involved in social justice advocacy and have helped to further define social justice within a practice-oriented framework. These competencies also help to operationalize knowledge, skills, and awareness of social justice by identifying specific advocacy strategies that psychologists may use within three domains: client, system, and public arena. These competencies highlight a helpful framework within which to conceptualize current trainee development issues in the context of social justice training.

Using these calls and suggestions from the literature and professional organizations, we outline strategies with which social justice work can be integrated into applied practicum training for psychology trainees. We discuss integration strategies for both didactic practicum courses and fieldwork practicum. It is important to note that many training programs offer a concurrent academic course with trainees' introductory field work experiences in order to "integrate the practicum component of the students' education and training with other elements of the program and provide adequate forums for the discussion of the practicum experience" (APA, 2005, Domain B.4). Thus, trainees' learning of both applied and didactic elements of the practicum is often concurrent and required for the trainee's needed liability coverage (e.g., if students are in a practicum, they must be taking a corresponding course in their program to receive proper instruction and liability coverage). We use the recommendations of Goodman et al. (2004) and Burnes and Manese (2008) outlined above so that academic programs and practicum sites can collaborate to integrate these strategies into a trainee's practicum experience.

### **Strategies for Integration of Social Justice: Didactic Practicum Courses**

Before psychology trainees can begin to learn to practice social justice, it is important for them to learn knowledge and become aware of their own attitudes about social justice by way of a supportive classroom environment. As many academic training programs have a course that accompanies trainees' practica, incorporating social justice into the practicum is crucial to trainee's comprehensive learning of social justice work as part of their clinical skill development. Therefore, we discuss three central areas of didactic learning (examination of literature, self-examination, and examination of systems) that are important to consider when integrating social justice into practicum coursework.

Before the course and practicum experience begin, it is crucial for the practicum course instructor to connect with practicum field supervisors to have consistency about the social justice mission of trainees' field experiences. Having an in-depth phone conversation and/or having departmental faculty meet with practicum site directors is necessary to make sure that the trainee is not receiving incongruent messages about social justice from their training programs and from an applied fieldwork site. An additional strategy to prevent such possible incongruence is to have an informal "welcome supervisors" event at the beginning of the year in which the training program invites all supervisors to an informal gathering to discuss the mission statement, philosophy, and requirements of the practicum training program and to meet the course instructor. This

event can also be used as a forum to coconstruct a definition of social justice and to process questions and feedback that site directors and faculty may have of each other.

### **Examination of Literature and Readings**

To start, it is helpful if the social justice definition used to guide practicum is included in the course syllabus, and that the instructor defines the specific opportunities and challenges that exist within social justice advocacy (Pieterse et al., 2009). Further, it is important for practicum instructors to incorporate topics of social justice into course material throughout the practicum course rather than dedicating one class session to the topic. This thorough integration can be done by through the instructor's reflection on how social justice intersects with various skills taught in the practicum course and purposefully integrating social justice into each topic and/or learning module. One primary way of integrating social justice into didactic training experiences is the requirement of readings on social justice as part of a practicum course so that trainees learn a common language. We recommend a combination of readings from within psychology disciplines and from outside of psychology disciplines (see the Appendix for a listing of readings and other teaching materials). Such a combination of readings provides a comprehensive exposure to theory, research, popular press, academic journals and books with a social justice focus. Such readings will produce conversations between trainees in a practicum course that will encourage them to learn from each other and to examine their own definitions of social justice.

### **Learning Activities: Self-Examination**

In addition to reading assignments, engaging trainees in learning activities is integral to social justice education to help them gain awareness of their own attitudes and biases as well as their attitudes about social justice (or lack thereof) in the various systems around them. As Goodman et al. (2004) encourage self-examination as part of learning to engage in social justice, such reflective activities have been shown to be an integral part of a practicum course (Neufeldt, 2006), and psychologists have noted the importance of teaching self-examination to trainees in developing their clinical skill (Stedman, 2006). One strategy is to engage students in self-examination by using journals and corresponding in-class discussions and to give them an opportunity to respond to readings, class discussions, and an integration of theory and praxis. We often give guided journal assignments in which trainees reflect on a preselected prompt. For example, trainees can write reflections in which they self-assess their own social justice competencies by noting their knowledge, attitudes, and skills at various points throughout the course. Journals can also be helpful to incorporate the sensitivity to differing skills levels as outlined by Burnes and Manese (2008) by allowing trainees to evaluate their own learning at differing levels.

### **Learning Activities: Examination of Systems**

In addition to self-examination, instructors should include learning activities in the practicum course that teach trainees how to use social justice as a lens to examine various systems of which they and/or their clients are a part. For example, instructors can use

in-class exercises and roleplays on how to speak and/or process with clients about definitions and the labeling of marginalization and oppression in applied work. Such activities should begin early in the course (e.g., similar to understanding microskills like reflection of content and active listening, trainees' understanding of marginalization and oppression can be thought of as a needed, basic skill for working with clients of various cultures and contexts) and can help trainees to practice applying social justice into their budding professional roles. Further, such practice can allow trainees the opportunity to integrate this understanding into other topics in the practicum course material later in the course; for example, assignments in which trainees present a case conceptualization and use facets of social justice such as how oppression impacts a particular client can help them learn to apply theory to their professional practice.

Trainees' examination of systems can also be done outside the classroom. A primary learning activity to achieve this outside learning is through a field observation assignment. As part of the first few weeks of the practicum course, we have asked students to observe people in the margins by conducting field observations in any location that is outside the campus of their institution and will hopefully include people of a similar demographic to who the trainee will see in practicum. As marginalization and oppression are ingrained in every aspect of our social, political, and economic societies and many people are on the margins of these societies (Hooks, 1984, 1994), we encourage students to observe and label how marginalization occurs in places where they both most and least expect it, to observe these processes, and write field notes (for examples of such notes, see Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). For this assignment, we provide trainees some leading questions for their field note writing, such as: How did trainees themselves feel in certain spaces as they may have witnessed such oppression? We have found that this assignment helps students to understand dynamics of power and privilege. It is also important to process the act of "othering," or creating a "me/them" mentality by observing marginalization and separating oneself from the process and instead simply viewing it. Practicum course instructors should use this process as a catalyst to stress the importance of transcending othering by asking them to not just go to a space where they feel as though some aspect of their privilege is taken away from them but also recognize their role in marginalization by simply witnessing it and creating hierarchies between themselves as viewers and others as the viewed.

The practicum course can often be a space in which trainees share experiences that are challenging in their fieldwork practicum sites; consequently, many practicum course instructors will use the classroom as an environment to mentor trainees to develop strategies to deal with a practicum site's agency politics and other difficult situations (Baird, 2007). As such, practicum instructors can integrate social justice by supporting trainees in developing their own strategies and skills to deal with power hierarchies inherent to the practicum site that are detrimental to clients' well being. Such learning can occur by having trainees construct a genogram, or a visual depiction of organizational relationships (see McGoldrick, Gerson and Petry (2008) for in-depth explanations of the genogram), of the various organizational levels of their site, interpreting the genograms in small groups during class, and then having a larger class discussion. This discussion can result in finding ways to use agency resources and staff to advocate on

behalf of clients. Further, this exercise can be a good way for trainees to apply Goodman et al.'s (2004) principle of sharing power by helping clients and themselves to learn ways to navigate systems and leaving them with tools for change. It is important to note that developmental skill level may moderate the ability for trainees to engage in navigation of such systems. Practicum instructors may therefore need to provide extra scaffolding for trainees at more beginning skill levels.

### **Strategies for Integration of Social Justice: Fieldwork Practicum**

Although academic program support for social justice training of psychology students is important to ground them in the literature, philosophy, and values of social justice related to psychology, practicum experiences often provide the very first contact trainees have with clients and related social justice issues. Therefore, we discuss four specific content areas of training in practicum sites that are important to consider when integrating social justice into fieldwork practicum: practicum hours, psychoeducational workshops, evaluation, and interest groups. As noted above, it is crucial for the practicum course instructor to connect with practicum field supervisors to have consistency about the social justice mission of trainees' field experiences.

#### **Practicum Hours**

An initial place to begin to incorporate social justice advocacy into more traditional fieldwork placements is to reconceptualize how hours of clinical work during practicum are defined. Traditionally, practicum hours entail individual and group counseling, outreach, and appraisal activities (APA, 2005; Lopez & Edvardson, 1996), and many of these activities typically occur within the walls of a practicum site. However, because social justice advocacy entails reaching underserved and/or marginalized groups in society, training directors and other site administrators may consider adding specific social justice language and activities to the more traditional field placements. Site directors and training directors can use the flexibility that they have in approving practicum hours as appropriate for APPIC internship applications as a strategy to ensure students receive credit for social justice advocacy in practice. For instance, if a traditional practicum in a college counseling center requires a trainee to see six individual clients and to lead two groups, directors could add a specific social justice outreach and/or activism activity to the required practicum activities. One example is having practicum trainees at a university counseling center participate in university-based advocacy efforts outside of the center that address issues of student marginalization within the university community (Smith, Baluch, Bernabei, Robohm, & Sheehy, 2003).

#### **Psychoeducational Workshops for Outreach and Prevention**

A key social justice strategy in fieldwork practicum is that trainees have opportunities to learn how to design, implement, and evaluate psychoeducational workshops, outreach projects, and prevention programs. In reality, trainees may not have the skill level to deliver these outreach and prevention workshops on their own;

therefore, it is ideal if they are mentored by a staff member or by their primary supervisor. Also, because it may be challenging to determine how to specifically integrate a social justice focus into these workshops, we suggest the following five guidelines based on the guidelines of Conyne (2010) and Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) to help ground the outreach and prevention in social justice principles: (1) identify social justice issues that affect clients served by the practicum site (e.g., hate crimes toward LGBTQ people, first-generation students); (2) conduct a literature review for the selected social justice issues to ensure best and ethical practices; (3) meet with stakeholders in the community of the clients and practicum site to determine needs of the group (e.g., for outreach to African American students, meeting with community leaders of African American communities; meeting with staff leaders of the black heritage groups on a college campus or in the area of a community mental health agency) to coconstruct goals and objectives of the program; (4) design a workshop based on the needs of the community and delivering it in a form (e.g., electronic presentations, hand-outs, experiential, didactic, audio, video) and at a time and day (typically outside of traditional office hours) that will be most optimal for the clients served; and (5) establish an evaluation format (e.g., paper or electronic survey) and follow-up procedures to ensure continuing connection between the counseling site and the group receiving the workshop.

Trainees can be included in all of these steps, or in one that most captures their interest and/or fits with social justice training goals collaboratively identified with their director. For instance, in working on guideline number three above, effective outreach to historically marginalized communities requires an understanding and connection with the key stakeholders in these networks (Hage & Kenny, 2009). This connection often entails strategically mapping the leaders of a group. For instance, if it is well-known at a practicum site that Asian American/Pacific Islander students will not access counseling services due to mental health stigma, it is important to identify who the key stakeholders are in this community in order to: (1) identify their counseling needs and (2) build trusting relationships with them. Connecting with these stakeholders and their allies often means working outside of traditional counseling office hours and attending community meetings.

In addition to these five guidelines discussed, a focus on prevention, empowerment, and resilience should be included when working with a historically marginalized group (e.g., Latino immigrants; Conyne, 2010). When conducting outreach to groups who have more privileged statuses (e.g., heterosexual allies in a LGBTQ Safe Zone training), field supervisors should teach and support trainees in emphasizing how to use privilege to raise consciousness and enact positive social justice change.

### Evaluation of Social Justice Advocacy Skills

Because the literature on evaluation of social justice advocacy skills is still nascent (Speight & Vera, 2008), clinical and training directors may want to consider using a combination of formal and informal assessments to assess trainee skills. The Privilege and Oppression Inventory (Hays, Chang, & Decker, 2007) is a measure that assesses a trainee's beliefs about race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Another tool is the Social Justice Advocacy Readiness Questionnaire that evaluates several domains of trainee advocacy, including individual awareness, values, and skills in

social justice work (Chen-Hayes, 2001). These assessment tools may be used at the beginning, middle and end of a trainee's practicum placement to understand and to track trainees' understanding and belief systems with regard to privilege and oppression. It is important when using formal measures to ensure that trainees have supportive supervision during the practicum class and at their training site in exploring their social justice strengths and growing edges so that areas for improvement can be collaboratively explored.

Site directors and training directors may also consider using informal assessments, such as developing a social justice measure themselves that evaluates aspects of social justice advocacy skills the directors are interested in appraising. For instance, directors may use Goodman et al.'s (2004) six principles of social justice to guide the construction of an informal assessment of trainees' learning. For instance, the "giving voice" principle may be woven into case conceptualizations and client notes in order to discuss practical strategies to integrate social justice advocacy into counseling work. Using the developmental focus described earlier, we recommend an evaluation that incorporates an understanding of trainee's differing knowledge and skills, as ". . . awareness of *isms* may be changed and further facilitated by contemporary movements (e.g., social activism)" (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 67). This evaluation technique can also double as a good training exercise in which trainees and supervisors evaluate each other's knowledge in an informal, one-on-one format.

As social justice advocacy often entails interacting with and understanding power hierarchies, a power analysis (e.g., "Who has the power and where is the power?") of a trainee's particular population of interest is important to ensure trainees have the skills to negotiate power differentials in their social justice topic area. Worell and Remer (2003) provided several guidelines for a therapist and client collaboratively conducting a power analysis. These suggestions may also be a helpful way for trainees to qualitatively provide an evaluation of power and include: collaborative determination of a working definition of power; ability to identify different types of power (e.g., legal, physical) individuals may or may not possess; and, exploration of personal privilege and oppression statuses related to power; and, knowledge of how internalized oppression and environmental obstacles may alter an individual's use of power.

### Establishing Social Justice Interest Groups

Social justice interest groups can be important working groups to establish within a practicum site to ensure an ongoing dialogue about social justice issues, practice, actions, and evaluation. Affinity groups—such as White Privilege Exploration groups or People of Color groups—may be a helpful way to establish these within a training environment. More general social justice interest groups that meet at a specific time, day, and place can also be a place where staff, faculty, and trainees receive "drop-in" support about various social justice issues with which they may be struggling. Clearly defining the purpose, duration, and structure for these groups can be a helpful way to understand the effectiveness of the group. Social justice interest groups may evaluate the types of clients typically served or underserved in a practicum site,

design outreach and prevention strategies with regard to social justice issues, and/or develop strategic plans (among many other activities) to support achieving the purpose of the group.

### **Developing Academic Program-Practicum Site Partnerships**

As academic programs and practicum sites begin to integrate social justice into their training, the development of a partnership between entities is crucial so that the inclusion of social justice is long-term. We reiterate the importance of Burnes and Manese's (2008) recommendation discussed earlier of constructing a working definition of social justice and to incorporate that definition into the mission statement of the practicum site and program. This mission statement can guide future explorations of social justice and can establish a value system and platform for integrating a social justice emphasis into larger systemic structures—such as into the trainee's academic department and university mission statements as well as agencies, hospitals, practices, schools and districts in which trainees do field work during their training.

Partnerships in social justice training can also be remedied by having site administrators and program faculty hold in-service trainings on the definition of social justice and related constructs of privilege and oppression. One such training could be a welcome reception in which academic faculty and site personnel come together to coconstruct a definition of social justice; however, it is important that these trainings are not isolated to psychologists working at a practicum site, but that all staff (e.g., receptionist, office manager) are included in these trainings so social justice is not a construct understood by just a few, but rather accessed by many people involved in the daily operation of a practicum site. The Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2003) outline specific advocacy strategies for three large domains of the client, system, and public arena, which is a helpful framework to discuss current social justice issues in a practicum site. In-service trainings should have sufficient time for all attendees to discuss the complexities of social justice—from its definition and practice to systemic change and evaluation of social justice skills. Readings (see Appendix) can be used as a way to start or scaffold the discussion.

Taking a collaborative approach to working with practicum sites can also be an opportunity to mitigate any misunderstanding about what social justice training of psychologists entails. For instance, consider inviting practicum site supervisors and administrators to serve as an advisory body to training programs to discuss the social justice issues their clients face in their daily lives. These advisory bodies can strengthen university and community relationships, as well as ensure that psychology training in social justice remains grounded in “real world” challenges and opportunities. Creative approaches to working with such advisory bodies might entail holding a miniconference on social justice training in practicum sites, constructing opportunities for clients themselves to be involved in commenting on social justice issues they may face, and involve students in ongoing discussions with an advisory body. Ultimately, these advisory boards may serve as an accountability mechanism so that training programs have an in-depth understanding of how social justice issues “look” in community settings.

### **Limitations, Challenges, and Opportunities Related to Social Justice Practicum Training**

Once a common definition of social justice is established, another challenge becomes how to most effectively integrate a social justice focus into training in both fieldwork practice and in training programs so the emphasis on advocacy is long term. In order to structure fieldwork practicum in psychology so social justice advocacy is included as an important focus, it is likely that training and clinical directors will need to be innovative in how they view and approach fieldwork placements. As with any innovative change, directors may face obstacles in building nontraditional fieldwork practicum. We have found that using strategies that are designed to structure intentional discussions of social justice issues, the practice of advocacy, and the development of training environments that support social justice can often help with issues of resistance and can help to account for limitations in the teaching of social justice.

Directors may find that there may be misunderstandings and/or confusion about what the term “social justice” actually means from trainees and staff, especially in terms of how advocacy translates to practice. This construct may be a term that may feel “too academic” or lacking relevance for personnel at practicum sites. In order to address this challenge in a realistic manner that supports students in their learning of advocacy, site directors and training directors should begin with two questions to guide decisions about fieldwork practicum: (1) what is the definition of social justice guiding fieldwork practicum at their particular site, and (2) what are the specific social justice skills trainees will gain? Goodman et al.'s (2004) work on training psychologists in social justice is an important document to guide the answers to these two questions. The authors recommend exploring the degree to which trainees will be able to learn skills related to each of their six principles in order to identify available fieldwork placements. There are also numerous ways social justice has been defined in terms of language, concepts, theories, and practice (Speight & Vera, 2008). Therefore, it may be helpful to create opportunities where trainees, staff, and supervisors may explore and discuss what social justice “looks like” in practice.

In addition to training personnel in social justice work, it is important to recognize the range of agencies in which social justice work can be integrated and the constraints of integrating such work into these agencies. One way to explore such integration and possible constraints is to invite community members and activists to the practicum site for a focus group (described below in more detail) so that these constraints can be addressed in the formation of a university-mental health agency partnership. Although applied training sites are busy, site directors' inviting of these people to come to the training site to discuss social justice can be an important part of navigating agency politics and exploring constraints to social justice training. Further, agency directors can communicate to agency staff that understanding oppression and marginalization can often better the relationship between therapists, trainees, and clients and therefore often predict a positive evaluation of services from client perspectives. Further, practicum faculty in graduate programs and site directors can prepare trainees to talk about social justice with agency staff and to be able to use different language that is more widely used outside of the academy

and more common in agencies (e.g., speaking of social justice in terms of “service disparities,” etc).

Although some academic programs and fieldwork sites may readily support social justice work, a variety of practicum sites may not have training as a focus and therefore be resistant to integrating social justice into their mission. In integrating social justice into practicum field work, site directors should be prepared to address resistance to this training model (Manese, 2009). Agency and program administrators should consider it is likely that there may be resistance to a uniform view of social justice by trainees, faculty, and staff. Singley and Manese (2006) use their example of an advocacy program called “Goals in Action” to illustrate ways to address and process resistance with colleagues that can be transferred to academic departments or fieldwork sites. In this program geared toward historically marginalized students in their university, the authors created three themes that asserted the program’s importance in anticipation of resistance. These points included: (1) commitment to the education of all students—beyond just those who were succeeding; (2) reminder of the university’s obligation to ensure all students were incorporated as “full members” of the community; and (3) assertion of the primary focus on the welfare of students. These points can help administrators to work with resistance to social justice training and help staff to understand how addressing social justice helps all trainees and their clients to focus on strengths and welfare.

In addition to identifying social justice goals for fieldwork practicum that anticipate resistance, it is additionally important to not back away from resistance, but to rather integrate resistance as an opportunity to explore different perspectives and build support for social justice advocacy. Discussing the different definitions of social justice and/or selecting one or more social justice issues that there is common ground on can be a helpful way to move through such resistance. Exploring privilege and oppression experiences related to divergent notions of social justice can also be helpful. For instance, if people of color trainees, faculty, and staff define social justice in one manner, whereas the White personnel define it in another—exploring how their individual experiences of privilege and oppression shape their view of social justice can be a more productive way to directly address resistance.

Addressing resistance can also entail difficult dialogues, using a consultant, and/or incorporating a variety of didactic, experiential, and media resources (e.g., watching movies that explore intersections of marginalization and oppression such as the *Color of Fear*) to explore different viewpoints. As trainees hold the least amount of power in a practicum environment, it is important for clinical staff and training directors to discuss how to most effectively include trainees in this discussion. Ideally, a transparent exploration of social justice and different viewpoints about advocacy would include staff and faculty modeling how to explore these differences in a helpful, productive, and meaningful manner so they may vicariously learn how psychologists may address social justice in the “real world” and in “real time.”

### Conclusion

Speight and Vera (2008) note that, “The million-dollar question remains: How do we go about educating . . . trainees for the breadth of social justice work, from prevention to advocacy?” (p. 64). This analysis has attempted to begin to answer this question

by exemplifying how social justice can be incorporated into practicum programs in professional psychology. We believe that this article can help to apply foundational principles of social justice and offered concrete examples of these principles with psychology trainees both inside and outside of applied psychology training programs. Burnes and Manese (2008) argue that there is much work to do for the field of psychology to integrate social justice work into the education and training of future psychologists. Future research is needed to evaluate the efficacy of these teaching pedagogies with respect to trainees’ learning processes and outcomes. As the field of psychology continues to identify and investigate ways to train its new generation of professionals, it is imperative that social justice training be incorporated so that future professionals in professional psychology will be able respond equitably and responsibly to the needs of clients, systems, and injustice that affect our changing world.

### References

- American Psychological Association. (2005). *Guidelines and principles for accreditation of programs in professional psychology*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Association for State and Provincial Psychology Boards. (2009, January). *ASPPB Guidelines on practicum experiences for licensure*. Montgomery, AL: Authors.
- Baird, B. N. (2007). *The internship, practicum, and field placement handbook: A guide for the helping professions* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Boylan, J. C., & Scott, J. (2009). *Practicum and internship: Textbook and resource guide for counseling and psychotherapy* (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Burnes, T. R., & Manese, J. E. (2008). Social justice in an accredited internship in professional psychology: Answering the call. *Journal of Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 2, 176–181.
- Campbell, L. (2005). Defining practicum. In M. B. Madson, L. K. Chapman, N. L. Wood-Barcalow, & C. Williams-Nickelson (Eds.), *Succeeding in Practicum: An APAGS Resource Guide* (pp. 11–20). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association of Graduate Students.
- Chen-Hayes, S. F. (2001). Counseling and advocacy with transgender and gender-variant persons in schools and families. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education, & Development*, 40, 34–49.
- Conyne, R. K. (2010). *Prevention program development and evaluation: An incidence reduction, culturally relevant approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crethar, H. C., Torres Rivera, E., & Nash, S. (2008). In search of common threads: Linking multicultural, feminist, and social justice counseling paradigms. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86, 269–278.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goodman, L. A., Liang, B., Helms, J. E., Latta, R. E., Sparks, E., & Weintraub, S. R. (2004). Training counseling psychologists as social change agents: Feminist and multicultural principles in action. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 32, 793–837.
- Hage, S. M., & Kenny, M. E. (2009). Promoting a social justice approach to prevention: Future directions for training, practice and research. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 30, 75–87.
- Hage, S. M., Romano, J. L., Conyne, R. K., Kenny, M., Matthews, C., Schwartz, J. P., & Waldo, M. (2007). Best practice guidelines on prevention practice, research, training, and social advocacy for psychologists. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35, 493–566.
- Harvey, V. A., & Struzziro, J. A. (2008). *Professional development and supervision of school psychologists: From intern to expert* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.

- Hays, D. G., Chang, C. Y., & Decker, S. L. (2007). Initial development and psychometric data for the Privilege and Oppression Inventory. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 40*, 66–79.
- Lewis, J., Arnold, M. S., House, R., & Toporek, R. (2003). *Advocacy competencies* [Electronic version]. Retrieved online October 3, 2006, from <http://www.counseling.org/Publications>
- Lopez, S. J., & Edwardson, T. L. (1996). Quantifying practicum experience: A comment on Hecker, Fink, Levasseur, and Parker (1995). *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 27*, 514–517.
- Manese, J. E. (2009). Beyond internship training: A director's view. In J. E. Manese (Chair), *Social justice in training and professional psychology: Answering the call*. Symposium presented at the National Multicultural Conference and Summit, New Orleans, LA.
- Maton, K. I., & Bishop-Josef, S. J. (2006). Psychological research, practice, and social policy: Potential pathways of influence. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 37*, 140–145.
- McCabe, P., & Rubinson, F. (2008). Committing to social justice: The behavioral intention of school psychology and education trainees to advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth. *School Psychology Review, 37*, 469–486.
- McGoldrick, M., Gerson, R., & Petry, S. (2008). *Genograms: Assessment and intervention* (3rd ed.). New York: Norton.
- Miller, T. W., DeLeon, P. H., Morgan, R. D., Penk, W. E., & Magaletta, P. R. (2006). The public sector psychologist with 2020 vision. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 37*, 531–538.
- Nastasi, B. (2008). Social justice and school psychology. *School Psychology Review, 37*, 487–492.
- Nelson, G., & Prilliltensky, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. New York: Palgrave-McMillan.
- Neufeldt, S. A. (2006). *Supervision strategies for the first practicum* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Pieterse, A. L., Evans, S. A., Risner-Butner, A., Collins, N. M., & Mason, L. B. (2009). Multicultural competence and social justice training in counseling psychology and counselor education: A review and analysis of a sample of multicultural course syllabi. *The Counseling Psychologist, 37*, 93–115.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Casas, J. M., Suzuki, L. A., & Alexander, C. M. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Singley, D. B., & Manese, J. E. (2006). *Goals in Action summary report*. (Research Report #1–06) San Diego, CA: UCSD Psychological & Counseling Services.
- Smith, L., Blauch, S., Bernabei, S., Robohm, J., & Sheehy, J. (2003). Applying a social justice framework to college counseling center practice. *Journal of College Counseling, 6*, 3–13.
- Speight, & Vera, E. (2008). Social justice and counseling psychology: A challenge to the profession. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (4th ed., pp. 54–67). New York: Wiley.
- Stedman, J. M. (2006). What we know about predoctoral internship training: A review. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 5*(2), 80–95.
- Tallyrand, R. M., Chung, R. C., & Bemak, F. (2006). Incorporating social justice in counselor training programs. In R. L. Toporek, L. H. Gerstein, N. A. Fouad, G. Roysircar, & T. Israel (Eds.), *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology* (pp. 44–58). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Toporek, R. L., Gerstein, L. H., Fouad, N. A., Roysircar, G., & Israel, T. (Eds.), *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology* (pp. 37–43). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Toporek, R. L., Lewis, J. A., & Crethar, H. C. (2009). Promoting systemic change through the ACA advocacy competencies. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 87*, 260–268.
- Toporek, R. L., & Liu, W. M. (2001). Advocacy in counseling: Addressing race, class, and gender oppression. In D. B. Pope-Davis & H. L. K. Coleman (Eds.), *The intersection of race, class, and gender in multicultural counseling* (pp. 2785–413). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Trusty, J., & Brown, D. (2005). Advocacy competencies for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 259–265.
- Weiss, I., & Kaufman, R. (2006). Educating for social action: An evaluation of the impact of a fieldwork training program. *Journal of Policy Practice, 5*, 5–30.
- Worell, J., & Remer, P. (2002). *Feminist perspectives in therapy: Empowering diverse women*. New York: Wiley.

(Appendix follows)

## Appendix

### Resources for Social Justice Training for Psychology Professionals and Trainees

- Bell, L. (1997). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams & L. Bell (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 3–15). New York: Routledge.
- Bluestein, D., Elman, N., & Gerstein, L. (2001, August). *Executive Report: Social Action Groups National Counseling Psychology Conference*. Houston, TX: Authors.
- Burnes, T. R., & Manese, J. E. (2008). Social justice in an accredited internship in professional psychology: answering the call. *Journal of Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 2*, 176–181.
- Goodman, L. A., Liang, B., Helms, J. E., Latta, R. E., Sparks, E., & Weintraub, S. R. (2004). Training counseling psychologists as social change agents: Feminist and multicultural principles in action. *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 793–837.
- Hernández, P. (2008). The cultural context model in clinical supervision. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 2*, 10–17.
- Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Hooks, B., & Shapiro, E. P. (1984). *Feminist theory: from margin to center*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Kiselica, M. S. (2004). When duty calls: The implications of social justice work for policy, research, education, and practice in the mental health professions. *The Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 838–854.
- Lee, C. C. (Ed.). (2006). *Counseling for social justice* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: American Counseling Association.
- Maddux, J. E. (2002). Stopping the “Madness”: Positive psychology and the deconstruction of the illness ideology and the DSM. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 13–25). London: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, J. D. (1991). The mental health professional and social action. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 61*, 484–488.
- Maton, K. I., & Bishop-Josef, S. J. (2006). Psychological research, practice, and social policy: Potential pathways of influence. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 37*, 140–145.
- Mays, V. M. (2000). A social justice agenda. *American Psychologist, 55*, 326–327.
- Melton, G. B. (2003). Mental health and social justice: A vision for the 21st century. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 73*, 245–247.
- Miller, T. W., DeLeon, P. H., Morgan, R. D., Penk, W. E., & Magaletta, P. R. (2006). The public sector psychologist with 2020 vision. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 37*, 531–538.

(Appendix continues)

- Morrow, S. L., Hawxhurst, D. M., Montes de Vegas, A. Y., Abousleman, T. M., & Castaneda, C. L. (2006). Toward a radical feminist multicultural therapy: Renewing a commitment to activism. In R. L. Toporek, L. H. Gerstein, N. A. Fouad, G. Roysicar, & T. Israel (Eds.), *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology* (pp. 231–248). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Nelson, G., & Prilliltensky, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. New York: Palgrave-McMillan.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Romney, P. (2008). Consulting for diversity and social justice: Challenges and rewards. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60, 139–156.
- Snyder, C. R., & Lopez, S. J. (Eds.). (2005). *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York, NY: Oxford Press.
- Sue, D. W. (2008). Multicultural organizational consultation: A social justice perspective. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60, 157–169.
- Toporek, R., Gerstein, L. H., Fouad, N. A., Roysicar, G., & Israel, T. (2005). *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology: Leadership, vision, and action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Toporek, R. L. (2006, August). Collaborating to confront marginalization: Counseling psychologists in work and community. In L. H. Gerstein, G. Roysicar, & R. L. Toporek (Chairs), *Social justice: Catalytic action and counseling psychologists*. Symposium presented at the American Psychological Association Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA.
- Van Den Bos, K. (2003). On the subjective quality of social justice: The role of affect as information in the psychology of justice judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 482–498.
- Vera, E. M., & Speight, S. L. (2003). Multicultural competence, social justice, and counseling psychology: Expanding our roles. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 31, 253–272.
- Worell, J., & Remer, P. (2003). *Feminist perspectives in therapy: Empowering diverse women* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Received March 9, 2009  
Revision received January 26, 2010  
Accepted February 11, 2010 ■